



DOWNTOWN-CHINATOWN NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD NO. 13

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'24OCT07 PM 3:09 CITY CLERK

October 7, 2024

Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813-3065

Subject: Opposition to Bill 50 (2024) due to proposed island-wide impacts to community events

Aloha City Council Members,

As Chair of the Downtown-Chinatown Neighborhood Board, I am writing in opposition of Bill 50 (2024) in its current form due to the proposed rules, requirements, and restrictions placed on community events island-wide (including events held in Downtown-Chinatown).

Our neighborhood has faced numerous challenges (most recently, prolonged power outages that has put yet another strain on our small business community) and has been working with the Mayor's office on efforts for revitalization of the area.

Our board believes that community events are a key element to our revitalization. Events that have been the most successful have brought tens of thousands of individuals into our neighborhood, providing crucial foot traffic and economic resources for our small businesses.

However, key events/street festivals have not occurred over the past year. And organizers of Hallowbaloo have recently reported that the event for 2024 will not be taking place for a second straight year due, in part, to DTS permitting challenges involving the use of a mandatory liquor-controlled area (a.k.a. beer garden), which was not required in the past for safe and successful events in our neighborhood (a key arts, entertainment, and nightlife district in Honolulu).

In May 2024, our board unanimously adopted a resolution urging city officials to support community events. In October 2024, we unanimously adopted a motion to NOT support Bill 50 (2024) due to proposed restrictions that would discourage events in Downtown-Chinatown.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ernest Carvalho", is located below the "Aloha," text.

Ernest Carvalho
Chair, Downtown-Chinatown Neighborhood Board No. 13

Appendix 1: Downtown-Chinatown Neighborhood Board No. 13 Resolution 2024-003

**DEPT. COM. 722
CCL**

Downtown-Chinatown Neighborhood Board No. 13
Resolution 2024-003

URGING CITY/STATE OFFICIALS TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE ECONOMY-
BOOSTING AND UPLIFTING COMMUNITY EVENTS IN DOWNTOWN-CHINATOWN

WHEREAS, the Downtown-Chinatown Neighborhood Board No. 13 (“NB 13”) operates under the Neighborhood Plan (“NP”) of the City & County of Honolulu (the “City” or “Honolulu”) to represent the residents in its area (“Downtown-Chinatown”); and

WHEREAS, the duties and functions of NB 13 under NP §2-13-102 include taking actions that reflect the needs, wants, and interests of the neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, Downtown-Chinatown is a mixed-use, transit-oriented neighborhood that is regarded as an important economic engine of Honolulu fueled in large part by the entrepreneurial ventures/efforts of multiple small business restaurants, cafes, bars, nightclubs, theaters, galleries, markets, and retail shops; and

WHEREAS, like many downtown urban centers across the United States, Downtown-Chinatown has been challenged by waning activity due, in part, to recent business downsizing and/or transitioning to work-from-home schedules; closures of large retail anchor tenants in the neighborhood; and negative public perception of an ongoing proliferation of homelessness and crime; and

WHEREAS, Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi’s office (the “Office of the Mayor”) has publicly expressed views on the importance of Downtown-Chinatown to Honolulu and a commitment to plans/efforts to revitalize the neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, increasing and maintaining neighborhood foot traffic is paramount to the revitalization of Downtown-Chinatown and the success of its small businesses given its ability to stimulate economic activity and activate spaces and areas with positive communal energy; and

WHEREAS, the absence of such foot traffic has allowed other activities and behaviors, such as illicit drug dealing/use and homelessness, to gain a foothold in public spaces; and

WHEREAS, such efforts to increase and maintain neighborhood foot traffic will require a coordinated multi-pronged approach which may include: (1) increasing housing stock through new developments or adaptive reuse of underutilized retail/office space, (2) mitigating the discouraging impacts of homelessness and crime, and (3) attracting visitors (both Honolulu residents from outside the neighborhood and tourists); and

WHEREAS, focusing on the third approach (i.e., attracting visitors to Downtown-Chinatown), uplifting community events could include a variety of activities such as:

- Parades (e.g., the Chinese New Year Parade)
- Street festivals (e.g., The Heart of Honolulu)
- Fundraisers (e.g., the Annual Hawaii Children's Cancer Foundation Fundraiser, Murphy's Pigskin Pigout for the University of Hawaii Football program)
- Holiday block parties (e.g., Cinco de Mayo, Saint Patrick's Day, Hallowbaloo); and

WHEREAS, such historical events have proven to be effective in bringing large quantities of visitors into the neighborhood (potentially tens of thousands, including some that specifically travel to Honolulu to attend the community event); and

WHEREAS, multiple small businesses in Downtown-Chinatown have expressed strong support for these community events which, based on conversation, has often led to the highest revenue grossing days/nights of the small businesses' entire year; and

WHEREAS, multiple members of the neighborhood have expressed similarly strong support for these community events given their effect of filling the streets with positive communal energy, creating a sense of safety in the neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, these events require coordination with multiple components (which may include food vendors, security personnel, portable lavatories, promotional activities, liquor licenses, street closure permits, and post-event cleanup) and materialize only through the personal efforts of the community event organizers ("Organizers"); and

WHEREAS, these events also require significant upfront capital, therefore assessing the probability the community event will generate enough revenue to recover the initial investment is critical in the planning process (such evaluation process, "Financial Viability"); and

WHEREAS, in recent months, certain historically successful and widely popular community events failed to materialize (e.g., Hallowbaloo 2023, Saint Patrick's Day 2024, Cinco de Mayo 2024) despite initial plans and efforts of Organizers (such events, the "Aborted Community Events"), to the expressed disappointment from many in the community; and

WHEREAS, due to such expressed disappointment, NB 13 endeavored to better understand the nature and cause of these Aborted Community Events, which included outreach to various well-known Organizers, small businesses, and officials from the City/State; and

WHEREAS, although not cited as the only casual factor, one of the challenges noted by Organizers (of the many controllable and uncontrollable challenges that may be encountered when planning community events of this scale) related to hurdles that must be cleared to obtain permitting/approval for planned usage of public streets or the allowance for alcohol consumption; and

WHEREAS, general permits/approval are required by the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu (“ROH”) with specific requirements and regulations for the community event established through discussions between the Organizers and various City departments such as the Honolulu Liquor Commission, the Honolulu Fire Department, or the Honolulu Department of Transportation Services (the “City Departments”); and

WHEREAS, while ROH is readily available to the public, the specific requirements and regulations communicated by City Departments (specifically certain recently implemented ones) may not be centralized or published (which would facilitate a more efficient planning process for Organizers); and

WHEREAS, based on our understanding, in historical/past years, the City Departments were comparatively more laissez-faire regarding requirements and regulations on community events’ street usage and liquor consumption (enabling the Organizers to operate within the permitted street closures using much of their own judgment and discretion); and

WHEREAS, such historical/past years’ community events, as represented by the Organizers, yielded no significant documented complaints or violations (i.e., such documented complaints or violations, if any, represented a reasonably-tolerable incidence rate given the nature and scale of the event), indicating that these historical community events and these specific Organizers have a safe and successful track record; and

WHEREAS, assuming an Organizer has a safe and successful track record, we believe a reasonably laissez-faire approach by City Departments is appropriate; and

WHEREAS, alternatively, we believe a predilection toward an overabundance of requirements and regulations potentially places undue constraints on Financial Viability and, consequently, may increase the risk of an Aborted Community Event (to the detriment of the neighborhood and its small businesses); and

WHEREAS, the Office of the Mayor provided a written response to an NB 13 member’s inquiry regarding these recent Aborted Community Events which stated, in part:

“It should be noted, back in 2011, the Downtown Neighborhood board, along with various community members wanted to reduce the frequency of street closure events in Chinatown. [...] DTS fully supported this effort and collaborated with the Downtown NB and others in the community. The result is what is occurring today, where the number of events in Chinatown were reduced to an acceptable level the community supported.”

WHEREAS, while acknowledging this historical NB 13 stance from 2011, we believe that due to Downtown-Chinatown’s persisting challenges and the need to continue efforts to revitalize the neighborhood, circumstances today justify revised consideration of NB 13’s historical position; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that NB 13 urges City/State officials to support and encourage economy-boosting and safe and uplifting community events in Downtown-Chinatown; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NB 13 requests City Departments to produce an updated comprehensive guide/handbook of requirements and regulations for community events in Downtown-Chinatown to be made available for the public good (i.e., for the benefit of the Organizers); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that with respect to community events in other areas of Honolulu that are not approved or not supported by residents in those neighborhoods, NB 13 encourages City Departments and other neighborhood boards to connect the Organizers to NB 13 to explore the possibility of holding the event in Downtown-Chinatown; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution, upon adoption, is intended to be disseminated to the Office of the Mayor, the Department of Transportation Services, the Honolulu Liquor Commission, the Honolulu Fire Department, the relevant elected officials of Downtown-Chinatown, and any other potentially-interested government officials; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that NB 13 requests that a representative from the Office of the Mayor or the Honolulu Department of Transportation Services provide their response to this resolution (through written correspondence or at a future meeting of NB 13) describing the City's reaction and any intended response/future action.

INTRODUCED BY: Ross Isokane

DATE OF INTRODUCTION: May 2, 2024

The Downtown-Chinatown Neighborhood Board No. 13 ADOPTED this resolution on May 2, 2024; 9-0-0 (AYE: Armstrong, Carvalho, Fitzsimmons, Isokane, Lye, McCarney, McDonald, Shubert-Kwock, Thompson; NAY: None; ABSTAIN: None).

Chair: Ernest Carvalho

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ernest Carvalho", is written over a faint, light blue circular stamp.