

## OUR VIEW

### KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

# Waiawa hopes high for housing, energy

**I**n the year 2030, if the decade unfolds according to projections, more than half of the state's electricity sales will be from clean-energy sources, up from this year's goal of 30%; and Honolulu's long-delayed and overbudget 20-mile rail line will be in its fifth year of full operation.

On the housing front, helping to address the long-standing inventory shortage, two masterplanned communities now in the works, Ho'opi'i and Koa Ridge, could be done or nearing development finish lines, adding a combined total of more than 15,000 housing units on the Ewa Plain and in Central Oahu, respectively.

And it's possible that construction will get started in 2030 on a Kamehameha Schools proposal for nearly 11,110 more homes, in Waiawa.

It's encouraging that in a presentation last week before the state Land Use Commission (LUC), the state's largest landowner envisioned a focus on the kamaaina market. That would include a dense concentration of homes near the city's future Pearl Highlands rail station, now under construction just over a half-mile from the makai edge of Kamehameha Schools' property.

An influx of affordable homes is needed as Oahu falls short of demand by 20,000-26,000 units. Situating as much new inventory as possible near the rail stations, stretching from Kapolei to the terminus at Ala Moana, is a sensible move.

Rail is a key element in the city's multimodal efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of gas-guzzling traffic on highways and byways. The line will operate up to 20 electric trains that can carry up to 800 passengers, or the equivalent of 20 local buses.

But access to rail stations must be made easy — with park-and-ride lots, docking stations for shared micromobility vehicles such as bicycles and scooters, and perhaps shuttles — with rail fares simply and reasonably priced. Then it's possible to imagine that this new Central Oahu housing might not leave us with traffic jams worse than the now-routine standstills.

In a show of green-minded optimism, Hawaii's four mayors have pledged to transform ground transportation to being powered by 100% renewable fuel within the next 25 years — in alignment with the state's goal of 100% clean energy in electric sales by 2045.

In some respects, Kamehameha Schools' plan for homes, commercial and park spaces as well as public schools and farm lots in Waiawa is a serendipitous upshot of two stalled attempts to develop land once largely dedicated to growing sugar cane.

In the late 1980s, local development firm Gentry Cos. was approved to build homes, golf courses, parks, a commercial center and schools at the site. But issues tied to market timing and financing prevented the project's start, and the Kamehameha trust reclaimed control of the property in 2009.

Five years later, it secured LUC approval to install solar farms as an interim land use. But that effort failed to launch when the selected renewable-energy company filed for bankruptcy.

The scrapped proposals afforded Kamehameha Schools opportunity to fine-tune and expand parts of its envisioned scope. For example, in line with the state-wide push toward more clean-energy, solar farms will continue to be part of an interim use, ranging from 20 to 35 years on the property.

As planning continues for the site, it should fold in expected updates to the city's Energy Conservation Code. Among proposed amendments to the state Energy Code: required renewable hot water heating and electric vehicle infrastructure, such as requiring some "EV charger ready" stalls, in some new housing.

The trust's latest plan — projected to be fully developed by 2075 or thereabouts — is grand, with countless unknowns. Success will hinge on reserving a majority of housing for moderate- and low-income buyers, and balancing community growth with Hawaii's environmental goals.

