

Oral Closing Argument

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Land Use Commission – Ho’opili Case
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Good afternoon.

The question before this Commission is whether or not to completely destroy highly productive agricultural land to make way for yet another unneeded suburb.

Today, I will be addressing that question, along with the problems of traffic, and why these houses are not needed.

I

Let’s begin with agriculture.

I want to start with statements by the Petitioner’s ag expert, Bruce Plasch. Although no one would expect him to heap praise on the ag land involved, listen to what he said in the Environmental Impact Statements for this project (show the EIS) : This land “has very favorable conditions for crop production, with high-quality soils, flat or gently sloping terrain, high solar radiation (sunshine), low pumping costs for irrigation, and it’s location is close to town. It has prime soils of A and B quality. (EIS Vol.2. Sect. 1, p.ES1. Also

Supp.WTD 2:1-7) Those are direct quotes! He’s saying the same thing we are. And

he was testifying for the Petitioner! Why such great praise? Because it cannot be denied.

Plasch later writes, “The Petition Area constitutes about one-fourth of what was called the Golden Triangle,” and is the only part of the Golden Triangle still remaining in agriculture. (Plasch Supp. WDT 7:9-13) I want to repeat that: “The Petition Area constitutes about one-fourth of what was called the Golden Triangle.” The Golden Triangle. Why was the Petition land called the Golden Triangle? Because as another exhibit states, “For vegetable crops, the Ho’opili lands are among the most sustainably productive in the world.” (FOM James Brewbaker Exhibit 33, p. 1)

Most places in the world, because of their winters, have only one growing season a year. Hawaii can grow year round, though some areas are limited in number of crops per year because of cloud cover and rain.

Because of abundant sunshine in low-lying Ho’opili, yields of crops like sweet corn are at least 55% higher there than on the North Shore slopes. (J B

FOM Exhibit 33)

What does the land produce? In 2007, the last year records were kept, Ho`opili land produced more than 40% of Oahu’s fresh broccoli, beans, romaine lettuce, and zucchini, and more than 70% of Oahu’s fresh

corn, cantaloupe, pumpkin, and honeydew, along with smaller percentages of a number of other crops. (DOA Statistics 2007)

Ho'opili constitutes a huge chunk of our ag land on O'ahu. When pineapple, coffee, flowers, and other export crops are excluded, there are only 4,800 acres of land on Oahu currently producing food for local people. Ho'opili accounts for 1,497 of those acres. That's 32% of Oahu's active farm acreage. (C. Fujikane, 1/19/12, 190:4-193:7) Again, let me repeat, Ho'opili constitutes roughly one-third of all the O'ahu farmland that produces food for the local market.

Let's talk more about the soil -- Professor Jonathan Deenik testified, "Close to 90% of the Petition area is composed of high activity clays, which are characterized by very high nutrient retention capacity, and high fertility. " (J. Deenik, 3/16/12, 74:5-9) Fifty percent of the soils come from two groupings: Molosols and Vertisols. Deenik says, "Of the 12 soil types on the planet, these two fall at the very top in terms of fertility and agricultural productivity." (Deenik 3/16/12 75:10-16)

We all need to be aware of the stark reality of what will happen to this precious farmland. Because a thousand of the acres are clay, which contracts and expands, cracking foundations, the developer will need to

scrape off three or four feet of the prime, A and B quality soil, haul it away, and replace it with three feet of coral. (Repeat: They will put a thin layer of the soil back on top of the coral, forming an Oreo.) This destruction of the farmland will be total and irreversible. It will be impossible to correct for as long as humans live in these islands. (J. Deenik, 3/16/12 78:22-79:2)

Can we afford to let them do that? No. Why?

We import roughly 90% of our food. We have less than two week's supply of food in the islands. If the ships don't arrive, we don't eat. We need to be aware of the many things that could cut off our food supply. A spike in oil prices could make many foods become too expensive to import. A tsunami could destroy our ports and low-lying airports. A pandemic could close the islands to all flights and all shipping. A major earthquake in California could destroy ports and roadways to them. War could cut Hawaii off from its food suppliers, even for years. These things may not happen soon, but your descendants will live here for centuries...Centuries. Surely the time will come when these Ho'opili lands will be needed for food in order to survive. But the farmlands will be gone. . . if you allow it.

Let's look at some better alternatives for the future. In the Fall semester, 2012, Ma'o Farms will initiate an agriculture program of studies at the new UH West Oahu Campus, just across the road from Ho'opili. It will eventually accept 75 students a year. (Gary 3/1 45:8ff)

Those graduates will need farmland. Many witnesses have told us of the shortage of available land for small and medium-size farms. (G. Maunakea-Forth

3.1.12, 44: 1, 10-14; L. Cox, 3/1/12, 132:8-18) There really is no farmland available.

This Ho'opili land is the perfect solution for that problem. If you keep this land in ag, and if Aloun continues to make their slow move from the Ho'opili land to Galbraith Estate, over the years, this will open up the Ho'opili lands for young farmers and current farmers seeking to expand. With both properties being farmed—Ho'opili and Galbraith-- we can almost *double the food production of Ho'opili*.

The timing could not be better. The lands would become available just as a new pro-farm consciousness is sweeping across America. We have seen such major changes in the last few years.

You remember, in 2009, when we began these hearings, I sat here alone, just one person standing up for the farms. In these last three and a

half years, we have seen a mushrooming of public consciousness about fresh fruits and vegetables. People are concerned about nutrition. They want organically grown food. They feel strong about food security and the need to save our farmlands. All of these concepts are new. KANU Hawaii has 30,000 members eating right, eating local. It's everywhere: Honolulu Weekly has articles each week. Civil Beat, Hawaii Reporter, other webnews sites. The Star Advertiser, Hawaii Public Radio, 'Olelo, Talk Radio. We have **50** farmer's markets on this island alone. Surveys say people are willing to pay more for locally grown food. And they are right. We have become a food conscious and farm conscious society.

This change has also affected the City Council.

With Ho'opili and Koa Ridge clearly in mind, and with full awareness that both were within the Urban Growth Boundary and were designated by the City for development, the entire City Council voted unanimously for

Resolution 12-23:

Be it resolved by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu that the City's Agricultural Liaison is urged to expedite the identification and mapping of important agricultural lands and ensure that the IAL maps support and protect farming by stabilizing the agriculture land base.

Be it further resolved that the process of identification and mapping of important agricultural lands also consider agriculturally productive lands within urban growth boundaries that are classified as prime agricultural lands, provided adequate water supply is available....

By passing this Resolution, the Council expressed its willingness to lay aside city plans for urbanization of Ho'opili and Koa Ridge, and to consider those properties for Important Agricultural Lands designation should the Land Use Commission keep the land in Ag.

What about the Legislature? In this last session, there was a bill, HB2703, which would have doubled local agricultural production in the State by 2020. 37 of the 50 Representatives (over 2/3rds of all the Reps) and 4 Senators co-authored the bill. It sailed through the House, and the Senate, before being killed in Conference Committee because of outside pressures.

The bill getting that far shows that the world has indeed changed. Demand for food security, and for fresh, locally grown produce really is the wave of the future. We need to ride that wave.

II. TRAFFIC

Let's talk traffic:

During the Lingle administration, the Commission received a very grave warning about freeway standstill from then State DOT Director, Brennon Morioka. In his written testimony, he wrote, "Even with all assumed mitigation measures, the H-1 Freeway will quickly degrade to Level of Service F due to the Ho'opili Project."

"At LOS F there is gridlock on the freeway." (Niiya Transcript 10/21/11 162:12-25)

He continued, "Knowing that we would not accept Petitioner's proposed TIAR or any modification thereof, the Department of Transportation has proposed no conditions for the Decision and Order." (Niiya-Cerullo Transcript 10/21/12

165:11-19)

How much stronger can one get?

The Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Project itself lays out the same story in Table 4.13. It shows that in 2030, when the project is fully built out, even *with* Rail in place, the intersections on the H-1 freeway will mostly have Level of Service F at rush hour. (See FOM Exhibit 14 from FEIS)

Let's take a look at it. Starting with the morning commute, the freeway at Makakilo Drive is now at Level of Service A – free flowing. With the project it will become E. That's the worst traffic we know today. And this is seven miles before the H-1/H-2 merge! Every other cross road

studied is at LOS F, stalled. Kunia Rd./Fort Weaver Rd. has LOS F. Pa'iwa St. at Waikele has LOS F. The H-1/H-2 merge is at F.

Let's look at it coming home. We know that the worst of the traffic today coming out of the city is *before* the H-1/H-2 merge. With Ho'opili, the merge will be at F. Pa'iwa St. because it has an extra lane in that small section, will be at D. Kunia/Fort Weaver will be at F. And Makakikilo Drive, way out there, will be at Level of Service F, gridlock.

A.M.

(7 mi upstream from merge)

Makakilo Dr. (now at A)	E
Kunia Rd. (FWR)	F
Pa'iwa St. (Waikele)	F
H-1/H-2 merge	F

P.M.

H-1/H-2 merge	F
Pa'iwa St.	D (because an extra lane already exists there)
Kunia/Ft. Weaver Rd.	F
Makakilo Drive	F (Way out there!)

That's about as bad as it can possibly get.

Let's return to morning traffic: To solve the problem, the Petitioner has come up with the preposterous plan of narrowing the existing lanes so it can stripe in another lane. . . a lane that will end just before the H-1/H-2 merge, which, as you know, cannot be widened.

As Professor Panos Prevedouros testified, the H-1/H-2 merge is a three-lane choke point on the freeway. He testified, "It doesn't matter if you add ten lanes upstream, if they all come down to three lanes at the H-1/H-2 merge, it doesn't take a civil engineer to tell you, you haven't solved the problem. It's a choker. A choker is a choker is a choker." (Prevedouros 77:1-23)

Adding another lane that ends at the H-1/H-2 merge can only make a far, far worse jam at the merge... and upstream!

[Web editor note: For an updated analysis by Panos Prevedouros, see "Letter to the Honolulu City Council: Hoopili Doesn't Fit," Civil Beat, 03/02/2015. <http://www.civilbeat.com/2015/03/letter-to-the-honolulu-city-council-hoopili-doesnt-fit>]

I want to impress upon you that every commuter from Kapolei and Makakilo, and every commuter from the Wai'anāe coast, and every commuter from Ewa and from Ewa Beach will be *behind* the 12,000 cars generated by Ho'opili. We have the worst traffic in the U.S. We already expect to add 34,805 cars from the zoned houses. Our people are really suffering. We need your help. Please don't put 12,000 more cars on our freeway.

III

Let's talk about the need for houses: Reasonable Need for Urban Growth is one of the reasons given in HAR 15-15-77 which would allow the Commission to urbanize ag land.

Is this Project reasonably necessary for Urban growth? No, it's not needed at all. The testimony of Bob Stanfield, the City planner, has to be read carefully for the facts. As an employee of the city, he must say what the city wants him to say. But as a professional planner, he must also be true to himself and his profession. So he lays out the truth for those paying attention in his written testimony from 2009, and repeats it **again in 2012**. On page one of both documents, he says "Our long-range projection is that the demand for homes in Central Oahu and Ewa, through 2035, will average 1800 units a year." (Stanfield DPP Exhibit 10B) So, at 1800 units a year, how many units do we need between 2009 and 2035? 26 years x 1800 units = 46,800 units.

Now, when testifying, Stanfield talked about the 34,805 units already zoned, fully entitled, and ready to build in 'Ewa.

And in Central Oahu, our exhibits show there are 12,000 more homes at Wai`awa by Gentry, and 3,500 more in Royal Kunia/Launani Valley/Waikele, all fully entitled and waiting to be built. (DPP Annual Report on Status of

This totals 50,305 homes in Central and Ewa. This does not include Ho'opili or Koa Ridge. (EDP May 2011, p2-11 and DPP Annual Report on Status of Land Use on Oahu in 2010.)

If we take those 50,305 zoned units and subtract the 46,800 units that will be needed by 2035, we have an excess of 3,505 units beyond what's needed.

Not one house in the Ho'opili project is needed, according to Stanfield's numbers. If we *were* to build the 11,750 houses projected for Ho'opili, we would have a huge excess of more than 15,000 homes. If built, Ho'opili will glut the housing market. Clearly, this project is not reasonably necessary for urban growth.

Further, with 50,305 units ready to build in Leeward and Central, it is very difficult to make a case for the need for more jobs and more economic development. If these 50,000 units haven't generated construction jobs, why would adding 12,000 more change the situation? The problem with lack of construction jobs is the economy, not lack of houses to build. We have plenty of houses to build.

Finally, let's talk of sprawl. There is no city in the Second City, no downtown business district in Kapolei. In all 80 square blocks, there are

only 12 substantial buildings standing! It's a ghost town. And there's *nothing* on the drawing boards. Bank of Hawaii has mostly moved out of their huge building. The concept of the Second City is all but completely dead. The Second City was supposed to be a job center, take people off the freeway. Without it, Ho'opili will be one more huge bedroom community, nothing more, extending the ugly urban sprawl of Honolulu. Do we really need one more, humongous bedroom community?

I want to mention two other points before finishing. From the very beginning of the planning for the Second City, this area was kept separate and planned to be kept in agriculture. Governor Waihee told us this, and Tom Coffman also went in to great detail about it. The plan was to use the scrub lands closer to the seashore first, and slowly to use the better lands. (The closer land is to the mountains the thicker the soil. It gets very thin by the seashore.) It was never planned that this prime farm property would be used for houses.

Finally, I want to say something about tourism. Tourism is leading our economic recovery. We need to support it. What do tourists come to see? The lush green beauty of Hawaii. When they drive up H-2, they want to see country; they don't want to see houses on both sides of the road.

When they leave Waipahu and break out into the country, they want to see mountains and open vistas. Tourists don't want to see houses along the side of the road. Worse yet, there's going to be a ten foot high cement wall along the freeway. That will make them feel like they are right back in the San Fernando Valley.

We can't pave over the beauty of this island. Or we'll kill off our number one industry.

For all of these reasons, I beg you to vote against the petition to develop this property.

Thank you.