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November 16, 2021

Hawaii Historic Places Review Board
State Historic Preservation Division
601 Kamokila Blvd., Suite 505
Kapolei, Hawaii 96707

RE: Hawaii Historic Places Review Board - November 19, 2021
Agenda Item C, Nominations: Irwin Memorial Park (610 Bishop
Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96793 (1) 2-1-013:007)

Dear Hawaii Historic Places Review Board Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding the proposed re-registration of Irwin Park located in Downtown Honolulu. In my capacity as a City Councilmember representing Council District 6, in which Irwin Park and Aloha Tower, as well as the historic Chinatown Special District and a variety of historic properties, are located, I offer the following comments.

I strongly object to the modification of the existing status of Irwin Park to the proposed re-registration of this site as a historic site that is characterized as a 'LANDSCAPE, parking lot' and LANDSCAPE, plaza' designation.

Although Irwin Park's current use may include parking spaces for vehicles, the original intent of the 1930 deed to the Territory of Hawaii, Governor's Executive Order 472 (March 13, 1931), Hawaii Revised Statutes Section 206J-6©, *Limitations on the powers of the development corporation*, and 1999 Historic Places Review Board's approval of Irwin Park's nomination to the Register of Historic Places affirmed the designation of this site as a public park at the Honolulu waterfront.

The significance of Irwin Park as an open space integral to the Honolulu Harbor waterfront and the Aloha Tower site was identified in the nomination for Irwin Park approved by the Historic Places Review Board in 1999 to list Irwin Memorial Park on the Register of Historic Places:

Although certain functional intrusions have occurred over time, the park continues to retain its integrity as a significant open space central to the Honolulu Harbor waterfront. Irwin Memorial Park retains integrity of a) location, as the central esplanade along the waterfront created to beautify Honolulu Harbor during the era of ocean travel; b) setting, as a significant

open space providing a gathering place and view planes to the waterfront and important surrounding buildings of the era; c) design, with the historic configuration of shade trees and palm trees planned by a noted landscape architect within this wide esplanade central to the waterfront; d) feeling, as a landscaped open space with shade tree canopies fronting Aloha Tower; and e) association, as a commemorative park and monument to an important person directly involved with Hawaii's history of commerce on the Honolulu waterfront.

The Aloha Tower Environmental Impact Statement of 1990 (EIS) states that Irwin Memorial Park is "the only major vegetation on the Aloha Tower project site along the waterfront. Further, in the EIS the State pledges a commitment to renovate Aloha Tower and restore Irwin Park by relocating the parking elsewhere so "the entire park will be beautified .. ." and that the historic trees "will be saved to provide a shady canopy for park users ... and cultural events for the public's enjoyment" (9.3 and M-5). Thus, Irwin Park is destined to again take its "rightful place as a focal point of Honolulu" within the waterfront (9.4). (Source: Section 7, page 2 of 1999 Nomination to the Register of Historic Places).

During these COVID-pandemic times of economic instability and constant stress for Honolulu citizens, it makes economic sense to preserve and protect Honolulu's historic properties and historic sites. They help to preserve a sense of place that is critical to building resilience and trust that the future will yield a better tomorrow.

Rather than reducing Irwin Park's historic status as a park asset, we should honor the State commitment to restore Irwin Park by relocating the parking elsewhere, as stated in the 1990 Aloha Tower EIS. Hawaii residents, visitors, local businesses and preservation advocates would welcome the restoration of Irwin Park as a demonstration of respect for historic architecture and historic sites celebrating Hawaii's unique history and heritage.

Being able to enjoy the Irwin Park shade trees in an outdoor gathering space, as a historic site commemorating important historic events, significant historical leaders and the evolution of ocean travel throughout the Pacific, would provide a tremendous boost to our community.

I therefore urge board members to reject the re-registration of Irwin Park, and to retain its current public park status without modification. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Irwin Park re-registration.

Sincerely,


Carol Fukunaga
City Councilmember, District 6