

Renters: Keep us in Waikiki

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By Briana Poilon

When is "highest and best use" not necessarily the best use? Let's consider the Hobron block, of recent media fame. It happens to be the largest, and very last, genuine neighborhood in Waikiki.

Thousands of Waikiki residents have been uprooted in the last four years, and gigantic empty lots punctuate where mixtures of people used to live, the fallout of the real estate feeding frenzy in the late '80s.

To a developer who's after enormous profits, this mixture of residents doesn't mean much. To the character, ambience and well-being of our resort town, I submit that it does.

A favored argument in support of the recent "resort-mixed use" designation as the way to implement the land use ordinance is the fiction that the only thing standing in the way of turning Hobron into a Hawaiiana-drenched superblock (isn't that a contradiction?) is an unworthy handful of renters who've stunned and manipulated an unsuspecting City Council. This "gang" is trying to turn the block into a criminal stronghold where no one has to pay any rent, if

Jack Myers' hopes for Hobron.

My, but we have short memories! More than a year ago, not only "handful" of renters, but most Waikiki community groups came out in force against the land-use designation change.

Owners of property joined with renters on the future of Hobron. In fact, the only people testifying for resort-mixed use besides the developer were tenants who were being offered what seemed an irresistibly seductive relocation package.

Waikiki's "Proposal for an Ordinance to Amend the Waikiki Special District" intends to "support the retention of a resident population. How can we retain resident population by destroying the largest neighborhood in Waikiki and transforming it into a commercial hotel center?"

To pave the way for a slick hotel super-mall at Ala Wai Gateway with resort-mixed use would:

- Violate the recent room cap set for good reasons by the City Council.

- Overtax the stretched infrastructure in the area.

- Be counterproductive to the stated goals of the master plan for a convention center — to create a stable economic base for existing hotels.

- Would, with the Hale Koa and Kalia Tower projects, pose the prospect of thousands of new hotel rooms — meaning even fewer jobs for hotel workers because occupancy is so threatened.

USE YOUR POWER

The City Council will hold a special meeting tomorrow on whether to keep the Hobron area's new resort-mixed use zoning or restore its residential designation. You can testify for or against the zoning change.

- When: 9 a.m. Friday.
- Where: City Council meeting, 2nd floor, City Hall.
- How: Call 523-4291 today to get your name on the agenda.

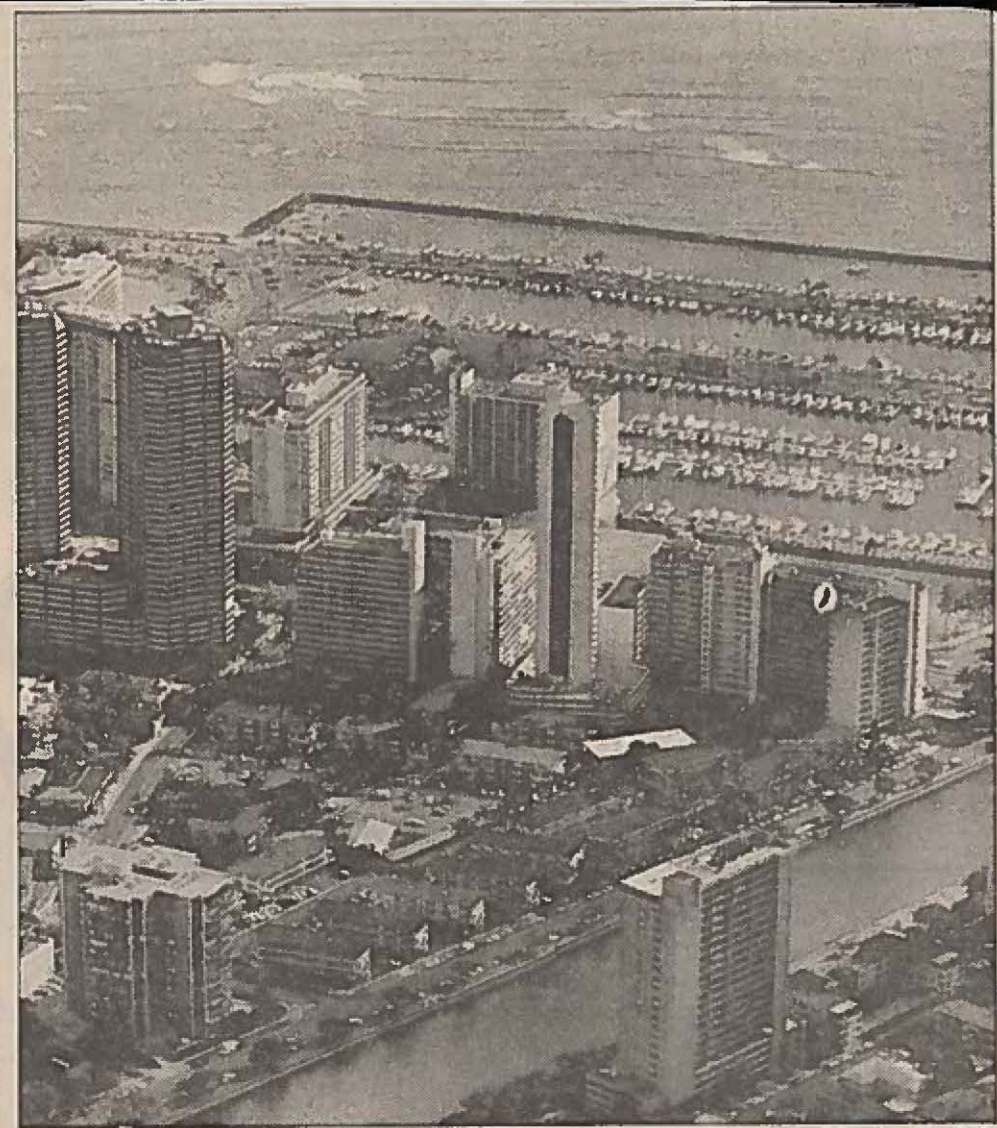
ture of the Ala Wai Gateway neighborhood forever.

Renters there understand that Jack Myers and Dr. Richard Kelley intend to rebuild at Hobron. Perhaps the creativity that Myers has amply demonstrated could find a way to respect the Ala Wai Gateway mixed community and, if his renters can't afford what is built, move them within Waikiki to what they can afford. Perhaps, too, he might build something that mixes the old with the new.

What renters want is to live in the community in which they work. We look to an innovative future for Hobron where renters can remain in their chosen community.

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The writer is chairperson of Waikiki...



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This view of the ewa end of Waikiki shows the "Hobron area" of low-rises that is a focal point of the dispute over Waikiki development.