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Page 1

Q1

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Q4

What specifically will you do, if elected, to increase the supply of housing at all price-points?

There is a direct correlation between economic growth and prosperity, and the demand for housing. This is certainly true in Hawaii. Since a large part of our State's economic activity is located on Oahu, the problems associated with our housing inventory in Honolulu has become acute, especially for affordable housing. The cost of living in Hawaii is high and, therefore, the amount of personal income devoted to housing is reduced by the cost of other living necessities.

Addressing the affordable housing shortage forces us to take a hard look at increasing land availability for development, reducing the cost of infrastructure (e.g., sewer, water, roads, etc.), reducing the cost of construction and materials, and making available capital and financing assistance for buyers. These are challenges which cannot be solved without the cooperation of our developers, business community, labor unions, financial institutions, shipping and transportation companies, our City Council, the State, and others. Each will need to contribute its social, economic, and community capital to make a dent in this perennial problem. My role as mayor will be to bring these entities together and to address affordable housing in a comprehensive way. Apart from this, the City and its partners need to understand what these groups need from the City to make sure that housing is available for local families. This involves exploring options to develop unused city land, or convert underutilized city-owned buildings to affordable housing. The City must be a catalyst to address our community's needs, not a roadblock.

There is no silver bullet to fix Hawaii's housing market and affordability crisis. However, what we can do now is to address our City's immediate need for housing by concentrating on increasing the supply of affordable housing rentals. By doing so, we can address housing shortages where it is most acute, that is, in the low income, special needs, and affordable range. As mayor, I will actively look to partner with local businesses, developers, contractors and suppliers, labor unions, financial institutions, and our government entities to build a program to increase affordable rentals for local families. This will include the potential redevelopment of existing vacant or unused buildings to repurpose them for housing.

I will also immediately take a hard look at the City Department of Planning and Permitting to give top priority to entitlements and permits necessary to produce housing at all price points.

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There is no silver bullet to fix Hawaii's housing market and affordability crisis. If you are looking for a simple panacea, good luck. However, what we can do now is to address our City's immediate need for housing by concentrating on increasing the supply of affordable housing rentals. By doing so, we can address housing shortages where it is most acute, that is, in the low income, special needs, and affordable range. As mayor, I will actively look to partner with local businesses, developers, contractors and suppliers, labor unions, financial institutions, and our government entities to build a program to increase affordable rentals for local families. This will include the potential redevelopment of existing vacant or unused buildings to repurpose them for housing.

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Q5

Given the City Auditor's findings on the procedural and personnel problems at the Department of Planning and Permitting, what immediate steps will you take to address these problems if elected Mayor?

It is clear from the findings of the City Auditor that significant improvement in the management and performance of DPP is called for. The lack of timeliness in the processing of permits and approvals undoubtedly impacts the cost of development in Honolulu. Additional staffing and resources will be examined as a possible mitigation measure amongst other reforms. Problems pointed out in the City Audit report also present opportunities for structural changes and modernization to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of this regulating body. This is particularly important to an expeditious recovery from the economic effects of COVID-19.

My first move as mayor will be to appoint a strong DPP Director, who has the full support of the Mayor's Office, and is familiar with the technical aspects of development and permitting to understand the needs of Honolulu residents and developers. However, this director must also have the leadership capabilities to both understand what DPP staffers need, and get them these tools to succeed, whether it be more staff, training, or other resources.

Given that I will not be in office for 7 months, nearly a year after the 2020 audit was published, my team and I will spend 60 days to re-evaluate what has already been done to improve the DPP, and analyze the department ourselves to address its problems. Then, my team and I will move forward and fix the department. While doing so, I intend to emphasize the following in my review of DPP:

- 1) Prioritize timeliness through streamlining and leadership. Hurdles such as the pre-screening process, which can delay a review for months, must be either expedited through automation, or eliminated altogether. Importantly, the lack of oversight, and accountability within DPP must be addressed so existing administrative guidelines, which serve to prevent inefficient and redundant practices, are followed.
- 2) Modernize permitting. As a committee member for Oahu's Resiliency Strategy, I supported recommendations to accelerate permitting through innovation. Self-service permitting and automated processes should be expanded on. We must systematically review our permitting requirements and codes to modernize them and eliminate redundancies. The use of technology may have a place in this solution.
- 3) Develop DPP's workforce. DPP workers should feel supported and confident enough to perform their duties efficiently. Emphasizing efficient practices and boosting morale through career development, job training, and measures to retain quality staff should be a priority for the City in light of the high vacancies and high staff turnover at DPP. Additional staffing will be looked at.

The problems in our DPP are practical problems that requires practical solutions and strong leadership. The DPP issue is going to require some initial, in-depth analysis once in office to responsibly approach this challenge, but I am prepared to work swiftly with my team, and importantly, DPP staff, to make these needed changes.