

MAYOR'S Highlights



AUGUST 2023

Rick Blangiardi



This Month's Highlights

- Embracing a Safer Waikiki
- Skyline's First Month in Operation
- New Leadership at Key City Departments
- Dedicated Pickleball Courts Open at Ke'ehi Lagoon
- Rental and Utility Relief Outreach

Protecting Our Paradise

The people who live in or visit Waikiki are privileged to experience life in one of Hawaii's most iconic and captivating places. It is the rare location where a picture-perfect landscape is rivaled in beauty only by the spirit of those lucky enough to call it home.

Over the years, we have all benefited from Waikiki's dynamic growth and the incredible experiences it offers. But as we take pride in this thriving neighborhood, we also shoulder the responsibility of ensuring that every resident and visitor can enjoy this paradise in safety and security — and a number of efforts are underway on that front.

Earlier this summer, the City and County of Honolulu entered into an agreement with Matt Levi Security to provide a specialized security team to enhance our public safety efforts along Kūhio Beach. The highly-trained group, composed primarily of current and former law enforcement officers, is there during evening hours to respond to unlawful activity, including threats against residents and visitors.

Given the Honolulu Police Department's staffing shortages and the myriad of existing HPD overtime requests, it has been difficult to sustainably get officers to commit to overtime shifts, and the administration doesn't want to strain the police department's resources by taking officers from one district to improve safety in another. Given these difficult circumstances, we are augmenting HPD's capabilities with Matt Levi's specialized security team.

These additional efforts, combined with the continued success of the Safe and Sound program, are creating a friendlier, safer and more secure Waikiki.

The Waikiki Business Improvement District Association recently hired a new executive coordinator — paid for by a grant provided by the City and County of Honolulu and The Kosasa Foundation — to champion Safe and Sound Waikiki. Katie Kaahanui will work directly with the Honolulu Police Department, the Prosecuting Attorney's office and local social service providers to find new solutions for habitual crime offenders and people struggling with addiction and mental illness.

"The Waikiki Business Improvement District Association has seen a dramatic reduction in crime throughout the area, especially at night," said Trevor Abarzua, the organization's President & Executive Director. "There is always more work to be done, but the Safe and Sound initiative has been a clear success that we all benefit from."

According to the Prosecuting Attorney's office, the City's crime reduction efforts are making a difference. More than 900 cases from within the Safe and Sound boundary have been charged, and more than 175 alleged criminals have been given geographic restrictions to keep them out of Waikiki. These are often repeat offenders who diminish the quality of life for others in the community.

“

We're going to be aggressive and do what we have to do to protect the residents and visitors who love Waikiki from crime," said Mayor Rick Blangiardi. "If I am going to be criticized for something, I want it to be for the lengths that I am willing to go to make sure people feel safe in their communities.

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And in the first half of this year, compared with the first half of 2022, the Honolulu Police Department reported fewer assaults, burglaries, robberies, drug offenses and cases of criminal property damage.

In recent times, we have encountered certain challenges that warrant our immediate attention and collective efforts, and given what Waikīkī means to all of us, we're rising to meet those challenges. Together, we can build a safer, stronger Waikīkī that is a testament to the aloha spirit that defines our island home.

Message from the Mayor

At its core, this job is about solving problems. Problems might vary in difficulty, and they might vary in urgency, but all of us, in all of our communities, have our own issues to tackle.

More than a year ago, Father Lane Akiona, the pastor at St. Augustine Church in Waikīkī, requested a meeting with me to talk about some of the issues at the church. Despite providing a valuable community service by feeding the less fortunate, the church was plagued with troublemakers. Innocent people reported being threatened. Trash from the free meals was being discarded on area streets, on sidewalks, and across private property. The bushes were being treated as bathrooms.

After more meetings and further discussion, I decided to ask Father Akiona to look for a better way to deliver meals to those who needed them most, and pointed to River of Life Mission as an example. River of Life had recently begun delivering meals to homeless individuals across the island, rather than distributing them in one place — and as a result, they had reported being able to serve more people in need than they did in Chinatown.

I want to be clear: I never asked Father Akiona to stop helping people in our communities. I had considered our conversations productive and our team's actions supportive — not antagonistic. For us, it has always been about public safety. We did not, and never will, oppose efforts to help the homeless, and I have said repeatedly that being homeless is not a crime — but it is clear that the time, place and manner in which the meal service was previously conducted is no longer the best possible way to serve the Waikīkī community.

— Mayor Rick Blangiardi

Powerhouse Picks: Mayor Announces Key Hires

Last month, Mayor Blangiardi announced several key additions to the City's cabinet leadership team, appointing two individuals with track records of success to oversee departments that are vital to the quality of life for O'ahu's residents and visitors.



Gene Albano

Director Designate, Department of Facility Maintenance

An accomplished electrical engineer and savvy businessman, Moanalua High School graduate Gene Albano has been named the new director designate and chief engineer of the Department of Facility Maintenance (DFM). In leaving the private sector to join the City, Albano brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this critical position,

having most recently been employed as Senior Vice President of WSP USA.

Albano is no stranger to significant City projects across O'ahu, having previously worked on Kaka'ako Infrastructure Redevelopment, the Honolulu Fire Department's South St. headquarters, DFM's Hālawā Base Yard, and the Department of Transportation Services' TheBus facility in Pearl City.

Albano will now lead the dedicated team of City employees who are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance programs of City roads, bridges, traffic signs, streetlights, streams and public buildings. The department also handles the upkeep of the City's fire, police and ambulance stations across the island.

Dita Holifield

Director Designate, Department of Enterprise Services



A talented leader and innovative media executive with a proven record of success in sales, marketing and events management, Dita Holifield joins the City and County of Honolulu as the director designate of the Department of Enterprise Services (DES). Country music lovers in Hawai'i may already be familiar with Dita, who spent the past nine years as general manager of the local radio stations owned and operated by Salem Media Group in addition to her duties as a radio DJ on Country 97.5 Honolulu.

Since 1997, she has also managed her own successful live events business and is the owner of The All-American Rodeo, the state's largest rodeo show.

Her career in entertainment has primed her for success with the Department of Enterprise Services, which oversees operations at a wide range of City recreational facilities, including the Neal S. Blaisdell Center, the Tom Moffatt Waikīkī Shell, the Honolulu Zoo, and six municipal golf courses.



Riding High!

Now that students are headed back to school (and more cars are headed back onto the road), you have more reason than ever to try Skyline! Ride to the Hālawā – Aloha Stadium Station, then hop on an express bus through Downtown Honolulu and all the way to U.H. Manoa — you'll be happy you did!



170,185

FIRST MONTH'S RAIL RIDERSHIP



The Kūpuna Council (Wai'anae) July 14, 2023

During their latest meeting at Pokai Bay, Mayor Blangiardi joined members of the Wai'anae Moku Kūpuna Council to talk about funding for homeless programs, maintenance at City parks and the possibility of conducting job fairs at schools along the Wai'anae Coast.



Kailua Independence Day Parade (Kailua) July 4, 2023

For the first time since the coronavirus pandemic began, the Kailua Independence Day Parade made its much-anticipated and exciting return down Kainalu Drive! Mayor Blangiardi and Governor Josh Green took to the streets on a beautiful day in Windward O'ahu!



Filipino Chamber of Commerce Ceremony (Waikīkī) July 18, 2023

Mayor Blangiardi attended the Filipino Chamber of Commerce of Hawai'i's annual installation banquet, joining hundreds of people gathered at the Hilton Hawaiian Village to celebrate the rich heritage of the Filipino community and exciting prospects for Filipino-owned businesses!



Boy Scouts Troop 777 Meeting (Honolulu) July 14, 2023

A long-time supporter of the Boy Scouts of America, the mayor stopped by Central Union Church of Honolulu to speak to members of Troop 777 Honolulu about leadership and helping others. "Troop 777 was honored to have Mayor Blangiardi speak to our Scouts and families about the importance of being good citizens in our community," they wrote on Facebook.

Hālawā View II Groundbreaking (Hālawā) July 18, 2023

On July 18, 2023, a groundbreaking ceremony was held for Hālawā View II, a 302-unit affordable housing project just half a mile from Skyline's Hālawā Station. It was an important step forward for transit-oriented development!

Bill 28 Signing Ceremony (Chinatown) July 18, 2023

Having been approved by the City Council earlier in the month, Mayor Blangiardi headed to Chinatown with Councilmember Tyler Dos Santos-Tam and other community leaders to sign Bill 28 into law. The measure ensures that bars and restaurants that serve alcohol will have a supply of the life-saving drug overdose medication Naloxone on hand, in case of an emergency.



Updates on Affordable Housing in Honolulu

In a groundbreaking move to combat the escalating affordable housing crisis in Hawai'i, Governor Josh Green signed an emergency proclamation on July 17, aimed at addressing the pressing issue of housing affordability. With housing costs soaring and the dream of homeownership becoming increasingly out of reach for many local residents, Mayor Blangiardi supports the intent of the proclamation.

Now, a collaborative effort by the state and all four counties will seek to streamline the regulatory processes for the development of 50,000 housing units over the next five years. Under the emergency proclamation, we will work with the state's Build Beyond Barriers Working Group to fast track affordable housing projects and speed up the construction of new housing units.

The 22-person working group includes representatives from the City, including the mayor's office and the Department of Planning and Permitting.

At Honolulu Hale, Mayor Blangiardi is also bolstering the City's affordable housing capabilities by bringing on two experts on development and land management.

Kevin Auger joins the City after leaving his post as redevelopment officer at the Hawai'i Public Housing Authority (HPHA), where since 2017 he has directed all phases of public and affordable housing activities for HPHA's 82-property multi-family portfolio, including procurement and selection of development partners. Kevin will serve the City as deputy director of the Mayor's Office of Housing.

And at the Department of Land Management, which handles all of the City's real estate transactions, Keith Suzuka joins as deputy director. Suzuka is a skilled attorney with more than 30 years of experience in business law as well as



residential and commercial real estate, both in the U.S. and Japan. Prior to joining the Department of Land Management, Suzuka was a partner with McCorriston Miller Mukai MacKinnon LLP.

The latest appointments come as part of the mayor's commitment to finding comprehensive solutions to the housing crisis and fostering sustainable growth in the city.



Ke'ehi Pickleball Complex Opens

Play ball! A blessing and grand opening ceremony marked the completion of the City's first dedicated pickleball complex, at Ke'ehi Lagoon Beach Park. The cluster of a dozen courts features dedicated pickleball lines, nets, and will include additional wind screens and fencing. Pickleball continues to be the fastest growing sport in the country, with our parks department working hard to accommodate the growing number of local pickleball players while continuing to engage other sports participants. These courts were created from repurposed tennis courts, giving them new life while creating modified facilities quickly and cheaply. We plan on adding about 55 more dedicated pickleball courts around the island through this repurposing effort. To learn more about the new courts and this initiative, visit honolulu.gov/parks today!

Keeping Our Neighbors Safely Housed

As housing costs increase, some of our neighbors are struggling more than ever to pay their rent and utility bills. Many are kūpuna, families with limited English proficiency, or households that can't afford the home internet service needed to apply for support programs.

Keeping these community members safely housed is a priority for our team, as well as our outstanding partners.

To reach these households, the Office of Economic Revitalization, Catholic Charities Hawai'i, the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement and members of the Honolulu City Council held eight community events for the Rental and Utility Relief Program (RURP) this summer.

More than 600 O'ahu families applied for short-term rent and utility help at the in-person events, as well as for help with home internet bills through the federal Affordable Connectivity Program.

These events are part of RURP's temporary reopening this summer, funded with \$25 million in State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds from the Honolulu City Council. RURP has helped more than 18,000 O'ahu families stay safely housed during and after the pandemic.

Report An Issue

Have an issue in your community? Report anything, from potholes to graffiti, using the City's 311 program — available now via mobile app or <http://www.honoluluhi.citysourced.com>



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