

Honolulu Mayor 2020 Election Candidate Survey by The Outdoor Circle

Response ID:32 Data

1. Please list your name and contact information for your campaign

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Keith Amemiya, team@amemiyaformayor.com

2. Economic Sustainability/Livability & Quality of Life on our Island:

2. What is your vision for improving "Honolulu's livability?" How does city government facilitate, direct, stimulate and/or achieve this vision? How will you provide accountability and performance measures for achieving this vision?

As discussed below in my answers, in my Housing for All Plan and Recovery Plan for a Healthy Honolulu, I will advance Honolulu's livability by increasing access to affordable housing, supporting multimodal transportation and Transit Oriented Development, ensuring that development is done smartly to preserve our important lands, and protecting the unique nature of our neighborhoods. This can be achieved through clear, detailed plans and collaboration amongst stakeholders. I am committed to bringing people together to overcome the challenges ahead. I will utilize a newly created Office of Community Engagement to give the community direct access to my administration and provide them with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions. This process will ensure that all voices are heard and that our city operates as transparently as possible while being accountable to our residents.

3. The pandemic shutdown gives us an opportunity to look at carrying capacity of our natural resources, infrastructure and quality of life. In your vision of Honolulu's future diverse economy, what changes would you pursue in the percentage of the economy for hospitality; defense; agriculture; education; intellectual property development in technology, media and research; commercial and industrial entrepreneurship; etc. What do you anticipate the "new economy" to be? How will you prepare Honolulu to embrace, advance and lead the new economy?

Although we are all still trying to quantify what a diversified economy entails, my Recovery Plan for a Healthy Honolulu focuses on investing in Healthy People, a Healthy Economy, and a Healthy Environment. We cannot simply return to the status quo. As we begin to reopen tourism, our priority must be keeping our workers safe. To further a healthier model of tourism, I would support increased impact fees, targeting high end visitors that spend more per person, and advancing regenerative tourism to instill a shared commitment to protecting Hawai'i in our tourists. With these adjustments to tourism, our new economy must also support small, local businesses and expand green jobs. Before us is an opportunity to support local agriculture, renewable energy, and healthcare professions to create more resilient jobs and a more resilient economy. Retooling some of our unemployed residents through access to job training is a necessary part of this transition. The City's WorkHawaii program can be a leader in leveraging existing relationships with the UH System, apprenticeship programs, and career training programs to expand opportunities for career pathways, including potential on the job training funding to support employers as they invest in new talent.

4. What are your thoughts on the rail? Should it stop (or pause) at Middle Street? Aala Park? Ala Moana? UH Manoa? Go to "at grade" and be rerouted on King Street? How can we ensure that stations and the tracks are better blended with the environment, have better landscaping and increasing trees along the route than is proposed or currently exists?

Transportation that is accessible – geographically and economically – plays an important role in reducing overall cost of living for all of O'ahu's residents and is important for climate action. It is important that the City be able to fund and provide high quality public transportation. I believe O'ahu needs a multi-modal transportation system to make everyday life predictable and navigable for our local families while eliminating our dependence on fossil fuels. Complete streets, rail, and transit-oriented development are essential components of our island's transportation future. I believe it is important that the Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation (HART) ensure completion of the Ala Moana Center phase of rail; otherwise, the City may find itself having to repay hundreds of millions of dollars back to the federal government. I believe HART warrants strong oversight given all the cost overruns and mismanagement. This includes ensuring that station design and treatments along the rail

corridor provide for high quality urban design and community benefits such as trees and landscaping. Just as transit is a critical climate action measure, so too are urban trees and landscaping to mitigate increasing temperatures and enhance the experience for transit users.

5. Noise pollution from weed whackers and vehicles modified to emit extra noise is dangerous and degrades quality of life. Specific noise ordinances are left to individual police to enforce, which results in no uniform policy or action. What concrete steps would you take to implement and enforce a uniform noise code like other cities have via muffler regulation and noise monitoring, etc.?

I would work with partners at the City Council to introduce legislation to address noise on O'ahu and support such legislation once it comes across my desk as Mayor. I would support laws creating consistency in our noise regulations. Dozens of jurisdictions have phased out gas-powered lawn equipment, and I would be interested in working with the City Council to determine the best way to accomplish that here in Honolulu. Phasing them out over a period of years would have a minimal impact on consumers while increasing our public health. I would also work with local law enforcement to ensure that they have the tools to enforce both City and State laws regulating vehicle modifications and noise. In addition to these near-term noise mitigation measures, it is important to keep focused on the City's first ever Climate Action Plan currently in development through the Office of Climate Change, Sustainability, and Resiliency. Within that plan is continued action and need to eliminate our use of fossil fuels which ranges from vehicles to the mentioned small landscaping equipment. Cities and neighborhoods are not inherently noisy places; it's the machinery and fossil fuel-powered equipment that we use that make our living environments noisy - changing this not only takes climate action, but will also improve our mental and physical health, and enhance our quality of life.

6. Homelessness routinely ranks as a top concern of residents. Understanding this is a complex issue, what are your plans to move people from the streets into housing and receive appropriate assistance, and reclaiming public areas, beaches, parks, streets and sidewalks for their intended uses by the public at large?

We know that the life expectancy of someone that is homeless is decades less than the average resident. It is thus not safe for anyone to live or raise their children on the street. However, for many people, other options are out of reach or seem to have many barriers to overcome to get to. To keep public spaces public, we must truly invest in affordable housing and provide support services, for these together are a tried-and-tested means to significantly reduce and even end homelessness. As outlined in my Housing for All Plan, I will increase the availability of rentals specifically designed to be affordable for low-income singles and households, incorporate innovative solutions like we did with Kahauiki Village, and engage homeless communities to ensure that the projects in the immediate area meet their specific and unique needs. By increasing incentives and improving the permitting process we can achieve more affordable units for our local families. These affordable units, paired with mental health and substance abuse treatment programs, can help meet the diverse needs of our homeless community.

3. Green Space & Trees:

7. What is your commitment to enhancing the urban landscape? Specifically, how would you prioritize the proper planting, care and pruning of trees and stop the unnecessary cutting down of mature trees during public or private development projects? How would you include the public's on-going input in this process?

There are many things that affect the success and survival of trees in the urban landscape. For climate and community health we need to maintain and enhance the urban forest, that is, keep as much as we can of what we already have and provide resources and develop partnerships to plant and care for new trees. City trees are city infrastructure and we need to budget, plan, design, and construct with that in mind. Sometimes trees need to be removed due to their health or potential risk to people and property. We need to communicate this early and have the plans and strategies to overcome this attrition. This goes for both City external communications, as well as, internal communications. Mayor's Directive 20-14 addresses the needs for both. I would work with long-standing tree champions like The Outdoor Circle as well as newer advocacy organizations such as Trees for Honolulu's Future to develop expectations and protocols for communications on City projects that may affect existing trees. We need to evaluate City procedures and specifications in the urban environment to see what current design practices can be improved to better accommodate the planting and growth of urban trees. Trees require space

and much can be done to better accommodate trees, e.g., Complete Streets projects, stormwater projects, pervious hardscapes, and subsurface practices such as was used on Hikimoe Street.

8. The city's current urban canopy coverage is about 20%, well below other "livable" cities and even with stated goals to increase tree canopy to 35%, no real progress is being made. This makes walking outdoors for work, shopping, etc. difficult and decreases livability. Given that climate models predict a much hotter Honolulu, what efforts would you propose to increase our tree canopy at a time when it is still decreasing by 1% annually?

Current and complete urban canopy cover data is critical to help Honolulu measure it's goals. I would work with partners and departments to produce a full and updated Urban Tree Canopy Assessment and Change Analysis from the 2013 data. This data would then inform an urban forest management plan and where to prioritize investments first. This data in conjunction with the Citizen Forester data being generated in partnership with Smart Trees Pacific is critical for City tree asset management, as well as, engagement with private landowners to address trees and increasing temperatures across our communities. Additionally, I would continue the procedures detailed in Mayor's Directive 20-14 to improve internal City practices and communications with the public.

9. Do you support traffic speed reductions, "bulb outs," on-demand crosswalk signals, and other traffic calming to increase pedestrian and bike safety and create walkable and aging-friendly cities?

Streets are historically places for social interaction, community, and economic prosperity. Over time we allocated more and more of this public space to a single use - operating cars. I support the need to fully execute upon the vision and intent of the City's Complete Streets and Age-Friendly City policies and current efforts towards Vision Zero. And I'd be remiss if I didn't stress that the Complete Street ordinance also states that trees are integral components of complete streets.

10. Would you support the creation of a "Tree Czar" to ensure that the city departments work together to protect trees, oversee the increase of canopy shade tree planting and generally answer to the public on matters advocating for protecting trees and increased tree canopy coverage?

Mayor Caldwell recently issued Directive 20-14, City and County of Honolulu Actions to Address Increasing Temperatures and the Urban Canopy. This Directive reminds of and stresses the need to coordinate and collaborate across departments to ensure we are meeting our various City tree policies and goals. This continues the good work of the past several years along with strong community partners like The Outdoor Circle to elevate the importance of trees in our communities, not as nice to haves, but as critical infrastructure for climate action and adaptation, and so that we continue to have beautiful neighborhoods to call home. I would carry this Directive forward and consult with staff that have been executing the order and ensure any new department directors are aware of the critical procedures detailed in the order. Additionally, I would work with the Department of Parks and Recreation Division of Urban Forestry to propose a consolidated tree ordinance and updated urban forest management plan to ensure we're intentional and measured about the work of maintaining and enhancing the community forest. This internal work needs to be supported by external partners for the planting and early tree care on both public and private properties, and in sharing in the message and communication about the importance of trees in our communities.

4. Tax Concerns:

11. Would you support a "green tax" to improve our green infrastructure, purchase open space, and better our parks as other cities have done?

Right now is a difficult time to discuss and consider new taxes and/or fees. COVID-19 recovery is paramount for the next administration. We need to also ensure that environmental and cultural regeneration are part of this progress. This will require deep investigations into how and where we allocate funds. Through state enabling legislation the City's Department of Facility Maintenance has been investigating the establishment of a stormwater utility fee to directly address the impacts of impervious surfaces and ensure a stable funding source for enhanced green infrastructure practices, e.g., green stormwater infrastructure, reducing paved surfaces, planting more trees, and creating a green infrastructure and open space master plan. Multiple rounds of direct community engagement work was completed and a stakeholder advisory group was facilitated. The ultimate proposal of a bill to establish a fund and create a fee structure was put on hold due to COVID-19 economic impacts; this is something I would like to pick back up at the appropriate time. Additionally, during this pause in the work, the study

should be revised to include a strong equity plan for our kūpuna, low-income families, and nonprofits.

12. Only Hawaii has a GET, which greatly burdens businesses but leaves end users with the impression that they pay less than 5%, while actually paying about 19%? Would you support elimination of the GET for essential goods like food and medicine? Would you support shifting to a sales tax to make the tax more transparent?

I am open to evaluating ways to make our tax system less regressive. Often, proposals to eliminate GET include replacement revenue through user fees, which tend to have an even more regressive impact. A low, broad tax rate does allow for the government to fund necessary programs while having as minimal of an impact as possible on local families. State funding must also cover our public school system, which is typically a municipal responsibility in other jurisdictions. This is part of the reason Hawai'i has the lowest property tax rate in the country. Maintaining a GET and property tax rate that is manageable for our local businesses and families is a priority.

5. City Infrastructure Maintenance & Other Government Services:

13. Where do you stand on the Neighborhood Board system (some people want to dismantle it)?

I support continuing the Neighborhood Board system, as it is an important part of our city government. Every meeting is attended by representatives from all levels of government – City, State, and federal – and representatives from various departments and agencies. Neighborhood Boards provide a direct link between community and government, giving residents a place to go within their community for direct access to information and answers to questions. This is particularly important for more rural communities, kūpuna, those with special needs, and others who may have barriers to directly accessing the various levels of government in other settings. The Neighborhood Boards also provide a forum for giving residents notice of upcoming projects; temperature checking the community's perceptions, wants, and needs; and gathering other necessary input. Like with any system, I am open to recommendations for how to improve it to increase the goals of community engagement and access.

14. How will you improve maintenance of city parks, sidewalks, bike paths and beaches?

These important public amenities and resources cannot solely be managed and maintained by the government. We need to provide opportunities for the community to lead when they can and want to, supported by City agencies, budgets, and agreements. Just as The Outdoor Circle has a long tradition of community and park improvements, this island has long traditions of laulima and kākou, and the City should facilitate such leadership, while also providing guidance, resources, and/or materials to assist in maintenance partnerships.

15. How would you foster timely, open, transparent, and on-going communication with the public regarding issues relevant to their community? Too often the public learns about an issue too late to act. Would you require each department to have a public liaison/ ombudsman to ensure that citizen concerns are being met and addressed at each department?

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the criticality and challenges of dispensing information and retrieving input and feedback from the community. Outreach and inreach are needed to develop trust through fostered relationships. The community contributions to the O'ahu Resilience Strategy started to answer this in some respects in Action 44, which may provide some good foundation for an idea of either an Office of Community Liaison/Engagement or dedicated staff to serve such a role. While some in the community may be OK with getting information at a Neighborhood Board meeting a month after asking a question, others may desire more direct communication channels. Although press releases go out, interviews happen, and social media amplifies messages, having administration staff out in the council districts and/or at Satellite City Halls to serve as liaison for that area could be a step to better relationships. That is part of the goal with my proposed Office of Community Engagement. This could also better establish expectations of what's possible in terms of communication. Departments and Offices receive lots of communication and inquiries from the public, council, and even the administration. Staff cannot always respond immediately because there is also the need to be diligent about conducting the work of the City. There are certainly opportunities to improve upon the two-way street of government and community conversation and I look forward to co-creating these ideas with community leaders.

16. How would you work to ensure that Honolulu works to implement the best and brightest ideas for governance and

livability from other cities around the world?

We need to continue to be active participants in national and global discussions. Leaders and agencies participating in networks or initiatives keep us open to ideas, to listen and then contextualize what could work here grounded in aloha 'āina values and practices. We have had some recent successes from pursuing competitive external awards, i.e., Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities Initiative and Bloomberg Philanthropies American Climate Cities Challenge and What Works Cities Program, and we should continue to support City agencies and staff to endeavor to bring these resources to bear for government and community. Lastly, the more we do the work of trying to tell our story and share with others around the world, the better practiced we are at looking hard at our strengths and opportunities and leading by example.

6. Sign Laws/Visual Pollution:

17. The Outdoor Circle has worked for over a century to keep Hawaii visual-pollution free with no off-site ads and strict controls on signage, something that is unique that keeps our state beautiful and protected from visual clutter. Will you oppose all commercial advertising & sign clutter on all public property, parks, and equipment (including TheBus) to respect the century-old tradition of banning off-site advertising throughout our beautiful state?

I support and applaud The Outdoor Circle's efforts, and I would oppose commercial advertising and sign clutter on all public property, including the outside of city buses. I appreciate the advocacy of The Outdoor Circle and their efforts to get billboards removed from Honolulu. Our community deserves decluttered city streets and the ability to enjoy our island's natural beauty, such as Diamond Head, so I support efforts to reduce clutter and visual blight.

18. Will you support regulation of unrelated commercial advertising (for example a tour bus advertising for an unrelated attraction) on vehicles, whether permanently parked or mobile?

I support regulating the advertising of unrelated commercial activities. I would not want to see our island turn into one of the many cities on the mainland peppered with advertising in all forms.

19. Will you place controls on the sign clutter and visual blight caused by unregulated food trucks operating on commercial property in many parts of the island?

I support food trucks being subject to the same unrelated commercial activities restrictions as other advertising. It is important that our streets remain free from clutter and blight.

20. What steps will you take to reduce light pollution, as well as the visual blight from overhead utility lines?

I would fully enforce the current laws on the books related to shielding of new outdoor lamp light fixtures. I would also be open to assessing whether portions of Hawai'i and Maui Counties outdoor lighting ordinances may be replicated on O'ahu to strike a balance between regulations and outdoor lighting at private residences. I also support underground utility lines to avoid blight.

7. Tourism:

21. How can we be smart about tourism, when it returns, to prevent overtaxing of our infrastructure (traffic, parking at scenic spots, beaches, etc.), and destruction to our natural resources with fewer visitors, but higher daily per capita spend?

Hospitality is central to our economy, but we must also promote smart tourism. Ten million visitors a year are too many, burdening the health of our workers, our infrastructure, our environment, and our way of life. Our targeting should be towards high end visitors that will spend more per person, and incorporating regenerative tourism will bring in visitors with similar values that will leave with a shared commitment to protecting Hawai'i, her people, and her natural resources. As Mayor I would also support legislation adding or increasing impact fees to better manage and protect those natural resources. As we reopen components of tourism, we must also ensure that it is done safely to avoid an overtaxing of our health infrastructure. This means committing to clearly outlined workplace safety protocols and having sufficient testing and contact tracing capacity as a part of the reopening process.

22. There is serious opposition to short term vacation rentals in many neighborhoods for a number of reasons. Should these types of rentals be permanently banned outside of tourist zoning areas?

I support Bill 89, now ROH Section 19-18, and the regulation of short term vacation rentals. Since enacted, we have seen an increase in units on the rental market, and this increased supply has resulted in more affordable housing for our local families. In addition, vacation rentals disrupt the nature of and quality of life in our neighborhoods; they are thus more appropriately situated in resort-zoned areas. I support strict enforcement of the law, and I would not tolerate illegal operations as Mayor.

8. Climate Change

23. Climate change is a global issue but with local impacts. While Honolulu has an office dealing with climate change, what is your view on the urgent needed to change direction, if any, to minimize or accommodate predicted climate change impacts on Honolulu? What would be your highest priorities to be achieved in your first term on climate change?

The physical and social infrastructure we put in place as we recover from the COVID-19 crisis will be an important blueprint for how we address impacts from climate change, how we deal with many challenges, and how we work together as a community.

A new Mayor will walk into their office with the City's first-ever Climate Action Plan with near-term actions awaiting to be executed and with our first-ever Climate Adaptation Strategy in development. Climate resilience is one of my top five campaign priorities and it is imperative upon leadership to validate the peoples' voice as it is their work that created each of these important resources: Office of Climate Change, Sustainability, and Resiliency; O'ahu Resilience Strategy; and Climate Action Plan and Climate Adaptation Strategy. Further, the plan and strategy informs community development plans and the next hazard mitigation plan. As we await the finalization of the Climate Action Plan, we already know that we must meet the State's Clean Energy Initiative and carbon neutrality laws, and must do it sooner than 2045. I will work with the departments to more quickly transform our bus fleet to electric, implement efficiency and power generation projects at City facilities, as well as streamline permitting for residential and commercial solar.

24. What position do you have on the proposed Ala Wai Watershed Army Corp Plan which has faced serious community opposition? Would you support signing the PPP agreement as it is?

Discussions on the need to provide flood risk reduction through the watershed having been ongoing for more than 20 years. The current potential for funding and project materialization need to continue. The flood mitigation measures as originally proposed have undergone extensive reevaluation from engineering, performance, and community perspectives. From the Army Corps' continued investigations and support provided by our federal delegation; to the administration's strong opinions about particular project features and stepping into a leadership role as the State stepped back from the project; to the City Council permitted interaction group community engagement and discussions with the Army Corps; and most importantly the strong community voice and direct involvement in the continued project improvements, this project highlights the challenges and opportunities ahead in developing community and government relations towards addressing climate resilience.

9. Development:

25. How would you make enforcement effective against "monster homes" in our neighborhoods?

While there is always room for improvement, the extensive nature of Honolulu's monster home ordinance suggests that the central issue stems from enforcement. This was confirmed by the audit of the Department of Permitting and Planning (DPP). As Mayor, I can help remedy this by directing DPP to enforce the law, ensure that there are adequate inspectors, stop the approval of expired plans that should be resubmitted, and require that systems be implemented to properly track and inventory the number of large detached dwellings on O'ahu. Some of the demand for these homes comes from the lacks of affordable housing options for many households as well as the historically minimal enforcement of illegal vacation rentals. Addressing both in my Housing For All Plan will help to address the root issues and focus on the kinds of development that communities embrace for their communities versus those that may disrupt neighborhoods.

26. Development has been proposed that would violate existing zoning and/or land use laws. Will you agree to protect view corridors and scenic view planes as they currently exist, especially on city-controlled land?

I will not support development that violates or contradicts existing zoning or land use laws, for developers must be held to the same standards as all other residents. Protecting view corridors and scenic view planes is essential to preserving our island's beauty and our community's way of life. I would support smart development that follows the law and contemplates and preserves views, especially on City-controlled land.

27. Where do you stand on land-use rezoning, in particular the rezoning and repurposing of preservation land and the repurposing of residential lands for non-single-family home use. How do you feel about individual communities across Oahu being allowed to decide what should be built in their own communities? Will you agree to protect green space in all lands designated as "Preservation," "Conservation" or "Prime Agricultural."

Simply put, I support protecting preservation, conservation, and prime agricultural lands; ensuring that the community's voice is a central component of any planned project; and adhering to our sustainable community plans. I plan on creating an Office of Community Engagement to drastically improve the mechanisms for collecting public input and to ensure that all voices are heard. COVID-19 has revealed that our residents are compassionate people, and I know all of us want to see truly affordable housing for our local families most in need. That is why we need development that incorporates particular communities' knowledge and sense of place to ensure that projects both meet our housing needs and are done smartly, in congruence with the systems that already exist.

I would be hesitant to accept and would heavily scrutinize any plans to rezone preservation or other significant lands. By focusing development in the urban core and along the rail line through Transit Oriented Development, we can preserve land on other parts of O'ahu. This will also promote healthier and greener lifestyles by giving local families access to multimodal transportation.

28. What other comments or thoughts would you like to leave for our community?

Since I started my mayoral campaign ten months ago, I've talked with thousands of residents and they're worried about their quality of life and the future of our islands. They shared with me stories about the impossible choices they have to make: spending time with their family or working multiple jobs, taking care of their health or working to get healthcare benefits, and paying for housing or paying for good food. The past generations of political leaders have failed our people. COVID made it all the more clear that the leadership of the past did not work then and certainly won't work in today's world. We need more than just talk and legislation. We need action. Honolulu needs leadership that will bring people together to finally get things done for our community, especially during this time of crisis.

10. Thank You!

New Send Email for Mayoral Survey

Jul 15, 2020 15:19:16 Success: Email Sent to: winston@outdoorcircle.org

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