

Honolulu Mayor 2020 Election Candidate Survey by The Outdoor Circle

Response ID:51 Data

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

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Rick Blangiardi, rickblangiardiformayor.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?

To me, the concept of "Honolulu's livability" is associated with our residents' quality of life. It's hard to think of quality of life on Oahu without considering A UW's ALICE Report (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). Honolulu's ALICE population struggles to earn enough to provide the basic necessities for their families and are often forced to make tough decisions between expenses like rent/mortgage, child care, health care, food, utilities and transportation, etc. My vision for improving Honolulu's livability focuses on the most needy among us, with a prioritization of affordable housing/workforce housing, functional transit systems serving communities across Oahu, the development of transit-oriented communities with live, work, play options, accessible multi-modal transportation systems (pedestrian, bike, shared-use resources, transit, etc.), complete streets and outdoor public spaces, upgraded infrastructure, climate change/sea-level rise solutions creating a sustainable Hawaii, the creation of better paying jobs that stimulate Oahu's economy and a lower cost of living in Hawaii. I chose my campaign slogan, "It's About You," because I wanted to show respect for our diverse island communities and cultures, respect for our city's general plan and respect for all the time and hard work that went into developing Oahu's eight sustainable community plans...it's about letting our communities and neighborhoods define their unique character and preserve the things they hold dear. City government has both a direct and indirect role in improving Honolulu's livability and I am committed to using my 40+ years experience in the private sector, my leadership skills, my respect for others, my vision and my commitment to hard work to deliver results for all the people on Oahu.

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?

The COVID-19 pandemic not only presents enormous health and economic challenges, but it also presents enormous opportunities to reassess, reflect, think outside the box and chart a new and better path forward. The decision on how to do this is not mine alone as Mayor, but rather, the collective will of our residents, our businesses, our communities, our government, the markets and the capacity and sustainability of our natural and finite resources. As Mayor, I will bring together the diverse stakeholders including, but not limited to, industry groups, businesses, universities, non-profits, professionals, unions, community representatives, government leaders and others to help conceptualize and identify opportunities and priorities for a new economy on Oahu. It will require intense planning and forethought and we can certainly learn lessons from past diversification efforts on Oahu. Informed by the past, inspired by the future, we must start the process now so that we can leave a better legacy for our future generations on Oahu.

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?

Rail is being built to improve mobility in Oahu's heavily-trafficked east-west corridor...a laudable goal for an equitable intermodal mass transit system on Oahu - a system designed to connect people, people and places and improve quality of lives. The project, though, is in significant distress, and as a Mayoral candidate, I presently don't have access to the internal

documentation, including project and financial records, needed for the kind of honest and frank dialogue about rail I would prefer. Most critically, we don't know what the true cost of rail will be, especially for the last 4.2 miles through the heart of Honolulu.

If it's going to cost significantly more than HART and the City are currently saying – and frankly I think it probably will – then let's get the real numbers on the table, and figure out what to do about it. I want this rail project to be functional and beneficial for the people and communities on Oahu, but I can tell you this: there are no easy answers or quick fixes.

As your Mayor, I commit to gather and assess all the hard facts about rail, then move forward with full transparency. I am not interested in pointing fingers, but I firmly believe everyone must be accountable.

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.?

Noise pollution is a real problem impacting the quality of lives on Oahu. As Mayor, my administration can, subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the City and County of Honolulu, draft and introduce legislation by request through the Council or we can work with concerned and supportive Council members to get legislation drafted and introduced within council. In either case, the present system of disparate enforcement is unacceptable and the City must find a way to regulate unwanted noise emissions that are not preempted by other laws or protected by our state and federal constitutions. In drafting the legislation designed to become law, we must stay focused on reasonable, realistic and clear standards capable of objective enforcement. Finally, our law enforcement officers must be provided the tools they need to identify and measure the noise level. Using best practices from other cities and municipalities can help inform and guide us in the drafting and enforcement of our law.

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?

Homelessness will be a top priority in my administration. While Hawaii's per-capita homeless population is one of the highest in the nation, we can take meaningful steps to solve our homeless epidemic if we make a long-term concerted commitment to strategies and solutions that address the many reasons our people are on the streets. There is no one solution to Honolulu's homeless epidemic and many of the current policies such as "compassionate disruption," only move the problem in circles to other neighborhoods and parks and then back again. It is not a permanent solution.

The homelessness initiative I propose is to bring all the disparate stakeholders addressing homelessness on Oahu together (Federal, State, City and County of Honolulu, non-government organizations, etc.) to agree upon a concerted multi-pronged approach to a multifactorial problem. Right now, individual stakeholders largely operate in well-intentioned silos, believing in good faith that they have the solution(s) to homelessness. Unfortunately, the causes of homelessness are many and we can only achieve a county or state-wide solution by bringing all the stakeholders together to understand their singular role in the collective solution. For example, Honolulu's Housing First program works for a specific segment of the homeless population. But it does not necessarily work for others, including the service-resistant homeless population on the streets, those who suffer from mental illness, drug addiction and/or psychotic behaviors and resist structured programs. Even standard strategies combining social services with incarceration are rarely successful with chronic service-resistant individuals, especially those with substance addiction issues and severe mental issues. This population needs other intervention programs which are currently being piloted on Oahu, such as Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD).

In closing, we simply must resist thinking there are one, two or even three solutions to homelessness. It's just not that simple and I am convinced that if we bring all the disparate stakeholders together to take a step back, break down the walls, regroup and study the bigger picture, we can collectively craft solutions that will solve Honolulu's homelessness epidemic. It will take a collaborative leader with a big vision and, as Honolulu's Mayor, I am willing to step forward and work with others to get it done.

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?

When Honolulu was accepted into the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities program, one of the focus areas or domains was "outdoor spaces" with a prioritization on the continued enhancement of Honolulu's urban landscape with trees for the many benefits they confer: shade/cooling temperatures, stormwater mitigation, erosion control, improving air quality, wind speed reduction, visual appeal, etc. On Oahu, we are fortunate to have many non-profit and community based organizations actively planting, caring for and maintaining new trees including, but not limited to, Trees for Honolulu's Future, Ho'olā'au Community Tree Planting Project and the Hawaiian Legacy Reforestation Initiative, all of which I enthusiastically support. I also support and will continue to honor the City's goal of 35% urban tree canopy by 2035 and 100,000 planted trees by 2025. Bottomline, the City and County of Honolulu has a vested interest in creating a sustainable future that combats climate change, preserves and expands our urban canopy and improves the quality of lives for our residents on Oahu. I appreciate all that Outdoor Circle does to advocate for and protect trees in our public spaces, in parks and along our streets and right-of-ways. My commitment to greening Honolulu is unwavering.

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?

I believe there is wide support for the expansion of Honolulu's urban canopy coverage, but the City lacks focus, structure and metrics that would provide greater transparency and encourage accountability. Organizations like Smart Trees Pacific and their Urban Tree Canopy Assessment program and urban tree canopy change analysis have documented the significant loss of urban canopy on Oahu over time. It's time for the city to step up, actively manage Oahu's urban tree canopy coverage and find the necessary funds representing our City's commitment to both the functional and aesthetic value of trees and expanded tree canopy coverage.

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?

Absolutely. The Honolulu Complete Streets Ordinance (Ord.12-15) was passed by City Council and signed into law in 2012, establishing Honolulu's complete streets policies to: (1) Improve safety; (2) Apply a context sensitive solution process that integrates community context and the surrounding environment, including land use; (3) Protect and promote accessibility and mobility for all; (4) Balance the needs and comfort of all modes and users; (5) Encourage consistent use of national industry best practice guidelines to select complete streets design elements; (6) Improve energy efficiency in travel and mitigate vehicle emissions by providing non-motorized transportation options; (7) Encourage opportunities for physical activity and recognize the health benefits of an active lifestyle; (8) Recognize complete streets as a long-term investment that can save money over time;

(9) Build partnerships with stakeholders and organizations statewide; and (10) Incorporate trees and landscaping as integral components of complete streets. In 2015, Honolulu was accepted in WHO's Age-Friendly Cities program, affirming Complete Streets policies in Honolulu, and in 2016, Honolulu finalized its Complete Streets Design Manual. Complete Streets principles are now firmly established in the City and County of Honolulu and I will continue to work with City Departments and the public on identifying future Complete Streets projects across Oahu.

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?

Honolulu Mayor's Directive No. 20-14, July 1, 2020, established policies and instituted practices aimed at improving management of City and County of Honolulu trees in accordance with the Honolulu's Urban Tree Plan (March 2019) and Action 33 of the O'ahu Resilience Strategy (May 2019). Applicable to all executive branch City departments and agencies,

Directive No. 20-14 requires every City department and agency "consider the climate change mitigation and environmental benefits of a healthy urban tree canopy when making decisions that affect the City's trees" and "requires the protection of existing trees that pose no threat to human health or safety or undermine an essential government function, and the planting of more trees to expand our urban canopy." Given Directive No. 20-14 and the breadth of its plan and strategy, I think the designation of a "Tree Czar" might well assist the City in oversight of Directive No. 20-14 and increase tree canopy coverage on Oahu. As such, I would be interested in meeting with Outdoor Circle and other stakeholders on the best functional location of such a "Tree Czar" in the City.

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?

Considering the significant negative economic impacts associated with COVID-19, I am reluctant to consider any type of "tax" or "fee" upon the public at this time, even more so without first being fully informed as to the associated financial impact and/or functional benefit of any such proposed tax or fee. However, if Outdoor Circle has information it would like to share regarding a proposed "green tax" and examples of positive results in other cities with such a tax, my administration would always welcome the opportunity to review such materials for discussion and consideration in the future.

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?

With every crisis comes opportunities and I believe the current COVID-19 economic crisis will present opportunities to discuss our City and County and/or State tax policies and laws. While I understand concerns with the regressive nature of Hawaii's GET tax and its impact on necessities like food and medicine, I believe discussions regarding our City and County and/or State tax policies and laws require a fuller discussion than GET alone. Transparency, openness and community engagement at all tax classifications would be essential.

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 community level civic engagement and believe the calls to dismantle our Neighborhood Board system are misplaced. I do believe, however, that the City should study and look at how to improve the Neighborhood Board system, especially in light of COVID-19. While televising our Neighborhood Board meetings provides remote access, we should consider new technologies that allow actual participation through web-based applications. As Mayor, my administration is open to any and all ideas on how to improve government, civic engagement and community participation.

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

As cities transition away from car-centric cultures and develop more transit-oriented communities with open spaces, parks and intermodal infrastructure, including improved sidewalks, bike paths, bike lanes and transit facilities, it is incumbent on the City to adjust its priorities accordingly and maintain this critical infrastructure. All of the listed infrastructure is consistent with Honolulu Complete Streets policies and guidelines.

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?

As Mayor, my administration will prioritize efficient and effective communications with the public. For example, right now, in an economically distressed COVID-19 environment, I believe the City has significant opportunities to improve its communication with the public regarding available CARES Act financial resources and programs. In some cases, improved community outreach may involve the establishment of HUBS or community-based offices/programs that increase accessibility to all

individuals in a community. In other cases, having a dedicated public liaison asset in each department may help facilitate timely responsiveness to citizen concerns. As a general premise, I question the efficiency of a centralized office of community engagement as this adds but yet another layer of non-subject matter specific personnel to the resolution process. My preference would be to have dedicated subject matter experts in each department working through their department liaisons to address community concerns. However, I am open to any and all suggestions otherwise and welcome suggestions from the Outdoor Circle.

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?

There are countless opportunities to learn from best practices in other jurisdictions, cities and places around the world. As Mayor, I will prioritize the appointment of departmental and agency directors who are open-minded, visionary and proactive thinkers. For example, the World Health Organization Age-Friendly Cities network was envisioned as an opportunity for cities around the globe to share best practices on creating activated livable communities from keiki to kupuna. I believe we must continue to look for other opportunities to network outside Hawaii while respecting our local culture and values.

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?

Yes and I appreciate Outdoor Circle's continued activity in this regard.

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?

Yes, to the extent this is not an area preempted by State laws and regulations or in violation of constitutional protections. I would like to learn more about The Outdoor Circle's concerns in this area.

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?

Yes, I am concerned with visual blight and its impact on Hawaii's natural beauty. I would like to learn more about The Outdoor Circle's concerns in this area.

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

My understanding is current federal, state and county laws regulate the shielding of certain outdoor lamp fixtures, especially as it relates to certain protected species, such as the Hawaiian Shearwater. I support the reduction of unnecessary light emissions. As for undergrounding of utilities, while I support such initiatives from an aesthetic, improved functionality and maintenance perspective, I understand there are significant increased costs associated with the undergrounding of utilities, the most recent example in Honolulu being the Dillingham corridor and rail-related utility relocations.

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?

The current COVID-19 economic crisis presents unique opportunities for the tourism sector to advance their preference for the quality tourism model versus quantity tourism model, respecting the sustainable capacity of Oahu's natural resources through responsible management. Tourism has been the economic engine on Oahu and in Hawaii for many years, accounting for approximately 216,000 jobs, nearly \$17.8 billion in visitor spending and more than \$2 billion in taxes in 2019. Given those

figures, it is impossible to imagine our economy fully recovering without tourism. As such, my preference would be for the City, State and communities to work with the tourism sector on partnerships and collaborative solutions that protect our island's natural resources while facilitating the industry's successful transition to the quality tourism model. It means the City will need to do its part to keep our infrastructure and neighborhoods safe, clean and well-maintained. I am convinced we can turn this real challenge into a win-win for the tourism sector, our natural resources and our communities.

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?

Short-term rentals (STRs) have been regulated in Honolulu since 1989. In 2019, Ordinance 19-18 (Bill 89) was passed to balance the benefits of STRs for both operators/hosts and guests with a commitment to respect the character of residential neighborhoods across Oahu. Ordinance 19-18:

Permits a limited number of new Bed and Breakfasts (B&B) in non-resort areas under a new registration process subject to annual renewal requirements;

Prohibits Transient Vacation Units, or "unhosted" rentals, in non-resort areas, unless the dwelling has a Nonconforming Use Certificate (NUC);

Regulates hosting platforms, such as Expedia or Airbnb, with monthly reports filed with the Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) and shared with City Council; and

Makes illegal any form of STRs advertising which is not in compliance with zoning regulations as provided in Ordinance 19-18.

As Mayor, I will see that the law is enforced and I will make sure DPP has the tools and resources to accomplish their work.

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?

I am honored to be a member of Oahu's Resilience Strategy Steering Committee, working with the City's Resilience Office on a Resilience Strategy ("Ola") informed by the community at large. The strategy lays out 4 pillars, 12 goals and 44 actions for our community, partners and the City to implement. I invite members of The Outdoor Circle to review the City's Resilience Strategy at <https://resilientoahu.org/resilience-strategy>. During my first term, my priority on climate change, even in a COVID-19 economy, will be to complete the City's Infrastructure Project Review process, incorporating resilience elements into City infrastructure projects and, equally important, develop longer term City Capital and Financial Plans for more comprehensive project planning and programming over Oahu's projected climate change horizon.

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?

My understanding is the Army Corps of Engineers is currently in the redesign stage to incorporate and reflect community concerns. After a thorough review of the modified plans, including community engagement, I look forward to moving this project forward in a responsible way consistent with community concerns and Army Corps flood mitigation priorities. If acceptable to the City, State and our communities, I will sign the PPP agreement in the modified form.

9. Development:

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

In January 2020, the city auditor issued its Audit of the Department of Planning and Permitting's Processes for Reviewing Building Permit Applications, Resolution 18-284, CD1, FD1 to "[d]etermine if the city is effectively administering the required

residential and commercial permits," including an examination of city staffing levels, barriers that contribute to prolonged or delayed permit issuance, management effectiveness and a comparison of the city building permit process with other jurisdictions. The city auditor's office also offered recommendations on how the Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) can be improved.

As Mayor, the city auditor's report is a roadmap that I can and will use with the right team, including a Director of DPP dedicated to recruiting and working with competent, experienced and knowledgeable professionals in DPP, to transform our current system from the inside out. Personally, I believe it would be counter-productive to paint DPP, given its size and the enormity of assigned functions, as a problem that can only be remedied from the outside. Instead, using my coaching and leadership skills, I will assemble a team that will identify and find the change agents in DPP to work swiftly, understanding workings and limitations of the current system, to rethink and transform the city's building permit system. Using best practices from other jurisdictions, I am confident we can make the necessary changes in short order while instilling pride in our DPP civil service workforce that they were part of the solution(s). I know that as Mayor, I will make this happen.

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?

My campaign slogan, "It's About You," reflects my respect for policies, laws and regulations adopted through community processes. I will support enforcement of existing zoning and/or land use laws, most 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."

The City sustainable communities plan process is intensive and community-based. I respect the process and I will respect the policy guidance of Council when it adopts the plans. Communities, through the sustainable community plan process, guide public policy, investment, and decision-making for their communities through 15 to 20 year planning horizon. With respect to protecting lands designated preservation, conservation and prime agricultural, the communities also indicate their preferences in their community sustainable plans, which are periodically revised. As Mayor, I will give heavy weight and respect to community preferences in any action brought before the City to rezone said lands out of their then classification.

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

First, I'm not sure many in the community know that I come from a working class family (my father worked as a machinist at Pearl Harbor) and my values reflect my upbringing - work hard, always be fair and accountable and do your homework (be prepared). As Mayor, I want to solve quality of life issues in our communities, like affordable housing and workforce housing, transit systems that serve transit-oriented communities, upgrades to our city infrastructure, climate change and sea level rise solutions that create a sustainable Hawaii, all programs that will stimulate our economy, create good paying jobs and enhance the quality of life for all our residents. These are my priorities.

Second, and I say this respectfully, experience and leadership matters and I bring 40+ years of successfully leading numerous businesses through challenging times. I am not in this to build a political career, I am in this to make a positive difference. COVID-19 and its impacts are the greatest threat to Honolulu and the greatest priority for everyone. We must focus on public health and safety, reopening, recovery and revitalization. This is going to take months, and even years, and will require focused, decisive and experienced leadership from your next Mayor. I know I am the best candidate for the job and I humbly ask for your support.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions.

Sincerely,

Rick Blangiardi

New Send Email for Mayoral Survey

Sep 04, 2020 04:51:44 Success: Email Sent to: winston@outdoorcircle.org

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