

Oral testimony/summary of a hearing as presented against KAK 22-024, the new 400-foot-tall tower development at 1000 Ala Moana Blvd. in Kakaako, proposed by Victoria Ward, Ltd., a local subsidiary of Howard Hughes Corp., Delaware.

The 9:00 a.m. project presentation by Victoria Ward personnel and sworn testimony by its experts, along with questioning/clarification of minor issues by Hawaii Community Development Authority (HCDA) board members, took about two hours. The Coalition to Mitigate the Impacts of Sea Level Rise (CMISLR) members who physically attended the meeting at the HCDA office had an impression that many of these speakers from Victoria Ward (aka Howard Hughes) were reading materials as if they knew the questions that would be asked from them. While the issue of Climate Change and Sea Level Rise was not addressed/mentioned in any discussions, the “benefits” of over \$700 million to the local economy over ten years was emphasized. In stressing the need for the housing market that Victoria Ward/Howard Hughes was creating, its representatives also mentioned that almost 70% of the units had already been presold. CMISLR volunteers, unfortunately, could not ask to whom?

Not overlooked should be the impromptu comments by Board member Peter Apo who raised concerns such as “What about kupunas/elderly? Can they sit down where they want in the public places? (Are there sit-down opportunities?). What about restrooms? There is a large homeless population in that area. How will that impact the general public?” The Victoria Ward expert witness then testified that public restrooms would be available/provided, (incorporated?).

After this, most of the 28 people that signed up in support of the project spoke up almost exclusively online. It seemed as if most had been “pre-selected” or put into this position to testify in support. They were largely younger people and ranged from representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Architects and Urban Planners to construction union workers, food vendors, etc. They also did not address the concerns about Climate Change and Sea Level Rise.

Concerns were also raised as to who would pay for the maintenance and upkeep after the developer walks away, as the burden would be placed on the owners (Howard Hughes should disclose expected unit owner maintenance fees).

CMISLR was the only group to speak in opposition. Volunteer member Audrey Haunani Chandler provided the following oral testimony:

“We are opposing this development based on unaddressed concerns about public health and safety issues pertaining to unstoppable Climate Change and accelerating sea level rise.

“The location of the proposed 400-foot tower sits at the edge of the three-foot sea level rise zone. Based on the latest research, a four-foot sea level rise is now a certainty by the end of the century if not much before, and a 6- to 7-foot sea level rise a looming possibility. Raising the 400-foot tower on a 9-foot pedestal totally ignores these realities.

“This project is about money and a short-term employment boost to the local economy. However, Howard Hughes Corp. advertises the project as a sustainable development. A sustainable development is defined as one that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

“We understand, and based on what we have witnessed, such projects have in the past and will always again be approved in the future with minor tweaks based on the 2010 master plan development agreement for the Ward Neighborhood Master Plan between HCDA, Howard Hughes,

and the local banks and HCDA's 2013 acceptance of the sustainability guidelines presented by Howard Hughes.

“We have so far provided three letters to HCDA that outlines our initial concerns. Within a day such information will be posted on our web site www.CMISLR.org.”

After CMISLR's oral testimony, a lady (also a former Waikiki Neighborhood Board member), not having signed up previously to speak, asked and was given permission to do so. She stated that she is not for or against the project. She lives now in the adjacent housing project (62-unit Honuakaha Senior Housing project at 545 Queen Street) because she could not afford to live anymore in Waikiki. She questioned if the many mom and pop stores displaced/forced out of business could really afford the high rents of the new, upscale Ward Village development that also has not created affordable housing.
