

## COMMUNITY



Hawai'i Convention Center is squeaky clean?

IMAGE: MATTHEW KAIN

## Island Sweeps

*In light of APEC, there's talk of "safe zones."*

BY MATTHEW KAIN | AUG 10, 2011

3

### QUOTED

**"They should have thought about this last year, and the year before, and the year before. [APEC] is going to come to town and it's going to be sparkling clean; and then, back to normal. That doesn't make sense. Homelessness is a big issue here."**

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**COMMUNITY** / On May 17, 2011, Gov. Neil Abercrombie released his 90-Day Plan on Homelessness in Hawaii: A (surprisingly short) manifesto consisting of nine objectives "designed to provide visible, measurable and significant relief that will benefit persons who are chronically homeless."

The 90-day mark is fast approaching, as is APEC 2011. Lawmakers and citizens alike have contributed copious amounts of chatter concerning Honolulu's "homeless problem" and the impression it will give to the attending APEC nations. There has been talk of "safe zones"—a place for homeless people to gather which are away from the action (i.e. out of sight, out of mind)—and even talk of the police doing "sweeps" or "roundups" in order to cleanse the Waikiki area of its apparent eye-sore.

But it's not illegal to be homeless, and shooing away people who are deemed "undesirable" is a violation of constitutional rights. Right? The mere possibility of homeless roundups has piqued the interest of the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii. ACLU intends to be in the area during APEC making

### This week

#### Lord, Won't You Buy Us a Mercedes-Benz?

David Cheever started his decades-long marketing career in Hawaii as VP of Marketing for a local bank. Eight years later, he launched his own marketing business, serving banks, food companies, retailers, lawyers, architects, contractors, resorts, tech companies and non-profits.

#### My City of Ruins

It seems a shame that verdant squares of fenced-off, overgrown plots remain untouched, languishing in terra-purgatory. Who owns that huge lot on Dillingham Boulevard and Colburn Street, the plot on King Street and Poha Lane or Kapiolani Boulevard and Hauoli Street?

#### Island Sweeps

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#### Paying for toys

[Aug. 3: "Interisland Dilemma"] If rate payers fund the cable, then the rate payers should own the cable.

#### Who says it's Green?

The *HW* article [Aug. 3: "Interisland Dilemma"] states: "Big Wind seems

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Talk Back

christa Jerid thanks for the insight dude. Pointing something out isn't whining but it's good to know we have people here...

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sure people are treated humanely. "The government can't suspend the constitution to make a good impression on visitors," said the ACLU Hawaii recently, via Twitter.

How can we best make use of all of this awareness that has been culminating as preparations are made for APEC? Is it possible that APEC 2011 could serve as a launch pad for a greater movement to help reduce homelessness in Hawaii?

Forty-eight-year-old, Oahu-born Brian Fo doesn't think so. Fo has been homeless and living on the margins of Oahu's society for 16 years. He doesn't think the efforts coordinated with the upcoming APEC summit will make much of a difference in the greater scheme of things here in Honolulu. Fo thinks that last-ditch efforts to make the city look squeaky clean will likely be frivolous in the long term.

"They should have thought about this last year, and the year before, and the year before," Fo says. "[APEC] is going to come to town and it's going to be sparkling clean; and then, back to normal. That doesn't make sense. Homelessness is a big issue here."

When asked whether it would be possible to get a significant portion of Waikiki's homeless to go to a safe-zone, Fo simply says "Somebody's going to go. But afterwards, they'll go back to where they had their freedom; where they can cruise and nobody can bother them."

Recent sweeps in Kakaako and on the Waianae coast have displaced hundreds of homeless people. Some have "reportedly" gone to stay in shelters or are staying with friends. Many have simply relocated to another spot. According to city officials, APEC will not be the cause of any iron-handed homeless "roundups," by the police or anyone else.

"Not in this country, not in this state, not in this city. Even if we wanted to, and we don't, that would be an unconstitutional move," said deputy director of Honolulu's Department of Community Services, Bridget Holthus, on July 28 at a state House committee meeting held by lawmakers attempting to gain support for a "safe zone."

John Tamura, age 45, was born and raised on Oahu and has been homeless on and off for about six years. "Sometimes it's the best thing to do," Tamura says about homeless sweeps. "It looks kind of bad, you know? Once you pitch a tent, to me, you're getting comfortable already. Then they think they own the land, and they're causing problems for everyone else; blocking the sidewalk, making a mess and not cleaning up."

Abercrombie urged charitable and faith-based organizations to refrain from putting on public feedings. It was a controversial request, but since then shelters like the Institute for Human Services and the River of Life Mission in Chinatown have reported feeding more people. That means more people in trouble are coming into contact with the people who can help them. In some way, that is measurable progress.

But for now, measurable progress from the governor's 90-Day Plan has yet to be seen. The key points and objectives in the plan are broad—some might say commonsensical—and measurable progress will most likely be hard to quantify. The plan ends on Aug. 19, but homelessness in Waikiki will not have simply disappeared. Nor will the worry surrounding APEC have abated. It will be interesting to see what the next step is. Hopefully it's not some Gestapo-like roundup of Honolulu's down-and-out corralled into camp cities, while the world's big wigs talk shop about how to make more money.

Perhaps we could use APEC to inquire how these other countries handle their "homeless problems." APEC represents cities like Shanghai, Hong Kong, Sydney and Moscow, which have all had their own battles with homelessness. We can't expect something like a "homeless problem" to change overnight, and APEC shouldn't be our only reason for making it a concern in the first place.

The real question is this: Will all of this intense focus on a very real issue facing Oahu

to be an answer to all our environmental problems.

### Am I missing something?

[Aug. 3: "Interisland Dilemma"] When did Oahu run out of wind and sun?

### Crazy, stupid, lament.

[RE: Aug. 3: "The 25-Year Itch"] You did pay enough attention to realize that Carell's character reminds Gosling's character of Gosling's character's dad, right?

### Displaced water?

[July 13: "Collateral Damage"] Anyone with some understanding of our local socio-economic populace should question the statistics put forward by LCA, HRI and others who say the "majority" of Laie residents support the hotel project. Money can purchase the best PR to sell ice to the Eskimos.

### Rail NOW

In response to Curt Sanburn's article [July 6: "Rail Done Right?"], it's hard to believe that someone with Tom Berg's perspective is representing 'Ewa Beach, Kapolei and Waianae. In the article Berg is quoted as saying, "The state legislature refused to get tough on uninsured motorists.

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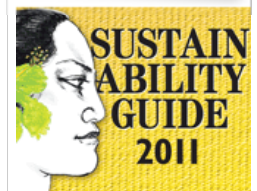
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continue after APEC has come and gone? We'll see.

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