

# Charting Tomorrow: A Plan For a Brighter Future in Hawai'i

<http://neilabercrombie.com/charting-tomorrow-plan-for-hawaii/>

The full version contains achievements from the current term and outlines specific initiatives for a brighter future in the next four years. [PDF \(9MB\)](#)

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## INTRODUCTION: THE FIRST FOUR YEARS

The first four years of our Administration were marked by difficult challenges and progressive achievements. We have made significant strides, and Hawai'i is a better place today. When I first took office, our state government faced a \$220 million budget shortfall, furloughs, decimated programs cut to the bone, and low employee morale. We were struggling to pay our bills. Three years later, our state's fiscal condition has improved with a \$1 billion turnaround, we have restored critical programs and we have begun to invest in key initiatives that will benefit the people of Hawai'i for the long term. However, we cannot be complacent – we must continue to be proactive in maintaining fiscal sustainability and build on the progress we have made to further improve the lives of Hawai'i's people.

When I embarked on the endeavor to become the Governor of Hawai'i in 2010, my team and I put together an ambitious plan to set forth *A New Day In Hawai'i*. The *New Day* plan focused on three primary goals:

- To invest in education and rebuild our economy
- To sustain our Hawai'i for future generations
- To restore public confidence in government

I am proud to say that we have been able to check off a number of goals in the *New Day* plan. Here are just a few of our significant accomplishments:

- Incorporated the superintendent of schools into the governor's cabinet
- Instituted cabinet-level leadership and coordination on early childhood initiatives
- Improved the prevention, management, and response system for invasive species
- Prepared for the impacts of climate change
- Preserved and started growing on agricultural lands
- Reinvigorated the Executive Office on Aging
- Led a comprehensive inter-governmental approach to homelessness
- Invested in early childhood
- Appointed a state chief information officer
- Protected the human and civil rights of all, regardless of categories
- Supported Native Hawaiian self-determination and resolved long-standing controversies
- Employed a firm and consistent approach to criminal justice and put an end to shipping prisoners out of state

My Administration, the Legislature, and countless public and private sector groups and individuals – particularly public employees – all contributed to these achievements. However, more needs to be done to further build upon the foundation we have established over the last four years. Now that we are on solid

financial ground, we can also set forth new goals for the near and long-term future to help our children and our children's children feel confident about Hawai'i's future.

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## PREAMBLES

Below are preambles to each section of *Charting Tomorrow*. Please download the full version ([PDF, 9MB](#)) to read the complete plan.

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## AFFORDABLE HOUSING & SMART GROWTH

Since 2010, my Administration has made it a priority to invest in the well-being of Hawai'i's people through helping families stabilize and improve their lives by building housing that people can afford, providing housing to Hawai'i's low-income individuals and families, and working to address the complex issue of homelessness. Increasing the housing supply is essential in any plan to alleviate homelessness in Hawai'i. The demand for housing exceeds supply. In particular, the need for low-income public housing is almost twice the current available supply. The statewide projected rental housing need between 2012 and 2016 for lower income families is approximately 19,000 units.

For the same period, the anticipated first-time homebuyer need is approximately 24,000 units for moderate-income families. Increasing the housing supply is essential if we want to enable the working class and our next generation here in Hawai'i to achieve the dream of owning a home.

There are no easy solutions, but my Administration is committed to working collaboratively with the counties and building public-private partnerships to leverage resources for the benefit of those in need of housing.

## AGRICULTURE & LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

Hawai'i currently imports the majority of its food, making the state highly vulnerable, given our isolation. In addition to boosting Hawai'i's self-sufficiency, the agriculture industry is a tremendous economic opportunity. According to a recent UHERO report, diversified agriculture is the fastest growing agricultural sector in Hawai'i.

However, we have lost critical industries and much of our capacity to collect and maintain agricultural statistics. We will continue to revitalize our state's agriculture industry by staying on track to double local food production by 2030, increase food self-sufficiency and further boost demand for local products.

## ECONOMIC GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

The economy is on solid footing and continues to grow. Last year, the tourism industry hit record levels with major indicators, including visitor arrivals and expenditures, at all-time peaks. The state is projecting further tourism growth of 1.7 percent in 2014. All other sectors of the economy show positive indicators. Hawai'i has one of the nation's lowest unemployment rates along with record highs in the labor force and employment. We

anticipate continued growth in the economy overall, driven by a robust construction sector, which is anticipated to grow by 15 percent in 2014.

Real property values remain high. The military is at the highest level of active duty personnel since WWII. This year, the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise, which began in June, includes 23 participating countries, making it the largest defense exercise in Hawai'i's history. We are also seeing unprecedented diversification of our economy in new and exciting areas that bode well for our future.

## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

Infrastructure, particularly as it relates to transportation, is one of the most fundamental services provided by government. For too long, Hawai'i's infrastructure has not been maintained and updated to keep pace with our population's changing needs and growth patterns. Furthermore, when I took office, state finances were in shambles and we faced a deficit of more than \$200 million, which made it difficult to pay for infrastructure upgrades.

Despite these challenges, we made it a priority to invest in improving our infrastructure from the start of our Administration. We invested more than \$3 billion in these improvements to kick-start our economy and create jobs. We also improved our fiscal health and our credit rating so we could borrow at historically low rates, making upgrades in our infrastructure more affordable than ever.

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## EARLY LEARNING

Early learning is the educational foundation by which a child develops the necessary skills to succeed in the future. Our goal is to create a comprehensive and integrated statewide early childhood development and learning system where children are healthy and developing, where they have access to high-quality early learning programs, where their families are supported, and where they enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The goal of early learning is not only to increase access and provide more opportunities for preschool-aged children and their families, but also to improve the quality of the learning and educational experience so that these keiki have the tools they need to be prepared and ready for K-12.

## EDUCATION

By working together and making tough choices, Hawai'i has accelerated progress for our children. In the last four years, we have built a strong foundation and will continue to pave the way for every child to have access to quality educational opportunities – from early childhood through high school and beyond. In 2014, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan called Hawai'i a "rising star" and referred to the state's progress in education as "extraordinary."

Through more quality preschool opportunities as well as improved experiences and outcomes for every child in our state, we must fulfill the promise of public education for our keiki and secure the future of our community and economy.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

The University of Hawai'i (UH) system is an economic engine for the state and the people of Hawai'i take great pride in UH's academic and athletic programs. UH has made great progress over the years, providing a quality education and opportunities for its students. We need to do all that we can to ensure that college is both accessible and affordable for students on all islands, and that students are provided academic offerings that will allow them to be competitive once they enter the workforce.

It is also critical that UH faculty and staff have the resources and support they need to be effective educators and to conduct innovative research. The research conducted by UH influences both public and private sector decision making that impacts the economy, environment, and Hawai'i's people.

We must provide students and faculty with a safe and enriching learning and working environment by reducing UH's repair and maintenance backlog. The UH System is one of Hawai'i's most valuable resources, and we must nurture it and grow it to become a world-class institution.

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## CLEAN ENERGY TRANSFORMATION & GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION

Hawai'i continues to lead the nation with the Hawai'i Clean Energy Initiative (HCEI) goal of 70 percent clean energy by 2030. We are on target to exceed electricity milestones ahead of schedule and create a road map for meeting clean transportation goals.

Hawai'i imports most of its energy and has the highest energy costs in the nation. However, the state has not sat idle. Energy has become one of Hawai'i's most important economic enterprises, and clean energy is the driving force behind our economic transformation.

Going forward, Hawai'i will continue to lead the charge for clean energy policy, planning and deployment. The state is poised to serve as an international test bed for renewable energy and energy efficiency that creates green jobs and attracts investment.

## ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Hawai'i is the endangered species capital of the U.S. with an economy that is dependent on a healthy environment. As an island state, Hawai'i is especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as sea-level rise, drought, increased storms, and ocean acidification. Freshwater will become increasingly important as we face the impacts of climate change. Hawai'i must establish a waste reduction strategy to further lessen the amount of waste that goes into our landfills.

It is a priority of our Administration to steward our environment and natural resources through partnerships to protect and restore our core watershed areas and reefs; support healthy fisheries, freshwater security, and biodiversity; and ensure effective waste management. Hawai'i is also planning for the impacts of climate change by making sure that our critical infrastructure, natural resources, and food system are resilient.

## INTEGRATED SUSTAINABILITY

Hawai'i is a microcosm of the world's sustainability challenges and is uniquely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We have the opportunity to serve as a national and international model for innovative and integrated whole-system solutions. We must strengthen the following key areas as the building blocks for a sustainable, resilient, secure, diverse, and equitable economy for current and future generations:

- Clean energy transformation and greenhouse gas reduction
- Agriculture and local food production
- Invasive species prevention and control
- Natural resource management and environmental health
- Waste reduction
- Climate change preparedness and adaptation
- Integrated sustainability

In 2011, we made sustainability a priority for our state by incorporating the definition, goals, and principles into our State Plan through Act 181. Hawai'i's official state definition of sustainability emphasizes that we must strike a balance between economic, social and community, and environmental priorities. Balance must be achieved through the following key strategies:

- *Integrated approach*: Break down silos between government agencies and levels of government through collaborative leadership and joint action.
- *Partnerships*: Work closely with the private sector and with communities on shared projects.
- *Accountability*: Set measurable targets, track progress, and support data-driven decision-making.
- *Lead by example*: Make government operations greener to increase efficiency and sustainability while reducing impacts and costs.
- *Smart investments*: Strategically leverage government investments to support state sustainability goals.

Hawai'i can offer a unique "aloha approach to sustainability" that is rooted in culture, collaboration, and community.

As Ambassador Ronald Jumeau of the Seychelles said when inviting Hawai'i to make an international commitment to sustainability, "It is time for Hawai'i to stand up, step forward and be recognized as an island leader in sustainability."

## INVASIVE SPECIES PREVENTION & CONTROL

Hawai'i is facing a biological crisis due to invasive species. We are committed to protecting Hawai'i's economy, agriculture, environment, health and way of life from the devastating impacts of invasive species by strengthening biosecurity at our borders and between our islands, supporting on-the-ground control efforts in each county and watershed, and effectively working across departments for effective response.

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## HEALTH

Hawai'i's residents have some of the best health outcomes of any state in the nation. Overall, we compare favorably to U.S. average rates of heart disease, cancer and injuries. However, there are still some communities throughout the state that do not enjoy as favorable outcomes and have higher rates of preventable disease and poor health. The high cost of treating disease and injuries holds back economic development for individuals and society.

Investments in preventive care and transformation of our healthcare system will produce better outcomes at lower cost.

By also focusing on the social determinants of good health, raising education levels, building safe communities, and reducing poverty, we can achieve the best health for our citizens in the future.

## HEALTHCARE TRANSFORMATION

Hawai'i has long had one of the highest rankings for people with health insurance in the nation. With the help of the ACA, we will soon have close to universal coverage.

Meanwhile, we are transforming our healthcare system to ensure high quality and affordability for all Hawai'i residents. We are also investing in healthier communities through education, economic opportunities, local farming and our natural environment.

## HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is a multi-faceted issue with no easy solutions. People become homeless for many different reasons: some face mental health or drug issues, and others are not able to make ends meet.

We can end homelessness by permanently re-housing those who become homeless as soon as possible. For the sickest and most chronically homeless, housing them first and providing services is less expensive than what the government is currently paying in emergency calls, medical, police, jail, and court costs.

Together, we can end homelessness by focusing on what works and by building bridges between our public, private, and community sectors.

## KŪPUNA

As our aging population grows dramatically, the state will have limited resources to address the many needs of older adults in Hawai'i. To achieve significant progress, everyone involved in ensuring the well-being of Hawai'i's kūpuna – including the Executive Office on Aging (EOA), area agencies on aging, public and private elder health and social service providers, senior advocacy groups, and consumers – must be aligned and work toward the same vision and goals. No single entity can fully address the issues and challenges of the aging network. We are committed to achieving the vision of Hawai'i as “the best place to grow older.”

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## CONCLUSION

## A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR HAWAI'I

Hawai'i is at a crossroads. I believe our best days are ahead of us, but only if we resolve to work together and put aside our differences for the benefit of future generations. We have a choice. We can move forward on the course we've charted to a brighter future, a better tomorrow.

- We can invest in our infrastructure to create jobs, improve our economy and ensure we're prepared for the 21st century.
- We can provide preschool for all children, giving future generations a head start on success.
- We can provide more care, services and financial relief for our kūpuna in return for all they've given us.
- We can create a more financially resilient and fiscally responsible government that can meet the needs of our citizens without mortgaging our future.
- We can protect our environment while still supporting the needs of our growing population through clean energy, local food production and responsible development.

*Together, we're charting a course to a better tomorrow.*