



[Back to Star-Bulletin Homepage](#)  
[Back to Breaking Headlines](#)

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## State offers homeless shelter in Kakaako

**A renovated warehouse at Pier 1 will be open nightly beginning today**

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About 200 homeless people who were essentially kicked out of Ala Moana Park when the city began nightly closings in March will be allowed to stay in a temporary shelter opened by the state at Pier 1 in Kakaako.

The announcement was made this morning at Central Union and Kawaiahao churches where an estimated 150 to 160 homeless have been staying at night since the Ala Moana closure began on March 27.

Housing and Community Development Director Stephanie Aveiro said the state looked at nine possible locations and decided that the warehouse at Pier 1 would be the best option for now.

"This is the most ideal," she said this morning, just before making the announcement for the group at Kawaiahao. "We looked at every vacant site or building the state had access to."

The warehouse facility will be open from 5 p.m. to 8:30 a.m. daily beginning today. During the day people will be able to secure their belongings in storage units, according to state officials. A hot meal for dinner and a snack for breakfast will also be provided along with a piece of identification for entry.

Gathered in the church hall the group cheered upon hearing that the new shelter was located in Kakaako, close to many jobs and social services, but had several concerns including what happens to people who work at night,

where would they take a shower, and whether it is it safe to put 200 homeless people in a confined area.

"It is a logistical nightmare, you're going to put everybody in one place," said Gary Oshiro, a member of Kawaiaha'o, Ohana O Hawaii, a governing body created by the homeless population at the church.

"And showers are a priority, you don't have to go into the Ala Wai to get the flesh-eating disease."

Council president Leinati Matautia said in such environments small disagreements can escalate into physical violence very easily.

"Petty stuff, like he snores too loud or that person smells too bad," she said. "And then you have the alcoholics and addicts that come in high and drunk ... there's a whole lot of things to be concerned about. But we're going to check it out."

Christian Haas, a former Palm Springs, Calif. resident, said he thought the location is great, especially since, like Kawaiaha'o Church, it is far enough from the Chinatown or downtown area to keep people like himself away from the lure of drugs.

"I know a lot of people who came here and don't do that stuff anymore," he said. "When I first got here I stayed at IHS (Institute of Human Services) and as soon as you walk out boom! There's Chinatown."

"All the churches and social services like River of Life, it's all there. But the drugs are there too ... everybody there is a drug dealer — you can get crack, or meth or whatever," he said.

"Not that some people still won't do it but it's easier if it's not right in your face."

Kawaiaha'o Kahu Curt Kekuna — who was dressed in athletic wear and spoke to the crowd with the sternness and authority of a high school football coach — reminded the group that while the warehouse may not be what they want, right now it is what they need.

"Just as you depended upon God here and prayed, do the same thing over there," he said. "It doesn't matter whether you have a house or not, a house does not determine who you are, God determines who you are."

"And you better start believing that right now."

Overall the Kawaiaha'o group seemed optimistic and curious about the new shelter and most said they would go see what it was like today. And many had praise for Gov. Linda Lingle for trying to do something.

"I'm thankful for what she's done, especially since the mayor just dished it

on her," Oshiro said. "He's just concerned about his park.

"But this is bigger than Ala Moana ... you just ask the people living in caves and bushes out there," Oshiro said.

Aveiro said the decision to use the warehouse was made on Friday but that state workers needed the weekend to make renovations, including fixing the roof, installing floor covering, fire extinguishers and smoke alarms, improving lighting and ventilation and putting in partitions to create separate areas for single men, women and families.

Lingle signed an emergency proclamation Friday to ensure that work — estimated at \$200,000 — would be completed by today.

"Our administration will continue our efforts, as we have over the past three years, to find solutions to end homelessness throughout the state," said Lingle in a news release.

The city says Sister Roberta Derby Park, next to Honolulu Police headquarters remains available at night for homeless who need a place to stay.

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