RES26-039
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 194

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: May 13, 2026 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 2

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name:	Email:	Zip:
McKinley Eads	mckinleye@avalonhi.com	96813
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Avalon Group	Support	May 12, 2026 @ 08:38 AM
Name:	Email:	Zip:
Ted Kefalas	tkefalas@grassrootinstitute.org	96813
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii	Support	May 12, 2026 @ 09:14 AM

AVALON GROUP
Queen's Court
800 Bethel Street, Suite 501
Honolulu HI 96813
Phone 808.587.7770
Fax 808.587.7769
www.avalonhi.com

WRITTEN TESTIMONY
IN STRONG SUPPORT OF RESOLUTION 26-039
RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Aloha Chair Waters and Members of the Council,

Avalon Group respectfully submits this written testimony in strong support of Resolution 26-039, which updates allowable density standards in the Downtown BMX-4 zoning district.

Downtown Honolulu is the City's historic and civic core and one of the few areas with extensive infrastructure, transit access, and proximity to major employment and government services. However, outdated development standards have limited reinvestment and prevented Downtown from functioning as the high-intensity urban center envisioned in City policy.

Although Downtown has the highest allowable height limits in the State, the current base floor area ratio (FAR) of 4.0 makes it impractical to use that height in a meaningful way. In practice, FAR—not height—controls development, resulting in underbuilt projects and inefficient use of land in the City's most important urban district.

Resolution 26-039 directly addresses this issue by increasing the base FAR in the BMX-4 district from 4.0 to 7.0. This is a reasonable and measured adjustment that improves project feasibility, allows development to better utilize entitled height, and supports reinvestment in aging and underutilized properties. For many projects, this change can determine whether redevelopment is possible at all.

The proposal also realigns the BMX-4 district with its stated purpose. The Land Use Ordinance identifies BMX-4 as the City's highest-intensity mixed-use district, yet Downtown currently has lower effective density than parts of Kakaʻako and Ala Moana, where FAR allowances are higher. Resolution 26-039 corrects this imbalance and ensures Downtown is not placed at a competitive disadvantage relative to other urban areas.

By modernizing Downtown's development standards, Resolution 26-039 supports revitalization, mixed-use development, housing opportunities, and long-term economic vitality in the urban core.

For these reasons, Avalon Group respectfully urges the Council to adopt Resolution 26-039.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Respectfully submitted,
Avalon Group

GRASSROOT INSTITUTE OF HAWAII

1050 Bishop St. #508
Honolulu, HI 96813
808-864-1776
info@grassrootinstitute.org

Removing barriers to Hawaii's prosperity

May 13, 2026, 10 a.m.
Honolulu Hale

To: Honolulu City Council
Tommy Waters, Chair
Andria Tupola, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii
Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: Resolution 26-39 — PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO CHAPTER 21, REVISED ORDINANCES OF HONOLULU 2021 (THE LAND USE ORDINANCE), RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Aloha Chair Waters, Vice Chair Tupola and other Council Members,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports** Resolution 26-39, CD1, which would request the Honolulu Planning Commission to review a bill that would increase the floor-area ratio of the Central Business Mixed Use zone.

Specifically, the draft bill would allow for a floor-area ratio of 7.0 in the BMX-4 zone — up from the current 4.0 limit. The maximum FAR would be 10.0 for projects that use the current open space bonus system. These changes would essentially allow denser buildings in BMX-4 zones so more housing units could be built.

The draft bill would also allow Interim Planned Development-Transit projects up to 12.0 FAR. The current limit for IPDT projects is 7.5.

Grassroot believes this measure could help increase business and housing opportunities in and around downtown Honolulu, where all of the city's BMX-4 zones are.

The need for new housing is significant. A 2024 update to the Hawaii housing planning study estimated that Honolulu needed 27,710 new units built between 2023 and 2027 to keep up with demand.[1]

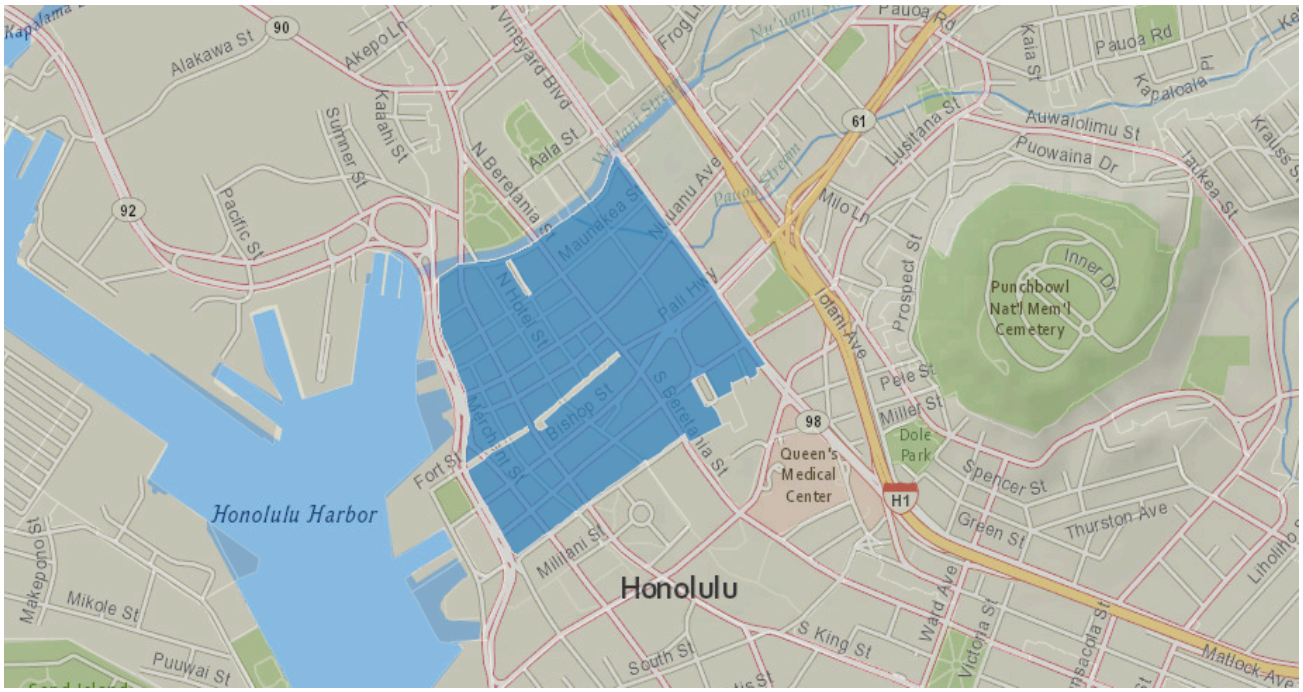
[1] "Hawaii Housing Planning Study 2024," prepared by SMS Research and Marketing Services, Inc., FSR Consulting LLC and Ward Research, Inc. for the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation, Table 39A, p. 124.

It will be nearly impossible for the city to meet that goal without changing zoning rules to allow more housing.

The bill also aligns with the city's 2025-2028 Strategic Housing Plan goal to "identify opportunities for maximizing urban land use through adjustments to density standards in the Land Use Ordinance."[2]

Figure 1 below shows where the current BMX-4 district is in Honolulu.

Figure 1. BMX-4 zones



This area of Honolulu already accommodates tall, high-density buildings. Allowing more of these structures to be built would enhance the area's walkability, resulting in more foot traffic for downtown businesses.

In short, this legislation could be a meaningful step toward revitalizing downtown.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

[2] "Strategic Housing Plan 2025-2028," Prepared by the Mayor's Office of Housing with CommunityScale, January 2025, p. 70.