

MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 2, 2015

The Mayor's Office has improved the proposal for the Sand Island site to be used to house the chronically houseless. One of the main improvements include the installation of container units instead of the previous plan of providing a single main canopy on the property for up to 100 persons. Despite these design upgrades, the Pacific Alliance to Stop Slavery highlights several concerns with regard to safety and effectiveness for the proposed plan on ending houselessness.

- First, there are enforcement issues based on the question of how the City intends to move people to Sand Island. In practice, we worry that methods may be by threat or force due to existing and new criminalization laws targeted at the houseless (Stored Property, Park Closure, Sidewalk Nuisance, Sit-Lie)?
- Second, these container units will most likely not have built-in cooling abilities. The Sand Island site becomes very hot during the day and averages at least 90 degrees during the summer. Container units may "bake" under the hot sun, disincentivizing healthy, sanitary, or comfortable care.
- Third, there is a lack of access to clean drinking water. There exists no infrastructure for clean drinking water access at the Sand Island site. Port-a-potties and portable showers will not address this lack of access.
- Fourth, there remains an isolation issue due to the site's remote location. Bus lines do not run to the site and street lighting at night fulfills the basic minimum, with no bike lanes for houseless who have bicycles. Without constant monitoring, this physical isolation will create safety hazards and create opportunities for increased crime activity.
- Fifth, without aggressive case-management, this facility will turn into another emergency shelter and will not help end houselessness. Emergency shelters are often established and then ignored once the cosmetic duty of temporarily removing the houseless from business and residential areas have occurred. Emergency shelters differ from Housing First Programs, the latter which offer aggressive case management with the specific goal of moving chronically houseless into permanent shelter immediately.
- Sixth, the City's proposal targets the chronically houseless. Most of the unsheltered do not fit into the definition of chronically houseless. E.g. most of the houseless residents in Kaka'ako park (500 persons) would not be affected by this proposal because, despite many families being homeless for years, they do not fit the definition of "chronically homeless."
- Seventh, without immediate and aggressive case management, as one would receive in a real Housing First Program, there is no incentive nor guarantee that the houseless placed on Sand Island will remain in the facility. This would result in a waste of tax-payer dollars on this initiative.
- And lastly, while the City calls this a "transitional program" for Housing First, this is no way fits into best practices for a true Housing First Program.