

October 11, 2010

Mr. Gregory Hee  
City and County of Honolulu  
Department of Design and Construction

**RE: Kalakaua Sidewalks Conceptual Streetscape Design**

Mr. Hee,

Thank you for the presentation before the Waikiki Neighborhood Board at our September 2010 meeting and the follow up presentation at the Waikiki Improvement Association office. The Neighborhood Board and community at large understand that the project is currently about to commence, the City has already defined its scope and design, and that your presentation before the Board was for informational purposes only.

With that in mind, we would like to offer some suggestions predicated on the impassioned testimony at the meeting by the Waikiki street performers, concerns raised by Board members, and the fact that the meeting was the first time that most of the Board members as well as the public had heard of the Kalakaua improvement plans.

- Where possible, use hardy, drought-tolerant native species especially within the shrubbery 'islands' between the roadway and the pedestrian sidewalks. Ideally, limit mechanical irrigation to the establishment period of the plantings only.
- Revisit the need to remove apparently healthy palm and other trees, currently 'free standing' in the sidewalk areas and instead create plant grouping islands around them instead.
- One of the rationales provided for removing some trees was to provide greater visibility to shops and restaurant signs on second floors. However, many of the 'after' visual simulations shown during the presentation contradict this goal and instead are shown to further block signage visibility via trees and plantings. Ensure that the project's goals and outcomes are not contradictory.
- Waikiki sidewalks are increasingly congested. Many of the improvement will result in a reduction of sidewalk width. Ensure that the improvements not only don't reduce sidewalk width, but instead widen the walk where feasible.
- Current 2-3 foot high walls between the roadway and sidewalks are interspersed along the length of Kalakaua Avenue. These walls are used and enjoyed for resting, people-watching, street performances, snacking and street vending. These, along with rock walls for sitting in various locations, are an integral feature of the Kalakaua Avenue strolling experience. The current plans show these removed and no replacement of street furniture for sitting, proposed. This is a mistake and needs to be reviewed. Sitting benches (with arm-rest bars to discourage sleeping), walls with seating areas incorporated, and other forms of street furniture need to be installed generously along

the length of Kalakaua Avenue. As you heard at the Board meeting, our community feels strongly about this issue.

- Of greatest concern is the perception that the City is using these improvements as a way to drive street performers out of the area and/or make it difficult for them to operate along the street. Whether as a passive result of the improvements or by design, the City needs to ensure that the street performers and the visitor interaction with them, is not compromised but instead enhanced. Many on the Board feel strongly that street performers enhance the visitor experience, provide a unique street life to Waikiki and are an enjoyable addition to our neighborhood. However, the best way to facilitate their activities in an organized manner is to provide them with formal dedicated areas along the Avenue. Like Pike's Marketplace in Seattle and certain areas of San Francisco and other cities, these dedicated areas should be coupled with a licensing system for regulation and assignment of specific street performers to certain areas at assigned times. While this latter regulatory procedure may be outside your current scope of work, allocating these performance areas in your current plans would be appropriate in anticipation of a future street performer system.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review the plans and improvements along Kalakaua Avenue. The Board and community trust that you will take these concerns into consideration as you move forward with the project.

Sincerely,

Jeff Merz, AICP, LEED AP  
Vice Chair – Subdistrict Three  
Waikiki Neighborhood Board