



City and County of Honolulu

Kalihi Neighborhood Transit-Oriented Development Plan Stakeholder Interviews Report

Prepared by

DYETT & BHATIA

Urban and Regional Planners

January 2011

1	Introduction	1
	Plan Overview	1
	This Report	1
2	Major Themes.....	2
3	Discussion Topics.....	3
	Transit-Oriented Development and Station Design.....	3
	Neighborhood Character	3
	Land Use Mix.....	4
	Development Opportunities.....	5
	Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements	6
	Bus and Vehicle Circulation and Parking	6
	Open Space and Recreation.....	7
4	Next Steps.....	8
	Appendix A: List of Interviewees	9

1 Introduction

PLAN OVERVIEW

The City and County of Honolulu is preparing neighborhood plans that integrate neighborhood planning with planning for the High Capacity Rail Project. The purpose of the plans is to create policies that capitalize on the opportunities brought by rail access, while also addressing potential challenges. The Kalihi Neighborhood Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan will address land use, transportation, economic, and infrastructure plans around three planned stations: Middle Street Transit Center, Kalihi, and Kapālama.

The planning area will encompass about a 2,000-foot radius around each station. Within this area, opportunities for land use, transportation improvements, and community facilities will be examined. A broader ½-mile radius area will be used to integrate transportation connections. The Kalihi Neighborhood TOD Plan process started in December 2010. Throughout the planning process, community members will be offered a variety of opportunities to help develop a vision and plan for these station areas that reflects the community’s most important values and priorities. Outreach activities include stakeholder interviews (the subject of this report), community workshops, a community needs assessment survey, an advisory committee, and ongoing updates to the City’s website.

THIS REPORT

This report describes the process and results of the first community outreach effort: stakeholders’ interviews. For this effort, representatives of public agencies, community organizations, businesses, and property owners from the neighborhood, were interviewed in one-on-one or small group settings in order to identify their major issues, ideas, and concerns related to development around transit stations in their communities. This effort is one component of the larger community outreach program.

Stakeholder Interviewees

Although all neighborhood residents, employees, and visitors, are “stakeholders” in the area, these initial meetings targeted individuals representing a variety of interests and organizations to explore a range of issues and needs. The small group nature of these discussions enabled individuals to be more candid and in-depth than they otherwise might be in a larger community forum. Moreover, discussions could be focused on topics more salient to the individual and the mission of the organization or position that he or she represented. Interviews were conducted between December 1 and December 14, 2010. City staff and consultants from Dyett & Bhatia met with most interviewees in person; phone interviews were conducted with a few individuals. A total of 28 individuals participated.

Report Organization

Following this introduction, Section 2 summarizes major themes, mentioned by the majority of stakeholders. Section 3 provides more detail and discussion of these themes, as well as secondary ideas and concerns. Section 4 discusses next steps in the planning process.

2 Major Themes

The following major themes were consistently raised by stakeholders:

1. Explore TOD opportunities along the Dillingham corridor, in light of its proximity to Downtown, existing activity centers (including Honolulu Community College and big box stores), and high levels of existing transit service and use.
2. Acknowledge and look to lessen potential challenges and barriers to development including: crime and safety; industrial presence; existence of long-time small businesses, fear of gentrification; small lot/dispersed ownership that will require lot consolidation; and high construction costs. Incentives and higher densities may be needed to achieve transition to different uses.
3. Improve quality of the public realm, including: integrating train stops with surroundings, overall streetscapes, sidewalk improvements/provision, trees and landscaping, new streets to provide better walking connections, and undergrounding of utilities. Stakeholders also recognized an opportunity to improve the canal along Kohou and Kōkea streets as a public amenity and an attraction for new higher density residential uses.
4. Acknowledge mixed opinions about existing residential uses and devise appropriate policies. Some stakeholders thought that new development should be “integrated” with existing housing. Others believe that much of the existing housing stock is not well maintained or even conforming and that the City may do better service to property owners by upzoning (increasing densities). Developers will need incentives for lot consolidation (e.g. integrating parking with buildings, providing sidewalks, etc.).
5. Coordinate planning efforts by collaborating with local institutions. Kamehameha Schools and Honolulu Community College both have master plans underway that are welcoming of TOD. These projects can help serve as catalyst projects for further development and improvements. The plan will also need to coordinate with O’ahu Community Correctional Center, which is planning an expansion, as well as the Department of Education, since there are several public schools within the planning area.
6. Integrate bus and rail transit to ensure convenient connections. Several stakeholders expressed need for feeder bus or shuttle service to bring transit riders from outside the planning area to the rail stations.

3 Discussion Topics

This section provides an expanded discussion of the major themes and other issues raised by stakeholders. Reflecting their diverse backgrounds and experiences, stakeholders' perspectives on issues do conflict in some instances. Thus, the following discussion outlines points of agreement and disagreement. Appendix A may be consulted for a more comprehensive listing of interview responses.

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT AND STATION DESIGN

Stakeholders are overwhelmingly supportive of the rail project and the opportunities that it could inspire for new development. They envision new development opportunities, particularly around the Kalihi and Kapālama stations, capitalizing on their proximity to Downtown and the already high rates of transit use in the area. However, many stakeholders express concern that the station will be solely a platform, as opposed to a station with relevant amenities—retail shops, restrooms, ticket windows, etc.—that will create a welcoming environment integrated with its surroundings. Stakeholders are concerned about the safety, cleanliness, and security of the stations, fearing that if stations are not well maintained and patrolled, then people will not use the train. Active uses (such as small stores and cafés) integrated into the stations would create a hub of activity and enable “self policing.”

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Stakeholders generally see Kalihi as a diverse neighborhood, composed of a variety of land uses and ethnicities—including Southern Chinese, Micronesian, Filipino, and Korean families. A range of housing types are provided in the neighborhood, including apartments and small lot single family homes. Households tend to be multi-family and/or multi-generational, although it was also mentioned that many homes are being shared by unrelated families/individuals. The neighborhood is seen as convenient and inexpensive for a variety of new immigrants and long-term residents; while many residents are potential rail transit patrons, some stakeholders are concerned about changes to this character once the rail line is constructed.

The Kalihi area is described as one of the few remaining places in the city providing industrial space for uses such as printing presses, auto body shops, and storage facilities. The neighborhood is home to many small businesses and established “mom and pop” shops that have survived in Kalihi because of low rents. In some locations, homes are directly next door to industrial uses. There are also several schools around Kalihi Station, serving families from the neighborhood.

Stakeholders also mentioned several negative characteristics of the neighborhood that they would like to see overcome. They see the area as busy and safe during the day, but unsafe at night and are concerned about crime related to drugs and prostitution. Stakeholders also describe the area as a “pass through” neighborhood. Commuters use Dillingham Boulevard as an alternate route to Nimitz or King Street. Costco and other big box store customers travel straight to their destination and do not stop at the local businesses.

LAND USE MIX

Small Business and Industrial Uses

Industrial locations are at a premium in Honolulu, as they are continually squeezed out of communities by new development. Stakeholders are split on whether these industrial spaces should be redeveloped with higher intensity uses or remain as industrial.

Stakeholders are concerned that small businesses are already leaving, due to competition from big box stores. There are also concerns that these small businesses will be further impacted during construction of the rail and then by rent increases once the rail is completed. Other stakeholders believe that the neighborhood is currently underutilized and that rail will provide some impetus for higher-intensity and more variety in uses.

Housing

Housing is a major topic discussed by stakeholders in terms of the overall supply constraint as well as several sub-topics: use of single-family homes for multi-generational families and “care” homes (both leading to higher population density); homes in disrepair; and the concentration of public and other subsidized housing in the area, particularly around the Kalihi and Kapālama stations.

Stakeholders were generally supportive of affordable housing and the need to ensure safe connections to transit. Two major public housing developments are located in the planning area: the Kamehameha and Kaahumanu Homes, with several more located just beyond the planning area in Kalihi Valley and closer to the Iwilei Station. Many of the residents are seniors and low-income workers who are less likely to own or use a car, and therefore rely on the bus to get to work and services. These residents may use the train if it is convenient and affordable. Only a few stakeholders believed that public housing contributes to crime and safety concerns.

Around the Kalihi station, many residents live in small-lot single-family homes that they own themselves or rent from independent landlords. These homes often house more than one family or multiple generations, including children and their grandparents. In addition, some of these homes are “care” homes, in which residents operate fee-based home-care businesses providing care for seniors or persons with disabilities. Other homes are occupied by unrelated families or individuals. So, although the residential densities may be low or moderate, the population density is in effect much higher. Stakeholders are generally supportive of the preservation of these small-lot single-family homes, though several stakeholders mentioned that many of these homes are in disrepair, do not conform to City code requirements, and generally require improvement.

Big Box Stores

Stakeholders see both benefits and drawbacks the big box stores located south of Kapālama Station, including Costco, Best Buy, and Home Depot. On the one hand, these stores provide a range of products at low prices, drawing customers from throughout the city. On the other hand, they may hurt small businesses, undercutting prices and providing one-stop shopping with which small retailers cannot compete. Costco in particular is a major destination, creating traffic at peak shopping hours. But, these customers are only passing through and generally do

not stop in the neighborhood for other shopping needs. There could be opportunities to capitalize on this retail market and customer base, if people had more reason to stop in the neighborhood.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The majority of stakeholders recommend adding residential and commercial development around the station areas. Most stakeholders want to see more retail businesses and a broader range of businesses, but do not see a market opportunity for hotels or office buildings. The primary opportunity areas are around the Kalihi and the Kapālama stations, with the Middle Street station seen as a bus transfer station.

Kapālama Station

New development in this area is already proposed by Kamehameha Schools and Honolulu Community College—both institutions have master plans underway. Potential opportunity sites include redevelopment of older commercial strip malls along Dillingham Boulevard and Kohou Street, especially where leases are set to expire in the near term. Honolulu Community College is pursuing a long term master plan to redevelop its campus and create connections to and better integration with the Kapālama Station. New uses, such as restaurants, cafés, and office/school supply retailers, can help support the college and its students. This TOD planning process will need to coordinate with these institutions.

A range of housing types are recommended by stakeholders, including high-rise towers (up to 30 or 35 stories), single-family homes, market-rate, workforce (i.e. small units, moderate price), and affordable. A few stakeholders recommend increasing height and density allowances to allow towers with views of the harbor and to add many more residents to the area, while others stated that development should just rise above the 25-foot height of the rail line. Residential uses should be complemented by basic services (e.g. groceries stores) and public amenities (e.g. improvements to the canal).

Kalihi Station

The area around the Kalihi Station is made up of small-lot single-family homes, small retailers fronting Dillingham Boulevard, and a mix of industrial and other uses, making new development difficult due to small parcel sizes and fragmented ownership. Where buildings have deteriorated or commercial and industrial developments have extended beyond their useful life, redevelopment opportunities should be examined. In the shorter-term, there may be small development opportunities; for example, according to stakeholders, some basic services are missing including grocery stores and health services.

Middle Street Transit Center

The planned station at the Middle Street Transit Center is thought to have fewer surrounding development opportunities, given the cluster of highway off- and on-ramps and institutional land uses (military and correctional facilities). At this station, convenient connections between rail and bus transit will be paramount. Over time, there may be additional development opportunities along Dillingham Boulevard.

Barriers to Development

Stakeholders recognize several barriers to development and redevelopment. Demand for housing is high and supply is constrained, making market-rate housing expensive. However, construction costs are high and, according to developers, new rental housing is not financially viable. Therefore new housing is developed as condominiums sold at market-rates—or in the case of affordable housing, developed through tax credits or other incentives, then sold and leased back as subsidized housing. Additionally, most stakeholders believe that industrial uses should or at least will be maintained, which may preclude residential development. Likewise, stakeholders are reluctant to lose the neighborhood's long-running small businesses. Moreover, several stakeholders mentioned that sites in the area are small parcels owned by individual land owners; lot consolidation will be challenging. Incentives and allowance for higher densities may be needed to transition sites to different uses.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE IMPROVEMENTS

Stakeholders overwhelmingly agree that the station areas need substantial improvements in terms of pedestrian connections and the overall public realm. This includes integrating the stations into the existing neighborhoods to facilitate pedestrian access to and from the stations and surrounding uses. There are many schools and, therefore, students in the area; stakeholders expressed concern about the safety of students crossing both Nimitz (from Sand Island) and Dillingham boulevards. They can also benefit from improved pedestrian connections inspired by the rail line.

Sidewalks need to be constructed where they are currently missing to create continuous pedestrian walkways on both sides of Dillingham Boulevard and the streets that intersect it. Basic streetscape improvements are needed, including lighting and landscaping. Overhead utility wires will need to be moved to make way for the aerial structure, providing an opportunity to underground other utilities. In addition, new development may provide opportunities to add public gathering places and to create new street connections.

Stakeholders lament the lack of bicycle use in the area (and throughout the city) due to safety concerns. Streets that lack bicycle lanes or shoulders, speeding cars, a high accident rate, and a traffic engineer culture that does not prioritize bicycle use were all cited as reasons why community members do not choose to ride bikes, despite that the area is flat, the weather is good, and many low-income families cannot afford automobiles. Still, bike parking facilities were recommended to accommodate the limited bicycle users that do exist and may use transit.

BUS AND VEHICLE CIRCULATION AND PARKING

Stakeholders were consistent and clear that the stations should be designed to be safe and convenient for pedestrians and well-integrated with bus service. Several stakeholders see a need for feeder buses or shuttle service (including on-demand services) to bring transit riders to rail stations from upland areas. Transfers should be seamless, particularly at Middle Street Transit Center, where the rail station will connect to numerous bus lines.

Many stakeholders are concerned about the potential loss of travel lanes due to the aerial rail structure. Stakeholders repeatedly mention the heavy traffic on Dillingham Boulevard and fear that it will get worse. Similarly, some stakeholders are concerned about the loss of left- and

right-hand turn lanes. This is particularly critical for institutions such as the O'ahu Community Correctional Center, which has emergency and other transport vehicles entering and exiting the facility, but also for high-traffic turning locations, such as Alakawa Street, which leads to Costco, Home Depot, and Best Buy.

Stakeholders are also concerned that current parking constraints will only worsen once the rail line is constructed and new development ensues. Parking is currently constrained around Honolulu Community College and along Dillingham Boulevard and its side streets, for both employees and customers. Many of the small businesses in the area have limited parking, since they preceded the current parking requirements. Likewise, loading and unloading areas are often non-existent, such that trucks block travel and/or parking areas. The challenge is to better manage parking: encouraging alternative transportation (i.e., rail and bus) and providing facilities for employees and customers, while avoiding spillover into residential neighborhoods and reducing the land area that must be devoted to parking.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Open space in the neighborhood is limited to Kalakaua Park, but only a few stakeholders thought that more parks are needed to serve the community. According to stakeholders, this park is well-used by both the surrounding schools and by organized sports teams from throughout the city, who use it during non-school hours. (Note, most stakeholders work in the neighborhood but do not live in the area; meetings with residents may confirm or deny this assertion.) A persistent idea in the community has been to develop a linear park along Kapālama Canal (Kohou and Kōkea streets), including development of sidewalks (currently provided inconsistently) and improvements to the riparian area. This improvement could catalyze and complement new development, including higher density residences. Moreover, this linear park typology is seen as a better option than traditional parks, since they will inspire more foot traffic and improved safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. Lastly, several stakeholders recommend more recreation and after-school activities to keep students engaged in the afternoons.

4 Next Steps

Preparation of the Kalihi Neighborhood Transit-Oriented Development Plan is proceeding with an integrated community outreach and technical analysis process. The input gathered during the stakeholder interviews will be combined with the other outreach efforts described below to inform the plan:

- **Community Workshops:** workshops will be held at key stages of the process to provide a forum to share ideas, concerns, challenges, and opportunities.
- **Community Needs Assessment Survey:** a survey will solicit input from a sample of residents about the community's needs.
- **Advisory Committee:** a committee composed of community representatives will meet during key stages of the process to refine the community vision, discuss the purpose and outcomes of community workshops, provide input to evolving plan ideas, and review work products.

These outreach efforts are complemented by technical analyses that will result in the following documents:

- **Existing Conditions Report:** this report will document and respond to community needs and priorities identified during early/initial community outreach activities; and provide a summary of existing conditions, opportunities, and challenges related to land use, urban design, transportation, infrastructure, and economic markets.
- **Project Area Vision and Principles:** this product will synthesize concepts and objectives expressed during early community outreach activities, providing a framework for policy development and the reports described below.
- **Station Area Alternatives Report:** this report will document and analyze three alternative concepts based on ideas emanating from the opportunities and challenges described in the Existing Conditions Report and direction from community outreach activities.
- **Preferred Transit-Oriented Development Plan:** this document will briefly summarize the preferred plan for each station area, including the vision, land use, circulation, and key characteristics. The preferred plan may be one of the alternative concepts or some combination of two or more concepts.
- **Draft and Final Transit-Oriented Development Plan:** finally, the Plan will summarize the community outreach activities and interim reports described above. It will provide goals and policies for the station areas; a land use and circulation plan; TOD zoning elements; as well as implementation actions and a phasing plan.

Appendix A: List of Interviewees

Ronald Higashi, Susannah Wesley Community Center

Jan Harada, Helping Hands

Catherine Camp, Kamehameha Schools

Hilarie Alomar, Kamehameha Schools

Linda Schatz, Kamehameha Schools

Bruce Nakaoka, Tradewind Capital Group

Blair Suzuki, Tradewind Capital Group

Dexter Furuhashi, Department of Education

Heidi Meeker, Department of Education

John Borders, Department of Public Safety and Five Representatives from DPS and the Oahu Community Correctional Center

James Burke, Department of Transportation Services

Clayton Wong, Department of Transportation Services

John Nouchi, Oahu Transit Services

Jerome Preese, Oahu Transit Services

Ken Kato, Honolulu Community College

Brian Kashiwaeda, Honolulu Community College

Tara DePont, Helbert Hastert & Fee

Wendie McAllaster, Helbert Hastert & Fee

Brian Maeshiro, Kalihi Business Association

Warren Altona, Kalihi Business Association

Patricia Costa, Kalihi Business Association

Ron Jones, Kalihi Business Association

Stephanie Fo, Hawaii Public Housing Authority

DYETT & BHATIA
Urban and Regional Planners

755 Sansome Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, California 94111
☎ 415 956 4300 📠 415 956 7315