

HONOLULU CHARTER COMMISSION

KOMIKINA PALAPALA HO'OKUMU

2026 CHARTER AMENDMENTS



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ABOUT THE 2026 CHARTER AMENDMENTS**

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Amending the Revised Charter

The Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu serves as the foundational document for Honolulu's municipal government, outlining its structure, powers, and functions much like a constitution for the city. The Charter requires that the mayor and the City Council appoint a commission every ten years to review the Charter and submit proposed changes to the voters.

The 2025-2026 Charter Commission reviewed 295 proposals. Through deliberations at its public meetings, the Commission approved 20 questions to appear on the November 3, 2026, General Election ballot.

Vote on the Proposed Changes

The members of the Charter Commission encourage you to start early and learn about the 2026 Charter amendments. This booklet provides the ballot question, present situation, and what would happen if the proposal passes for each amendment.

For a digital copy of this booklet and how the proposed amendments would be written into the Charter, please visit the Charter Commission website at: honolulucitycouncil.org/chartercommission.

To prepare for Election Day, we encourage you to review this booklet and consider whether you would vote "Yes" or "No" on each proposal.

2025-2026 Charter Commission Members

Dawn Szewczyk, **Commission Chair**
Sommerset Yamamoto, **Commission Vice Chair**

Commissioners

Jacob Aki
Davin Aoyagi
Cedric Duarte
Gerald "Trey" Gordner
Brandon Marc Higa
Diane Kawauchi
Jace Mikulanec
Scott Power
Sandra Simms
Summer Sylva
April Woofter

2026 Charter Amendment Question 1

Food Security

Should the Charter require annual funding for a Food Security Fund, without having to simultaneously increase real property tax rates to fund the appropriation, to support programs and grants that provide locally grown or produced food to Oahu residents, as well as non-local food only in an emergency?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Charter currently requires annual funding for five special funds: the Clean Water and Natural Lands Fund, Affordable Housing Fund, Climate Resiliency Fund, Honolulu Zoo Fund, and the Grants in Aid Fund. It does not establish a Food Security Fund, or require funding for programs that improve access to locally grown or produced food.

If Proposal Passes

The Charter would create a sixth special fund, the Food Security Fund, and increase annual funding for the Charter's special funds from 2.5% to 3% of estimated real property tax revenues. The six funds would each receive an equal share of the funding.

The Food Security Fund would support City programs, grants, and subsidies that improve access to locally grown or produced food, strengthen O'ahu's food supply, and improve food security. During a declared emergency, a limited portion of the fund could also be used to purchase other food when necessary.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 2

Guiding Principles & Values

Should the Charter be amended to replace its preamble with language recognizing the relationship between the people of the City and County of Honolulu and the 'āina, honoring the wisdom of kūpuna and the legacy of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole, and affirming commitments to transparent, accountable government and stewardship of natural, civic, and cultural resources?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Charter's current preamble describes the City's commitment to responsible government and public participation. It does not recognize the relationship between the people and the 'āina, Native Hawaiian cultural values, or the legacy of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole.

If Proposal Passes

The Charter's preamble would be replaced with language: recognizing the relationship between the people of the City and County of Honolulu and the 'āina; honoring the wisdom of kūpuna and the legacy of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole; and affirming commitments to transparent, accountable government and stewardship of natural, civic, and cultural resources. The amendment would update the Charter's guiding principles but would not change the legal powers or duties established elsewhere in the Charter.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 3

Native Hawaiian & Cultural Stewardship

Should an Office of 'Ōiwi Resources and Cultural Stewardship be established within the Office of the Mayor to oversee the management of 'Ōiwi resources within the City, develop related programs, and create a Cultural Advisory Council of kūpuna, cultural practitioners, and community representatives?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Charter currently provides the O'ahu Historic Preservation Commission with the authority to advise and assist the federal, state, and City governments in carrying out historic preservation responsibilities, provide public education and training in historic preservation, and develop a comprehensive citywide historic preservation program.

If Proposal Passes

The Charter would establish an Office of 'Ōiwi Resources and Cultural Stewardship within the Office of the Mayor. The Office would coordinate Native Hawaiian cultural and natural resource stewardship across City departments, promote the appropriate use of the Hawaiian language, develop related programs, collaborate with government and community partners, and submit annual reports to the Mayor and City Council. The amendment would also establish a Cultural Advisory Council composed of kūpuna, cultural practitioners, and community representatives.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 4

Equity & Inclusion

Should a nine-member LGBTQIA+ Commission be established to advise the Mayor, City Council, and City agencies on matters affecting the LGBTQIA+ community and recommend policies, programs, and legislation promoting social, economic, and political equality?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Charter establishes several advisory boards and commissions to provide recommendations on specific public policy issues but does not establish a commission dedicated to advising the City on matters affecting the LGBTQIA+ community.

If Proposal Passes

The Charter would establish a nine-member LGBTQIA+ Commission to advise the Mayor, City Council, and City agencies on issues affecting LGBTQIA+ residents. The Commission would be authorized to recommend policies, legislation, programs, and administrative actions, serve as a liaison between the community and City government, and employ staff as necessary to carry out its responsibilities.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 5

Election Reform

Beginning in 2032, should the City use ranked-choice voting to elect the Mayor, City Council, and Prosecuting Attorney, allowing voters to rank candidates in the order they prefer (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) in a single November election?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

City officials are elected through a two-step nonpartisan special election. When three or more candidates run for an office, a first special election is conducted with the state primary in August. If a candidate wins a majority, then they are elected. Otherwise, the top two advance to a second special election held with the state general election in November. Turnout in August is typically much lower than in November. This means a relatively small group of voters who may not represent the views of the City as a whole decides the options (or the winners) for everyone else. In the 2024 election, all City officials were elected in August. Additionally, Hawai'i Revised Statutes section 11-100 limits ranked-choice voting to only special elections to fill City Council vacancies.

If Proposal Passes

Beginning in 2032, ranked-choice voting will be used for the Mayor, City Council, and Prosecuting Attorney, and these offices will be decided in the November election by a larger and more representative electorate. Voters can rank any number of candidates in the order they prefer (1st choice, 2nd choice, 3rd choice, etc.). If no candidate receives a majority of first choices, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and those ballots transferred to each voter's next choice, repeating in rounds until a winner is determined. The City Clerk will also adopt rules and implement a public education program.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 6

Constitutional Rights & Immigration Policy

Should the Charter be amended to require the Honolulu Police Department to 1) adopt policies to ensure the constitutional rights of all persons regardless of immigration or citizenship status are protected, and 2) assist federal immigration enforcement activities only when required by statute or court order, and after the requesting agency's identity and authority have been confirmed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Charter currently requires the Honolulu Police Department to preserve the public peace, protect the rights of persons and property, prevent crime, and enforce state laws and City ordinances. It does not establish policies governing the Department's role in federal immigration enforcement or specify when officers may assist federal immigration authorities. Under Hawaii State Law, Act 141 (2026) prohibits all state and county law enforcement agencies, including the Honolulu Police Department, from providing information to federal immigration authorities for the purposes of immigration enforcement, but does not prohibit the Honolulu Police Department from complying with a judicial warrant, court order, or subpoena.

If Proposal Passes

The Charter would require the Chief of Police to adopt and enforce policies protecting the lawful exercise of rights guaranteed by the United States and Hawai'i Constitutions for all persons, regardless of immigration or citizenship status. Law enforcement officers could assist with or facilitate federal immigration enforcement activities only when required by a verifiable state or federal statute or a court order. Before providing assistance, officers would also be required to verify the identity and legal authority of the requesting agency through official channels for each individual action.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 7

Housing Affordability

Shall the Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu be amended to encourage increasing housing availability and preserving available housing as policies for the City and County of Honolulu?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Revised Charter does not contain a statement recognizing the City's shortage of housing available for long-term occupancy, the impact of housing-related outmigration, or a declaration that encouraging the use of the City's existing housing supply for city residents is a compelling governmental interest.

If Proposal Passes

The Revised Charter would include a statement recognizing the City's shortage of housing available for long-term occupancy, finding that housing-related outmigration is an existential threat to the City, and declaring that encouraging the use of the City's existing housing supply for city residents is a compelling governmental interest.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 8

Affordable Housing Funding

Should the Charter be amended to clarify that the Affordable Housing Fund is a revolving fund, with repayments, interest, earnings, proceeds, and other receipts derived from the Fund to be redeposited into the Fund?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

Honolulu voters previously approved an Affordable Housing Fund that provides affordable rental housing for households earning up to sixty percent of the area median income. Housing projects that receive money from the Fund must remain affordable for at least sixty years. The Fund receives roughly eight million dollars per year in property tax revenues, which are used to purchase land, renovate existing buildings, or construct new affordable housing units. Currently the Charter does not specify what happens to money that is loaned from the Affordable Housing Fund and later returns to the City with interest.

Currently, the Charter provides that any funds remaining at the end of any fiscal year shall not lapse. The Charter does not specifically state that repayment, interests, earnings, and proceeds from the Fund are redeposited into the Fund.

If Proposal Passes

It would clarify that repayments, interest, earnings and proceeds derived from the Fund are redeposited into the Fund. The Affordable Housing Fund could support a wider range of affordable rental housing, including affordable units within developments that contain a variety of uses (mixed-use) and price points for housing (mixed-income). Loan repayments, interest earnings, and other revenues generated by the Fund would remain available for future affordable housing investments, so that the Fund can grow and support more affordable housing units and projects over time.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 9

Affordable Housing Funding

Should the Charter be amended to no longer require a second public hearing for any transaction related to City real property interests?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Charter requires the Department of Housing and Land Management to hold a public hearing to determine whether each real property transaction or activity related to city real property interests serves the public interest. Many transactions are quite small, such as easements for utilities or public access. As a result, the hearings are infrequently attended. Additionally, they impose significant costs on the City in staff time and advertising expenses. For transactions or activities affecting a City real property interest that exceeds one-quarter acre in size, the Department is also required to conduct a public hearing in the Council district where the real property interest is located. The Charter also requires the Department to prepare a report for each transaction or activity with specific findings that it serves the public interest, which must be approved by the Council.

If Proposal Passes

A separate public hearing requirement for City real property transactions will no longer be required, but the public will retain the ability to learn about and testify on all City property transactions when they appear on the agenda for City Council meetings.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 10

Housing Policy

Should the City be required to prepare and carry out a functional plan for the development of affordable housing?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Charter requires the City and County of Honolulu to prepare long-range functional plans for several major services, including parks, environmental services, and transportation. However, it does not require a comparable long-term functional plan for housing. As a result, housing priorities are addressed through individual programs and policies rather than a single comprehensive plan.

If Proposal Passes

The Charter would require the Director of Housing and Land Management to prepare and maintain a ten-year Housing Functional Plan, with updates at least every five years. The plan would be reviewed for consistency with the City's General Plan and Development Plans and would help guide future housing policies, capital improvements, and budget decisions. The requirement would take effect on January 1, 2030.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 11

Funding Flexibility

Should the Charter be amended to allow the Clean Water and Natural Lands Fund and the Climate Resiliency Fund to award grants to federal income tax-exempt non-profit organizations that provide services that are consistent with each Fund's purpose?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Charter currently allows only the Grants in Aid Fund to award grants to federal income tax-exempt non-profit organizations that provide services to economically and/or socially disadvantaged populations, or provide services for public benefit in the areas of the arts, culture, economic development, or the environment.

If Proposal Passes

Both the Clean Water and Natural Lands Fund and the Climate Resiliency Fund would be allowed to award grants to federal income tax-exempt non-profit organizations that provide services consistent with each Fund's purpose.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 12

Funding Flexibility

Should the Revised City Charter be amended to allow the Clean Water and Natural Lands Fund, Affordable Housing Fund, Climate Resiliency Fund, and other funds established under Section 9-204 to receive funding from federal, state, philanthropic, and other sources?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Charter establishes several special funds that receive dedicated real property tax revenues. However, it does not expressly authorize these funds to accept additional revenue from sources such as federal or state grants, private donations, or philanthropic organizations.

If Proposal Passes

The special funds established under Section 9-204 could receive funding from federal, state, philanthropic, and other authorized sources in addition to their existing dedicated funding.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 13

Historic Preservation

Should the Charter be amended to allow the Clean Water and Natural Lands Fund to be used for historic preservation, and to preserve and protect buildings, sites, structures, and objects that have been acquired by the fund; to rename the Fund the Land, Natural Resources, and Historic Preservation Fund, and the advisory commission for the Fund the Land, Natural Resources, and Historic Preservation advisory commission; and to allocate proposal review for Fund use between the advisory commission and the O'ahu Historic Preservation Commission?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Charter currently establishes the Clean Water and Natural Lands Fund to acquire and protect environmentally, historically, and culturally significant lands. However, the Fund generally cannot be used to preserve or restore historic buildings or other historic and culturally significant sites and objects. The Clean Water and Natural Lands advisory commission receives proposals for use of the Fund, and submits its recommendation to the Council.

If Proposal Passes

In addition to acquiring historically significant lands, the Clean Water and Natural Lands Fund could also be used to preserve, restore, maintain, and rehabilitate historic buildings, sites, archaeological resources, and culturally significant objects. The Clean Water and Natural Lands Fund would be renamed the Land, Natural Resources, and Historic Preservation Fund, and the name of the advisory commission for the Fund would also be changed. Review of certain proposals for use of the funds would be submitted to the O'ahu Historic Preservation Commission.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 14

Historic Preservation

Should the Charter be amended to increase the annual appropriation for costs related to operation, maintenance, and management of lands that were acquired using the Clean Water and Natural Lands Fund, from 5% of the moneys that were deposited into the Fund in the previous year, to 10%?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

Currently, the Charter limits the amount of the Clean Water and Natural Lands Fund that can be used for operation, maintenance, and management of lands acquired by the Fund to 5% of the moneys deposited in the previous year.

If Proposal Passes

The amount of moneys that may be used for operation, maintenance, and management of lands acquired by the Clean Water and Natural Lands Fund will be 10% of the moneys deposited in the previous year.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 15

Government Modernization

Should an Office of Data and Innovation be established to use data to improve city services, promote government transparency and civic engagement, ensure that the city uses artificial intelligence responsibly, and protect residents' digital privacy?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Charter establishes a Department of Information Technology (Section 6-1201) responsible for operating and maintaining the City's information technology and telecommunications systems. However, the Charter does not designate any office or officer as responsible for citywide data governance; for using data to improve the delivery of services; or for protecting the digital privacy of residents. A Chief Data Officer and two data specialist positions were created in 2022 by City Ordinance 22-31. Ordinance-based positions can be modified or eliminated by future administrations without a public vote.

If Proposal Passes

The Office of Data and Innovation, led by an executive officer and reporting to the Managing Director, will become an integral part of City government. The Office will provide Citywide direction for data standards and strategy, data privacy, responsible use of artificial intelligence, and innovation in City services. Establishing the Office of Data and Innovation in Charter will ensure that the City will employ experts in data, innovation, and artificial intelligence, as these play a growing role in our society.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 16

Civic Participation

Should permanent resident aliens who are residents of the City and County of Honolulu be permitted to serve on City boards and commissions?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

City boards and commissions are groups of experts who volunteer to advise, assist, or oversee certain parts of City government without pay. Currently, you must be a registered voter of the City and County of Honolulu to serve on a board or commission. Many willing and capable long-term residents—including employees of international businesses, nonprofit organizations, and universities—are currently excluded from serving in these roles.

If Proposal Passes

Permanent resident aliens who are residents of the City and County of Honolulu would become eligible for appointment to most City boards and Commissions as long as they meet all other qualifications.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 17

Civic Participation

Should quorum and board action be based on the majority of members eligible to vote, excluding vacancies and non-voting members?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

A majority of all members to which the board or commission is entitled constitutes a quorum, unless specified in the law or ordinance creating the board or commission or in any other law or ordinance. The Charter also currently requires a majority of the entire membership to take any action, and the entire membership has been interpreted to include vacancies and members who are not eligible to vote. As a result, some boards and commissions with vacancies and nonvoting members have been unable to take official action despite having enough members present to conduct a meeting.

If Proposal Passes

The amendment would clarify that vacancies and non-voting members are excluded when determining whether a quorum is present and that, once a quorum has been established, official actions may be approved by a majority of the members present and voting, unless state law or the Charter itself requires a higher voting threshold. Neighborhood Boards, which are elected positions, would not be affected by this change.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 18

Administrative Organization

Should the First Deputy of the Department of Human Resources be exempt from civil service provisions, like similar roles in other City departments?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The First Deputy of the Department of Human Resources is a civil service employee. They also represent the City in negotiations with unions over civil service salaries, benefits, and privileges. In all other counties in the State, the same position is exempt from the civil service, as are first deputies in other city departments in the City and County of Honolulu.

If Proposal Passes

The position of First Deputy of the Department of Human Resources will become an appointed position exempt from the civil service. This will make the position consistent with other counties and City departments effective January 1, 2027.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 19

Administrative Housekeeping

Should the City Clerk be required to provide technical and secretarial services to the Charter Commission?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

The Charter requires the appointment of a Charter Commission every ten years to review City government and recommend Charter amendments. The Charter does not designate a permanent administrative home or guarantee technical or secretarial support for the Commission.

If Proposal Passes

The City Clerk would be required to provide administrative and technical support to the Charter Commission. The Charter Commission's authority, responsibilities, independence, and ability to propose Charter amendments for voter consideration would not change.

2026 Charter Amendment Question 20

Ethics & Accountability

Should the Charter make a Councilmember, the Mayor, or the Prosecuting Attorney ineligible for election to any City office for two years if impeached, or if the official resigns after an impeachment petition has been filed, consistent with the provision for being recalled from office?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Present Situation

Currently, a Councilmember, the Mayor, and the Prosecuting Attorney may still be elected or appointed to any other City office with no restrictions even if they have been removed from office pursuant to impeachment proceedings, or if they resign after an impeachment petition has been filed.

If Proposal Passes

A Councilmember, Mayor, or Prosecuting Attorney who is impeached, or who resigns after an impeachment petition is filed, could not be elected or appointed to any City office for two years. This would make the restriction similar to the one that already applies to elected officials removed through a recall election.

YOUR CITY. YOUR VOICE. YOUR CHARTER.



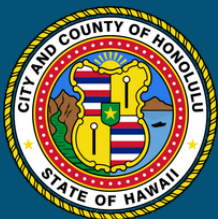
HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF O'AHU!

Translated materials will be available online in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, 中文 (Chinese), Ilokano, and Tagalog. Please visit our website at: honolulucitycouncil.org/chartercommission.

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Prepared by the 2025-2026 Honolulu Charter Commission.
Paid for by the taxpayers of the City and County of Honolulu.



O'AHU VOTES

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Questions?

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