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Protest Planned Monday at City Hall Over Proposed Resort Development Along Ka Iwi Coastline

Developers are Moving Ahead with Plans to Build 180 'Cabins' Despite Outcry from Residents; Former House Minority Leader Gene Ward Will Present Petitions to Mayor in Opposition

By Malia Zimmerman, 8/26/2006 8:18:07 PM

Island residents will rally at Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann's office at Honolulu City Hall on Monday afternoon from 4 to 5 p.m. to protest the proposed construction of 180 recreational vacation "cabins" along the Ka Iwi Coastline in Hawaii Kai on one of the last undeveloped parcels of pristine land in East Oahu -- land that residents believed was protected from any kind of development.

The developer said the "Queen's Rise Recreation Center" would be located on a 98-acre parcel of land surrounded by privately owned conservation land; and a sister project, "Mauuwai Recreational Center" would be situated on an 83-acre parcel above the privately owned Hawaii Kai Golf Course. The cabins are 800-square-foot units, each with a kitchen and lanai.

QRM must get approval from the city's Planning and Permitting Department first because the land is zoned "preservation" or "P2." No other approvals are necessary if the city administration says the project is a "permitted use." The plan has already been met with strong opposition from hundreds of people from Kailua to Diamond Head.

At a June Hawaii Kai Neighborhood Board meeting, when Aaron Eberhardt, the developer's spokesman, came to make a brief presentation, more than 300 angry residents showed to oppose the plan. They left frustrated because he did not answer most questions posed by community and neighborhood board members or any of the questions by the media.

Most upsetting to the hundreds of people who attended and raised their hands to vote against the proposal along with all of the Hawaii Kai Neighborhood Board Members, was the fact that the company by law must make just one presentation to the community to layout its proposed project. No follow up is required by law. At a second meeting held July 12, 2006, by Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann in conjunction with Sen. Sam Slom, R-Hawaii Kai, several hundred people showed up to voice their desire to see the project turned down by the city. At that meeting held at Kaiser High School, Hannemann said he had no additional details of the developer's plans, noting no application had been submitted to the city. Hannemann said based on what he knew about, he did not support the idea. His statement was met with loud applause.

But last week, developers submitted an application for the project and are pushing ahead with their plans -- details have not been made public. If the city's Planning and Permitting Department turns down the application and says it is not a "permitted usage," developers can apply for a zoning change through the Honolulu City Council, and that would require public hearings. Former state House Minority Leader Gene Ward, who recently moved back to Hawaii Kai after working overseas in East Timor for the Peace Corps, is coordinating the protest at City Hall.

Ward, who is hoping to reclaim his seat in the state House this election, says: "After hundreds of us from the community showed up to protest this resort development at the Hawaii Kai Neighborhood Board in June and then at the Mayor's and Sen. Slom's Townhall meeting in July, many thought nothing would happen, and suddenly this happens. My fear is that the community feels so strongly against this project, that if the developer sidesteps the consultative process, he will face a massive outcry from the community, and even the possibility of civil disobedience."

Ward adds that at the demonstration at Honolulu Hale, he will present the mayor's office with the hundreds of petitions collected against the cabins project.

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