

# Loss of \$6.2M in federal funds will pinch outreach programs

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At the end of the year, Hawaii no longer will receive more than \$6 million in federal stimulus money aimed at preventing 5,000 people from joining the circuit of homeless people who continuously migrate around the islands.

The money # \$4 million for Oahu and \$2.2 million for the neighbor islands over the past two years # helped pay for security deposits and as much as six months# worth of rent for recipients.

#It#s really sad,# said Darlene Hein, director of community services for the Waikiki Health Center, which runs the Next Step homeless shelter in Kakaako. #The money helped people get into housing and stay in housing.#

On Oahu, 771 people in 1,851 households received assistance from the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing funds through July 3. An additional 1,179 people were helped on the neighbor islands.

Homeless advocates fear that the end of the federal stimulus money could increase Hawaii#s homeless population, which was reported at 1,322 in a January #point-in-time# survey.

The federal money helped #the hidden homeless# who often have jobs and families and live in cars # unlike the chronic homeless who often have mental or substance abuse problems, Hein said.

#They#re really two different populations,# Hein said. #But did the (federal money) help keep people off of the street? Absolutely.#

Homeless advocates also continue to worry that state and city officials are planning to conduct last-minute #sweeps# of homeless people on Oahu on the eve of November#s Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference, which will draw President Barack Obama and other leaders of 21 APEC nations.

State and city officials have testified before the Legislature that they do not conduct homeless sweeps, saying it is not a crime to be homeless in Hawaii.

But state Rep. John Mizuno, who presided over the testimony as chairman of the House Human Services Committee, said: #We#re hearing time and time again that they are doing sweeps. They want to call it #beautification# or #park cleaning,# but just be honest. The public is smart and they see right through it. I#m upset at government for not being honest with the people of Hawaii # and I#m in government.#

A handful of homeless people who sleep on the King Street sidewalk in front of Old Stadium Park in Moiliili said Honolulu police took photos of their tents and belongings Wednesday night.

#The lieutenant said, #These guys are next,## said Jared #Spider####Castro, 43.

The message quickly spread among the 20 or so homeless people who sleep on the sidewalk that they should move or risk getting their tents and belongings cleared by city workers.

#We#re done,####said Gayle Yee, 61. #It#s time to move on.#

Several homeless people said they ended up on the edge of Old Stadium Park this year after they were cleared out of other locations on Oahu, including nearby McCully-Moiliili Public Library, the exterior of Diamond Head Crater, Keaau Beach in Waianae and the sidewalks of Kakaako near the University of Hawaii John A. Burns Medical School.

Asked how many times he's moved this year, Vance Apolo, 58, said, "A lot of times. If they're going to have another sweep, we'll just have to move again."

Asked where he's likely to end up, Apolo said, "I have no idea. But I gotta go somewhere."

Whatever's coming next for the homeless people around Old Stadium Park represents part of a bigger effort to control the growth of homeless populations on Oahu, which include an entrenched encampment of nearly 40 tents and plywood and 2-by-4 structures along Beretania Street on the edge of Chinatown.

The encampment sits directly mauka of Aala Park, where Gov. Neil Abercrombie's 90-day homeless plan discouraged groups from feeding homeless people.

Instead, the groups were asked to provide food and services at the nearby Institute for Human Services, where homeless people can tap into a broad range of services.

But this week Aala Park remained filled with more than 50 homeless people during the middle of the day. And many of the homeless occupants said they now walk over to IHS for food, only to return to the shade of the park.

"It's beautiful here," said Jose Fertino, 43. "It just means I have to go farther to eat."

A 60-year-old man who wanted to be identified only as "Bobo" said Abercrombie's intention to divert homeless people to services by cutting off food providers "is like putting on a Band-Aid when you have a disease. It doesn't help."

Greg Cuadra, chairman of the McCully/Moiliili Neighborhood Board, said homeless people destroyed the Ewa-end grass of Old Stadium Park with their urine and garbage.

#It is an eyesore and it's increasing,# Cuadra said. #You can't walk down that sidewalk on King Street early in the morning because they're all over. They just moved from the (McCully) library, which is state property, over to the park, which is city property. The problem just moved a couple hundred meters. Don't take this the wrong way, but I would love to see them go somewhere else.#

Blue city signs in the park say the park is closed from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. Other blue signs clearly prohibit camping and tents.

Several homeless individuals told the Star-Advertiser that they sleep in tents along a portion of the sidewalk that sits between King Street and Old Stadium Park, where the laws are murky.

#In terms of the sidewalk, we need clear delineation of what public and private property is,# said Honolulu police Capt. Calvin Tong, who oversees the district that includes Old Stadium Park. #As long as nothing is obstructing a pedestrian from clearly walking on the sidewalk, we're not enforcing anything at this point.#

On Thursday, Tong said he was unaware of any police activity the night before involving homeless people around Old Stadium Park.

#We don't do sweeps,# Tong said. #We do park closure enforcements and we address criminal issues. We don't encourage and allow our officers to do sweeps.####

But the state Department of Transportation last month cleared about 90 homeless people from the H-1 freeway's Nimitz viaduct, along with 50 to 60 truckloads of their belongings.

DOT officials now clear out the area about every six months, spokesman Dan Meisenzahl said.

But Brandon Cayetano, owner of the nearby Hawaii All-Star Paintball Games, said #These guys all crossed the road to my field.#

Cayetano has been dealing with homeless people on his 6-acre site for at least four years and has paid as much as \$5,000 to haul their belongings from his property.

Thirty-five new homeless people suddenly appeared following the DOT sweep, Cayetano said.

#HPD has no jurisdiction here, and the state sheriffs have been as helpful as they can be, but it#s hard to get consistent enforcement,# Cayetano said.

So Cayetano turned to private security to help clear his paintball fields of homeless people.

#It#s hard that it came to this point,# Cayetano said. #But every time they do a sweep they come here.#

And Hein, of the Waikiki Health Center, believes more sweeps lie ahead with APEC on the horizon.

#When APEC comes in,# she said, #anybody on the margins # the street vendors and gypsy cab people and streetwalkers # they#re all going to be told politely to go to other places.#