



KAILUA NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD NO. 31

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Honolulu City Council Committee on Planning and the Economy Chair Esther Kia'aina
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Hawaiian Homes Commission Chair Kali Watson
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Subject: Kailua Neighborhood Board Resolution Regarding City Council Resolution 24-151, the Proposed Conveyance of Kalaheo Hillside Property to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands

Aloha Council Chair Waters, Committee Chair Kia'aina, and Hawaiian Homes Commission Chair Watson,

At the Kailua Neighborhood Board meeting on August 1, 2024 the following resolution regarding the subject proposed conveyance was adopted:

The Kailua Neighborhood Board requests that a new geotechnical study be conducted prior to the transfer of 10 acres of public land on Kalaheo Hillside from the City & County of Honolulu to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands to ensure that the hillside soil is stable enough to do earth moving and build new homes on it without causing damage to existing homes. Furthermore, to protect existing homeowners, the City & County of Honolulu and Department of Hawaiian Home Lands will conduct a survey assessing existing conditions of homes abutting Kalaheo Hillside which must be conducted by either the City & County of Honolulu or the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands and approved and disseminated to homeowners prior to any construction.

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The rationale for the Kailua Neighborhood Board's resolution was:

(1) Resident testimony and expressed concerns regarding the continuing soil slippage and instability of Kalaheo Hillside. The unstable soil causes cracks in residents' home foundations and other structural damage even decades after their homes were built in the 1950s.

(2) Soil studies have shown that Kalaheo Hillside clay soil has very high expansion potential when subjected to moisture fluctuations and are often referred to locally as "adobe" clays. These "Kokokahi Series" soils tend to swell significantly when exposed to moisture and shrink when dried. Such soils are potentially capable of uplifting foundations and slabs, with resulting distress to the structures they support. In addition, these soils can settle significantly if saturated and/or poorly compacted.

The testimony of 13 Kalaheo Hillside property owners about expensive and recurring house foundation, house wall, sewer connection, and retaining wall repair issues was compelling. A video of the meeting is available at <https://cchnl.webex.com/cchnl/ldr.php?RCID=70ae6948263d1258b87d802c8b7f41f5> (password RaPf8Zpg) with resolution discussion, including testimony, beginning at 11:56.

Comments were limited to three minutes each. Some of the experiences shared by the Kalaheo Hillside residents are briefly summarized:

1. Judy Mick - neighbors have been surveyed and the damage to homes and costs to repair are overwhelming; damage survey of homes in 600 block should be conducted prior to construction and again after construction
2. David Pound - construction poses significant risk to homes; do a comprehensive soil survey first
3. Pat Caldwell - NOAA meteorologist; problematic location is compounded by episodic heavy rainfall affecting the clay and heavy earth moving
4. Ryan Agee - can project that new homes will experience the same major problems that existing homes have; \$70K in repairs to foundation, sewer pipes, and retaining wall since 2021 due to shifting soil
5. Barbara Germann - have experienced pipe cracks in slab, cracked walls, doors that don't close, fences that list, uneven floors, cracked tile, replaced sewer line; an earlier city initiative to develop this land in 2015 was



abandoned when a soil study found the hillside unstable and unsuitable for development; new owners will need cash for repairs

6. Ainslie Mackovjak - recurring foundation and wall crack issues due to hill slippage; ¾" cracks between walls and windows; drywall repairs needed annually; \$40K to jack up slab

7. Michelle Miyamoto - steep slope; foundation cracks, sloping walls, and retaining wall issues; do study first

8. Wynn Miyamoto - neighbor geologist Jim Hancock says clay dissolves in heavy rains; I'm a civil engineer and it's very expensive to stabilize the land; do study first

9. Chris Evans - science professor who incorrectly assumed a house should be stable after 40 years; since buying \$200K in repairs including \$125K foundation, drywall repairs annually, rock wall ready to fall over

10. Karen Hanson - \$45K for retaining wall which has since been destroyed by landslide; \$42K in temporary measures since wall destroyed; still need to build a new retaining wall

11. Kelsey Nakanelua - built a house on Iliaina St. but will never live there due to hillside soil issues

12. Deven Latimer - the land is moving every year causing foundation cracks; do soil study and also EA first

13. Sara Isen - existing and new homeowners need protection

Desire for the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands to add homes in Kailua was broadly expressed. The concern is it would not be helpful to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands to acquire this particular Kalaheo Hillside property if it is not suitable for housing and only brings additional liability. A new geotechnical study prior to conveyance is needed to assess this.

The suitability of this land being zoned R-7.5 was also questioned. Structures have never been constructed on this property and previous studies dating as far back as a 1952 U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Survey of the Territory of Hawaii have indicated that this property is problematic for construction. If a new geotechnical study concludes that this property is ill suited for residential homes, then perhaps the property should be rezoned for a more appropriate use.

Aloha,

William M. Hicks

William M. Hicks
Chairman, Kailua Neighborhood Board

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