

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND PERMITTING  
**CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**  
650 SOUTH KING STREET, 7<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
PHONE: (808) 768-8000 • FAX: (808) 768-6041  
DEPT. WEB SITE: [www.honolulu.gov](http://www.honolulu.gov) • CITY WEB SITE: [www.honolulu.gov](http://www.honolulu.gov)

RICK BLANGIARDI  
MAYOR



DEAN UCHIDA  
DIRECTOR

DAWN TAKEUCHI APUNA  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EUGENE H. TAKAHASHI  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

September 17, 2021

The Honorable Andria Tupola, Chair  
and Members  
Committee on Executive Matters and Legal Affairs  
Honolulu City Council  
530 South King Street, Room 202  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Tupola and Councilmembers:

SUBJECT: Resolution No. 21-156 Charter Amendment Relating to the Planning Commission

Resolution No. 21-156 proposes to initiate a Charter Amendment to the Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu 1973 (2017 Edition), membership on the Planning Commission. The proposed Charter Amendment would require the Planning Commission to have at least one member with substantial experience or expertise in one of the following categories of disciplines, that each of the categories must be represented by a different member, and all of the categories must be represented on the commission:

- a) Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices, native Hawaiian law, or traditional Hawaiian land usage;
- b) Land use planning, policies, and principles;
- c) Land development and construction; and
- d) Climate change and sea level rise causes, effects, and solutions; or environmental protection and preservation.

The proposed charter amendment would require that four of the nine commissioners have one of the required disciplines.

The Revised Charter of Honolulu, Section 6-1506 defines the Powers, Duties and Functions of the Planning Commission as:

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"The planning commission shall:

- a) Advise the mayor, council and the director of planning and permitting on matters concerning the planning programs.
- b) Hold public hearings and make recommendations on all proposals to adopt or amend the general plan, development plans, and zoning ordinances. The commission shall complete its review and transmit its recommendations through the mayor to the council for consideration and action in a timely manner.
- c) Perform such other related duties as may be necessary to fulfill its responsibilities under this charter or as may be assigned by the mayor or the council."

The Planning Commission is a voluntary commission comprised of citizens with a wide variety of experience. Given their backgrounds, the Commissioners approach matters before them with an open mind and consider a wide range of testimony and opinions in rendering their decision. Finding people willing to serve on the various Boards and Commissions has always been a challenge even with no qualification required. Restricting the majority of the Commission to the four disciplines listed in the report will further shrink the pool of potential candidates and frustrate our ability to seek or maintain a quorum to conduct the business of the commission.

Finally, we find no recent decision by the Planning Commission that failed to address any of the five fields of discipline cited in the Report. We understand the desire to have certain experience or expertise on the Planning Commission. However, rather than requiring specific experience for individual commissioners, we would recommend that commissioners should have experience in one or more of the four disciplines listed in the Resolution.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at 768-8000.

Very truly yours,



Dean Uchida  
Director

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APPROVED:



Michael D. Formby  
Managing Director