

# HISTORIC HAWAII FOUNDATION

**To:** The Honorable Esther Kiaʻaina, Chair  
The Honorable Calvin Say, Vice Chair  
Honolulu City Council Committee on Housing and the Economy

**From:** Kiersten Faulkner  
Executive Director, Historic Hawaiʻi Foundation

**Committee Date:** Tuesday, September 20, 2022  
10:30 a.m.  
City Council Chamber

**Subject:** **Bill 44 (2020) Oʻahu Historic Preservation Commission**

On behalf of Historic Hawaiʻi Foundation (HHF), I am writing in **strong support** for the proposal to reestablish the Oʻahu Historic Preservation Commission.

## **BACKGROUND and CONTEXT**

The purpose of the Oʻahu Historic Preservation Commission is to establish a means by which the City & County of Honolulu can formulate and implement a comprehensive program for the identification and preservation of historic and cultural resources on Oʻahu. These types of local government boards were envisioned and established in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) to encourage preservation and wise use of historic resources. The Act created the Certified Local Government (CLG) program to encourage local governments to undertake local historic preservation efforts.

In 1993, City Council passed enabling legislation for the Commission via Ordinance 93-55 and enacted it in Revised Ordinances of Honolulu [Section 3 Article 10](#). Despite clear policy directive and authority from Council, successive administrations failed to establish the Historic Preservation Commission. It has never had appointees or staff, so has been a paper commission only.

The framework established by the NHPA set up a decentralized partnership between the federal, state and local governments. The partnership is based on the use of common goals, standards and guidelines when undertaking preservation efforts. To help state and local governments achieve the purpose and goals of the NHPA, federal funds are provided to State Historic Preservation Offices. Of those funds, a specific percentage is passed through to Certified Local Governments to support local preservation efforts.

In Hawaiʻi, three of the four Counties have established preservation commissions that are consistent with Federal framework and the State's CLG program. Kauaʻi, Maui and Hawaiʻi Counties all have local historic preservation or cultural resource commissions.

The purposes of these citizen boards are to:

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### **Historic Hawaiʻi Foundation**

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Historic Hawaiʻi Foundation was established in 1974 to encourage the preservation of historic buildings, sites and communities on all the islands of Hawaiʻi. As the statewide leader for historic preservation, HHF works to preserve Hawaiʻi's unique architectural and cultural heritage and believes that historic preservation is an important element in the present and future quality of life, environmental sustainability, and economic viability of the state.

1. Encourage historic preservation at the local level;
2. Encourage local governments to follow the national standards for archaeology and historic buildings, sites, structures and districts in developing and administering their preservation programs;
3. Provide technical assistance through a partnership with the State Historic Preservation Division; and
4. Provide participating counties with funding to underwrite various historic preservation activities.

### **HISTORIC HAWAI'I FOUNDATION COMMENTS:**

The O'ahu Historic Preservation Commission can provide several specific benefits:

- The Commission can help the City with proactive identification of properties that tell the full story of Hawaii's history, not merely react to proposals brought forward piecemeal.
- The Commission would create an O'ahu historic property system for the survey, identification, and inventory of historic properties and archaeological sites. The system would be integrated into the City's Department of Permitting and Planning's (DPP) planning, application, review, and compliance system and complement the State Historic Preservation Division's (SHPD) inventory system.
- The Commission can assist with planning and design activities undertaken by City departments to ensure preservation considerations and standards are integrated from the initial concept development, thereby avoiding conflicts later in the construction or approval processes.
- The Commission would review proposed projects that may adversely impact historic properties and allows the commission to make recommendations to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts of proposed projects on historic properties.

The City & County would benefit from retaining and implementing its Preservation Commission and enrolling in the State's Certified Local Government program. The CLG grant program can provide financial assistance for start-up projects, including a Planning for Preservation program that allows newly-established preservation commissions to work closely with a preservation specialist. CLG grants can be used for planning, survey and evaluation, preparing National Register of Historic Places nominations, developing procedures to protect properties, and for public education projects. Community Development Block Grants can be used as a match for CLG funds.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Historic Hawai'i Foundation supports the implementation of the O'ahu Historic Preservation Commission. HHF recommends that Council use this opportunity to recommit to its established policy and strengthen its practice of preserving, conserving and protecting historic properties for the public benefit. The landscapes, buildings and sites that we preserve are part of a community's unique character and story. They provide tangible links from the past to existing communities and provide benefit to future generations.

**Therefore, HHF supports Bill 44 (2022).**

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