

Nation of Change

Utah is Ending Homelessness by Giving People Homes

By Terrance Heath

Earlier this month, Hawaii State representative Tom Bower (D) began walking the streets of his Waikiki district with a sledgehammer, and smashing shopping carts used by homeless people. “Disgusted” by the city’s chronic homelessness problem, Bower decided to take matters into his own hands — literally. He also took to rousing homeless people if he saw them sleeping at bus stops during the day.

Bower’s tactics were over the top, and so unpopular that he quickly declared “Mission accomplished,” and retired his sledgehammer. But Bower’s frustration with his city’s homelessness problem is just an extreme example of the frustration that has led cities to pass measures that effectively deal with the homeless by criminalizing homelessness.

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- City council members in Columbia, South Carolina, concerned that the city was becoming a “magnet for homeless people,” passed an ordinance giving the homeless the option to either relocate or get arrested. The council later rescinded the ordinance, after backlash from police officers, city workers, and advocates.
- Last year, Tampa, Florida — which had the most homeless people for a mid-sized city — passed an ordinance allowing police officers to arrest anyone they saw sleeping in public, or “storing personal property in public.” The city followed up with a ban on panhandling downtown, and other locations around the city.
- Philadelphia took a somewhat different approach, with a law banning the feeding of homeless people on city parkland. Religious groups objected to the ban, and announced that they would not obey it.
- Raleigh, North Carolina took the step of asking religious groups to stop their longstanding practice of feeding the homeless in a downtown park on weekends. Religious leaders announced that they would risk arrest rather than stop.

This trend makes Utah’s accomplishment even more noteworthy. In eight years, Utah has quietly reduced homelessness by 78 percent, and is on track to end homelessness by 2015.

How did Utah accomplish this? Simple. Utah solved homelessness by giving people homes. In 2005, Utah figured out that the annual cost of E.R. visits and jail stays for homeless people

was about \$16,670 per person, compared to \$11,000 to provide each homeless person with an apartment and a social worker. So, the state began giving away apartments, with no strings attached. Each participant in Utah's Housing First program also gets a caseworker to help them become self-sufficient, but they keep the apartment even if they fail. The program has been so successful that other states are hoping to achieve similar results with programs modeled on Utah's.

It sounds like Utah borrowed a page from Homes Not Handcuffs, the 2009 report by The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty and The National Coalition for the Homeless. Using a 2004 survey and anecdotal evidence from activists, the report concluded that permanent housing for the homeless is cheaper than criminalization. Housing is not only more human, it's economical.

This happened in a Republican state! Republicans in Congress would probably have required the homeless to take a drug test before getting an apartment, denied apartments to homeless people with criminal records, and evicted those who failed to become self-sufficient after five years or so. But Utah's results show that even conservative states can solve problems like homelessness with decidedly progressive solutions.

This article was published at NationofChange at: <http://www.nationofchange.org/utah-ending-homelessness-giving-people-homes-1390056183>. All rights are reserved.

SAN JOSE (KPIX 5) – The city of San Jose is exploring a new strategy to help the homeless and fight prostitution at the same time, by giving away motel rooms to the homeless where prostitutes have set up shop.

Along North First Street and Monterey Highway, prostitutes work the streets out in the open, often using the strip's low-rent motels as their home base.

At the same time, a growing number of homeless people have also moved out into the open...onto downtown streets and parks.

San Jose City Councilmember Sam Liccardo thinks there's a way to address both problems at the same time.

"As we talk to the owners of those motels, we're hearing there's a lot of under-utilized space there. And there's an opportunity here," said Liccardo. "If we could displace some of the prostitution with an opportunity to house homeless that know we simply haven't had the resources to be able to house."

It would cost about a million dollars to house 60 people for a year. It's a new strategy that's just getting its first hearing at the city's economic development committee.

"It's actually more costly for someone to receive services from the city or from the county living out in the street," said committee Chair Rose Herrera. "Quite a bit more costly. Thousands and thousands of dollars."

The plan could be offered first to the recently homeless or people who stand the best chance of quickly getting back into their own housing.

"It's a good idea. I think it will help a lot of people get off the streets," said one homeless woman Christina Balga. "Give them self-confidence and be ego-boosting."

Another homeless woman, Valery Soto, agreed. "It would keep them from dying – and they could take showers and people would actually want to shake their hand."

But not everyone is buying into the idea. One man whose family has a restaurant near some of the motels is afraid it might drag the neighborhood down even more.

"If you basically have like a skid row, if you will – for a restaurant, that's like the worst thing that could happen to us and the neighborhood as well," said Anand Shah.

San Jose officials said only about half of the rooms at any one motel would be used under the program and motel owners would be free to decide whether to opt in or not.

The program would be run by a certified homeless agency. The issue was expected to come before the full city council later this spring.

KATU NEWS

By Stephen Mayer Published: Feb 23, 2014 at 8:04 PM PST

Man burned after using candles to heat home, officials say

Portland Fire and Rescue says it all began with a few seemingly harmless candles, lit by an elderly man and his wife who were trying to stay warm after their power was cutoff Friday.

Somehow the man's clothes caught on fire, his wife was able to put out the flames but not before he was badly burned.

"Candles make some heat but it's not a good idea in the house, we really discourage it," Lt. Damon Simmons said.

Simmons says the department runs into more candle-related fires than you might expect. They are about 3% of all calls and 7% of all burn injuries.

Candles can be good to have on hand for emergencies, but make sure they are placed in a proper holder. Also be sure to keep an eye on those candles, don't leave them in another room and put them out before heading to bed.

The man remains in critical condition, his wife wasn't hurt.

Portland General Electric says that because of privacy reasons they can't say how far behind the couple was on their payments.

However, PGE says that cutting off someone's power is the last resort and that they try to work with customers who are struggling.

If you are having trouble paying your bill there are programs available. PGE is legally obligated to cut off power after an account goes unpaid for too long.

<http://www.katu.com/news/local/Man-burned-after-using-candles-to-heat-home-officals-say-246803211.html>

HUMAN RIGHT TO HOUSING REPORT CARD

Student: United States of America

CATEGORY	2011	2012	2013
Security of Tenure			
Renters	<i>B-</i>	<i>C-</i>	<i>C</i>
Homeowners	<i>D+</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>
Access to Counsel	<i>D</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>D-</i>
Emergency & Dire Circumstances			
Criminalization of Homelessness	<i>F</i>	<i>D-</i>	<i>D</i>
Domestic Violence	<i>B-</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>A-</i>
Availability of Services, Materials & Infrastructure	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>
Affordability	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>F</i>
Accessibility	<i>C-</i>	<i>C-</i>	<i>C-</i>
Habitability	<i>C-</i>	<i>C-</i>	<i>D</i>
Location	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>
Cultural Adequacy	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>
Overall	<i>D+</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>D+</i>

COMMENTS

Some progress, but needs more work!

NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

Moore-Love, Karla

From: Joe Walsh [lonevet2008@gmail.com]

Sent: Sunday, January 05, 2014 6:17 PM

To: Moore-Love, Karla

Subject: Communications

Hi Karla,

Would you please put me on the Communications list at the first opening, my subject will be opportunity to end homelessness.

Thanks,

Joe

1/7/2014

Request of Joe Walsh to address Council regarding opportunity to end
homelessness (Communication)

FEB 26 2014

PLACED ON FILE

Filed FEB 21 2014

LaVonne Griffin-Valade
Auditor of the City of Portland

By *Susan Parsons*

**COMMISSIONERS VOTED
AS FOLLOWS:**

	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Novick		
Hales		