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Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Chairman Jay Rasulo was greeted yesterday by Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse at a ground-breaking ceremony at Ko Olina.

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Disney breaks ground at Ko Olina

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Walt Disney Parks and Resorts broke ground on its first Hawaii resort at Ko Olina yesterday morning, in a demonstration of confidence in the project's future success.

Plans for the resort, estimated at a cost of about \$800 million, were announced more than a year ago, well before economic woes hit Wall Street.

The resort on 21 acres is expected to offer 350 hotel rooms and 480 time-share villas for Disney Vacation Club members, along with amenities such as a saltwater snorkel lagoon, wedding lawn and spa.

Disney says its research has shown Hawaii to be the top destination choice for its vacation club members, and that it is confident it will remain so when the project opens in 2011.

— [Nina Wu](#)

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By [Nina Wu](#)

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In a vote of confidence in the economy as well as Hawaii's potential as a destination, **Walt Disney Parks and Resorts** broke ground on its planned resort at Ko Olina yesterday morning.

Walt Disney Co. of Burbank, Calif., had announced plans for the resort on 21 acres more than a year ago, but only unveiled details last month.

Disney's first resort in Hawaii, estimated at a cost of \$800 million, is expected to open in 2011.

For Hawaii officials and the community, the symbolic groundbreaking signified Disney's commitment to the state, which will bring jobs, dollars and visitors.

"This Disney destination resort will provide a unique way for families to experience Hawaii," said Jay Rasulo, chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts. "By blending Disney's high standard of guest service and creative storytelling, we'll create a place where all family members can discover the wonder of these special islands."

Rasulo said Hawaii is a place where he has often brought his own family for vacations.

Hawaii remains one of the top choices internationally for **Disney Vacation Club** members. All one has to do, he said, is look at the majestic surroundings, the state's rich beauty and natural culture, and it's no wonder that it's a top choice.

"We have long-term confidence in this location and in our product," Rasulo said.

Walt Disney Parks and Resorts operates 38 resort hotels with more than 35,000 hotel rooms worldwide. Extensive research is done before breaking ground.

Highlights of the planned resort include a signature waterway featuring tubes and bodyslides through rockwork and an iconic caldera volcano, a wading pool, spa and saltwater snorkel lagoon.

There will also be a kids club, wedding lawn, convention center and two restaurants.

Two 15-story towers will offer 350 hotel rooms and 480 time-share villas for the Disney Vacation Club, while an open-air lobby designed like a canoe house will greet them.

Disney is also expected to bring 1,000 permanent jobs for cast members.

"You can't ask for a better economic indicator than Disney breaking ground in your neighborhood," said Attilio Leonardi, president of the Kapolei Chamber of Commerce. "We couldn't have asked for a better stamp of approval than Disney making a decision to come here."

Walt Disney yesterday also presented \$100,000 to be divided among Campbell, Kapolei, Nanakuli and Waianae High School academic programs.

DISNEY AT KO OLINA

Developer: Walt Disney Parks & Resorts

Estimated cost: \$800 million

Size: 21 acres

Rooms: 350 hotel rooms and 480 time-share villas

Highlights: Expansive pool, waterway with tubes and slides, saltwater snorkel lagoon, spa, wedding lawn, convention space, and kids club

Jobs: 1,000

Projected opening: 2011

Source: Walt Disney Parks & Resorts

VIDEO: Disney Breaks Ground In Ko'Olina



Despite the economical hardships many are facing, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts breaks ground for its newest resort addition.

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