



**TRUST FOR
PUBLIC
LAND™**

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™



E Lohe Mai I Nā Leo O Ka ‘Āina (Listen to the Many Voices of the Land)

**Grass Roots Community Engagement Report
Nā Pāka no Ka Lāhui – Parks for People Program Hawai‘i**

Introduction:

With the support of many funders and partners, Trust for Public Land brought its national Parks for People Program to Hawai'i at the end of 2020, beginning with a pilot project at 'A'ala Park. Although challenged by COVID-19 pandemic gathering restrictions and peoples' reluctance to meet in-person in 2020-2021, Trust for Public Land partnered with community organizations, service providers, and public agencies working in and around the park, embarking on a year-long grass roots community engagement effort. This report summarizes those findings as Trust for Public Land transitions in 2022 to engaging the surrounding community in an interactive participatory design process for park improvements and programming and interim park activations. Mahalo to the many funders and partners who made this work possible as we listen to and lift community voices to transform the park into a welcoming, vibrant place for all!

Funders

American Savings Bank
Atherton Family Foundation
Robert Emens Black Fund of the Hawai'i
Community Foundation
HawaiiUSA Federal Credit Union Foundation
Island Insurance Foundation
Howard Hughes

Finance Factors Foundation
HEI Charitable Foundation
City and County of Honolulu Grant-In-Aid
Program
Bank of Hawaii Foundation
Central Pacific Bank Foundation
First Hawaiian Bank Foundation

Partners/Contributors

Sarah Amman
Adult Friends for Youth
Better Block Hawai'i
Blue Zones
Dr. Vanessa Buchthal
Dr. Donna Camvel
City & County of Honolulu Department of Parks
& Recreation
City & County of Honolulu Prosecutors Office
City & County of Honolulu Office of Housing
and Homelessness
Family Promise of Hawai'i
Fringe/Art Space
Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction Center
Hawai'i Institute of Public Health
Institute for Human Services
Malia Kaia
Kalihi Media
Kalihi Palama Health Center

Kamehameha Schools Mural Club
Ka Po'e Kaka'ako
Kekaulike Courtyard
Jenna Kilgren
KVIBE
K-Nard Narruhn
O'ahu Intertribal Council
Project Koa Yoga
Project Vision Hawai'i
Aura Reyes
RYSE Hawai'i
Soused Productions
Saint Elizabeth's Episcopal Church
State of Hawai'i, Department of Health
Susanna Wessley
We Are Oceania (WAO)
Weed and Seed
Ximena Healing

Contents

KA HO’OLAUNA – NĀ PĀKA NO KA LĀHUI (INTRODUCTION – PARKS FOR PEOPLE HAWAI’I) .. 4

KE KĀLAI & KE KA’AKĀLAI (OUR APPROACH & STRATEGY) 6

NĀNĀ PONO (QUALITATIVE) RESULTS..... 8

NĀ HELUNA (QUANTITATIVE) RESULTS 38

CONCLUSION..... 47

APPENDIX A: ANTHOLOGY GROUP INTERCEPT SURVEY 48

APPENDIX B: SOPARC BASELINE REPORT

KA HO‘OLAUNA – NĀ PĀKA NO KA LĀHUI (INTRODUCTION – PARKS FOR PEOPLE HAWAI‘I)

Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

For over 45 years, we have partnered with communities across the country to protect the lands that people value and create the close-to-home parks, trails, and green space where families connect with nature. In Hawai‘i, we have been connecting communities to the outdoors and to each other since 1979, protecting over 59,000 acres of park and natural land, working farms and ranches, coastlines, native forests, and important cultural landscapes across the state.

We protect land and create or improve parks where they are needed most. More than **80 percent** of Americans live, work, and play in cities. However, many city residents lack close-to-home access to nature and the outdoors. People in cities also experience tremendous social challenges—poverty, isolation, crime, pollution, inequity, and health disparities. Our holistic approach to community based park development and activation can help to address these issues from a unique perspective.

At Trust for Public Land, we believe that everyone should have access to a quality park, playground, trail, and other natural outdoor area within a 10-minute walk from home. Parks and nature are where we come together—to play and build strong, healthy bodies, to visit with neighbors, and to celebrate our traditions.

On the continent, Trust for Public Land has a rich history of partnering with cities and engaging communities in designing, building, activating, and stewarding innovative park projects in New York, San Francisco, Dallas, Denver, Seattle, Los Angeles, and many more. More than **8 million** people across the country already live within a 10-minute walk of a park or open space protected or activated by Trust for Public Land.

In Hawai‘i, we are adapting our parks expertise to urban Honolulu and launching a pilot park project at **‘A‘ala Park** in Downtown–Chinatown to build a foundation for park and community success that can be replicated and used as a model for other park and public space projects. We are working with city and business leaders, neighborhood groups, and residents to create parks that communities need to improve their health, celebrate shared history, and strengthen social connections.

E Lanakila Kākou (Everybody wins)

Trust for Public Land supports communities to build and revitalize parks that anchor neighborhoods. When children have the chance to learn from and play in nature, when neighborhoods have a safe community gathering spaces to enjoy the outdoors, and when neighbors of different backgrounds connect and build community bonds—**everybody wins**.

When undertaken strategically, parks creation, improvement, and activation can transform communities. By analyzing health, social, and environmental data, and listening to community-articulated priorities, we can support the creation of parks that will maximize benefits for residents. Our focus on equity actively engages schools, senior centers, low-income populations, and immigrant communities to ensure that we reach the whole community.

Study after study reveals that access to the outdoors and green space improves human health, happiness, and well-being, beyond the measurable benefits of reducing pollution, cooling air temperatures, and filtering stormwater. Research demonstrates that converting vacant lots to quality

green space reduces crime and increases trust among community members. By building, improving, and activating quality parks in underserved areas and partnering with local residents, we are investing not only in economic growth, but in community growth.

Ka Manawa Kūpono ma ‘A‘ala Pāka (The opportunity at ‘A‘ala Park)

‘A‘ala Park is a 6.69-acre City-operated park in the heart of an exceptionally dense and underserved community. This urban ‘āina (land) is located in the ‘A‘ala ‘Ili (traditional smaller land division) of the Kou Ahupua‘a (traditional Hawaiian land division roughly from the mountains to the sea) of the Kona Moku (district) of O‘ahu, part of a historical breadbasket in present day ‘Iwilei, Honolulu Harbor, Sand Island, and Pearl Harbor. The area was famed for a complex of Hawaiian fishponds, intensive irrigation systems, agriculture, and wetlands.

The Free Kindergarten and Children’s Aid Association led the establishment of ‘A‘ala Park in 1900-1904 as part of an island wide playground movement and later turned the park over to the City. The park thrived as a political rallying place, a site for ethnic festivals (e.g., sumo wrestling) and community sports leagues (e.g., ethnic baseball leagues), and was a bustling hub of small business activity (shops, bakeries, laundries, theaters) and residences next to the City’s main train station where plantation workers gathered to organize the first labor unions in Hawai‘i. In the early 1990s, the City used the park as a “tent city” for the houseless, which was dismantled after well-publicized reports of a crime spree originating at the park. It is also considered a birthplace of modern skateboarding in Honolulu. Historical and social challenges continue to shape the park.

Today, over 18,000 people live within a ten-minute walk of the park. **Fifty-three (53) percent** of those households are low-income. The area is ethnically diverse, with over **fifty-five (55) percent** of residents speaking a first language other than English. The Downtown-Chinatown area lacks close to home, safe, welcoming public spaces for families to reconnect with nature, cultural resources, and other community members. The area also suffers from inequitable social, economic, environmental, and health issues such as poverty, houselessness, drug use, urban blight, disproportionately high rates of diabetes and pre-diabetes, and crime and public safety concerns— challenges that are likely to worsen as temperatures rise, and as urban heat island effects and severe storm events intensify.

Despite these challenges, ‘A‘ala Park is a beautiful park with a storied history reflective of Hawai‘i’s history and ethnic diversity. Community led park improvements, programming, and usage provide an opportunity to lift up community voices and empower residents to improve their health and quality of life, utilizing Trust for Public Land’s community-focused **Parks for People** strategies to facilitate an interactive community participatory design process and community driven park activation and

Park Statistics

- 100 million+ people nationwide do not live within a 10-minute walk of a park or open space.
- 31% of Honolulu city and county residents do not have a close-to-home park.
- 18,000 residents live within a 10 minute walk of ‘A‘ala park.
- 53% of those residents are low income.
- 45% of those residents were born in another country.
- 55% of those residents speak a first language other than English.
- 38% of those residents are youth or seniors.

Source: Trust for Public Land, Parkscore <https://www.tpl.org/parkscore> and Parkserve <https://www.tpl.org/parkserve>.

programming. Surrounding residents and businesses will have the opportunity to come together to articulate a shared vision for the park that honors its past and looks toward a shared future.

KE KĀLAI & KE KA‘AKĀLAI (OUR APPROACH & STRATEGY)

At Trust for Public Land, community is at the heart of everything we do. We believe that everyone deserves access to the benefits of nature and the outdoors. We understand that land and people are intimately connected. Often, the traditional approach to park development involves inconvenient public hearings that check regulatory boxes. Our work takes a different approach based on our experiences in similar settings. Working hand-in-hand with communities, we support the efforts of historically marginalized groups to access the outdoors by delivering park and green space solutions that lift up community voices and help to address wide-ranging challenges from a unique perspective.

In our community centered work at ‘A‘ala Park, Trust for Public Land is committed to incorporate a lens of health, equity, and climate, identifying all segments of the community and including them in the decision-making processes affecting their surroundings and environment. We take the time to listen to all voices: residents living within a 10-Minute Walk of ‘A‘ala Park, surrounding businesses, park users, people passing through or near the park, and the community at-large from keiki to kūpuna. The ‘A‘ala Park community is comprised of a diverse fabric of groups and people. We want all of them to feel

Photo Credit: John Bilderback



welcome, share their memories of this historical gem, facilitate community leadership of creating a vision for the future, and inspire others. We work with and alongside community, nurturing deep partnerships.

At the end of 2020 and in the midst of the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, Trust for Public Land launched our Parks for People program in Hawai'i, starting with a three-year pilot project at 'A'ala Park. In Year One (late 2020-2021), we sought to deeply engage the community that lives and works around 'A'ala Park. Our grass roots community engagement efforts were hindered and delayed by the pandemic, lockdown, meeting restrictions, peoples' reluctance to gather, COVID-19 variant surges, and Zoom/digital "meeting fatigue." However, we pivoted and partnered with public agencies, community organizations, and service providers to conduct "listening" sessions in and around the park, solicited survey responses (informally and via an intercept survey) of park users and surrounding community and business members, met with different community and business groups, interviewed focus groups in a partnership with American Savings Bank and the University of Hawai'i, and measured park usage using the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC).

This report summarizes the grass roots community engagement results. These results will serve as the basis for Year Two (2022) activities that will focus on community based interactive participatory design – small and large group meetings, iterative community feedback sessions, and workshops/charettes. We will also focus on interim park activations informed by the grass roots community engagement completed thus far, and work with the City on deeper public/private partnerships. Year Three will include raising funding for potential community desired capital improvements in the park and working out a sustainable plan to continue community led activations, events, and programming. We hope to create a replicable model that can be used in other communities and with other parks and public spaces.

Together, we will improve community health and equity, enhance personal well-being and connections to the outdoors, and promote environmental and economic sustainability in and around 'A'ala Park and the Downtown-Chinatown area.

E Lohe Mai I Nā Leo O Ka 'Āina (Listen to the Many Voices of the Land)

Throughout our grass roots community engagement, Trust for Public Land listened to many voices of the land – the voices of the past, the voices of current park users, residents, and businesses near the park, and the voices of keiki, kūpuna, and 'ohana – using several qualitative and quantitative methods. By deeply listening, we have learned from the community and will lift up their voices in the next community participatory design and interim activation phase.

NĀNĀ PONO (QUALITATIVE): Our qualitative community engagement efforts included researching the park's and the land's history, holding listening sessions and "talk stories" at community and business meetings, partnering with "Park Listeners" - community organizations and services providers working in and around the park, and interviewing focus groups in partnership with a University of Hawai'i public health researcher.

NĀ HELU (QUANTITATIVE): Our quantitative community engagement efforts included conducting an intercept survey of 412 people, completing informal community-based surveys, and deploying the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC) to measure park usage. The following sections summarize relevant data from these grass roots community engagement efforts with the full data/analysis attached as appendices.

NĀNĀ PONO (QUALITATIVE) RESULTS

Nā Leo Kūpuna (Voices of the Past/Historical Research)

In partnership with Dr. Donna Ann Camvel, a lecturer at the Windward Community College, we researched the history of the park and the land, including the Kalihi, Mokauea, Iwilei, 'A'ala, and Kou areas, as the kahua (foundation) of informing our community-driven approach. The Native Hawaiian methodology of Papakū Makawalu, "A cognitive and empirical process that uses a Hawaiian ancestral lens to study and understand the interconnectedness of everything in the natural world," was employed to determine place-based specificities and their associative connections to place, which required the use of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, or Hawaiian language. This process of understanding Hawaiian mo'olelo (story) of pre-contact 'A'ala included research of historical maps, and review of articles from various nūpepa Hawai'i (Hawaiian language newspapers). This research has revealed that 'A'ala Park has a shared, rich, and unique cultural history worth honoring and celebrating.

Nā Palapala'āina (Maps)

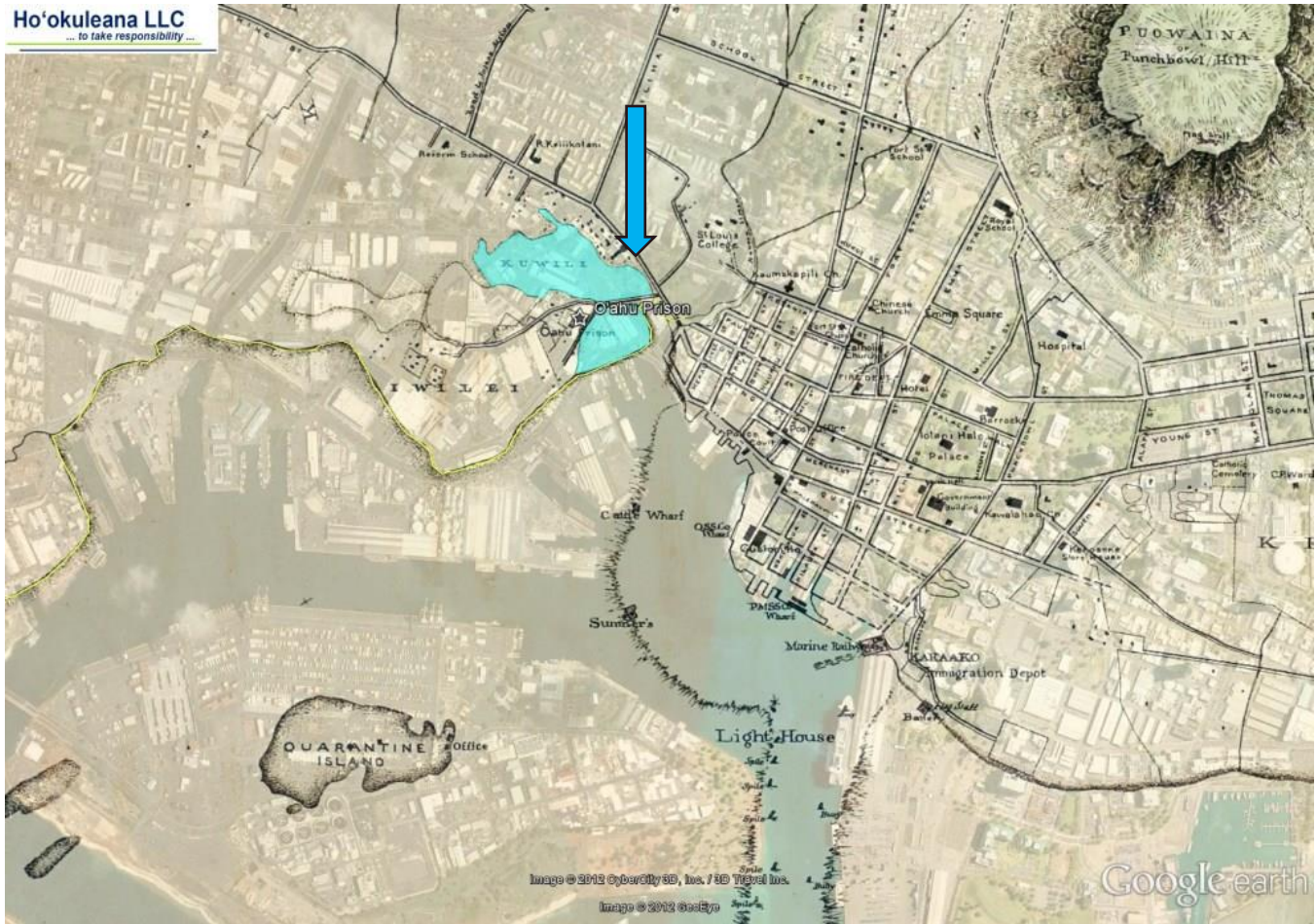
'A'ala itself is an 'Ili (subdivision) in the ahupua'a (land division) of Honolulu located in the moku (district) of Kona, on the island of O'ahu bounded today by Nu'uaniu Stream, and King, Liliha, and Beretania Streets. Early maps of the area show the 'āina of 'A'ala is bordered by the 'ili of Kō'iu'iu makai, Nini, Kamakela, Kauluwela, and Kō'iu'iu mauka, and is connected to the ahupua'a of Kapālama and Nu'uaniu. The falls of Waipuia and Waipuilani fed the streams of Mo'ole, Makuku, and Lulumahu, which joined Nu'uaniu stream as it made its way makai toward the sea. The streams of Waolani and Pauoa converged makai at the mouth of Nu'uaniu stream to flow into the Bay of Māmala and its fisheries located at Kou (now Honolulu).

According to Kame'eleihiwa, "In the 1880s on O'ahu, 78% of all Ahupua'a, or valley land divisions, were so extremely well-watered that lo'i kalo, or wet land taro terraces, were constructed from the back of valleys down to shoreline."¹ This is indicative of the vast food producing capabilities of the area prior to Western contact and is depicted in maps detailing the Honolulu ahupua'a. The bountiful fisheries of Ka'akaukui, Koholaloa, and Mokauea, flowed into the fishponds of Pāhou'iki, Auiki, Ananoho, Kapālama (a fishery), Iwilei (an ancient fishpond), Kawa, referred to as, "The King's fish pond," and other smaller inland fishponds.² 'A'ala Park's approximate location appears to have been next to an ancient inland fishpond known as Kūwili (which has several meanings, including swirling - as to spin in a dance; to move restlessly; embrace; caress³).

¹ Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa, *Food and Power in Hawai'i: Visions of Food Democracy* (UH Press, 2017 revision to chapter 3), p. 2 http://www.avakonohiki.org/uploads/1/2/5/5/12550111/2017.kameeleihiwa.kaulanaoahuainamomona.pt1.1-20_---reduced.pdf ("Kame'eleihiwa").

² Peter T. Young, "The Reef," *Images of Old Hawai'i*, September 16, 2015 <http://imagesofoldhawaii.com/the-reef/> (accessed 3/12/21). "On the opposite side ('Ewa) of Nu'uaniu stream was a fishpond, identified as "Kawa" or the "King's fish pond." Iwilei at that time was a small, narrow peninsula, less populated than the Honolulu-side of Nu'uaniu stream. The new prison was on a marshy no-man's land almost completely cut off from the main island by two immense fishponds. The causeway road (initially called "Prison Road," later "Iwilei Street") split Kawa Pond into Kawa and Kūwili fishponds." <http://imagesofoldhawaii.com/the-reef/>.

³ Pukui & Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary* (1986)



Source: Peter Young, Ho'okuleana (arrow points to 'A'ala Park)

Nearly the entire coastlines of the Kona and Ewa districts were lined with fertile and food producing fishponds or 'āina momona (fat, fertile, productive and well-watered). These ponds were fed by freshwater streams which flowed from the inland rainforests and mountain streams, filling the 'auwai or irrigation ditches along the way, and inundating the lo'i kalo or wetland taro fields. The fresh water met the kai or salt water at the mouth of Nu'uaniu stream creating a muliwai or nutrient-rich estuary in which the production of fish was able to feed the populace. As noted by Kame'eleihiwa, "Lo'i kalo systems were built in 63 out of the 80 Ahupua'a of O'ahu. While the construction and maintenance of lo'i kalo required extensive and skilled manpower, wetland taro produced 10-15 times more food per acre than dry-land taro."⁴

Explorer Otto von Kotzebue's expedition recorded the taro fields located above Kou. His 1817 map notes the 'ili of 'A'ala as a site where extensive kalo fields were planted. The area shown below attests to the numerous lo'i kalo located in the area to the left of Nu'uaniu Stream, with the approximate

⁴ Kame'eleihiwa at 2.

location of the park indicated by the arrow. This area is the 'ili of 'A'ala. Maps of the area evidence that the 'A'ala 'Ili, adjoining Māmala and Kou, was part of the productive food basket that fed the chiefs and maka'āinana (non-chiefly people) before and after contact with the West. Nu'uaniu, Pauoa and Kapālama streams fed lo'i, māla (dry gardens), the makai muliwai, and loko i'a (fishponds).

Nā Mo'olelo (Stories & Names)

Hawaiian language stories and place names of the pre-contact era include the story of Māmala (the original name of Honolulu Harbor) a mo'o wahine (Hawaiian deity) who played Kōnane (similar to Chess), surfed the waves, and protected the bay with her shark husband 'Ouhu until she left him and he became the shark god of Waikīkī and Koko Head.⁵ Other highlights include stories naming the area a gathering place for ancient ali'i (chiefs) to play Konāne and the significance of the area's rich agricultural wetlands. In the song "Na ka Pueo,"⁶ the name of the bay Māmala is juxtaposed to mālama, to protect: Ma ka 'ilikai a'o Māmala, mālama iho ke aloha, on the surface [of the sea] of Māmala, protect the love.

The name "'A'ala" means "fragrant" and an early story of the area references a grove of sweet smelling hala trees.⁷ Later interpretations have attributed the name to sweet smelling laundries of the area.



1817 map by Otto von Kotzebue (arrow shows approximate location of park). Park

⁵ Ben Finney & James D. Houston, *Surfing: A History of the Ancient Hawaiian Sport* (1996), p. 39 ("Finny & Houston"); William Drake Westervelt, *Legends of Old Honolulu* (1916), pp. 15, 52-54 ("Westervelt").

⁶ Samuel H. Elbert & Noelani Mahoe, *Na Mele O Hawai'i Nei* (1970); Curt Sanburn, "The Gathering Place," *Hana Hou Magazine*, Issue 21.5, 2018. <https://hanahou.com/21.5/the-gathering-place>.

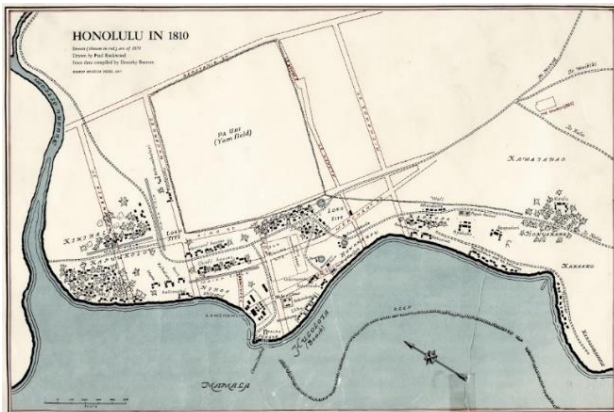
⁷ Mary Kawena Pukui, Samuel H. Elbert, and Esther Mookini, *Place Names of Hawai'i Revised and Expanded Edition* (1974).

Ka Mo‘o o ka Pāka – I ka wā mahope: Ho‘okūlanakauhale & Alahao

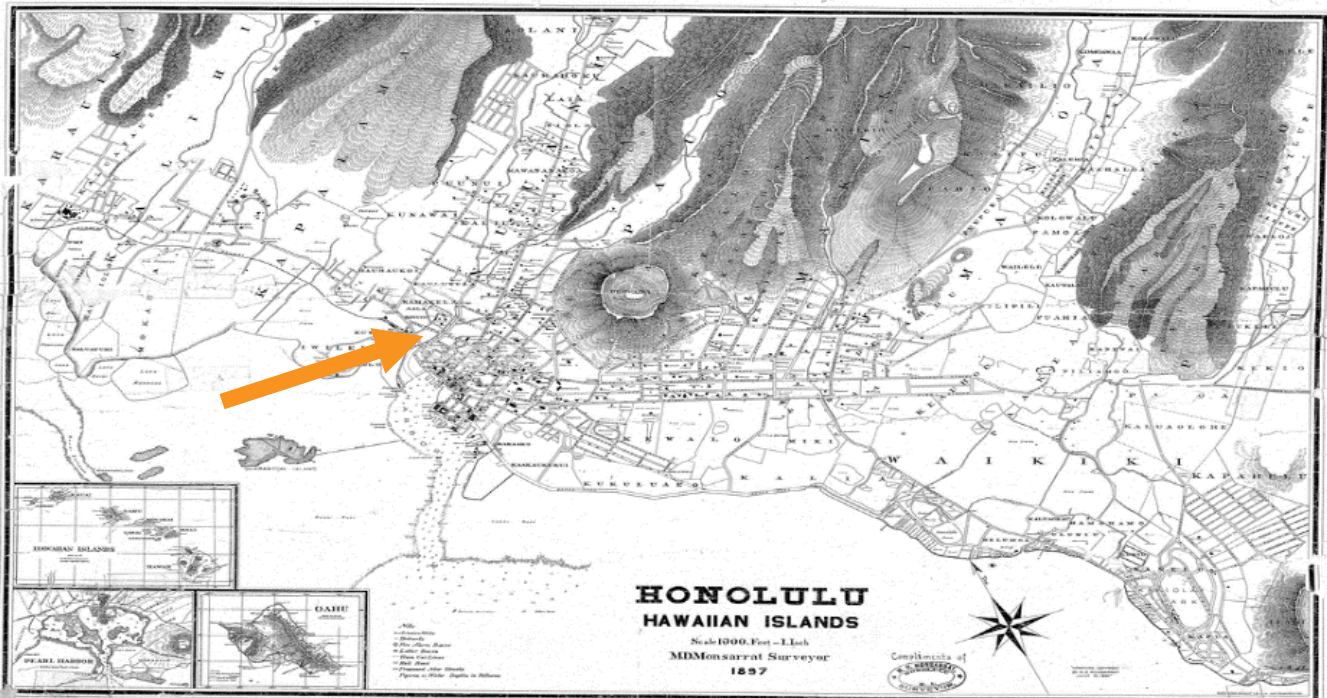
Story of the Park – Post-contact: Urbanization & Railroads

Ho‘okūlanakauhale (Urbanization)

During the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s, Kalihi, Mokauea, Iwilei, ‘A‘ala, and Kou, or Honolulu, were extensively developed and urbanized, rendering the topography nearly unrecognizable. Expansive dredging of the Honolulu Harbor and the filling of most fishponds, including Kawa and Kūwili, industrialized the area.



Reconstructed map of Honolulu in 1810 and Google overlay.⁸



1897 Map of Honolulu. Source: <http://www.avakonohiki.org/maps-kona.html> (arrow points to park location)

⁸ Peter T. Young, *Reconstructed 1810 Honolulu Map*, Bishop Museum, Ho‘okuleana, LLC. <http://totakeresponsibility.blogspot.com/2012/03/honolulu-1810-map.html>

Nā Alahao (Railroads)

O'ahu Rail and Land Company (OR&L), owned by Benjamin Dillingham and chartered on February 4, 1889, drove the industrialization of Iwilei. The historic OR&L Terminal remains today, located directly makai and across King Street of the park. "The property was first developed in 1889, with railroad tracks and a wooden, Queen Anne Style terminal building within the boundaries of the Kūwili Fishpond."⁹ A historic building survey regarding the terminal stated:



O'ahu Rail & Land Company Terminal¹⁰

The OR&L Terminal parcel is situated directly opposite 'A'ala Park, just south of Kalihi Palama and just north of Chinatown. When OR&L Co. operations were at their height in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, the area around the OR&L Terminal was bustling, with the surrounding streets lined with shops and residences. Neighborhood residents benefitted from access to easy transportation, and shop owners' benefited from the steady influx of customers from outlying communities. It was customary for plantation workers from outlying areas of Oahu to ride the OR&L lines into Honolulu to do their shopping on Saturdays. Disembarking the railcars at the OR&L Terminal in Iwilei, it was a short walk across Nuuanu Stream to Chinatown. During the active OR&L Co. years, the 'A'ala neighborhood, Chinatown and downtown were shopping destinations for groceries, clothing or everyday items, in addition to souvenirs for military personnel. These neighborhoods were also recreation destinations, with movie theaters and restaurants for dates or family outings. The OR&L Co. Terminal was also a point where people transferred to streetcars for travel to destinations farther east, or take a train to the country for the day.¹⁰

The report described the area in detail:

'A'ala neighborhood was filled with shops and residences, and 'A'ala Street itself began almost directly in front of the building. 'A'ala was a natural meeting place. Honolulu Harbor was the port of entry for all immigrants. 'A'ala was also the gateway from Honolulu to Pearl Harbor and points Ewa. The OR&L (Oahu Railway and Land) train depot was located on King Street, just across Iwilei, so 'A'ala was the first thing people from the rural areas saw when they came to town on the train, and the last stop for late shopping before going home. The Dillingham-Liliha-King intersection was the primary route for vehicular traffic and the HRT (Honolulu Rapid Transit) streetcars and buses passed right there on King Street, and this was great for business...Minority groups tend to locate in ethnic enclaves just outside of areas occupied by the dominant mainstream where they often are not welcomed, and 'A'ala was a perfect low-rent area...So in the 1920s and 30s this place was alive and jumping, flourishing and exciting. The timing was

⁹ *Id.*, at 3.

¹⁰ *Id.*, at 13-14.

right and 'A'ala became the place to congregate, shop, share cultural values, exchange ideas and feel very comfortable in the process. 'A'ala Rengo was the shopping center with the best and the most for the Japanese and the salespeople treated their customers with class, just like in the old country. The 'A'ala Market had all the fresh produce one could wish for, as well as treats for the kids.¹¹

Ka Mo'ō O Ke Pāka –Hānau 'Ia Ka Pāka 1970s: Pahuhopu, Rengō, & Hālāwai Hō'eu'eu Story of the Park – A Park is Born to 1970s: Homeruns, Rengō & Rallies

'Ai Puni (Homeruns)

In the 1890s, plans were laid for reclaiming this wetland section of Iwilei; and in 1898, the fill project began. By 1899, masonry work to contain the stream was completed and remaining areas were filled with sand and volcanic material. In 1900, the great plague fire of Chinatown displaced thousands of Chinese and Japanese residents and business owners. A few years later, the Free Kindergarten & Aid Association advocated for the completion of a park as part of a national park movement. Bounded on one side by Nu'uaniu Stream and by Chinatown - with its laundries, shops, slaughterhouses, rail yards, piers and tenements - on the other three sides, 'A'ala Park was born.



'A'ala Park circa early 1900's, (Saga, Scott), ©2020 Ho'okuleana LLC.

According to research by Wendie McAllaster and Don Hibbard in a presentation for the Historic Hawai'i Foundation, the park was a vibrant and actively used space:

The park featured a bandstand and two baseball diamonds and baseball became the park's defining image. Avid fans came out to watch their local teams - the Honolulu's, the Kamehameha's, the Punahou's, the Athlete's and the Maile Ilima's (the top five teams in 1902) - and weekends often found both fields full with simultaneous games...Until 1947, the train ran from Ka'ena Point into Honolulu, with the line ending directly across from 'A'ala Park. Jay Landis remembers, 'Every day the train would leave here, go down to Ka'ena Point, go to Kahuku, go load up the sugar and pineapple in Waialua area, come around the point, stop in Makua to pick up cattle if they had cattle

¹¹ *Id.*

and load up the sugar and go back to town.’ Chinatown and ‘A‘ala Park were the meeting place for urban and rural, land and sea, work and leisure, and cultures from all over the world.¹²

Rengō (Merchant Cooperative)

The area around ‘A‘ala Park featured vibrant Japanese/Okinawan small businesses. The ‘A‘ala Rengō was a cooperative association of merchants who operated in and around Chinatown, River and Hotel streets, and the Waikīkī side of ‘A‘ala. Reporter Curt Sanburn noted in a story for Honolulu Magazine:

All around the park, two-story shops, hotels, theaters, dance halls, taxi stands and tenements sprouted to service the emerging urban hub. Enterprising Japanese and Chinese fish sellers and grocers established the open-air, harbor-oriented Aala Market in 1918, with thirty food stalls under its big double roof. On the same block of King Street, Japanese merchant families pooled resources and opened Aala Rengo (union), a sidewalk strip of dry goods and department stores geared to the domestic needs of the district’s then-predominant Japanese customers. On the other side of the park, along Beretania, a row of family-run hotels included the Saikaya, the Shinshuya, the Kobayashi, the Nakamura and the Yamashiro. As detailed in Michael M. Okihiro’s 2003 history, ‘A‘ala: The Story of a Japanese Community in Hawai‘i, these hostelries catered to mostly Japanese visitors, both local and foreign, at a cost of about \$1.25 per night.¹³



Merchants in Chinatown. © 2020 Ho‘okuleana LLC

Oral histories from the University of Hawai‘i recall the area around the park as a vibrant business area. Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto shared the following,

¹² Hawai‘iHistory.org, ‘A‘ala Park, 2021 Info Grafik, Inc.

<http://www.hawaiihistory.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=ig.page&PageID=550>

¹³ Curt Sanburn, “The Gathering Place,” *Hana Hou Magazine*, ISSUE 21.5: OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2018, <https://hanahou.com/21.5/the-gathering-place>

To me, the 'A'ala Department Stores, as they were called in English, and 'A'ala Rengo (Hyakka-ten) in Japanese, was formed primarily as an advertising togetherness, rather than one conducting business because each business was separate. They did have, as I recall, a back-to-school sale and Christmas or nenmatsu sales. And at these times, they advertised---! don't recall newspaper advertising, but I do recall advertising on the radio because I used to accompany Mr. [Noboru] Hino when it was his turn to talk on the radio. And Mr. Hino, at that time, wrote words to a then popular song, "Oka wo Koete," because we were (across) the bridge, right across the bridge that covered Nu'uuanu Stream. He started (this) song, and you know I'm the worst singer but [JK sings] Bashi, hashi wo koete yuko yo 'A 'ala no

And that's all, I'm sorry that I can't remember but there was a whole song connected that was used in the advertising. Outside of that we used to have---the building itself was decorated by the 'A'ala Department Stores at Christmastime. There were strings of lights all over the building. That was a pretty big building to have lights on. The monkeypod trees in 'A'ala Park were [also] lighted. So people from the rural areas, or even people from Honolulu had an opportunity to have a stroll in the area and then shop. (On) those Christmas sale days, the hours were very long. The stores stayed open way past ten o'clock as I recall. And they opened at the same time which was somewhere about 7:30 [A.M.] or 8:00 [A.M.]¹⁴

The 'A'ala Rengo functioned like a cooperative or a union, and merchant members would advertise, conduct sales and promotions for their wares and goods. A song was composed, "Oka wo Koete," which located the merchants across the bridge that covered Nu'uuanu Stream.¹⁵

¹⁴ Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto, Oral History Interview with Jane Komeiji, April 15, 1992 Nu'uuanu, O'ahu.

¹⁵ Id.

Hālawai Hō'eu'eu (Rallies)

The park hosted concerts of diverse bands, sumo wrestling matches, lei vendors, and food stands with mochi, saimin, and more. There were parades with pā'ū riders and kāhili bearers. Celebrations were held to honor historical moments and cultural figures such as Jose P. Rizal (a Filipino nationalist) and the inauguration of the Commonwealth of the Philippines. The park also was the site of labor union and political rallies. Below is an image of Japanese and Filipino sugar workers striking together and displaying a placard with Abraham Lincoln's image as a symbol of unity and equality at a mass meeting at 'A'ala Park in 1920.



Hawaii State Archives

MALAMAIA NA HOOMANAO NO KA LA HANAU O WAKINEKONA



NA MOIWAHINE O NA MOKUPUNI MAI KA HEMA MAI—MISS MUNDON O OAHU; MRS. MORTON O MAUI; MISS WILHELMINA O HAWAII; MISS MAHOE O MOLOKAI, AHE MISS SILVA O KAUAI.



O KAMEHAMEHA ME KONA MAU KAUKAULIHI AHE KE AKUA K'I.

Other nūpepa Hawai'i (Hawaiian language newspaper) research noted the park hosting exciting events such as the first Kūkini Race from Honolulu to Hale'iwa (28 miles), a march celebrating Kamehameha I (pictured above), the Queen Lili'uokalani Keiki Hula Competition, and theatrical plays. The park also hosted community rallies protesting against federal redevelopment of the area, evictions, and government corruption. In 1961, when the photo below was taken, the City counted 39 families, consisting of 239 people, and 77 businesses on the 4.1-acre lot bounded by Beretania and King.¹⁶

¹⁶ Spiffy, sporty changes coming to Aala Park, It's About Time, Star Bulletin (Nov. 27, 200)
<http://archives.starbulletin.com/2000/11/27/news/story7.html>



Photo by Terry Luke, Star Bulletin (1961)



Source: <https://www.hawaiipeoplefund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/REMEMBERING-CHINATOWN.pdf>

Ka Mo‘o O ke Pāka – Kēia Wā

Story of the Park: Present Day

The park’s recent history has been mixed. In 1990, in an attempt to address the growing houseless population, the City erected a temporary “Tent City,” which was a source of controversy throughout its existence until it was removed in 1993 after a well-publicized night of “wilding” in the park involving a murder and crime spree.¹⁷ The park’s reputation as a place where poor and houseless individuals gather has been memorialized in a popular song by Johnny Noble dating from the 1930s, and sung by modern musicians today, “Manuela Boy”:

Chorus:

A-Manuel a-boy, my dear boy
You no more hila-hila (embarrassment or shame)
No more five cent (penniless), no more house (homeless)
You go ‘A‘ala Park a-hiamoe (sleep outside in ‘A‘ala Park)



Screen shot credit: APB Productions

‘A‘ala Park holds a central place in modern Honolulu skateboarding history. Skateboarding began in the 1970s in the park in a roller rink velodrome that preceded the current skate park. Skateboarders erected plywood on the rink fence and used that as a “wave” to skateboard radical tricks. Parks staff added a concrete lip around the rink to deter unauthorized additions, but the ever inventive skateboarders used the lip for lip slides and other moves. In the late 1990s, Mayor Jeremy Harris proposed new investments in skateparks, including at ‘A‘ala Park. A nearby skateboard shop APB Boardshop is named after the original crew that skateboarded at ‘A‘ala Park during this time. One of the co-founders of APB Boardshop helped to design and renovate the skate park. The current

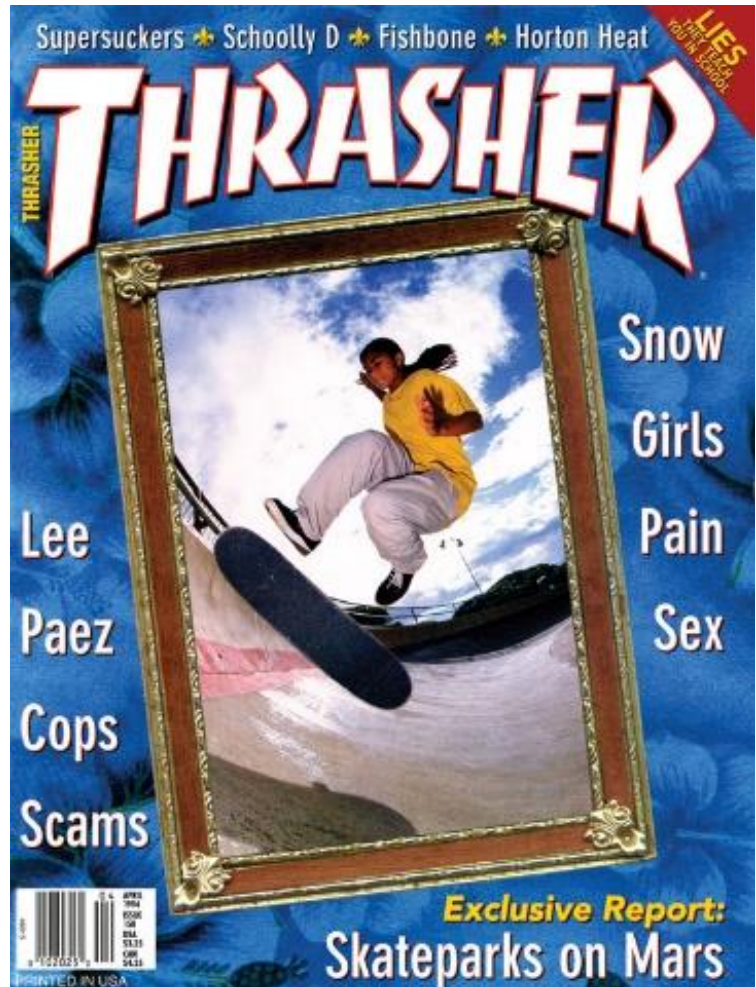
skate park was completed in 2002.

One of the few and first professional women skateboarders in the nation, Jamie Reyes, lived in the area near ‘A‘ala Park and was part of the early crew that first skateboarded in the park. She is one of three women to be featured on the cover of the national skateboarding magazine Thrasher and in the cover shot, appears to be skateboarding at ‘A‘ala Park.

¹⁷ Al Yamauchi, Honolulu Star Bulletin (1967)

In 2000, the City invested in major improvements in the park -- \$2.3 million which included the basketball court, softball field, parking lot, elevated grassy stage area, playground equipment and walkways. The City also began planning for a skate park that was eventually built and stands today.¹⁸ More recently, in 2018, the City closed the park for two months and reopened it with a new off-leash dog park created with support from a public-private partnership between the City and a non-profit organization called the 'A'ala Dog Park Association. Additional improvements included grass fields and irrigation, a renovated comfort station, and renovated play court and playground.¹⁹

Current ownership of the park is divided between the State and the City. The State owns the 3.64 acre eastern section park located nearest to River Street (including the Skate Park), but has transferred the park to the jurisdiction of the City and County of Honolulu Parks Department via a Governor's Executive Order. The City owns the 3.05 acres at the apex of King and Beretania Streets.



Jamie Reyes, Thrasher cover, April 1994 photo: Starr

¹⁸ Spiffy, party changes coming to Aala Park, It's About Time, Star Bulletin (Nov. 27, 200) <http://archives.starbulletin.com/2000/11/27/news/story7.html>

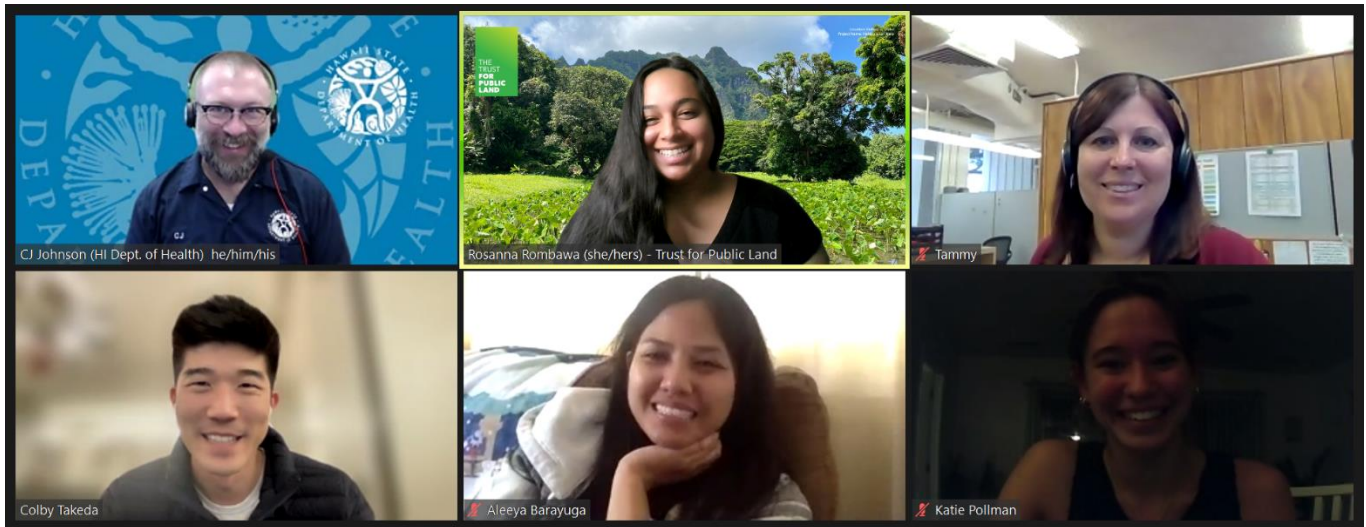
¹⁹ New off-leash dog park opens at Aala Park, Star Advertiser, Nina Wu (March 11, 2019). <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2019/03/11/breaking-news/new-dog-park-is-now-open-at-aala-park/>

Listening Sessions/"Talk Stories" & Ka Ho'olauna Lolouila (Virtual Visits)

Due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020 thru early 2021, Trust for Public Land focused on organizing small in-person and virtual meetings with over thirty leaders across a broad range of sectors including local foundations, government agencies, businesses, social services, and nonprofits. We asked participants to share their experiences in the park and sought their input about the future of 'A'ala Park, and invited participation in future steering committee and stakeholder group opportunities. In many cases, these meetings led to referrals to individuals, organizations, community standing meetings, and other meetings. Organizations and leaders we met with included:

Age-Friendly Honolulu	Kids Hurt Too
Blue Zones	Kukui Children's Foundation & Center
Chambers Young Professionals Group	Kukui Gardens
Child & Family Services	Mediation Center of the Pacific
City and County of Honolulu, Department of Parks & Recreation (previous and current administration)	O'ahu Economic Development Board
City and County of Honolulu, Prosecutors Office	O'ahu Metropolitan Planning Organization
City and County of Honolulu, Office of Housing	Pacific Gateway Center
City Councilmember Radiant Cordero	PBR Planning
City Councilmember Carol Fukunaga	P.E.A.C.E.
Downtown-Chinatown Neighborhood Board	PHOCUSED
Farrington High School/Creative Digital Media	Polyline Urban Planning
Hawaii Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development	Project Vision
Hawaiian Community Assets	Punawai Rest Stop
Hawai'i Appleseed	Rotary Club of Honolulu members
Hawaii Community Foundation	State of Hawai'i, Department of Health, Chronic Disease & Health Promotion Division, Statewide Quickbuild Group, and Kūpuna 'A'ala Project
Hawaii Institute of Public Health (including additional meeting with Kūpuna Food Security Council)	State of Hawai'i, House Representative Daniel Holt
HawaiiUSA Federal Credit Union	State of Hawai'i, State Senator Karl Rhoads
Historic Hawai'i Foundation	The Fringe Art Space
HOME Project	Townscape
Hui Aloha members	We Are Oceania (WAO) (including additional meetings with Community Resources Team)
H3RC	UH Center on Aging
Interagency Council (IAC)	UH Mānoa Community Design School
Kalihi Interagency Group	Weed & Seed (Chinatown)
Ka Po'e Kaka'ako	

Mahalo to everyone for your time, consideration, and mana'o (thoughts)! We look forward to connecting with more community members as we move forward.



Trust for Public Land was also invited to participate in two community events where food was distributed to over 600 families in Chinatown and Kalihi in late 2020. TPL donated gift bags of essential COVID-19 PPE and snacks, and over 600 informational flyers about the ‘A‘ala Park pilot project. At nearly every virtual and event opportunity, TPL continued to share an informal online survey link and/or QR code to gather community input. We continue seeking more opportunities to share, present, and gather community feedback and welcome invitations to do so from all sectors.

These efforts also generated a list of over 300 potential partners, stakeholder groups, and/or steering committee members that we engaged or plan to engage. We organized our list as:

- Residents
- Health & Human Services
- Businesses
- NGOs
- Religious Organizations
- Community Groups
- Government
- Schools & Education

Stakeholder groups were ranked in order of priority based on distance to the park and current level of engagement with the park. We reached out to surrounding resident buildings soliciting feedback about park sentiments and suggested improvements through resident and resource coordinators, property managers, and association leaders. We offered to pay for newsletter ads, set up survey and collection boxes in common areas with CSA incentives from our ‘āina-based partners, and present to their boards and/or residents. However, many building staff and residents had no extra capacity to facilitate contact with residents, gather feedback, or allow in-person meetings given the pressures of the COVID-19 global pandemic. We encountered challenges with some building staff living/working off-island or off-site, receiving no responses after multiple attempts to connect, and received many outright rejections letting us know these engagement methods were not options at the time due to internal COVID-19 policy restrictions.

Key takeaways from these primarily virtual meetings included:

- General consensus that the park had improved somewhat since recent improvements in 2018 and American Savings Bank's new headquarters being built across from the park, but continued concerns about safety, crime, drugs, and houseless in and around the park.
- Consensus that residents living near the park and park users should lead/guide the type of improvements and programming offered in the park: "The community should lead," stated one employee of Hawai'i State Federal Credit Union.
- Concerns that, even if the park is improved, existing park staff cannot adequately manage and maintain the park and make it safe for all.
- Agreement that the park had an inspiring and diverse history that was not well known.
- Agreement that the park could be venue for community gatherings or other cultural or health/wellness activities to make the area more vibrant and welcoming.
- Consensus that parking was an issue – the lot is very small, and monopolized all day by people trying to avoid paying for parking.

In early 2021, many business stakeholders were also struggling under the weight of the pandemic and let us know they had no capacity to serve in an advisory role, stakeholder group, or steering committee for our efforts. As we began to share more opportunities for partnership with area community service providers (immigrant services, housing, health, youth, City/State), we realized the critical nature of their services to this neighborhood resulted in a lack of capacity to take on park listening projects unrelated to COVID-19 relief and vaccinations. As a result, Trust for Public Land shifted to working with community leaders and service providers that served underrepresented groups because they were actively present in the park and their community engagement objectives allowed us to gather input from stakeholders in the area. At Trust for Public Land, we understand the importance of responding in ways that keep community at the center of everything we do, and look forward to future opportunities in 2022 to build pilina (connection) while supporting community resilience in response to COVID-19.

Pāna'i Like – Lohe 'Āina, Hana, Mālama 'Ōpio, Ho'olauna Lolouila o 'A'ala Pāka Reciprocity – "Park Listeners," Activities, & Youth Engagement of 'A'ala Park

Ka Lohe 'Āina ("Park Listeners")

In response to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, Trust for Public Land partnered with other organizations providing services in and around the park as "Park Listeners" to help us listen to and record community sentiment about the park and its future while performing core social services. Initial meetings with Park Listeners indicated this largely low-income neighborhood was in the midst of a severe public health disaster. The top three community concerns according to outreach workers were COVID-19 positivity rates (vaccines were unavailable at this time), income loss, and an accompanying increase in food insecurity.²⁰ Community leaders in Kalihi were rising, mobilizing, and responding to immediate needs and providing disaster relief. Gatherings were still limited and local parks turned into hubs of relief and community responsiveness.²¹

By Spring 2021, we were fortunate to enlist community partners in the area to kick-off park listening sessions introducing our project to surrounding residents, businesses, and service providers to support

²⁰ <https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/09/kalihi-has-the-worst-covid-19-outbreak-in-hawaii-heres-how-the-community-is-responding/>

²¹ <https://www.tpl.org/parks-and-the-pandemic>.

building pilina (connections) in the community as COVID-19 restrictions eased. Partnering with community leaders already working in and around the park connected us to the community, established trust, and facilitated additional community relationships. Consistent physical presence in and around the park allowed us to engage the community deeply, to learn from the community about the needs at 'A'ala Park, and to build connections that may foster sustainable stewardship for future park improvements. Park Listeners engaged community members and park users through informal listening/talk story sessions, administering surveys, and sharing snacks, water, light meals, informational resources, and the mo'olelo of 'A'ala.

"Park Listeners" included organizations such as We Are Oceania (WAO), which provides critical resources to the Micronesian community in and around Kalihi. By working with WAO during its food and COVID-19 supply distributions, TPL built pilina (establish trust and relationships) with a partner who is already deeply embedded in the Kalihi area and responsive to Micronesian community needs. WAO had capacity to incorporate our ongoing engagement with their existing outreach efforts, a challenge that many providers cited as the reason for not being able to support our more traditional community engagement efforts.



We Are Oceania (WAO)



Photo credit: Ikaika Anderson

Park Listeners asked those who were willing, to share about their relationship to the park, what they loved about ‘A‘ala Park, and what improvements would create a safer, healing, and more welcoming space for all.

Other partners and volunteers in Park Listener efforts included Adult Friends for Youth, Papa Ola Lōkahi, Ximena Healing, UH Mānoa Women’s Center, Child & Family Services, Sou’sed Productions, Project Koa Yoga, PAU Violence, The Fringe Art Space, Hawaii Community Bail Fund, Kimo’s Catering Company, Aloha Lei Company, and even avid skaters from the skate park!

Park listening sessions often offered tailored engagement activities such as Native American arts and crafts, painting in the park, keiki coloring activities, “pizza Saturdays” for skate park users, shared stories with Sou’sed Productions (a Micronesian media company), health and wellness activations, a senior walk activity, and talk stories. All activities were led by Park Listener community partners, free of charge, and adjusted regularly to follow continually changing COVID guidelines.

Other Park Listeners included Ka Po‘e o Kaka‘ako (KPOK), an organization whose leaders have experienced houselessness, and P.E.A.C.E., an organization that provides outreach and community building services to Hawai‘i’s houseless. The O‘ahu Intertribal Council (OIC), another Park Listener organization, led pandemic efforts to support the immediate needs of Native American and local residents, supplying light meals, water, and pandemic supplies in public parks. By partnering with and supporting community organizations like WAO, KPOK, P.E.A.C.E., and OIC in rising to meet the short-term needs of underserved communities affected by the pandemic, TPL was able to advance our community engagement efforts regarding ‘A‘ala Park. Groups like these, leading responsive grassroots pandemic relief, were able to incorporate TPL’s community engagement efforts into their existing services.



Photo credit: Ikaika Anderson



Photo credit: Ikaika Anderson

These collaborative community-driven efforts to build pilina (connection/trust) engaged 300 park users, facilitated donations of 100 free mini art kits and over 1000 meals donated to community groups, partners, and/or park users. Through our Park Listener partners, we are able to engage members of the houseless community, build trust, and promote positive engagement.

Voices Collected By Park Listeners:

“These kinds of activities and this presence are so important for the community to feel welcome again. This park has always been about bringing different groups from the neighborhood together. Even my family from the Philippines know of this park by name. It’s a special place and we’ve lost sight of that.” – Mani P.

“A’ala Park presents an incredible missed opportunity to promote health and exercise in this neighborhood. I live around the corner but have to drive across town for equipment that lets me get a good workout in.” Quinn C. “I love this park and this place. People just don’t understand how much being unstable limits my ability to do other things or contribute outside of just surviving.” – Ria L.



Photo credit: Ikaika Anderson



Photo credit: Ikaika Anderson

Ka Mālama 'Ōpio (Youth Engagement)

Based on the informal listening sessions and meetings and community surveys, a common theme emerged -- the importance of youth engagement. Youth are an important stakeholder group with a lifetime of park utilization ahead of them. They represent long-term opportunities for future stewardship of 'A'ala Park – but how do youth from this community use the park now and how can we improve health outcomes for a group that is traditionally excluded from urban development processes?

Through our Park Listeners, we reached out to various youth organizations and classrooms for input and learned that youth struggling with houselessness, poverty, substance misuse, separated families, and/or sex trafficking survival are users of local parks (particularly 'A'ala Park). Community partners provided recommendations that we used to tailor our engagement activities for this group using safe, trauma-informed care, and best practices.

As a result, once we wrapped up in-park listening sessions due to the COVID-19 Delta variant surge and increased restrictions in late 2021, we enlisted Park Listeners to facilitate talk story sessions using culturally-relevant activities for six site visits. We visited Hale Kipa, Hale Lanipolua, Susannah Wesley, RYSE, and Farrington High School to engage students following staff recommendations.



Photo credit: Ikaika Anderson



Photo credit: Malia Kaio

Cultural arts classes included haku lei (lei making) and 'ohe kāpala (bamboo kapa printing) for at-risk youth service organizations to build pilina (connection, relationship) and learn more about this demographic's relationship to 'A'ala Park and promote the importance of 'āina (parks) to improved health outcomes. The youth were provided squares to paint, draw, and create designs using 'ohe kapala made for them. Squares were then sewn into a community quilt to be used for future activities at 'A'ala Park. This quilt and the paintings created both on-site and the park would have been displayed at the Oahu Intertribal Council's Honolulu Intertribal Powwow at Bishop Museum in 2021 and would have highlighted information about each partner, their projects, and information collected from the community from listening sessions. Each organization, participants, and their families would have received free tickets to Bishop Museum and a special meeting opportunity with World Wide Walls Hawai'i (formerly known as Pow!Wow! Hawai'i) co-founder Jasper Wong to view the display, visit the Honolulu Intertribal Powwow, and Museum. But all events in Hawai'i were cancelled due to

increased COVID-19 restrictions related to the Delta variant surge. Partners are now planning to display art during an exciting First Friday exhibit in Chinatown in early 2022.

Farrington High School students participated by producing coloring book pages based on historical research of 'A'ala Park. The coloring book will be used in future participatory planning events for elementary aged children at schools near 'A'ala Park.



Photo credit: Malia Kaio



Photo credits: Better Block Hawai'i & John Bilderback

Youth engagement continued through the end of 2021 with a Creative Placemaking opportunity for high school students of Kamehameha Schools Mural Club in partnership with Hawai'i State Department of Health, Better Block Hawai'i, and KVIBE. Students led the design and implementation of small scale mural art projects celebrating the cultural history near 'A'ala Park based on community feedback/vote. KVIBE prepared the site and painted solid colors on three bus shelters and four utility boxes next to 'A'ala Park. Creative Placemaking and authorized public street art build a sense of community, increase awareness/compassion among drivers, and draw attention to pedestrians increasing safety, enhancing safe pedestrian access to 'A'ala Park. This is a highly visible project that responds directly to the community input we have gathered requesting more cultural celebrations, art, and youth engagement in the area. Young people from the neighborhood will be invited to participate in future urban development related activations and stewardship opportunities.

“Thank you Aunty Rose for letting us help the community. I feel calm.” – KVIBE

“Thank you Aunty for this experience and for feeding us” – KS Mural Club.

“Being able to help the community with art makes me so happy.” – Susannah Wesley

Focus Groups

In partnership with American Savings Bank and University of Hawai'i Associate Professor in Social and Behavioral Health Sciences Dr. Opal Vanessa Buchthal, focus groups and key individuals were interviewed. Dr. Buchthal completed 14 (30-90 minute) interviews in total – 7 focus groups, and seven one-on-one interviews by the time of this report, and more were in progress. The full report will be made available at a later date.

Focus groups included:

- St. Elizabeth's Church (Kalihi-Palama community) – majority Filipino and Asian parishioners (8 persons)
- St. Elizabeth's Church (Kalihi-Palama community) – majority Chuukese parishioners (7 persons)
- Service providers to houseless/stigmatized populations in Kalihi-Palama/Chinatown/Iwilei areas (8 persons)
- Middle-income Chinatown/Kalihi Palama condominium residents (9 persons)
- Chinatown community leaders (11 persons)
- American Savings Bank team members who work in the headquarters near 'A'ala Park (10 persons)
- Honolulu Prosecutor's office staff (4 persons)

Individual interviewees included:

- Ken Farm/Chair, Kalihi-Palama Neighborhood Board
- Amy Asselbayer/Hon Dept of Economic Revitalization
- Eddie Flores/Long-term Chinatown business owner
- Wing Tek Lum/Long-term Chinatown business owner
- Karl Rhodes/State Senator for the district
- Laura Thielen/Director, City and County of Honolulu, Director of Department of Parks and Recreation
- Judy Lind/Kokua Center

Although Dr. Buchthal is scheduled to complete several additional individual interviews and one focus group, repeated themes have already emerged, including:

- **Social issues collide.** Stakeholders hold a wide range of views, but one area of commonality is that they see 'A'ala Park and Chinatown as being where Honolulu's most intransigent social issues collide: lack of affordable housing and inadequate access to mental health services, substance abuse treatment beds, re-entry services for folks coming out of the prisons, immigrant/refugee resettlement services, family support, etc.
- **It's not just the park.** Most stakeholders see the A'ala Park, College Walk, and River Street pedestrian areas as a single, common area that should be viewed as a unit. Assets, problems, and potential solutions are shared and spill across these spaces.
- **Safety.** Safety in/around the park was paramount for everyone interviewed. People feel that until this is addressed other changes are going to be difficult. This holds for the park in particular, but also for Chinatown and downtown sidewalks and public spaces. The park is viewed as an unsafe place for women and seniors at any time of day. What happens in the park at night impacts people's willingness to use the park during the day. The park's unsafe reputation has been passed down generationally -- people who grew up here described being

taught as children to regard 'A'ala Park and the College walk/River Street area as unsafe and "out of bounds."

- **American Savings Bank's positive impact.** People generally are aware of the bank's security in the park area, and overall felt that this supervision was instrumental in making the park safer and more usable. There is a perception that the bank's involvement in the park (exercise groups and events) has led to some positive changes in the park's atmosphere.
- **Dirty/unhygienic.** The park is perceived as "dirty." Parents discussed not wanting to let children play on in playground because they feel they need to police the area for syringes first. Adults reported a strong stench of urine in the playground during/after rains, suggesting that the play surface and equipment in the area are covered with dried human waste. Some adults reported that it was unsafe to sit on the grass or touch the grass in the park with bare hands or feet. Multiple people discussed seeing people openly urinating or defecating in and around the park.
- **Need for amenities and public outdoor spaces.** People perceive an urgent need for outdoor amenities and outdoor space in the area. The City/County of Honolulu's successive efforts to remove amenities (such as water fountains) in public spaces (in an effort to discourage the houseless) is perceived by many as having a negative impact on public spaces in the Chinatown and downtown pedestrian areas, making them uninviting/unusable for everyone -- impacting all stakeholders -- area residents, visitors, and local businesses, but particularly impacting seniors who live in the area. Specific things people wanted:
 - **Places to sit down, relax, and picnic --** not just in park, but also along College Walk, Sun Yat Sen Plaza, Fort Street Mall, and in other outdoor spaces in the Chinatown area. Again, older adults and seniors particularly missed the amenities (picnic tables, benches, water fountains, restrooms) that the City has removed.
 - **Clean, safe restroom facilities.** The unsafe condition of the comfort station was viewed as particularly critical for seniors and children to be able to socialize in or around the park.
 - **Parking.** Many noted that parking is a major barrier to using 'A'ala Park for youth sports, events -- any kind of activity that would attract the public. Parking is also viewed as a barrier for using the park for family picnics or get-togethers -- anything that involves transporting coolers, pop-up tents, folding tables, etc.
 - **Games.** Chinatown residents wanted seniors to be able to sit outside and engage safely in card games, checkers/chess, and other table games at picnic tables along the Nu'uaniu stream area. It should be noted that historically, this was a regular activity for men and seniors in public spaces around Chinatown and in 'A'ala Park. While there are concerns about gambling associated with these games, this is also a culturally-valued activity. Playing cards, mah-jong, chess/checkers, etc in parks/outdoor spaces is a very common form of socialization in both China and the Phillipines.
- **Park oversight, management, and activation.** There was a strong recognition that more people (and more diverse groups of people) need to be brought into these spaces overall, and that the park itself needs supervision and oversight on a daily basis, in order for conditions to change. Things that multiple groups/stakeholders suggested:
 - **Cultural events.** Partner with community organizations to use the park for cultural events that link 'A'ala Park, College Walk and Chinatown areas together. Things that were suggested were cultural food festivals, music concerts, sports competitions, New Year's and other events that celebrate the heritage of the diverse cultural communities in the area.

- **Tourism.** Work with the tourism industry and community to develop curated, culturally-informed experience of Hawai'i's historic Chinatown/'A'ala Park/College Walk area, like walking tours of the area highlighting the history of the neighborhood and specific features, and guidance to outdoor spaces, activities, and shops/restaurants. The idea was to use tourists to help increase the number of pedestrians on the street and in the park, building a vibrant street scene.
- **Skate Park.** Build on the skate park's strengths, which is viewed as one of the park's unique assets. It was suggested that the skate park be more actively promoted within the larger community, perhaps with neighborhood youth organizations, residents, and visitors. One suggestion from a local family was that neighborhood skate shops be encouraged to provide equipment rentals or skateboard loans, which could support usage among both local kids and serve visitors, which would boost foot traffic in/around the park. Other suggestions were to use the park for skate clinics, learn-to-skateboard classes, skate-themed parties, and exhibitions or competitions.
- **Fatigue.** Chinatown stakeholders express fatigue -- that there have been multiple studies and proposed initiatives to address the issues in the area that always seem to peter out, and they are concerned that this is just one more half-hearted gesture. (E.g., see: [2011 Chinatown Riverwalk Revitalization & Downtown Connectivity Study](#); [2016 Chinatown Action Plan](#); [2020 Downtown Neighborhood Transit Oriented Development Plan](#)).

Ka Pāna'i Like – Nā Po'omana'o, Nā Pilikia, a me Nā Ha'awina

Reciprocity – Emerging themes, challenges, & lessons learned

Nā Po'omana'o (Emerging Themes)

Ka Wai (Water) – Clear themes from stakeholders who use the park emerged immediately, such as the lack of drinking water and safe restrooms. “When you’re exercising, skating, or walking around the neighborhood there’s no place to drink water,” said one park user. This simple and immediate concern was repeatedly echoed by others. For example, while water fountains in the park are not working, bathrooms are also regularly closed or feel too unsafe to use on the rare occasion they are open. Access to water and consistent access to safe clean bathrooms were top community priorities in creating a safer, healing, and more welcoming space for all.

Trust for Public Land’s staff also met with a health provider and walked from Kukui Cafe, down River Street, and through Chinatown, to solicit feedback and observe the incredibly challenging work service providers perform in the area. We learned about the various providers, outreach districts, and case management services. This service provider identified the need for water fountains and safe access to restrooms. The service provider also lamented the lack of affordable and easily accessible food stands in the area: “For those who cannot afford to purchase full meals but can afford small manapua man type snacks, they would still be contributing to the local business economy in a small way and can have the need for food met without being turned away by business owners here who understandably prefer customers that can afford a full meal.”

Nā Mēheuheu & Nā Hana No'eau (Culture & Arts) – Cultural celebrations and arts events continued to be suggestions for programmatic activation. There was consistent community member excitement learning about the area’s mo'olelo or reminiscing about the park’s history, and a palatable desire to celebrate the special history of the 'A'ala neighborhood. We heard from one excited resident, “There could be

Chinese, Vietnamese, and Filipino festivals to celebrate all the different ethnic groups and the many different religions in the neighborhood. We could even rent out sections with plots to grow gardens, parcels for artists in Chinatown to sell their art, and have the place across the street become a community center that teaches the history to tourists and local families with a gift shop and maps of things to try in Kalihi/Iwilei/Chinatown. We could really promote education by celebrating our past and cultural identity here in ‘A‘ala.”

One kūpuna shared that she would enjoy, “concession stands for eat and a place for kūpuna to sit and talk stories...We can have a Hawaiian garden with Hawaiian flowers where we sit down and admire the scenery...At our age we just like to sit, talk, eat, and maybe listen to music.” Where she grew up (across the street from ‘A‘ala Park), “there were a lot of Chinese, Filipino, Korean, and Hawaiian folks and we all get together in my days with no discrimination. All the houses were all close together and we were all friends...There was no hatred...It was really good.”

Another park user shared hope, “There’s so much that can happen with community art because there are so many artistic people in the area. You could do anything from murals, painting, temporary art structures made from wood and decorated by community members, poetry workshops, to even putting on plays. It’s really unlimited.”

Nā Hō‘ike & Nā Hana Ho‘o ‘eleu (Events & Activations) – People in the park also expressed deep appreciation for all of the activities offered, the resources provided, and learning about organizations invested in community resilience. We learned that people in general are interested in and excited about the possibility for improvements to the area and activation events and programs in the park. Other themes included concerns, praise, and recommendations. Park users expressed concern about overdevelopment and development in the park of any kind. They also expressed having trust in Trust for Public Land and commended American Savings Bank, although some users have expressed concern and suspicions regarding business interests and development of the park (e.g., that development of the park will push out neighborhood park users in favor of higher end activities/programs). There were also mixed and/or opposing solutions to address concerns related to houselessness in the area such as evictions or sweeps and/or direct inclusion in traditionally exclusive urban planning spaces.

Nā po'e o 'A'ala Pāka (Support current park users) – Skate park users share a unique culture and variable desire for engagement. The skate park community largely kept to themselves as an affinity group of hobbyists focused on skating who did not use other parts of the park with the exception of the parking lot. When asked what could be done to make 'A'ala Park a safer, healing, and more welcoming space for all, one avid skater replied, "Do events and clean up the park...we just come here to skate." The few who shared opinions were most concerned with non-park users taking up stalls in the parking lot and a lack of water fountains and usable restrooms. On a positive note, an informal group of families regularly gathers with their kids to skate each weekend. This group organized their own 'pizza Saturdays' and keiki coloring activities during our listening engagement efforts. In short, there is great potential to support more community-led skate park activations and events that benefit and improve health outcomes for families across the island.



Photo credit: John Bilderback

Nā A'a (Challenges)

Nā Lua (Restrooms) –The restrooms were frequently identified as a challenge. Over and over again, we heard that park users did not consider the public restrooms as a safe option to relieve themselves. The restrooms are often closed for repairs and inaccessible to the public. The restrooms are dark and have no natural light, air, or light fixtures. Like many City park restrooms across the island, this very old restroom "is dark, has a concrete slab for flooring instead of nice tiling, no fresh coat of paint, and no fresh scents of lemon or orange," as one grandparent explained as the reason he does not take his grandchild into the restroom. "It's just not nice," he shrugged. While this is common in many parks, the infrastructure issues and the stigma and other challenges associated with impoverished groups living near the park, and the visible drug use in and around the restrooms, make the restrooms an unsafe and unwelcoming place.

One caregiver shared about how she and her elderly mother were running errands and drove to 'A'ala Park only to find the restrooms closed. But most people shared how the restrooms feel unsafe to enter and are intimidated by people using the restrooms for illegal or dangerous purposes. One young woman living unsheltered near the park shared how she refused to use the restrooms after discovering a friend who died by suicide in the restrooms. Park staff also reported that the restrooms must be shut down regularly due to vandalism. Park staff assumed the vandals were houseless individuals removing or vandalizing pipes and toilets. Other houseless individuals and groups serving houseless communities assumed that the City park staff were removing restroom fixtures themselves to

avoid maintaining the restrooms. One woman who regularly skates at the park suggested posting security guards at the restrooms because she believed it would help address any drug use happening there.

A staff member of a non-profit that supports community relationship building between housed and unhoused populations on O‘ahu through initiatives like ‘Bathroom Brigades’ shared how her organization was able to enlist one woman to keep the restrooms clean if the organization donated the needed cleaning supplies to her. She said, “the woman lost hope and left to another park because of being ‘swept’ too many times and having her cleaning supplies confiscated.” However, she excitedly then shared more information about successful models on the mainland regarding innovative partnerships with parks and social service organizations: [How and Atlanta Park is Connecting People to Housing Through Place Based Social Services Provision.](#)

*****Trigger Warning – Trauma survivors may find some content in the section below triggering.**

Ka Hei (Substance Misuse) – The one major concern that was consistently accompanied with less excitement and even a sense of hopelessness was articulated by one park user this way: “Drugs are a big issue here, there’s a big supply because there’s a big demand. All kinds of people [buy drugs]. Not just the obvious ones you see on the street using in the open because they’ve given up on life. Most people have an awareness of this including law enforcement. But it just seems like an accepted thing as long as each group sticks to their one spot with not a lot that can be done. That’s [drugs] really all anyone thinks of when they think of ‘A‘ala Park.”

Those who know of ‘A‘ala Park, but are not living in or who are not from the area, share these concerns. Virtual listening session participants identified drug use as the top barrier to visiting ‘A‘ala Park. This was especially true for parents, with the exception of those with children who enjoy the skate park. Individuals misusing substances were visible on various occasions during park listener engagements and largely kept to themselves. However, there was one unfortunate disturbance by a drug user during art mural installations by the Kamehameha High School Mural Club around the park – a man who appeared to be under the influence of drugs yelled at the adult chaperones, kicked a female adult chaperone, and then ran away. Although the chaperone reported the incident to the police, there was no follow up. Later, the man showed up again, police were called again, but there was no response. Luckily, the female adult chaperone did not suffer any major injuries.

Young people from underserved communities such as this are also more vulnerable to negative influences that occur in parks, particularly with respect to illicit substances. For example, Hale Lanipolua serves underage survivors of sex trafficking and stopped taking youth to nearby parks because traffickers were waiting to re-recruit victims there. One girl stated that “‘A‘ala Park was where I came the first time I ran away,” and where she “tried crack for the first time.” Other Mayor Wright residents remember seeing teens smoking crack at ‘A‘ala Park as a kid growing up. Youth participants in these programs who had never heard of ‘A‘ala Park were fascinated by the history, enjoyed learning about parks, and were not only proud to share their art, but proud to be considered by the community in planning opportunities. One youth even said, “We’re the throw away kids. We’re dispensable. But you guys came here treating us like we’re special or like our voice could make a difference.” One young man in transitional shelter expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in his main passion of painting because it helped him cope with the diagnosis of his schizophrenia

These moments highlighted the need for continued deep community engagement and partnership in order to produce the longest sustaining and meaningful results. Individuals living with substance misuse are impacted by parks in many unseen ways. These issues are often compounded and exacerbated by other stigmas across social strata in parks around the state and country. At Trust for Public Land, we are committed to equity and understand the power of parks to transform communities for generations to come.

Nā Ha‘awina (Lessons Learned)

Ka ‘Ōpū Weuweu (Humble Homes). One of the biggest lessons learned was about the wide spectrum of housing insecure individuals. We learned about houseless community members cycling in and around just about every park on the island and across the state. According to the National Coalition for Homelessness, there are three general categories of homelessness -- chronic homelessness, transitional homelessness, and episodic homelessness -- each with their own definitions and demographics. There is also general consensus around the leading causes of homelessness across the country such as a lack of affordable housing and poverty <https://nationalhomeless.org/about-homelessness/>. For example, in Hawai‘i, the 2021 hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment is \$37.69, but the minimum wage is \$10.10, which is still higher than the national average of \$7.30 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/203384/us-two-bedroom-housing-wage-by-state/>. Other major factors that contribute to homelessness include lack of economic opportunities, a decline in available public assistance, a lack of affordable health care, domestic violence, and mental illness <https://nationalhomeless.org/about-homelessness/>.



Photo credit: Ikaika Anderson

One business owner who walks his dogs in the park explained it this way: “As far as improvements to this area, I think one place we could start given the folks around here are helping people who are living with undiagnosed and untreated mental illness.” He believed many of the houseless individuals nearby to be of different categories such as chronically homeless individuals living with mental illness and/or addiction. He believed dual diagnosis individuals such as these have the highest patient acuity and are the most challenging population to address. For example, one young twenty-two year old woman lived with her family and worked as a manager of a clothing store near Keeaumoku before she started hearing voices. The undiagnosed and untreated mental health related issues destabilized her entire living situation until she found herself living on the streets near ‘A‘ala, using illicit substances like meth, and walking in the road barefoot.

Another young woman had just turned 18 years old and became stranded after the Federated States of Micronesia closed its borders during the COVID-19 pandemic to mitigate the spread of disease. She

became emotional sharing her story, hoping to return home to her family soon. She thanked Park Listeners for the snacks. Unfortunately, during the following outreach, she appeared inebriated with

bruises on various parts of her body and did not wish to engage. Another woman in her late 40s explained effects of her mental health this way, “Being unstable just throws me off. People don’t realize how much being unstable actually effects what you’re able to do.”

Many other housing insecure individuals we spoke to in the park were also living with physical disabilities. One senior has been unable to find work due to increasing sight loss and works with his case manager to seek housing resources. Another elderly man who spent time with us was 73 years old and may have been living with age-related diseases prohibiting clear speech and coherent communication. Another woman thanked us for a water bottle and a snack for her husband: “I was at one point an officer when I was younger. But now my husband is sick and needs full time care. He’s in a wheelchair waiting for me [by the Rest Stop].”

One individual also shared how he simply prefers to “live outdoors” and was previously homeless in many places on the continent but moved to Hawai’i because it was, “easier to live outdoors here than the mainland” due to the mild climate. He enjoys the neighborhood for its convenient location near service providers who work specifically with houseless like the Institute for Human Services (IHS) and River of Life.



Photo credit: Ikaika Anderson

Another man said he needed to be alone to get back on his feet and being on the land was the best way for him to do so. He and his family were still struggling with the aftermath of the highly politicized murder of his teenage son, which revealed racial inequities and police tensions between the Micronesian community. He felt that when “the police come at 2am or 3am while everyone is sleeping and force us to get up and throw our stuff in the canal,” it doesn’t solve problems related to ending up on the streets. He believes, “we have to come together as a people and help each other.”

In Chinatown specifically, there is a high-density concentration of services for homeless clients including shelters, food provision, medical care, substance misuse, mental illness treatment, and case management services. This creates unique sets of challenges and opportunities to address community concerns for safety and increased access to basic infrastructure like water, sanitation, and restrooms. There is great potential for collaborative solutions between housed and unhoused community members to create safer park conditions through land-based stewardship and economic opportunities used in models across the country. <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/fort-greene-park/pressrelease/21863>

Ke Aloha no ‘A‘ala (Love for ‘A‘ala) – One of the major lessons learned in all of our park listener efforts was that, despite the overwhelming challenges associated with ‘A‘ala Park, there is a community consensus of love for ‘A‘ala. The community values this park as a gathering space that belongs to the neighborhood. Whatever the use – there is undeniable love for ‘A‘ala. There are also genuine concerns regarding gentrification of the area, the need for enhanced safety, and questions on how to sustain and manage long-term any improvements and programs.

We also learned about the critical role seniors play in remembering the rich cultural history of ‘A‘ala Park first hand and how excited youth feel in learning about and celebrating what kūpuna have to share. Overall, the gratitude, love, and excitement shared by the community was an inspirational contrast to the harsh realities faced by various segments of the population. It also highlighted the importance of Trust for Public Land’s community-driven model to achieve our anticipated outcomes of increasing community connection between groups and to place, improve health outcomes and park responsiveness over the next three years.



Photo credit: Ikaika Anderson

NĀ HELUNA (QUANTITATIVE) RESULTS

Our quantitative community engagement efforts included conducting an intercept survey of 412 people, completing informal community-based surveys, and deploying the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC) to measure park usage. The following sections summarize relevant data from these grass roots community engagement efforts with the full data/analysis attached as appendices.

Anthology Group Intercept Survey

Thanks to a partnership with the City and County of Honolulu’s Department of Housing, Prosecutor’s Office, and area banks (American Savings Bank, Bank of Hawai‘i, Central Pacific Bank, First Hawaiian Bank, and HawaiiUSA Federal Credit Union), Trust for Public Land was able to retain the Anthology Group to conduct an intercept survey of the area. The survey will be replicated in several years in order to measure community perceptions of the park after our and others’ interventions. The methodology and full deck of slides relating to the intercept are included as Appendix A to this report.

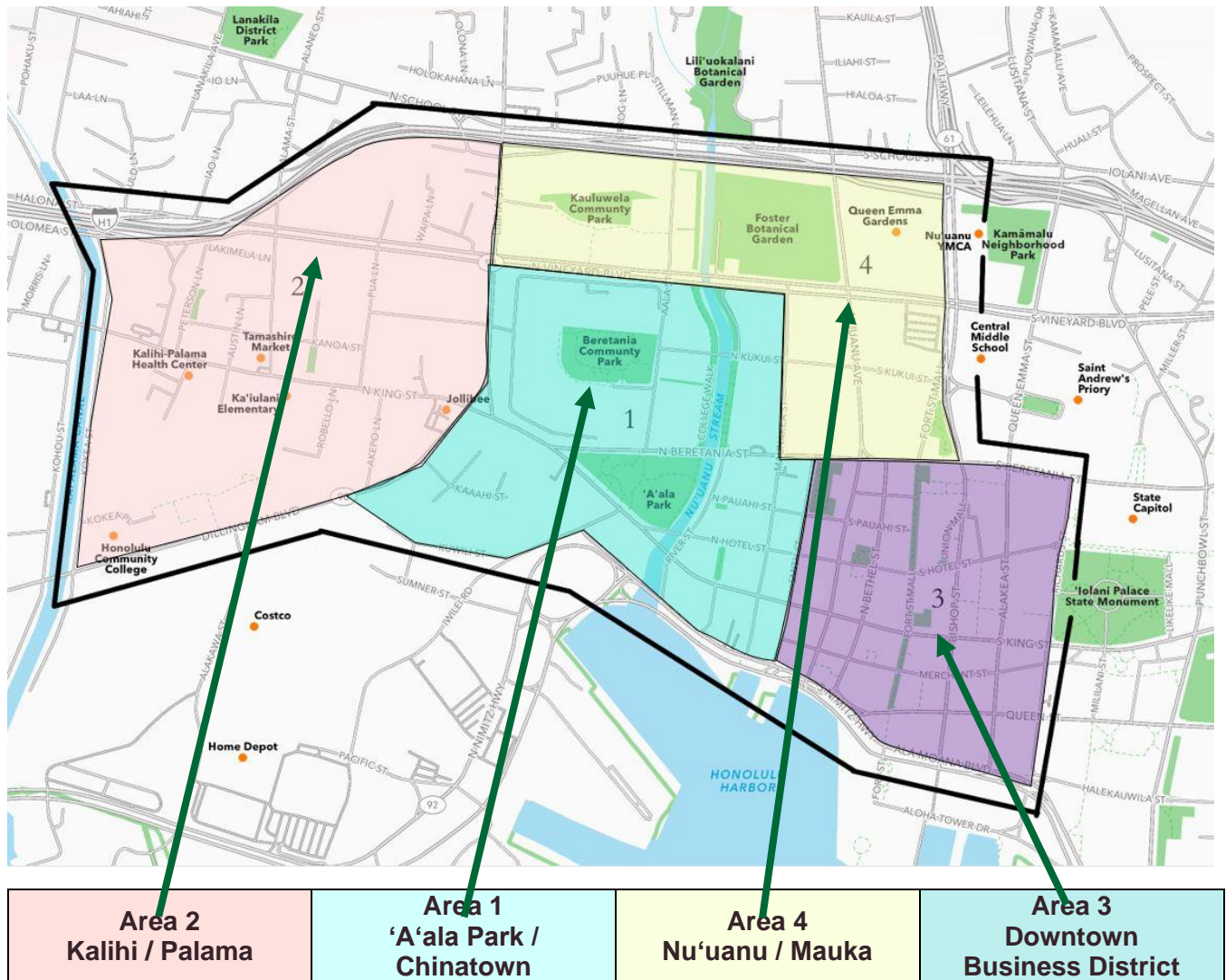
Methodology: Anthology conducted an intercept survey performed by trained professional Anthology Research interviewers using tablet computers and the Qualtrics platform. Respondents were handed an iPad and invited to self-complete the survey. Anthology interviewers assisted respondents when

needed. Each research respondent was given a small gift card as a thank you for participating. Anthology conducted a pre-test on June 9, 2021, and began actual field work beginning on June 24 and completed interviews July 1, 2021. Anthology completed 412 total interviews. The resulting margin of error for the total sample of n=412 is +/- 4.83% at a 95% level of confidence.

Languages – The survey was offered in English, Chinese (simplified), Tagalog, Vietnamese, Chuukese and Marshallese. Research respondents were able to “toggle” between languages as needed within the survey platform.

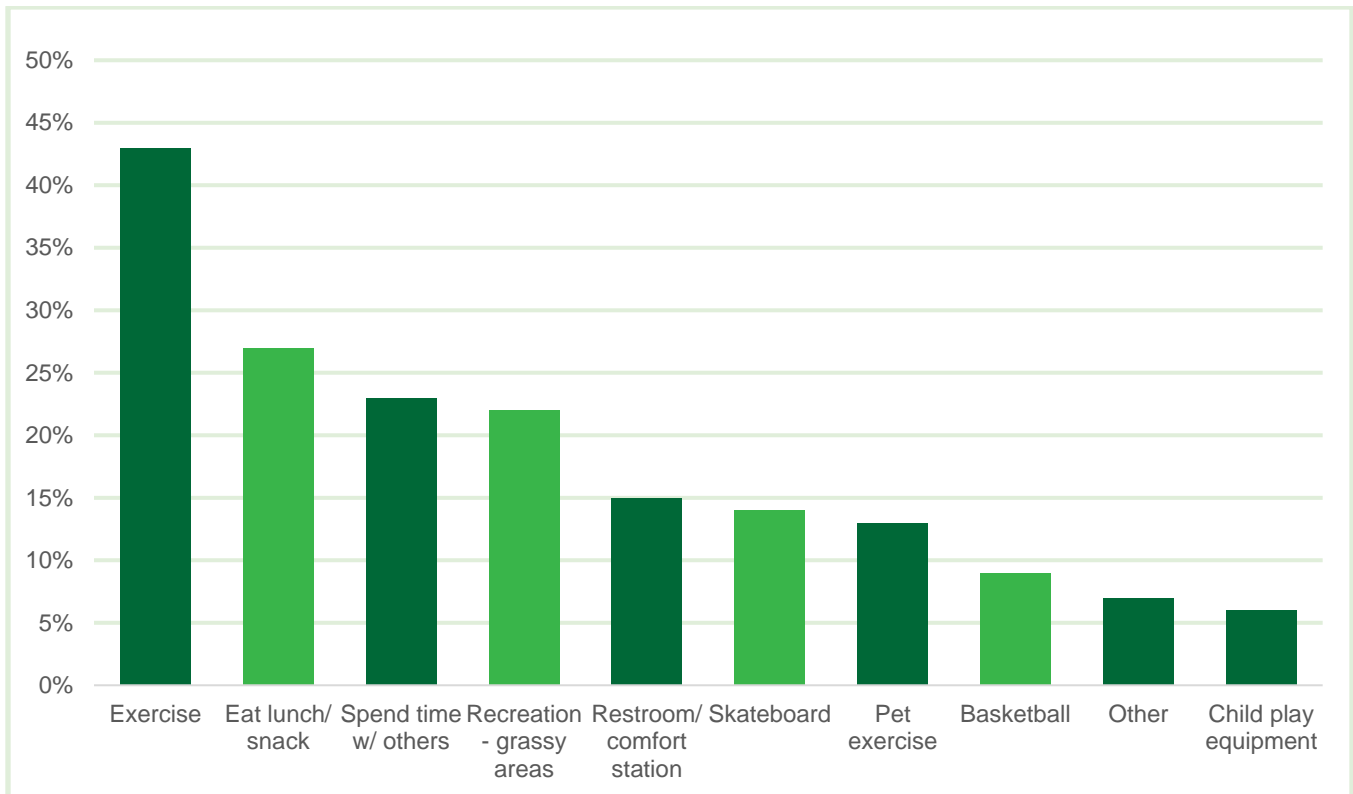
Area Surveyed – Research respondents were approached outdoors and surveyed in one of the four designated areas highlighted in the map below.

Respondent Qualifications – Respondents qualified to participate in the research if they fell into one of four classifications: area resident, business owner, worker in an area business or a transient (defined as being in the area to shop, dine, etc. or simply walking through on the way to another area).



Park Users: A complete breakdown of the socio-economic and ethnic background of the respondents and park users is in Appendix A. Of those people in the survey who identified as park users, Native

Park Usage and Activities: 175 respondents (42% of the 412 sample) who identified themselves as park users were asked to select from a provided list, the types of activities they take part in while in the park. Exercise was the top activity highlighted, selected by 43% of current park users. This confirms national research that parks are where 50% of vigorous exercise occurs. Ranking a distant second were those people who eat lunch or snack in the park, with 23% enjoying time with others in the park. One in five (22%) make use of the grassy areas, while 15% have used the restrooms and comfort station at some point in time. Fourteen percent (14%) have skateboarded there, while 13% like to bring their pets to the park. Nine percent (9%) use the basketball courts, with six percent (6%) taking advantage of the children’s play equipment.



The intercept survey revealed that there is hope and opportunity for improvement. Over 40% of park users and residents would use the park more frequently if more activities and events were held there. In general, park users and residents had more positive perceptions of the park and its potential than non-residents and business owners. Clearly, existing park users and area residents are the key to transforming the park into a safe and more welcoming place for all.

Community Based Surveys

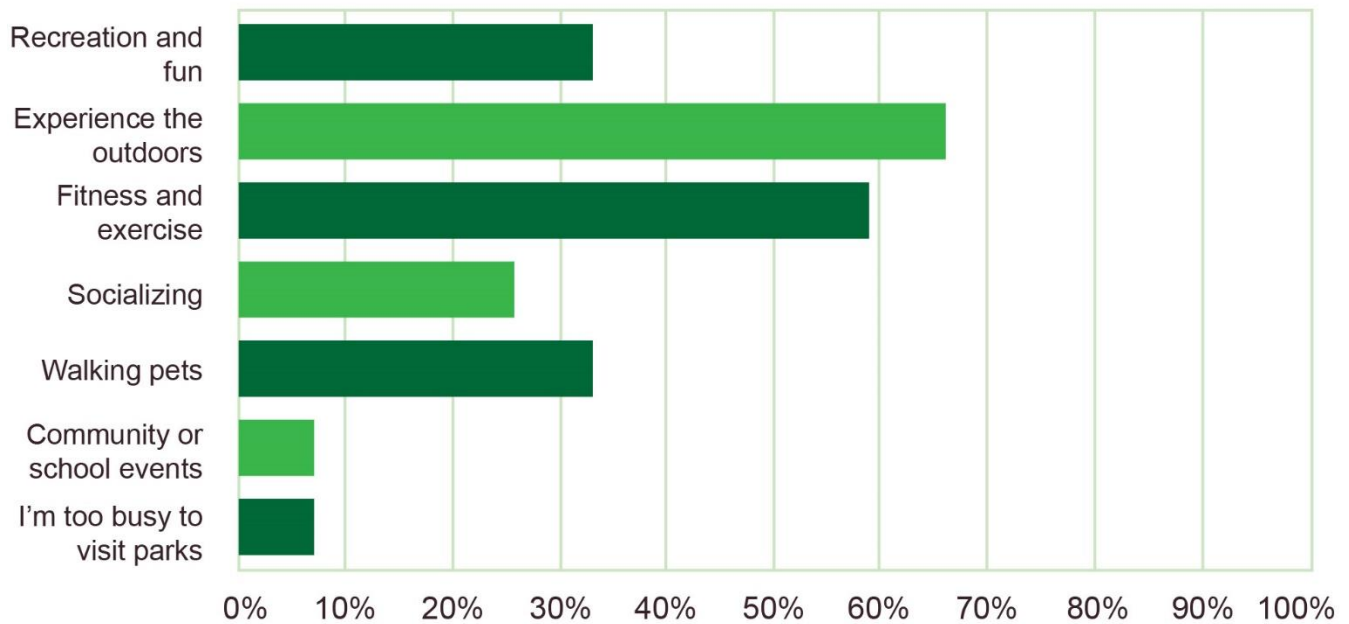
During our different engagement efforts, we asked those who were willing to fill out surveys relating to the park providing either paper surveys or a link or QR code to the online survey. These survey efforts included:

- Ongoing Online Survey
- ‘A‘ala Park Listener Surveys
- Vaccinations Clinic Surveys
- Better Block Hawaii Survey

Ongoing Online Surveys - Iterative on-line surveys were created, and questions were revised taking into account community feedback. For example, some participants in our park listening sessions enjoyed sharing their favorite memories of being outdoors, inspiring us to ask similar questions in our survey. We added an option to upload photos, Hali'a Aloha (Cherished Memories), and provide feedback on how we should celebrate participants' history. The top two uses for parks were fitness/exercise and experiencing the outdoors.

For what reasons do you use parks? Select all that apply:

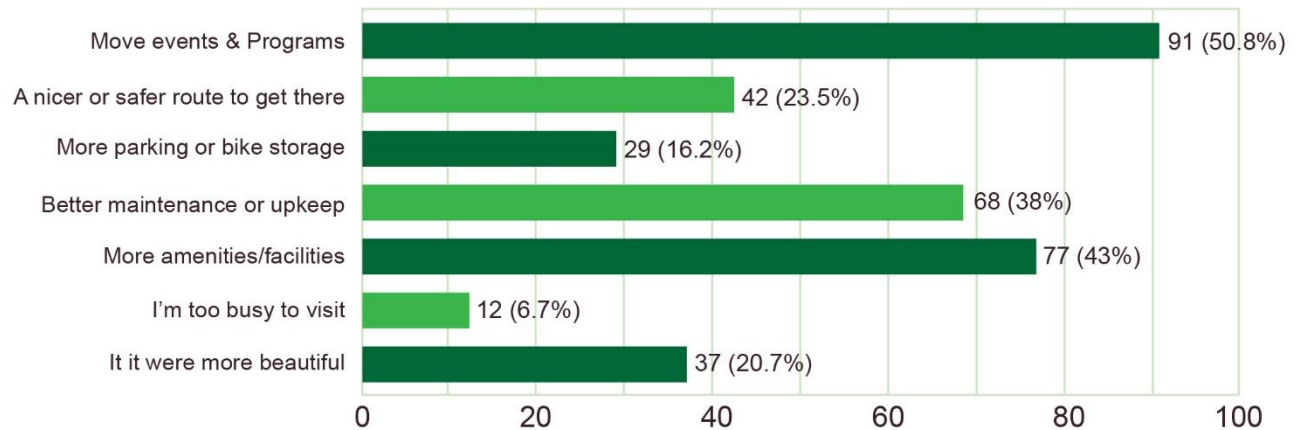
Answered: 27 Skipped: 4



'A'ala Park Listener Surveys - Our in-park surveys were developed in partnership with our teams of Lohe 'Āina or "Park Listeners." We were fortunate to provide data collection support for their organizations and initiatives in a way that continues to foster pilina (connection), trust-building, and support community leaders. We asked about park user demographics and suggestions for improvements, and sentiments toward other community-led initiatives.

Would any of the following encourage or help you to use A'ala Park more often?

179 responses



These surveys revealed concerns about the lack of access to water and restrooms.

- 62% of respondents expressed a desire to see more programs and events at the park to support children and youth;
- 55% wanted more social services; and
- 45% wanted more cultural and arts events.

The following word cloud reflects what respondents wanted to see more of in the park.



Park Listeners who worked with houseless and affordable housing groups also asked questions about alternatives to living on the streets and in 'A'ala Park. Over 75% of houseless respondents said that, if they were legally permitted to stay elsewhere and could take care of their space as a community in lieu of paying market rate housing costs, they would willingly relocate from the area.



Vaccination Clinic Surveys - In an ongoing effort to respond to neighborhood needs, our partner American Savings Bank organized a two-day vaccination clinic at 'A'ala Park, bringing in porta-potties to ensure the event could be permitted and participants could feel safe using the restrooms, and partnering with community service providers like Child and Family Services, We Are Oceania, and others. To address oft-repeated concerns regarding difficult to reach limited-English proficient, low-income seniors and immigrant populations in the Chinatown area, the bank ensured that translation services were available. We collected data from 113 respondents who shared many valuable insights about 'A'ala Park.

Safety was a top of mind concern for respondents to this survey.

- 63% did not feel safe in 'A'ala Park.
- 43% of respondents do not use 'A'ala Park even though they indicated a preference for 'A'ala Park when asked about all other parks in Kalihi and Chinatown area (including listing their own suggestions).

Better Block Hawai'i Survey - We also partnered with Better Block Hawai'i and Hawai'i FEAST to gauge community interest cultural celebrations, art, and youth activities. High school students from the Kamehameha Schools High School Mural Club designed culturally-relevant murals celebrating the unique history of the neighborhood. Our "Park Listener" partners surveyed people in the park and community members while we shared the survey link widely online.

Who was surveyed

103 Respondents



What was the feedback?

Park programming + improved pedestrian safety is needed to encourage more people to use the park



Improved park conditions



Arts and cultural events



Enhanced pedestrian facilities



After school programs

The survey confirmed that park programming and improved pedestrian safety were needed to increase park usage. Of the six designs created by students, the community voted on their favorite mural for the bus shelters and utility boxes around 'A'ala Park, as discussed above, which were completed at the end of December 2021.

Favorite Designs



Survey respondents identified their favorite of the six proposed mural designs. The two favorite designs will be incorporated into the larger bus shelter murals.

Our main challenge in conducting surveys in this diverse community were the significant language barriers in a largely immigrant community. As we continue to draw out the common themes, shared

values, and various approaches we appreciate the receptive nature of the community overall. Without their suggestions for improvements, willingness to partner, and the desire to connect to place, we would not be able to forward this work toward improved community health outcomes.

System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC)

We partnered with University of Hawai'i Associate Professor in Social and Behavioral Health Sciences Dr. Opal Vanessa Buchthal to measure park usage using the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC). Dr. Buchthal's full report is attached as Appendix B. The SOPARC observations revealed that the Diamond Head side of the park, including the Skate Park, is the most used area and that the public restrooms were closed or unsafe. In addition, the vast majority of park users are engaging in sedentary activities such as sleeping or laying down. Park users tended to be adult males, with females, seniors, and children comprising a much smaller percentage.

Methodology: Dr. Buchthal trained students to conduct the observations in park at four different time-points (7:30 am, 11 am, 2 pm, 4 pm) on Friday, Sunday, Wednesday and Saturday between October 22-30, 2021. The park was divided into nine distinct observation zones, based on the park's activity goal for the zone, using walkway edges, walls, and fencing to define the boundary markers between zones.

Park Usage: On average, 163 persons per day used the park, and it was slightly busier on weekdays (170/day) than on weekends (156/day). More than two thirds of park users observed were adult (83%) and male (68%). Only 11% of users appeared to be seniors (defined as individuals with white or grey hair). Youth (children and teens together) made up less than 6% of all park users observed. Children represented only 25% of the park users observed in the playground area. More than half of the individuals observed within the playground fencing were adult men sitting or sleeping on or around the playground equipment. No children were observed using the basketball court, dog park, ballfield, or Ewa walking paths.

The primary activities in the park were sedentary -- three-quarters (75%) of all A'ala Park users were observed engaging in sleeping, lying down, sitting, or standing. The most heavily-used zone of the park was the Nu'uuanu Stream walkway, where 25% of all users were observed. Another 16% of all park users were observed on the ballfield adjacent to the Nu'uuanu Stream walkway, and 16% in the area around the adjacent comfort station. Overall, more than half (57%) of all park users were found in these three adjacent activity areas along the Diamond Head (eastern) border of the park. The overwhelming majority (84%) of users in these three areas combined were engaged in sedentary activities – sleeping or lying down, sitting or standing. The least-used areas of the park were the basketball court (2% of users), dog park (3%), and playground (3%).

Skate Park: The skate park was the only portion of the park where a majority (51%) of park users were engaged in vigorous physical activity. The skatepark had the most diverse group of park users overall. While, as with the rest of the park, the majority of skatepark users were adult males, fully a third (33%) of skate park users were youth (children and teens combined), and a third (35%) of skate park users were female.

Public Restroom: During several periods, observers noted adult males 'standing guard' in the entry to both the men's and women's sides of the comfort station, appearing to control who could enter the facility. They also observed an unclothed adult male urinating on the sidewalk next to the comfort station, and midway through the observation week, they observed police activity occurring in this area,

with multiple individuals arrested. The comfort station doors were locked during all subsequent observations.

CONCLUSION

Ka Hopena

By striving to deeply engage the community, nurturing partnerships to increase community connection between groups, listening to the voices of stakeholders, and learning the history of the park and place, we hope to chart a path to improve the park in a manner responsive to local needs, providing maximum benefit to residents in the next phase of work in 2022 – interactive community based participatory design and interim park activations informed by the voices we have heard thus far. By listening to park users, residents, and businesses around the park, and learning more about their experiences, we heard the community voices and their suggestions to improve the park space and desire to deepen their relationship to land. As we incorporate these voices into a design planning process and support the community in leading, we hope to build a foundation of sustainable stewardship.

Through our Lohe ‘Āina (Park Listener) efforts, we learned how inspirational and great this community is. The community’s diversity is its greatest strength. While differences of opinion, lifestyle, and approach can cause division – this community reflects the diverse history of Hawai‘i and is a living example of how different groups and ethnicities can come together to celebrate their history, cultural identity, and create a shared vision for the future together. We hope the process of healing, improving, and activating the park will not only improve the public space, but will increase social connection between communities and foster future long-term stewardship. Together, we can improve community health and equity, enhance personal well-being and connections to the outdoors, promote environmental and economic sustainability, and transform the park into a safe and welcoming place for all.

For more information: <https://www.tpl.org/our-work/%CA%BBa%CA%BBala-park>

APPENDIX A: Anthology Group Intercept Survey

APPENDIX B: SOPARC Baseline Report