

Disney resort plan seen as boost to jobs, Ko Olina



This is what the new Disney resort at Ko Olina is expected to look like. It will have a Hawaiian theme.



Source: Walt Disney Parks & Resort

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Upscale Hawaiian theme earns community praise

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Ko Olina community members reacted positively to news that Walt Disney Parks & Resorts plans to build an 800-room oceanfront resort and add about 1,000 jobs to the area.

Disney hopes to begin construction next year on the luxury Hawaiian-themed family resort on 21 acres next to J.W. Marriott's Ihilani resort. Disney has no plans to build a theme park, but the hotel will be the company's first mixed-use family resort outside of its theme-park developments.

The Disney hotel, expected to open in 2011, is the latest addition to Ko Olina — where seven new hotel, time-

DISNEY'S PLANNED KO OLINA FAMILY RESORT

LAND: 21 acres on Ko Olina's lagoon No. 1, being purchased for \$144 million

EMPLOYEES: About 1,000

TIMETABLE: Break ground in 2008 and open in 2011

RESORT: 800 hotel and timeshare rooms and villas

DISNEY'S HAWAII TIES: A 1937 animated short film called "Hawaiian Holiday" featured Mickey Mouse playing slack-key guitar, Minnie dancing hula, Pluto tangling with a starfish and a crab, Donald lighting his fanny on fire dancing a hula, and Goofy struggling to surf.

GIFT: Disney yesterday gave Gov. Linda Lingle a large doll dressed as a hula dancer. It was part of the original "It's a Small World" exhibit, first shown at the New York World's Fair in 1964.

SEE DISNEY, A9

Disney

CONTINUED FROM A1

share or condominium towers have been built or announced in the last few years, reviving the once-stalled master-planned West O'ahu resort.

"I'm a realist," said Mary Jane Fox, a resident of the Ko Olina Fairways since 2001. "There is going to be more development out here. If there is going to be more development, I want it to be high scale and as quiet as possible. That's what the place here was built for — upscale condos and hotels. When we moved in we knew that was going to happen."

Ko Olina originally was envisioned in the mid-1970s by developer Herbert Horita as a \$2 billion resort with 10 hotels, a golf course, a marina and 3,000 homes.

Horita completed one hotel, four lagoons, a golf course and 280 townhomes before development stalled in the early 1990s. Developer Jeff Stone acquired the resort with partners in 1999.

"If they're going to build something, it's better that it be something Hawaiian rather than something else," said Makakilo resident and neighborhood board member Kioni Dudley. "I think that we can use a thousand jobs. And it would be nice to have another really fine hotel out here."

JOBS, CULTURAL APPEAL

Disney is purchasing the land for the hotel for \$144 million.

Jay Rasulo, chairman of Disney parks and resorts, announced the plans at a news conference yesterday. He said Hawai'i already is a very popular destination for members of Disney's Vacation Club, the Disney time-



Jay Rasulo of Walt Disney Parks & Resorts is joined by Lilo, far right, and Stitch in presenting Gov. Linda Lingle with a hula figure from Disney's original It's A Small World ride. It was part of yesterday's press conference in the governor's office to announce Disney's plan to build a resort at Ko Olina next to the Ihilani.

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share developments. The Ko Olina hotel will provide "another way to visit a place that they've loved for many years with a brand they trust," Rasulo said.

He said the 800 units will include both hotel rooms and villas for the resort and time-share.

Gov. Linda Lingle said the project will add jobs and help the community. The Leeward Coast community has struggled with economic issues that include a shortage of affordable housing and a growing homeless population living on the beaches.

Rasulo noted that Disney operates 36 resorts around the world.

Wai'anae Coast community leader William Ailā said the Disney group hosted a lunch with community and cultural leaders

yesterday.

Ailā said the Disney executives talked about honoring culturally appropriate concepts. "I think if they stick to Walt Disney's vision of these sort of theme resorts bringing hope and telling the indigenous story, they'll be fine," he said. But he said the community will need to see that commitment.

Ko Olina developer Stone said, "I think it's a perfect fit for the community. I think they're sensitive and I think they know exactly what needs to be done."

The development will also add to the 200 public parking stalls, increasing public access to the shoreline and man-made lagoons, Stone said.

FUTURE OF KO OLINA

City Councilman Todd Apo, who represents the area and works for Ko Olina, noted Disney's reputation for training and for helping the community.

Apo said the prospect of a

spike in property tax revenues looks promising as well. He said this kind of development should help nurture Kapolei as a secondary urban center.

Other major developments at Ko Olina include:

- Miami-based Crescent Heights' plan to develop a 16-story condotel with 400 to 500 units on 8 acres fronting Lagoon No. 3 next to the Marriott Ko Olina Beach Club time-share.

- A 750-unit Marriott time-share spread over four buildings that is largely completed, and several hundred vacation homes.

- A 247-unit beachfront condo by Centex Destination Properties under construction.

- A 1,000-room hotel and condo called the Grand Ko Olina Resort Hotel & Spa.

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