

Tourists who visit Hawaii love to talk about the warm weather and sublime beaches, but residents who live on the islands might tell a different story. Families find it hard to refer to Hawaii as a paradise when they can barely afford their rent or mortgage. The median price of a single family home on Oahu was \$760,000 in 2017 and is expected to rise to \$800,000 at the end of 2018. The other islands have a slightly lower median price, but they are still above the nation's average. High housing costs are also the root of other major problems such as homelessness and poverty as families earning \$58,000 are considered low income. As housing costs continue to rise above income levels, Hawaii may have to look towards smaller housing units to lower costs.

Homelessness is the ultimate result of Hawaii's high housing costs. Low income families will end up in poverty because of rent and eventually become homeless if they are not able to keep up with the price. In 2017, Hawaii had the highest per capita rate of homelessness in the nation. Hawaii's rate of homelessness will certainly go up before it will go down. If nothing is done to reduce the rate in 50 years, homelessness will impact the tourism industry. The homeless are forced to live on dirty streets with their belongings. Often enough, these areas lack sanitation facilities and accessible trash cans. The tourism industry brought in \$16 billion in 2017, but as the homeless move into more urban parts of the islands, tourists will stay away from the shops and businesses in those areas as the streets become more littered and stench. Police can be found moving the homeless from time to time but moving is not a real solution to the problem.

Lowering the housing costs seems like an easy task, but with the high demand for housing, it is difficult to provide enough affordable housing units to everyone. With the limited

amount of land on the islands, constructing more units would either mean building up or building smaller. Controversy surrounding the idea of massive skyscrapers in residential areas leaves one prominent option: smaller units. “Granny flats” is a term used to describe little cottages on other people’s properties. Instead of building them on people’s lawns, a large plot of land would suffice. These homes would have only the essentials with about 250 square feet per person. A fold up bed, mini kitchen, full functioning bathroom, and plenty of storage space hidden in the floors and walls would meet a person’s needs and wants. Using existing materials to make these homes would promote sustainability as well. Because Hawaii is an island chain, everything is shipped in large shipping containers. Two or three of these shipping containers could be stacked upon one another in order to create multiple mini-units. Using vertical integration, while not blocking out the sunlight for other people, would be the key to maximizing Hawaii’s land for affordable housing units.

The poverty level in Hawaii is unlikely to go down unless the community takes action. Many mainland states send their homeless to the island of Oahu and moving them elsewhere will not help with the issue. Building micro-units now would slowly ease low-income families out of poverty. Less homeless results in cleaner streets and public restrooms, and this would encourage other residents to use the parks where the former homeless had been living. More micro-units would also keep the homelessness population from spreading into popular tourist spots such as Waikiki. If the homelessness are kept out of this area, the tourism industry is likely to continue to grow at a soaring rate.

Clarence T.C. Ching was able to give back generously to his community partly because of the low-cost housing market at the time. He began to experiment with real estate in the late

1930s, and his housing development in Moanalua would eventually lead to the developments of Fort Shafter, Tripler, Red Hill, and the Moanalua and Salt Lake residential areas. While he contributed to many successful developments, his pride and joy would be Kukui Gardens, a low-income apartment complex. Mr. Ching dedicated his life to helping out Hawaii's communities, and Kukui Gardens enabled him to help a community that needed his help the most. Developing low-income micro-units follows Mr. Ching's vision because they provide a better life for those in poverty.

High housing costs put stress on many of Hawaii's families and individuals. Choosing to skip a meal or two because of high rent does not benefit the individual, and when a large group of individuals have decreased energy levels, the entire community feels the burden. When a worker is out sick for an extended period of time, other employees will have to start carrying the weight of their sick coworker. Hawaii is a smaller community than most, and combating the high housing costs by helping low-income people will inspire others to "dream big and make Hawaii a better place."