



Kapiolani Park Embattled Playground

Battle to save property stirs debate by officials

By William Kresnak
Advertiser Government Bureau

It's said you can't fight City Hall. But when Della Young realized the city was serious about taking her Paki Avenue property for Kapiolani Park use, she fought back.

Young, who lives at 3834 Paki Ave. with her fiancé and 80-year-old mother, organized area residents to defend their properties after the City Council voted June 24 to condemn hers.



Young

The vote was 8-1.

Because of Young's efforts, the city administration and City Council are now embroiled in a policy dispute over whether the city should press forward with plans to acquire land for Kapiolani Park expansion, gobbling up Young's property and 12 others.

"Priorities do change," Council Parks Chairman John DeSoto said. "It might be time to review the policy."

But he added, "The sooner we set the policy, the more comfortable the Paki Avenue residents will feel."

DeSoto hopes the Council will set a firm policy by the end of the year.

Mayor Frank Fasi said park expansion is needed to serve a growing population. In fact, he sees the Ala Wai Golf Course being turned into park land within the next 30 years because of the strain put on Kapiolani Park.

But Fasi said he has decided to hold off condemning Young's property until the end of the year, to give the Council time to come up with a policy.

Meanwhile, the Council is considering a resolution to stop the condemnation of Paki Avenue homes while the Council reviews plans for expanding Kapiolani Park.

The city estimates the tab to pick up the remaining nine Paki lots plus four in the neighboring block across from the zoo would be about \$2 million.



"The sooner we set the policy, the more comfortable the Paki Avenue residents will feel."

—John DeSoto



"I wouldn't want to kick people out of their homes... When you're that old, your home is your world."

—Randall Iwase

Council members want to know whether the expansion is necessary and worth the price, both in money and in the disruption in the lives of the residents, many of whom are elderly.

"I have great questions at this time whether we should expand in that area," said Councilman Randall Iwase, who introduced the current resolution.

"At a minimum, I wouldn't want to kick people out of their homes," Iwase said. "I would rather wait until the properties are offered for sale because the residents are old people."

"When you're that old, your home is your world to you," Iwase said.

Iwase also said he believes the official policy on the books doesn't call for Kapiolani Park expansion, since the Council scrapped the expansion plan through a resolution in 1982.

But parks officials say the Kapiolani Park master plan adopted by former Mayor Eileen Anderson's administration in 1983 is the guiding document for their vision of the park.

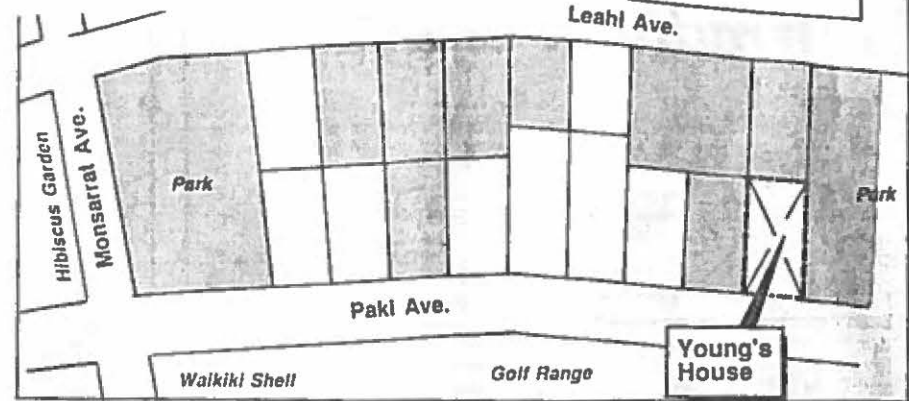
City Managing Director Jeremy Harris said the plan is to acquire the private lots to create an open recreational area, with the historic Winstedt House next to Young's property serving as a community meeting and special events center.

The city needs to complete acquisition of the eight-acre Paki Avenue parcel, known as the Leahi area, and similar-sized neighboring block, called the Paki area, because more park space is needed to serve a growing population, Fasi said.

Kapiolani Park consists of less than 100 acres, he said, which is small compared with parks of cities with similar populations.

The Leahi area block already has a playground on the Ewa end and an open area on the Diamond Head side, next to Winstedt House. The Kapiolani Park master plan calls for the remaining private parcels to be acquired and landscaped as open space.

The Paki block includes play courts next to the Walkiki Fire Station, the Paki Playground, a service center and the Queen Kapiolani Gardens. The plan calls for the private parcels to be acquired and used for play courts and parking.



Advertiser newsmap

The Paki-Monsarrat-Leahi block resembles a checkerboard of city-owned and privately-held houselots. (In the map above, the shaded areas are owned by the city.) The administra-

tion and Council have been at odds with each other — and with themselves — over whether to continue park expansion.

Kapiolani Park expansion plan is a history of doubletakes

By William Kresnak
Advertiser Government Bureau

The history of the city's on-again, off-again program to acquire Paki Avenue homes for Kapiolani Park expansion is as checkered as the area involved — a jigsaw puzzle of private parcels and park lots.

One hundred and ten years ago, King David Kalakaua set aside the 16 or so acres now bordered by Paki, Kapahulu, Leahi and Noela avenues and other land for a park for his queen, Kapiolani.

But in 1893 and 1896, sugar agent William Irwin, an adviser to Kalakaua, acquired much of the area for a residential subdivision.

The recent history of the Kapiolani Park expansion program begins in 1964, when the city designated the area's houselots for future park use in the city General Plan. City officials contend today that area residents should have known for more than 20 years they would lose their homes.

But it took 11 years for the expansion program to move in earnest. In 1975, the City Council directed the administration to give priority to acquiring the houselots. In the next 10 years, the city would spend \$1.3 mil-

lion to acquire 10 of the 23 private parcels in the area.

The City Council in 1981 reaffirmed its support for the expansion project, putting the houselots on a development plan targeting them for acquisition for park use.

The next year, the Council reversed its position by approving a resolution to stop the park expansion program.

Meanwhile, the administration of former Mayor Eileen Anderson in 1983 adopted the Kapiolani Park Master Plan, which calls for acquiring the houselots. At this point, signals got crossed.

The City Council in 1984 approved a shoreline management permit for the Kapiolani Park Master Plan, even though it targets the houselots for acquisition, a move the Council opposed two years earlier.

And the city administration, which has been in favor of condemning the lots and tearing down the houses on them, gave Paki resident Della Young a \$30,000 interest-free loan to make improvements to her house.

In 1985, the new administration of Mayor Frank Fasi and the Council both rejected a development plan proposal to delete the proposed purchases of the houselots. But Fasi was in-

clined to leave the property owners alone. The city managing director at the time, D.G. "Andy" Anderson, was said to oppose the land acquisition along with Tom Nekota, a former councilman who at the time was Fasi's parks director.

In fact, the houselots the city had already bought were declared surplus and almost sold.

But last year Anderson left City Hall to run for governor (unsuccessfully), Nekota was demoted and the city plan to buy the private properties picked up momentum within the administration.

This year, the Council authorized the condemnation of Young's property for park use.

But some Council members had second thoughts and now are considering a resolution to stop the land condemnation while they review the Kapiolani Park expansion policy.

"It's confusing," said Walter Ozawa, deputy director of the city Parks Department, who complains the bewildering signals have come from the Council.

"We have sent mixed signals. It's like looking at Lombard Street in San Francisco — it's the crookedest street in the world," Councilman Randall Iwase said.