FROM THE OFFICE OF

SENATOR STANLEY CHANG

East Honolulu Community Newsletter

October 2026



HECO ADDRESSES ONGOING POWER OUTAGES IN EAST HONOLULU

On Wednesday, September 23, community members gathered at the Niu Valley Middle School Cafeteria for a meeting with representatives from Hawaiian Electric to discuss the ongoing power outages affecting communities across East Honolulu.

The meeting brought together Hawaiian Electric's Jim Alberts, Senior Vice President and Chief Operations Officer; Shari Ishikawa, Vice President of Energy Delivery; Jim Kelly, Vice President of Government and Community Relations and Corporate Communications; Shannon Alivado, Director of Government Relations; and Nancy Bernal, Manager of Government Relations.

Residents shared their experiences with increasingly frequent outages and expressed concerns about the reliability of electrical service in the area. One resident noted that since January 2026, their neighborhood has experienced at least one outage every month.

Why Are Outages Happening?

Hawaiian Electric representatives acknowledged that the frequency of outages is a serious concern and said that outages are not acceptable.

According to Hawaiian Electric, East Honolulu has historically been one of the more reliable areas of O'ahu. However, the utility has seen a change in reliability over the past year and a half.

One of the underlying challenges is the age and design of the electrical grid. Much of the system serving the area was designed in the 1940s and 1950s. While the system was appropriate for the needs of the time, Hawaiian Electric explained that its design creates vulnerabilities today.

Electricity serving East Honolulu is largely transmitted from the Windward side of O'ahu. Power lines cross the Ko'olau

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EAST HONOLULU ELECTRICAL GRID

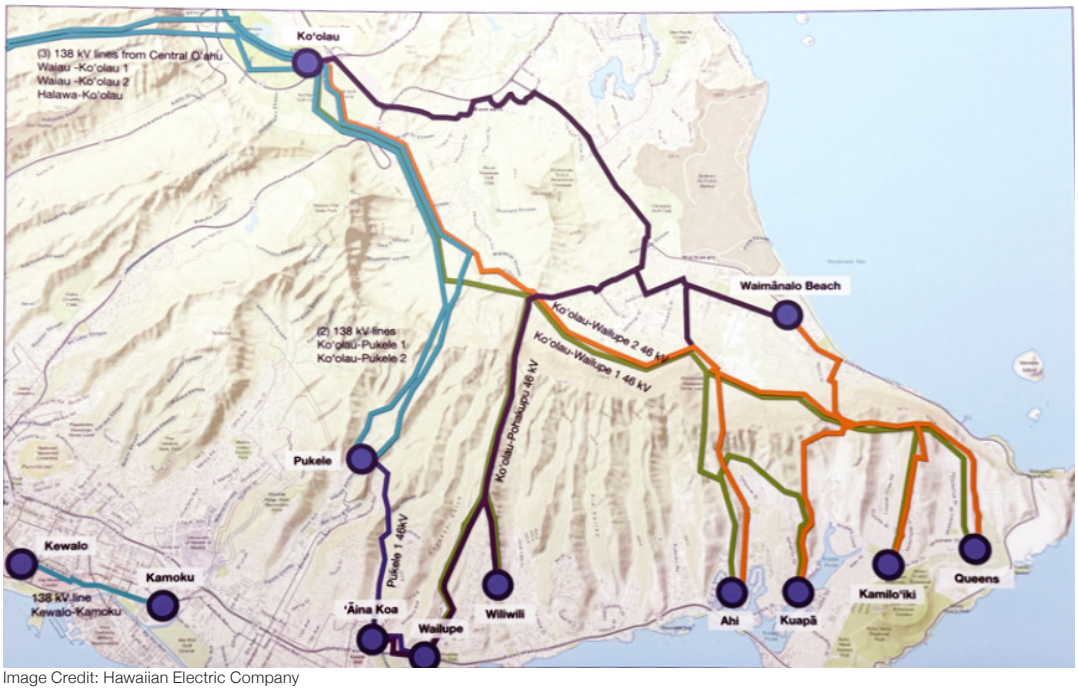


Image Credit: Hawaiian Electric Company

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HANDY CONTACTS

State Pothole Hotline
808-586-7852

City Pothole Hotline
808-768-7777

State Homelessness
gov.homelessness@hawaii.gov
808-586-0193

City Homelessness
complaints@honolulu.gov
808-768-4381

Abandoned Vehicles
808-733-2530

Building Permits
808-768-8000

Poison Control
800-222-1222

Trash Collection
808-768-3200

Street Light Repair
808-768-5300

Domestic Abuse Hotline
800-799-7233

Public Assistance Information Line
855-643-1643

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Mountains, and when a substation or other critical component experiences a failure, the effects can extend to multiple lines or communities.

Trees Remain a Major Challenge

Vegetation was another major focus of the discussion.

Hawaiian Electric reported that approximately 70% of outages are associated with falling trees or vegetation. Some of the trees in the area can reach 50 to 100 feet in height. When a large tree falls onto a power line, it can damage multiple lines and equipment, creating a domino effect that can leave large areas without electricity.

The utility conducts regular vegetation trimming and currently spends $20 million on vegetation management. Hawaiian Electric noted that substantially increasing that spending could help address the problem, but the additional costs could ultimately affect customers' electricity bills.

Hawaiian Electric also emphasized that many trees are located on or near private property. Because of narrow easements and limited access, the utility may not be able to reach trees farther from the power lines. Representatives encouraged private property owners to maintain trees on their property that could pose a threat to electrical infrastructure.

When major outages occur, repairs can also be difficult and time-consuming. In some locations, crews and equipment must be transported by helicopter to reach damaged infrastructure.

Exploring Long-Term Solutions

Hawaiian Electric outlined several potential solutions that could improve reliability, while acknowledging that each comes with costs and community considerations.

One possibility is creating an additional connection to a substation in Pālolo. Hawaiian Electric said this would not eliminate outages but could provide another pathway for delivering electricity and help reduce the impact of certain failures. The proposal would require approval, and a previous plan for the area faced community opposition.

The utility is also examining the possibility of additional substations along ridgelines. However, representatives acknowledged that residents have expressed concerns about the visual impact of additional infrastructure and do not want more utility poles along Kalaniana‘ole Highway. Placing electrical lines underground is another option, but Hawaiian Electric noted that underground construction can be extremely expensive.

Another potential solution is expanding battery storage at substations. Batteries could provide temporary power to communities during an outage while Hawaiian Electric crews work to identify and repair the underlying problem. However, additional land would be needed to construct larger battery facilities.

Individual homeowners can also install battery storage systems. Hawaiian Electric cautioned that widespread charging of batteries at the same time could create additional demands on the electrical grid, meaning these systems would need to be carefully integrated into the broader system.

Steps Already Underway

In the meantime, Hawaiian Electric said it is replacing aging utility poles and increasing the frequency of inspections of poles, transmission equipment, and surrounding vegetation.

Representatives explained that replacing poles and other infrastructure can take time, particularly in areas where crews must use helicopters to access difficult terrain. More frequent inspections are intended to identify potential problems before they result in outages.

Residents Ask for Better Communication

In addition to infrastructure improvements, residents emphasized the need for better communication when outages occur.

Community members expressed interest in having a website or mobile application that provides more detailed and timely information about outages, including what caused an outage, which areas are affected, and an estimated restoration timeline.

Residents also stressed that they want the ability to speak with a person when they need assistance rather than relying solely on automated or artificial intelligence systems.

The meeting highlighted that improving reliability will require both short-term maintenance and longer-term investments in East Honolulu's electrical infrastructure. Hawaiian Electric representatives said they recognize the community's concerns and are continuing to evaluate options for strengthening the system.

For residents who have experienced repeated outages, the discussion also provided an opportunity to directly communicate their concerns to Hawaiian Electric leadership and to hear about the challenges and potential solutions being considered.

Our office is making sure that Hawaiian Electric is responsive and addressing the concerns of our community. If you have any questions, please contact our office or HECO’s Customer Ombudsman at **(808) 543-2550.**

APPLY NOW! THREE PAID INTERNSHIPS AVAILABLE IN SENATOR CHANG'S OFFICE

Senator Chang is excited to share that applications are now open for three paid Internships in his office for the 2027 Legislative Session! The paid internships start December 2026 and end in May 2027!

The three internships include the following general responsibilities:

1. **Constituent Affairs/Administrative Intern**: Track and respond to constituent concerns, assist with drafting the monthly newsletter, attend neighborhood board meetings, and perform day-to-day office tasks.
2. **Legislative Intern**: Assist with the responsibilities of the Housing Committee and the weekly housing newsletter.
3. **Social Media Intern**: Draft social media posts, including reels and graphics, and manage scheduling of posts on Meta, Linktree, and other platforms.

While interns will have primary responsibilities based on their assigned role, these duties are not rigid. Interns may have opportunities to participate in other office, legislative, constituent affairs, and communications tasks based on their interests and the needs of the office.

This is a paid internship through the Hele Imua Internship Program. Interns must be available to work at least three days per week in the office, from 9AM to 5PM. Learn more about the Hele Imua Internship Program here: **Hele Imua – State of Hawai'i Internship Program – Workforce Development Division**.

All applicants must submit:

- A resume
- Cover letter (please specify for which role you are applying)
- 2 writing samples
- 3 references, including names and contact information

Social Media applicants must also submit:

- 1 reel sample
- 1 media graphic sample

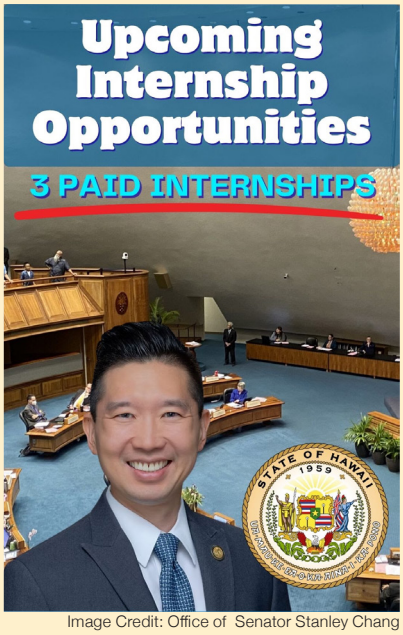


Image Credit: Office of Senator Stanley Chang

The application deadline is **October 12, 2026**. Please send all application materials and inquiries to **office.chang@capitol.hawaii.gov**.

BILLS TO EXPAND UH TUITION ASSISTANCE AND AWARD HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS TO MILITARY SERVICE PEOPLE SIGNED INTO LAW

We are happy to share that two bills that help current and former United States servicewomen and men have been signed into law. Senator Chang co-introduced SB 2138, now Act 65, to expand tuition assistance to Hawai'i National Guard Members pursuing their graduate degree at the University of Hawai'i.

Before this law was enacted, state tuition assistance for Guard members only covered undergraduate study. The new law now allows the Adjutant General of the Hawai'i Department of Defense to award tuition assistance to qualified enlisted personnel, warrant officers, and company-grade officers who are pursuing graduate degrees at any UH campus.

Another bill that he is incredibly proud to have co-introduced is SB 2614, now Act 240. This new law ensures that our brave veterans whose high school education was interrupted by compulsory service or wartime practices—spanning World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War—can finally receive the high school diplomas they earned and deserve. Our heroes sacrificed their youth and education to protect our freedoms. While we can never fully repay them for their service, granting this long-overdue recognition is a vital step in honoring their legacy and sacrifices.

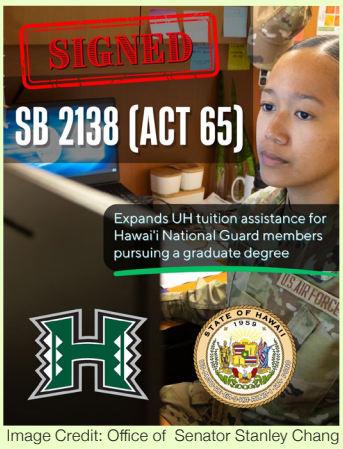


Image Credit: Office of Senator Stanley Chang

Mahalo to everyone who advocated for this bill and helped us deliver justice and closure to our local veterans and their families. For more information about these bills, please contact our office at **(808) 586-8420**.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE EAST HONOLULU SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PLAN

East Honolulu remains one of O‘ahu’s most vibrant, safe, and clean communities. This area is defined by its unique coastal landscapes and rich cultural resources. Over recent years, the City and County of Honolulu has thoughtfully engaged in careful suburban planning through the *East Honolulu Sustainable Communities Plan*. This plan was developed in April 2021 and re-adopted with technical amendments during July of 2022.

The suburban development patterns of the 20th century have been modified to provide more walkable streets and local convenience stores. Currently, more commercial, medical and legal services have been provided to meet the needs of the elderly population. Agricultural areas have been preserved and are producing food for East Honolulu communities. Community organizations are partnering with government agencies and developing plans and strategies to adapt and respond to the challenges of climate change, sea level rise, flooding, severe coastal storms, inundation of coastal areas and Kalaniana‘ole Highway, and wildfires. Best management practices have been implemented to retain stormwater runoff, replenish valuable ground water reserves and improve the quality of nearshore ocean waters.

The *Sustainable Communities Plan* also includes a ‘Vision through 2040.’ The Plan establishes eight core priorities to preserve East Honolulu’s quality of life and environmental integrity:

1. **Contain Urban Growth**: Limit outward urban expansion to preserve natural open spaces.
2. **Protect Agricultural Lands**: Safeguard local agricultural areas and regional food production.
3. **Manage Growth**: Limit the potential for unsustainable population and commercial expansion.
4. **Preserve Scenic Vistas**: Protect significant natural landscapes and scenic ridgeline views.
5. **Expand Public Access**: Improve safe public access to mountain trails and shoreline areas.
6. **Adapt Housing**: Evolve the housing supply to accommodate changing demographic needs.
7. **Build Coastal Resilience**: Strengthen infrastructure against coastal hazards and flooding.
8. **Adapt to Climate Impacts**: Proactively implement climate adaptation strategies across all neighborhoods.

The Plan remains significantly relevant today as Honolulu faces compounding challenges from climate change, housing scarcity, and overtourism. With rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and coastal erosion directly threatening coastal infrastructure, building coastal resilience and adapting neighborhoods to climate impacts is no longer a future goal but an immediate necessity. At the same time, balancing the need to evolve housing for a changing and aging demographic with strict urban growth boundaries is essential to prevent sprawl and protect both open space and agricultural lands. Furthermore, ensuring safe public access to mountain trails and shorelines preserves the cultural and ecological integrity of East Honolulu for residents amid growing recreational demands. Ultimately, these goals provide a vital framework for maintaining resilient, self-sustaining communities that balances modern urban needs with the protection of limited natural resources.

Through active community engagement and multi-agency cooperation, East Honolulu continues to look out for future generations. For more information about this plan, please contact the City and County of Honolulu at **(808) 768-8000**.

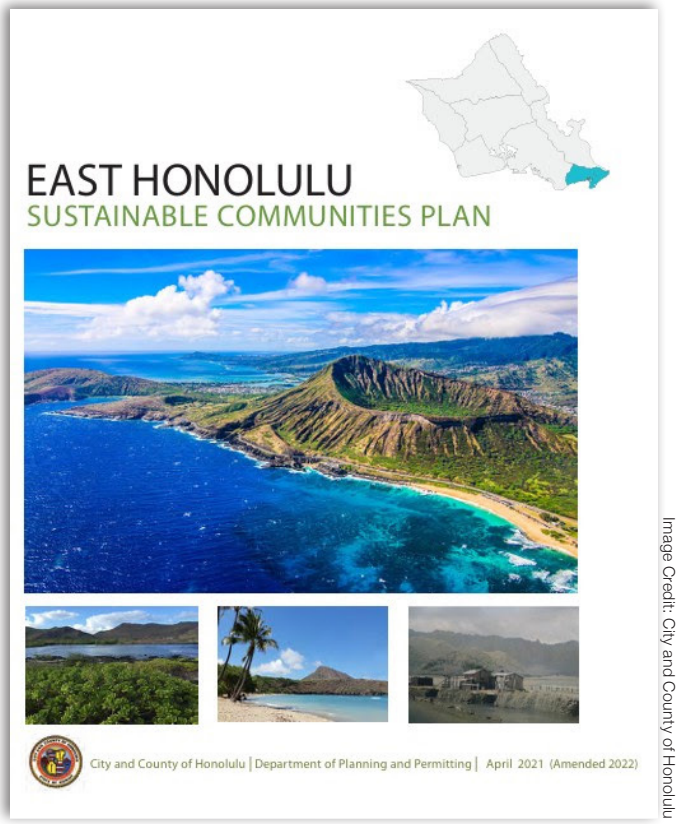


Image Credit: City and County of Honolulu

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