

FROM THE OFFICE OF

SENATOR STANLEY CHANG

East Honolulu Community Newsletter

August 2024



How We're Addressing Your Top Concerns

Earlier this summer, our office sent a postcard to all district residents with a survey soliciting the top issues facing our community. We received a wide array of responses, and top concerns include homelessness, public infrastructure and traffic issues, housing, the economy, and crime. This is an update on how we're tackling these issues.

Homelessness has consistently been the top issue in the district for many years. We have been alerted of unhoused individuals sleeping in park bathrooms adjacent to schools, living behind electric boxes by Hahaione Street and Hawai'i Kai Drive, and camping out at Diamond Head State Monument. When we receive these reports, we call the **Crisis Outreach Response and Engagement (CORE)** hotline, which responds to non-violent calls faster than the police by sending medical technicians and community health workers to assist and provide services. Call 808-768-2673 or email HonoluluCORE@honolulu.gov.

Public infrastructure and traffic issues continue to persist. We heard reports of persistent backups on Kalani'anaole Highway to Hind Drive and the continual need to clear the Wailupe Stream. The City is responsible for most of the basic infrastructure in our district, like keeping streams from overflowing, filling potholes, cleaning up bus stops, and fixing broken slides at park playgrounds. We work with City agencies and our district's City Councilmember, Tommy Waters, to address these maintenance issues. Meanwhile, our office has been alerting DOT about the traffic on frequently used highways and roads. We have also been sharing your suggestions regarding speed light installations and traffic calming devices with them.

Our office's top priority remains increasing Hawai'i's housing supply, which will be the single most important step toward reducing costs for local families. The **ALOHA Homes** initiative we've championed is now in *next page* ↻

Community Concerns in 2024

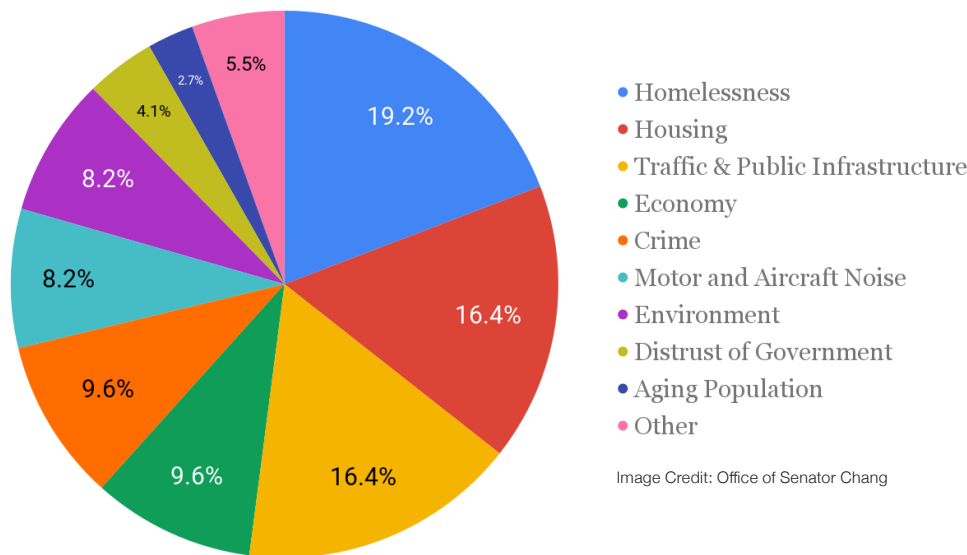


Image Credit: Office of Senator Chang

▶ **CALL US**

808-586-8420

▶ **EMAIL US**

Stanley Chang
 Senator, District 9 (D)
senchang@capitol.hawaii.gov

▶ **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

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development, with three different state agencies working on six different 99 year leasehold pilot projects across O'ahu. This Singapore-style revenue-neutral, income-blind housing can create the *tens of thousands* of homes Hawai'i needs to accommodate the future generations of our people at a lower cost than the private sector.

We are also working to make existing affordable housing finance programs more efficient. **HB1763**, passed this year and signed into law as **Act 235**, prohibits the **Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC)** from forgiving these loans, giving grants, and requires new projects be affordable *in perpetuity* rather than temporarily. We are working to require loans be repaid in five not 55 years and prioritize income-blind over income-segregated buildings.

Another major area of concern is the economy, specifically regarding inflation and cost of living. During the 2024 legislative session, we supported a number of bills to reduce the cost of living. **HB2404** is a landmark piece for our State, as it will provide significant income tax relief to Hawai'i's working families. The bill, now signed into law as **Act 46**, increases the standard deductions for taxpayers from the current \$4400 for joint filers to \$8800 next year and then continues in a series of steps until it reaches \$24,000 in 2031. The bill will *eliminate* State income taxes for the lowest-paid joint filers and support middle and high-income filers by adjusting brackets upward. Another important bill to bring down health care costs is **SB1035**, now **Act 47**, which exempts hospitals, infirmaries, medical clinics, health care facilities, pharmacies, and medical and dental providers from the General Excise Tax on goods and services that are reimbursed through Medicare, Medicaid or TRICARE. This will reduce the burden on our

healthcare providers and incentivize better service to kupuna and other eligible patients.

Excessive noise from cars and low flying air traffic continually disturbs our community. In response to these issues, we have been in contact with the **Honolulu Police Department**. HPD recommends calling the District 9 police station's non-emergency line at **808-723-3369** if you hear a vehicle whose noise is disturbing the community. Please report the vehicle's license plate number if you can. Complaints regarding low-flying air traffic noises are handled by the **State Department of Transportation's (DOT)** Airports Division's hotline at **888-697-7813**. If you have it, please share the following information: type of aircraft (military or civil), physical design (high or low wing and color), and registration number (the number will be preceded with a capital "N" on U.S. registered aircraft).

Finally, our office received several comments about crime in the district. Staffing issues at the Honolulu Police Department undoubtedly exacerbate this issue, and our office has and will continue to support efforts to bring HPD up to full capacity. **SB2494** would have provided police officers with retirement benefits similar to those offered to members of the State's retirement system, making the career more appealing. Another bill that our office champions includes **SB452**, which would have established a junior police pilot program at a local high school in coordination with the Honolulu Police, encouraging a new class of police recruits.

We stand ready to work with you on these and other issues affecting our district. As always, feel free to reach out to our office by emailing senchang@capitol.hawaii.gov or calling **808-586-8420**.

FREE BOROBORO WORKSHOP AT KAIMUKĪ PUBLIC LIBRARY

On August 4th, Kaimukī Public Library hosted a visible mending workshop. The workshop taught how to reduce fabric waste and revitalize a worn piece of clothing by introducing you to equipment, techniques, and resources. Guests brought their own clothing and fabric for mending and patching.

Fun fact: the name for this style of clothing is derived from the Japanese term "boroboro", meaning something tattered or repaired. Historically, this involved patchwork pieces of cotton, linen and hemp

materials, mostly hand-woven by peasant farmers. Pieces are stitched or re-woven together, making a stronger, warmer, practical material.



Image Credit: Japanese Craft Center

IN THE COMMUNITY

CULINARY INSTITUTE OF THE PACIFIC PHASE 2 UNDER CONSTRUCTION

It has been almost 20 years since the University of Hawai'i was awarded a 65-year lease for the former Cannon Club site to develop a facility for aspiring culinary professionals. The Culinary Institute of the Pacific (CIP)—on the slopes of Diamond Head—seeks to reimagine the culinary excellence of Hawai'i.

Phase one construction commenced in 2015, and phase two will be complete by next year. The CIP already includes two state-of-the-art culinary labs equipped with professional-grade amenities, including ovens and gas ranges. According to Chef Roy Yamaguchi, CIP's executive director, James Beard award-winner, and Culinary Institute of America (CIA) alum, the remaining construction will introduce an auditorium, Food for Thought creative center for producing packaged foods, and CIP signature restaurant. "These new facilities will provide advanced training and education, equipping culinary students with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in the culinary and hospitality industries," says Chef Yamaguchi.



CIP is collaborating with the prestigious CIA to provide a joint professional development program, with rigorous CIA-led training. Chef Yamaguchi remarks, "Our



Image Credit: Stanley Chiang

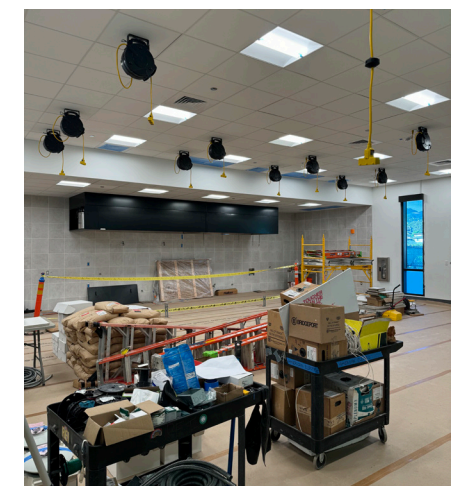
collaboration with the renowned Culinary Institute of America marks a pivotal moment in establishing a world-class culinary institute in Hawai'i and creating a workforce development program uniquely rooted in our cuisine and culture."

The joint workforce and professional development program includes two cohorts: **'Aina-based Mediterranean Cooking** and **Pacific Rim Plant Forward Cooking**. The program offers five-day culinary intensives focusing on Hawai'i-sourced ingredients, plant-forward cooking, and contemporary techniques. Participants will earn certificates from both CIA and CIP, including continuing education hours and a digital badge. CIA plans to offer a total of 24 cohorts of the CIA-supported curriculum over the course of three years. For the first two cohorts, the Hawai'i Tourism Authority is offering full scholarships for 32 industry professionals.

The new facility will also boost the State's culinary industry, which has seen a decline since the pandemic. Many restaurants currently deal with a shrinking labor force that has led to staff shortages and even

the shuttering of doors. These challenges underscore the need for initiatives like CIP, which will be, as Yamaguchi puts it, "nurturing local talent and providing pathways to professional growth to contribute to the excellence and sustainability of the culinary industry."

Between its state-of-the-art facilities, unique course offerings, upcoming full-fledged restaurant, and collaboration with the Culinary Institute of America, the Culinary Institute of the Pacific is poised to revolutionize Hawai'i's food industry and enhance culinary students and professionals' careers.



STAYING SAFE

SURVEY RESULTS SHOW MANY CITY RESIDENTS UNAWARE OF FLOODING RISK

The City and County of Honolulu's Office of Climate Change, Sustainability, and Resiliency conducted a Flood Risk Survey from February to March 2024. Funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Cooperating Technical Partnership Program, this survey aimed to gauge O'ahu residents' understanding of flood insurance, flood risk, and personal encounters with flooding. 1046 surveys were completed by a diverse cross-section of residents. Please note: this was before May 2024's heavy rains.

Repairs after a flood event can be very costly and time-consuming, but flood insurance can save significant amounts of money and time (restoration time can nearly double without insurance). Survey participants shared that the average repair cost was just over \$42,000. The repairs for renters cost more (\$75,000 on average) and even more time. Survey participants were asked how much damage they believed standing water would have on their property:

- 82% of participants believe repairs would cost over \$75,000 if 6 inches of water stood on their property for 1-2 days
- 61% of participants are not confident they could return to a liveable condition after repairs



Image Credit: Jamm Aquino / Honolulu Star-Advertiser

While participants recognize the substantial impact flooding has, only one in five residents have flood insurance. Residents do not have flood insurance for a plethora of reasons, including costs, low perceived flood risk, and a lack of insurance information.

FEMA uses Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMS) to determine how likely an area is to flood:

- **Special Flood Hazard Zones (A, AE, AEF, AO, V, and VE):** City-regulated areas that FEMA considers a special flood hazard risk

- **Flood Zone X:** areas not regulated by the City that FEMA considers a minimal flood hazard risk
- **Flood Zone D:** areas not regulated by the City that FEMA considers an undetermined amount of flood hazard risk

Participants were asked two questions about where the area they live in and its flood risk. Only a quarter of participants knew their area's flood zone. Participants also underestimated their risk of flooding, particularly those living in lower-risk zones.

Regardless of their flood zone, people throughout O'ahu have first-hand or second-hand flooding experience:

- 29% of participants in Special Flood Hazard Zones
- 39% of participants in Flood Zone X
- 21% of participants in Flood Zone D
- 69% of those impacted were uninsured
- **81%** of those uninsured after experiencing flooding now have flood insurance

Heavy rains were reported as the highest cause of flooding. It is crucial to know which causes of flooding are covered by insurance. For example, it is not covered when caused by plumbing issues, while coverage for hurricanes depends on the insurance policy. Other common causes include steam overflow and storm surging. Other methods exist to protect your property from flooding. Resources from the City and County of Honolulu are available at resilientoahu.org/get-flood-ready and honolulu.gov/swq/info-resources/residents.

Only one in five residents were aware that:

- Standard homeowners' and renters' insurance does not cover flood damage
- Hurricane insurance does not cover sitting water caused by storm surge
- Properties not mapped by FEMA still at risk

It is crucial to understand what your insurance covers. Generally, flood insurance damage is caused by natural sources such as heavy rain or overflowing bodies of water. Flood insurance does not cover damage caused by internal sources, damage from gradual seepage of water or moisture, or damage to exterior structures such as decks or patios. You can go to floodsmart.gov/whats-covered for more information about flood insurance coverage.

To read the City's full report on this survey, visit tinyurl.com/2024honoluluwatersummary

GETTING INVOLVED

Residents Can Report Illegal Short-term Rentals

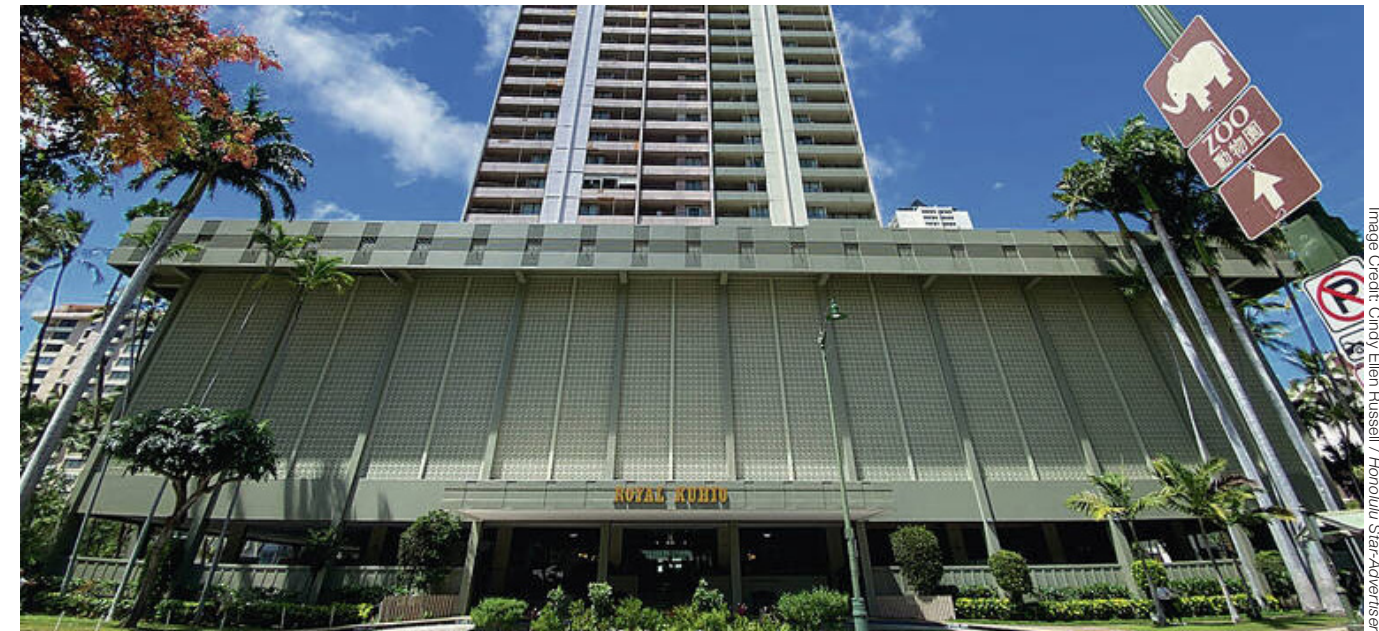


Image Credit: Cindy Ellen Russell / Honolulu Star-Advertiser

Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi is increasing the enforcement of Ordinance 22-7, introduced by the Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) in 2021. The ordinance increased minimum rental terms to 90 days (up from 30) in residential neighborhoods. In non-residential neighborhoods, short-term rental properties (with rental terms of less than 90 days) must be registered and are subject to additional restrictions and requirements, including a \$1K initial registration fee, and a \$500 annual renewal fee. Currently, there are 1148 registered STRs, in addition to 800 STRs under nonconforming use certificates. This number is expected to go up due to impending STR registration expirations.

According to Scott Humber, spokesperson for Blangiardi, the City has established a temporary rental branch to "focus solely on STR enforcement against illegal STRs that are not within the designated resort areas that were

mapped and determined under Ordinance 22-7." The branch will be utilizing the online platform *Granicus*, which provides STR registration functionality as well as online enforcement. The City also has added tools that residents can use to comply with the city's STR policies and aid in enforcement.

Humber adds that "community awareness of legal and illegal STR operations assists DPP in its enforcement."

City's STR landing site for forms, FAQs, and other STR-related information: honolulu.gov/dpp/permitting/short-term-rentals

A map where residents can verify if a property is legally registered as an STR: tinyurl.com/strcompliancemap.

Report illegal STRs at honolulu.gov/dpp/rfi.html?view=form.

STR regulations are overwhelmingly appreciated by local residents, as they make their neighborhoods less crowded. This support is crucial as DPP works to catch "illegal STR operators that find new ways to evade enforcement through electronic means, for instance, changing advertisements when DPP investigators are not at work or blocking DPP investigators from online advertisements." Humber adds that the new STR platform will help to combat this type of behavior.

For questions, please contact the Department of Permitting and Planning at 808-768-8000 or dpp@honolulu.gov.

YOUR CONCERNS

STAYING SAFE WHILE HIKING THE DIAMOND HEAD SUMMIT TRAIL

There are often unwell or injured hikers on the Diamond Head Summit Trail, prompting calls to Honolulu Fire Department (HFD) who generally sends up to 17 first responders. HFD personnel are also commonly called for the Koko Head Crater Stairs, Lulumahu Falls, and Lanikai Pillbox hikes. Once at the site, HFD conducts a medical examination, followed by an airlift to a nearby landing zone and transfer care to paramedics.

Despite being less difficult than other hikes, according to HFD, the Diamond Head Summit Trail takes the top spot for most hike-related rescues in 2022 and 2023. This phenomenon is driven by the high volume of daily hikers. Many are out-of-state visitors who might not be prepared, fit or adapted to Honolulu's hot and humid weather. The 0.8 mile hike, from trailhead to summit, includes a 560 feet elevation gain, a tunnel crossing and several sets of stairs. Curt Cottrell, who oversees state parks, says Diamond head is the "safest trail on Earth", and that "It's all about lack of conditioning of the patrons,

temperature, footwear, and water. It's not being prepared, fit or being able to handle heat." Hikers will often find that the route is not as easy as they thought, with risks like overheating, dehydration, or twisted/sprained ankles.

To address overcrowding on the trail the State has created a reservation system for non-residents who wish to hike the Diamond Head Summit Trail. Non-residents must pay a fee (\$5 for entry, and an additional \$10 for parking) to reserve a hiking time slot. The reservation system can be reached at gostateparks.hawaii.gov/diamondhead/about. As a result of this reservation system, the number of rescue calls from Diamond Head has been decreasing.

As for other solutions, Cottrell says State Parks has explored the possible use of a ranking system similar to ski slopes to help visitors determine difficulty levels of trails. This is complicated, though, as people have different standards for difficulty. Variables affecting difficulty include weather, pace and fitness level. "There is no universal performance metric you can impose on any single trail that would determine if it's advanced, intermediate or beginner," says Cottrell. Other options include preparing safety videos to be played at the trail visitor center or when making online reservations. Informative signs and access to a free water bottle refill station are already currently available.

Ralph Valentino, a member of The Hawaiian Trail and Mountain Corp. (HTMC), says "If you don't exercise, if you don't get out often, that's a lot of elevation in one afternoon. Your heart is not ready to push your weight, especially if you're overweight, to deal with that," in response to the high number of rescue calls from Diamond Head. "We should remind people they can turn around, stay on the same trail, get back down, and think about it for another day," he adds.

Some general safety tips include:

- Bringing enough water (HTMC recommends 2-3 liters for a day hike)
- Checking weather conditions
- Knowing your own limitations
- Having sufficient research and planning done beforehand (ex. knowing the length and elevation gain of the hike, how slippery the terrain is, etc.)

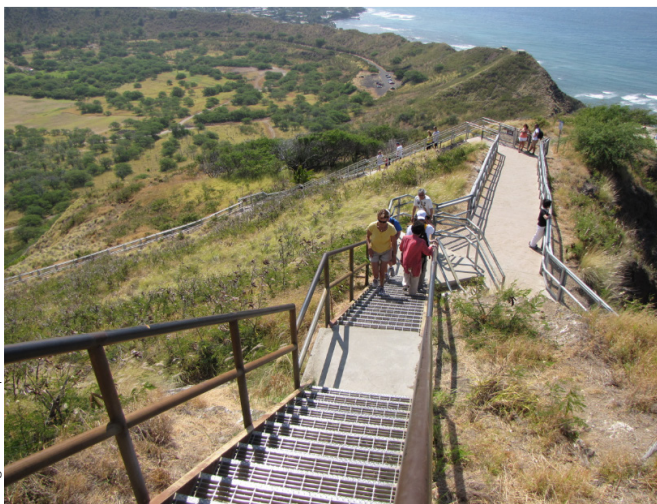
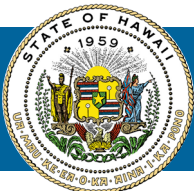


Image Credit: Department of Land and Natural Resources



FROM THE OFFICE OF
SENATOR STANLEY CHANG

Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 226
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813