

Wahiawā Discussion Group  
September 16, 2008  
Wahiawā District Park

**Attending:**

Bob Lormand	
Dan Nakasone	WCBA
David Hanson	
E. S. Whang	
L. Oyasato	
Leslie Brinkley	
Libby Smithe	WCBA
Nancy Miura	
Phillip Flip Kuchler	
Senator Robert Bunda	
Susie Peterson	WCBA
Yuki Kitagawa	
Kathy Sokugawa	DPP
Hal Senter	DPP
John Kirkpatrick	BCH
Michael Lim	BCH

Notes are intended to capture the sense of the meeting and the range of points discussed.

Meeting sponsored by WBCA, opened by Dan Nakasone.

(John Kirkpatrick): The Central O‘ahu Sustainable Communities Plan (SCP) was passed by ordinance in 2002. It was based on work done in the late 1990s. The plan and the ordinance call for regular review of the plan. That review is what the Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) and Belt Collins Hawaii (BCH) are now working on. We hope to learn about:

- Changes to the community since the plan was developed and published;
- How the people of Wahiawā feel about the Vision in the plan: Does it still make sense? If so, are the steps mentioned in the plan the ones needed to help bring that Vision to reality?

We are seeking community input to help develop a new draft plan. A draft of the SCP is expected by end of this year. It will be for public review, and there will be several opportunities for public input.

Key questions: Is this plan the right plan? Is the plan heading in the right direction?

The plan includes a Vision, Policies, and Guidelines. Important elements include:

- **Revitalization of Wahiawā.** This is a vision element. Tools mentioned in the plan to help realize it include the Urban Design Plan and the Enterprise Zone (passed in 2000).
- **Urban Community Boundary (UCB).** The boundary identifies areas in which agriculture and conservation, but no new Urban use, is allowed. DPP will not process requests for non-agricultural uses on agricultural lands. The applicant would have to propose, and the City Council accept, a change in the UCB (i.e., a change in the SCP) before DPP would even look at such a request.

Question from audience: What is definition of URBAN and FARM: Discussion: residential, commercial and industrial activities are urban unless closely linked to and directly supportive of agriculture (use of land to grow commercial crops). Farm dwellings can be an accessory to agricultural activity.

What is the expected use of the Galbraith Estate? Can it just be cut up into five-acre lots with luxurious “farm dwellings”?

- City and County (C&C) regulates how land is used for farm dwelling for a building permit. In the Ag-1 district there can be one farm dwelling per 5 acres; in Ag-2 district one farm dwelling for each 2 acres is allowed. Each farm dwelling and any accessory uses is limited to an area not to exceed 5,000 sq ft of the lot.
- The Agricultural Task Force convened by the City and County is reviewing the issue. It will make recommendations soon. One idea it’s considering is simply not to allow agricultural subdivisions. That would rule out the five-acre lots. With no subdivision, only two dwellings can be placed on a large agricultural parcel.
- Another idea is to require that a house follows farming: i.e. no “farm dwelling” is allowed until farm activity is well established. However, this may be a hardship for farmers. They are concerned about theft from fields when these are not supervised.

Farm subdivision applications go to State Dept of Agriculture (DOA). There is no minimum land size for a farm and little or no guidance in law on how to define what is a credible agricultural activity. Subdivision permit review does not require any public review or discussion.

Dillingham Ranch has subdivision approval. There was no public hearing input. The farm plan is based on a history of raising horses and riding on the ranch.

General discussion – It’s hard to define a “farm dwelling,” so as to avoid permitting gentlemen’s rural mansions. One approach taken by the City is to limit size. Other approaches would be to insist on a farm worker living in the dwelling, or defining agricultural use of a parcel in terms of

the financial return from that parcel (e.g., to insist that a parcel with a farm dwelling produce an agricultural cash flow sufficient to support a farm family at the median income )

Equally, it’s difficult to define “gentlemen’s estate” or “mansion” in this context – and DPP isn’t equipped to make frequent decisions about agriculture. (The Land Use Commission is tasked to make some of these decisions, especially as it deals with the recent Important Agricultural Lands act.)

It’s also difficult for policy makers to find ways to keep agricultural lands in agricultural use. One approach is in terms of viable agricultural production. Yet, there are farming families that want to put their children on the land, even when the children do not want to farm – so a small farm becomes a family subdivision with little or no farming. And if it doesn’t become a family subdivision, the kids may just want to sell.

Comment: City gets blindsided. The process takes over, and public input is lost.

Comment: Regarding Poamoho View Estates, there have been conflicts with people who farm wanting the access gate to stay open, and people with homes and no active farming want the gate closed.

Community wants agriculture near Wahiawā. There is not much land left. Do we develop every square foot? If the process is open-ended, down the line will we develop all the land. There will be no sustainability.

How do we encourage agriculture for Wahiawa revitalization?

The State Legislature is seeking to strengthen Ag laws for the good lands (Important Ag Lands Act). The new law adds incentives for agricultural use.

That law is watered down. Landowners can classify their own land. Should we take classification out of landowners’ hands?

Department of Agricultural and Land Use Commission will have a lot to say about definition of agricultural use and accessory uses on Important Agricultural Lands.

How do we add or strengthen language in SCP in support of agriculture? Should the SCP advocate Ag lands for Ag, rather than just oppose development on those lands?

We can suggest changes to SCP. The community can make stronger communication to City Council, Mayor.

Referring to section 2.2.4 of handout (excerpts from the SCP), does this mean mid rise development is allowed to occur on the Galbraith Lands?

No, that area is outside the Urban Community Boundary, and such development would not be possible without a change in the SCP approved by Council.

Question: If Galbraith were bought by, say, Dean Okimoto to do diversified Ag, with lease out of 5 acres each to many farmers; would that be supported?

No. That would be industrial, and encroach on agricultural lands. .

The Ag Task Force is considering the clustering of housing (to leave open as much land as possible for agricultural use, while still allowing farmers to live on the land).

Question: There is a problem with 5 acre lots. What is to happen to the land over time: should owners be allowed to subdivide the lots for their kids? What are we leaving the next generation, property or commercial enterprise?

One participant advocates growing crops on the land with no houses, no agricultural land used for housing. .

People who want to buy Galbraith land visited him (personally). Gave song and dance about Ag. However, buyer noted that in order to grow, will need residential.

One industry to blame are the land appraisers. Appraisers take no account of zoning. Lots of speculation.

Another way to support agriculture: make the water that can potentially be used for irrigation clean. Preserve lands below Lake Wilson for future agricultural use when water quality gets better in future.

Reply: BWS has looked at water reuse for Ag from Lake Wilson. (However, their major proposed use is irrigation of park lands, not agricultural land.)

What about renewable energy? Would wind farms count as an agricultural use? (At least two participants shake their heads, “No.”)

A study has been done in San Francisco: Can San Francisco support itself by lands within 100 miles? Turns out it can. Local produce can be grown in and near the city could support the population.

Land behind National Guard (Pine Spur) What’s happening there?

Land is Agricultural and identified as such in SCP. Purchaser is a telecom utility, and utilities can have fixtures in agricultural areas (e.g., transformers and the like to support power lines). So it is within the rules to have a utility station there. But that’s not the same as the utility’s headquarters.

We suffer from incremental decision making.

Once permit issued, what’s the enforcement? Does the City actually enforce rules on agricultural use of agricultural lands?

DPP doesn’t go out and inspect. Real Property Branch assessors do look over a lot of properties. Their task is to identify actual and potential uses that could raise the value of the land, not to enforce land use law.

No gentleman farms should be approved – there is no recourse once land has permits, no way the City insures that agriculture actually occurs.

### **Wahiawa Economics and Revitalization**

Off-street parking for employees is needed. There is parking at the Civic Center but it is not for employees.

Kane‘ohe good example. Employees parked close. Widen Kamehameha Hwy.

Suggestion from a local business owner: There are open parking spaces, but hard to see them from Kamehameha Hwy. Suggest that parking be allowed on Olive Ave. The street is effectively three lanes wide, though striped for only 2 lanes. Parking on one side would eliminate cars using the right side, protect the sidewalk, and prevent parking on grass/sidewalk. There are other streets also like this.

The Central Oahu SCP is more about policy than fixes to particular roadways and can respond in two ways: (a) include the restriping in Capital Improvement Projects list, (something the councilmember can support and push for) and (b) see this as part of a larger condition, and see if City can have a parking/circulation study done to meet community needs.

Building a parking lot/structure in Wahiawa Town is not feasible – economics don’t justify it.

Area is supported by military and local markets. No visitors come to Wahiawā – they by-pass the town, going along Wilikina Road. Any attempt to bring tourists into town may then conflict with aim of supporting local business on Wilikina Road.

Question: Are there any grants to redevelop town from Federal government?

Discussion: major source is Main Street program. WCBA has looked at this, but Wahiawā has little “historical fabric” for this sort of renewal. Urban Renewal – major government intervention to clear and rebuild an area – is no longer a City and County mandate.

Participant comment: his kids want the whole town redeveloped, with a new, brighter look.

Reply: One success story is South Beach, in Miami. The area was run down and had a poor reputation. A few buildings were repainted, and that sparked interest – others followed suit, and soon after the area became fashionable.

Participant comment: – he arrived in Wahiawā in the 1970s. It looks today just the same as it did then.

Facilitator Question: How to revitalize? What language in the plan can help revitalization?

Participant comment: A major problem is the loss of community activity centers: bowling, YMCA, theater. These have all moved to Mililani.

Question: What about tax incentives for new commercial development.

Reply – the enterprise zone law already creates those incentives.

Participant comment: One farmer grows food for Whole Foods. We need an infusion of something new so we can become a destination. Imagine a Whole Foods store in Wahiawa.

Comments: It’s a few bars and unsightly or adult oriented businesses that create the problem.

There are also bars and churches close to each other.

We need to change the face of the town, and we need grant money to do so. There’s no incentive for owners to improve buildings.

Question: Can eminent domain be used as a “hammer” to encourage owners to improve their property?

(John Kirkpatrick notes) eminent domain = City ownership. Ownership without vision isn’t revitalization. I once lived near parts of Chicago where owners simply abandoned buildings to the City, which did nothing to improve them... and certainly did not solve the problem.

### **Next Steps:**

These notes have been circulated by e-mail to participants

The entire SCP, including the maps, is on the DPP website:

[www.honolulu.dpp.org/Planning/DevSust\\_CentralOahu.asp](http://www.honolulu.dpp.org/Planning/DevSust_CentralOahu.asp)

The planning team will take information and inputs received and draft a proposed revised plan, for review by the community and community meetings around the end of 2008.

Thanks to WCBA for organizing this event.