

FROM THE OFFICE OF

SENATOR STANLEY CHANG

East Honolulu Community Newsletter

July 2024



WAIKĪKĪ ELEMENTARY TO RECEIVE NEW PRESCHOOL PLAYGROUND

Located across from Kapiolani Park, Waikīkī Elementary serves the communities of Diamond Head, Kapahulu, and St. Louis Heights. The school is part of the DOE complex that also includes Kaimukī Middle School and Kalani High School. In addition to the Common Core curriculum, Waikīkī Elementary emphasizes a mindful and caring environment, with the goal of creating “active stewards of our earth and compassionate agents of change within our community.”

Recently, the Governor released \$150,000 in capital improvement funds to construct a new playground for special education students at Waikīkī Elementary. The preschool class of 6 students will soon be able to enjoy age-appropriate facilities. Senator Chang’s office followed up with Ryan Kusuda, principal of Waikīkī Elementary, to learn more.

Principal Kusuda emphasizes that, while the class has a playground available, it is far from ideal. “Currently, our special education preschoolers have to walk to the opposite side of the 5.7 acre campus to access a play structure designed for older children,” he says. The new structure will be designed for the current development stage of the class and will be located within easy reach of their classroom. Kusuda points to research indicating the importance of playgrounds for young children: “Playtime is crucial for preschoolers aged 3 to 5, fostering physical, cognitive, and social development. Specifically designed playground structures offer opportunities for climbing, balancing, and running, enhancing motor skills and coordination while promoting overall physical fitness.” This structure will also include space to build and strengthen social interactions. Principal Kusuda importantly notes that, “[the structure will] provide a space for social interaction and peer relationships, where children learn mindful skills such as empathy, caring and cooperation, laying the foundation for positive social interactions.”

Ensuring our keiki have a safe place to build self-confidence and strong peer bonds at an early age is a top priority for Senator Chang. These funds will undoubtedly produce positive effects for Waikīkī Elementary and the greater East Honolulu community.



The new playground structure will be similar to this existing one. The playground may also contain a trike path, should funds allow. Image Credit: Principal Ryan Kusuda

► CALL US

808-586-8420

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► HANDY CONTACTS

State Pothole Hotline
808-586-7852

City Pothole Hotline
808-768-7777

State Homelessness
gov.homelessness@hawaii.gov
808-586-0193

City Homelessness
complaints@honolulu.gov
808-768-4381

Abandoned Vehicles
808-733-2530

Building Permits
808-768-8000

Poison Control
800-222-1222

Trash Collection
808-768-3200

Street Light Repair
808-768-5300

Domestic Abuse
Hotline
800-799-7233

Public Assistance
Information Line
855-643-1643

MOVING FORWARD

NEW DIAMOND HEAD FACILITY EXPANDS HONOLULU'S HOMELESS SERVICES

The city's new Lē'ahi Behavioral and Medical Respite facility is officially opened, with the aim to help transition O'ahu homeless into permanent housing. During this process, comprehensive and psychiatric care will be provided.

The facility is located at 3650 Maunalei Avenue, near the slopes of Diamond Head. The facility has a capacity of 20 beds, with 17 currently occupied by adult clients—most are men ranging from mid twenties to late seventies and have no health insurance. Clients are usually brought in by the City's Crisis Outreach Response and Engagement (CORE) program workers.

Along with clinical and behavioral mental health services, clients also receive assistance in acquiring important documents like birth certificates, government-issued identification cards, and others that will aid in finding long term housing. In addition, certified substance abuse counselors from North Shore Mental Health, are available. Ian Santee, the Honolulu Emergency Services Deputy Director, said this facility serves, "To address homelessness in

the City and County of Honolulu, [and] we created a partnership and collaboration with all of these entities to support the funding, to support the resources and to get clients." The City is additionally working with various hospitals across the island to coordinate patient transport to this facility. A city-issued statement reads, "The city will cover the costs of care, medication, and doctor's visits until the individuals can be set up with their own health insurance."

The facility provides clients with a peaceful environment to recover at their own pace. Santee explains, "There isn't a time limit per se, but our goal is about 60 days.... We want to move them along as fast as we can, but we're not going to just kick them out." Currently, the facility is funded by a \$4.2 million state-level grant. The City is working to secure other means of funding to ensure this location can serve the East Honolulu area for many years. However, the City does intend for more locations around O'ahu. Mayor Rick Blangiardi elaborates, "I can't tell you how many sites, but we're going to do as much as we possibly can. Money is somewhat finite, but there's a bit of collaboration when the state comes in, because the state has access to the funds, federal funds as well as state funds." The City's homeless coordinator Sam Moku adds, "We will be coming to your community, somewhere, to build one of these [transitional] shelters, and I ask all of you to be supportive."

According to the annual Point in Time Count, as of January 23, 2024, O'ahu's homeless population was 4494. If there are concerns about homeless individuals or groups in your neighborhood that need help, you can email HonoluluCORE@honolulu.gov or call the C.O.R.E. hotline at **(808) 768-2673** to ask for assistance. This line is for non-emergencies only and calls will be returned as soon as possible.



Image Credit: Cindy Ellen Russell

FREE WATERCOLOR WORKSHOP AT AINA HAINA PUBLIC LIBRARY



Image Credit: Artsy

On Saturday July 27th (10am–12pm), a beginner watercolor workshop will be hosted for free to adults of all experience levels! Held at 'Āina Haina Public Library,

artist Paige Su will guide participants in creating their own watercolor painting of the beautiful local scenery. All supplies will be included, but comfortable clothing is recommended for this event as long periods of sitting are expected. This event is sponsored by Samaritan Counseling Center Hawaii and NAMI Hawai'i and is part of the "Creating Coping" free workshop series. The series works to explore how creativity can strengthen mental health and wellness. Tickets are limited, so register today: eventbrite.com/e/creative-coping-watercolor-tickets-905822037097. Find more information on upcoming National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) Hawai'i events here: namihawaii.org.

IN THE COMMUNITY

NEW COVID VARIANT IS CAUSE OF GROWING INFECTIONS



Image Credit: Henry Ford Health

Public health experts are informing residents of the new COVID variant, KP.2 (or FLiRT), which is causing a large spike in cases and predicted to last through the summer. According to Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, this variant makes up about 28% of infections as of now.

According to Dr. Scott Miscovich, President and CEO of Premier Medical Group Hawai'i, "If you're over 60, your vaccine starts to wane at about four months and then it will stay with you a little bit longer. But after a year, you're not getting a lot of protection from it." The latest COVID boosters—the updated Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna—came out last Fall. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is planning to request vaccine manufacturers to update COVID-19 shots, to which Miscovich says they are "mostly telling patients to wait for the new vaccine, since we're anticipating it will be coming out late August."

While it is predicted that this spike will begin to drop in August, "It's good that people take extra precautions right now and over the next couple of months—until we know more about what is going on," says Hilton Raethel, President and CEO of Healthcare Association of Hawai'i. Precautions practiced include social distancing of six feet from others, wearing a mask, washing hands regularly, and isolating if you feel sick or test positive. Though COVID-19 diagnostic tests are no longer covered by most private insurance companies, they are available at large pharmacies (such as CVS/Longs). Medicare still covers tests from participating providers and Medicaid covers costs through September.

It is recommended that everyone receive a COVID vaccine or booster, especially if you are part of a high risk group (including those who are over 60 years, have a chronic illness, or are immunocompromised due to medications). At CVS, the annual flu and most recent COVID-19 booster can be done for free under most insurance plans. Here is a list of pharmacies offering vaccines in the East Honolulu area:

Hawai'i Kai
CVS Pharmacy

377 Keahole Street
Honolulu, HI, 96825

Āina Haina
CVS Pharmacy
5156 Kalaniana'ole Highway
Honolulu, HI, 96821

Kahala-Waiālae
CVS Pharmacy
4211 Waiālae Avenue
Honolulu, HI, 96816

CVS Pharmacy
3221 Waiālae Avenue
Honolulu, HI, 96816

Times Pharmacy*
1173 21ST Avenue
Honolulu, HI 96816
**Due to limited inventory, call (808) 733-2031 to check availability*

Diamond Head / McCully-Mo'ili'ili / Mānoa
CVS Pharmacy
2155 Kalākāua Avenue, Suite 102
Honolulu, HI, 96815

CVS Pharmacy
2470 South King Street
Honolulu, HI, 96826

CVS Pharmacy
2750 Woodlawn Drive
Honolulu, HI, 96822

Safeway Pharmacy
888 Kapahulu Avenue
Honolulu, HI 96816

APPLY FOR UTILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS THIS SUMMER

- Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP): provides aid to manage water-related expenses. hcapweb.org/low-income-home-energy-assistance-program-liheap
- Catholic Charities Hawai'i Rental and Utility Relief Program (RURP): support for renters with community enrollment events. catholiccharitieshawaii.org/rental-utility-relief-program
- Aloha United Way 2-1-1: vital assistance and resources for individuals facing challenges in meeting their rental and utility payments. auw211.org
- Salvation Army: vital assistance and resources for individuals facing challenges in meeting their utility payments. hawaii.salvationarmy.org/hawaii_2/fso
- Hawai'i Energy Efficiency Tips and Rebate Programs: tips and strategies to reduce utility bills permanently and cash rebates for efficient home equipment. hawaiienergy.com/for-homes/tips-to-save-energy

YOUR CONCERNS

HECO'S POWER SHUTOFF AND WILDFIRE MITIGATION PLANS

Hawaiian Electric has launched its Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) Plan. Currently, the East Honolulu area is not affected by the PSPS plan. Please view the map above to see the areas expected to be impacted by the plan. However, many of our community members have shown interest in the plan.

As part of the PSPS plan, the company may shut off power in areas that experience frequent windstorms and droughts. These conditions may prove hazardous should energy lines be knocked over and ignite surrounding dry vegetation. According to HECO Senior Vice President Colton Ching, several criteria—such as 45 to 50 mph or higher wind speeds, low humidity levels, and drought conditions—will be considered when deciding on a shutoff. A power shutoff is not guaranteed, and HECO will decide on a case-by-case basis.

If a power shutoff is called, it will last from six hours up to three days. According to HECO Vice President Jim Kelly, this is due to needing to send out ground crews to confirm power lines are safe to re-energize. The utility will send alerts via email, phone calls, texts, and social media to notify residents of an upcoming shutoff.

For the East Honolulu area, as part of their Wildfire Mitigation Plan, the company is focusing on hardening their utilities in the area. Their plan is as follows:

1. Installed smart recloser on the Kahala 12kV circuit to cover a portion of the circuit that traverses up toward Halekoa Avenue.
2. Install smart recloser on the Ka'alakei 12kV circuit near Ahi Substation.
3. Install smart fuse on the Wailupe 12kV circuit to cover a portion of the circuit traverses through a less developed, dry vegetation area.
4. Install smart fuse on the Koko Head 12kV circuit in the back of Kamilo'iki Valley.
5. Review LiDAR data for the Ko'olau-Wailupe 1 and Ko'olau-Wailupe 2 46kV lines that traverse down from the mountains to various substations to identify any conductor clearance issues and implement necessary line configuration improvements.
6. Reconductor a portion of the Anuu 12kV circuit that traverses up from Kalaniana'ole Highway to Hanauma Bay Road.

HECO also maintains that they are managing vegetation that grows near their structures. According to their plan, “the type of vegetation in the Hawaii wildfire areas are primarily grasses, shrubs, and few trees, which rarely grow into conductors. Thus, it is not recommended that vegetation management plans be adjusted in the wildfire areas. Further trimming of the already low-lying vegetation will not likely produce any appreciable results in the potential wildfire areas.” However, the company is cleaning flora that overgrow, such as albizia trees. Recently, extensive such overgrowth choked transmission line corridors along the base of the Ko'olau Mountains. The utility cleared the trees out and is “developing action plans to clear this area to ensure reliable service to the area,” according to Vice President Kelly.

View the Public Safety Power Shutoff plan here: hawaiianelectric.com/safety-and-outages/wildfire-safety/public-safety-power-shutoff

View the Wildfire Mitigation plan here: hawaiianelectric.com/documents/about_us/our_vision_and_commitment/resilience/20230101_wildfire_mitigation_plan.pdf

If you have questions, contact HECO at (808) 548-7311.

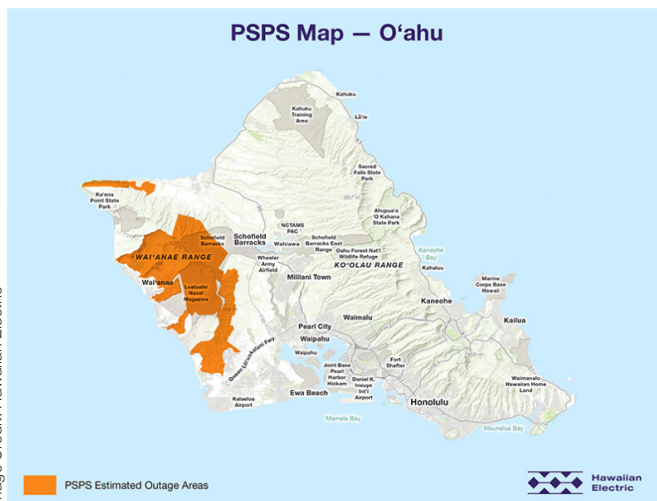
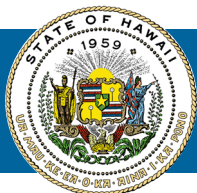


Image Credit: Hawaiian Electric



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