

HISTORIC HAWAII FOUNDATION

TO: The Honorable Kymberly Marcos Pine, Chair
Committee on Zoning and Housing
City Council, City & County of Honolulu

FROM: Kiersten Faulkner
Executive Director, Historic Hawai'i Foundation

Hearing Date: Wednesday, November 7, 2018
1:00 p.m.
City Council Chamber

RE: **Resolution 18-284 Interim Planned Development – Transit (IPD-T) for the Sky Ala Moana Condo-Hotel and Residential Development**

On behalf of Historic Hawai'i Foundation (HHF), I am writing **in opposition** to the proposed IPD-T approval for the “Sky Ala Moana” development within the Kapi'olani Corridor portion of the Ala Moana Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan. HHF's comments and recommendations pertain to the proposed project description and TOD requirements related to historic preservation and character.

Summary of Historic Hawai'i Foundation Concerns and Recommendations

HHF finds that the proposed development fails to identify, protect and enhance significant historic landmarks, as required by the TOD development standards, by proposing to demolish three historic buildings known as the Kenrock Buildings, located at 1388, 1400 and 1418 Kapi'olani Boulevard.

The proposed development does not meet urban design goals for the historically-significant Kapi'olani Boulevard corridor and the urban design components of the project are not consistent with the goals of the Hawai'i General Plan's Primary Urban Center Development Plan, including protection of Cultural Resources and cultivation of Livable Neighborhoods.

The development proposes almost triple the number of recommended parking stalls, substantially overbuilding parking and undermining the stated TOD goal to encourage transit ridership and multi-modal use. This predominance of parking as a use results in an eight-story wall of parking along Kapi'olani Boulevard and undermines the urban design goals, including preservation of the historic buildings and corridor character.

HHF's review of the plan found that the proposed community benefits fail to justify the increased development; the proposal would instead impose significant adverse effect on historic properties and community character and does not adequately “meet community goals and mitigate development impacts”.¹

¹ Ala Moana TOD Section 5.6

HHF recommends that the proposed development be amended to:

1. Retain the three historic Kenrock Buildings and incorporate them into the street level design,
2. Improve the street frontages, scale, massing, form and landscape design to be compatible and harmonious with the Kapi'olani Boulevard corridor character.

HHF recommends that Council withhold approval of the proposal until and unless these concerns are adequately addressed.

Interests of Historic Hawai'i Foundation

Since 1974, Historic Hawai'i Foundation has been a statewide leader for historic preservation. HHF works to preserve Hawai'i's unique architectural and cultural heritage and believes that historic preservation is an important element in the present and future quality of life, economic viability and environmental sustainability of the State.

Project Scope

The applicant proposes to develop a mixed-use project comprised of 400 condominium residences, a 322-unit condo-hotel, 110 rental units, commercial spaces and ancillary common area amenities, in addition to about 1000 parking stalls. This will be accomplished by demolishing low-rise commercial buildings including the three historically-significant Kenrock Buildings at 1388, 1400 and 1418 Kapi'olani Boulevard.

Significance of the Kenrock Buildings

The Kenrock Buildings meet the criteria as significant historic properties that are eligible for listing on the Hawai'i and National Registers of Historic Places.² Additionally they are identified in the "Hawai'i Modernism Context Study" (2011) as mid-century modern buildings with "high preservation value."³ They meet several of the criteria, including:

- **Criterion A: Association with events that have made an important contribution to the broad patterns of our history.** The Kenrock Buildings are directly associated with the post-World War II development of the Kapi'olani Corridor into Honolulu's "Miracle Mile" of commercial, retail and eating establishments.
- **Criterion C: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction....possesses high artistic value.** The Kenrock Buildings display a high level of design and integrity of materials and workmanship that represent the best of Honolulu's "mid-century modern" commercial building type. Distinctive architectural features include such elements as flat roofs, thin, flat cantilevered concrete canopies or awnings; strong right angles and simple cubic forms.
- **Criterion C: Represent(s) the work of a master.** The Kenrock Buildings were designed by the Honolulu architectural firm of Lemmon and Freeth (later Lemmon Freeth and Haines, then Architects Hawaii, now AHL), and constructed in three phases (1948, 1950 & 1959).

² Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) §6E-42 and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) §13-284.

³ "Hawai'i Modernism Context Study" by Fung Associates for Historic Hawai'i Foundation, November 2011, pp.4-2 & 5-7

As Hawaii's first professional corporation, the architectural firm designed some of Honolulu's most iconic mid-century modern buildings from their offices in the Kenrock Building between 1950 and 1962. The firm was part of the consortium (Belt, Lemmon & Lo), including John Carl Warnecke, that designed and oversaw the construction of the Hawai'i State Capitol.

Protection of Historic, Cultural and Scenic Resources

Despite this rich history and significant design, the plan proposal neglects to note any of the importance of the buildings or the adverse effect that would be caused by the proposed demolition.

HHF finds that the application failed to identify significant historic properties. It is disingenuous and highly inappropriate to dismiss the buildings as non-historic or insignificant solely because they have not been nominated to be listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places.

TOD Requirements and Recommendations Related to Historic Preservation

The TOD enabling legislation requires Neighborhood TOD plans to identify cultural and historic resources that form the context for TOD.⁴ It also mandates minimum requirements for development regulations to include "Identification of important neighborhood historic, scenic, and cultural landmarks, and controls to protect and enhance these resources."⁵

The Ala Moana TOD Plan failed to include a comprehensive architecture survey of historic properties, listing only a few of the most prominent in the study area. However, even the cursory chapter addressing this issue noted that there are "a considerable number of historically and culturally significant sites" and indicates that its list is not complete or exhaustive.⁶

Given the TOD mandate to preserve historic properties and the clear historic significance of the Kenrock Buildings, HHF finds that the proposed demolition of these buildings is in conflict with the requirement.

Therefore, the IPD-T plan should either be rejected as proposed or returned to be re-worked to incorporate the historic properties into the site plan and development program.

Recommendations

Historic Hawai'i Foundation strongly believes that the existing historic Kenrock Buildings can be successfully incorporated into the street level design of the proposed project, thus contributing to the preservation of the scale, mass and setback features of the historic Kapi'olani Corridor. This solution would also help address several of the other concerns, including the overall site plan, massing, bulk and detailing.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

⁴ ROH Sec. 21-9.100-2

⁵ ROH Sec. 21-9.100-4

⁶ Ala Moana TOD Plan pp 18

Kenrock Building Historic Photos, c. 1950s



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Historic Hawai'i Foundation was established in 1974 to encourage the preservation of historic buildings, sites and communities on all the islands of Hawai'i. As the statewide leader for historic preservation, HHF works to preserve Hawai'i's unique architectural and cultural heritage and believes that historic preservation is an important element in the present and future quality of life, environmental sustainability and economic viability of the state.