

Permit # KAK 22-024; Applicant: Victoria Ward, Limited (local Howard Hughes subsidiary)

As expected, at its August 3, 2022 Board meeting, HCDA approved Howard Hughes' "vested" tenth 45 story residential high rise (1000 Ala Moana Blvd. at the NE corner of Ward Ave.). This despite CMISLR's factual written and oral testimony that "the proposed project site is facing unaddressed public safety issues endangering Oahu's coastal zone and the project site with flooding many years ahead of actual 3-foot Sea Level Rise (SLR) inundation." Parts of such oral testimony was highlighted on KITV4 Hawaii News.

Not expected was that:

- a) the vote would be unanimous,
- b) neither the HCDA Board nor the applicant would address any of the serious public safety concerns brought to light by CMISLR, in its letter of July 25 with supporting documentation.
- c) the HCDA Board would not address CMISLR's request to pause the permitting of this and similar projects within the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) four-foot SLR zone without coordinating with the City and County of Honolulu in developing truly effective mitigation measures that shall be funded and implemented prior to any possible development so that it will not become a liability to the next generation,
- d) the HCDA Board would ignore/not address CMISLR's request for public hearings with sworn testimony by public officials pertaining to Climate Change and cumulative impacts of SLR on infrastructure and structural stability.

The oral testimony provided by supporters such as members of the construction industry and a former HCDA board member made it clear that the approval of the project is an "undeniable" economic necessity for Hawaii. The construction industry went even further by stating support for continued high rise residential development makai (ocean side) of Ala Moana Blvd. where presently the 2011 Kaka`ako makai master plan to protect the park and beach environment clearly forbids residential development. HCDA is apparently in the process of overturning this in support of a new master plan that opens the door for further high-rise development there.

While one supporter stated during oral testimony that SLR had been considered, no mention was made in either the applicant's documents nor in the project review by HCDA and the City and County of Honolulu agencies that the proposed project site is located at the edge of the three-foot SLR zone and that the latest research indicates that the site will be subjected to regular flooding years ahead of such actual SLR. Factual describing known project impacts would have required the listing of effective mitigation measures.

*During CMISLR's Climate Change and Sea Level Rise street-side public awareness program prior to HCDA's 9:00 am meeting, concerns were raised by a private citizen about documented settling of buildings due to SLR. Such information must be further investigated and mirrors the need for public forums on Climate Change and SLR with sworn testimony by public officials.

*We encourage concerned citizens to visit CMISLR web site CMISLR.org and provide any such information that should be brought to the public's attention.

*On August 3, Civil Beat published an article under the heading *Trapped in Harm's Way as Disasters Mount*. The article documented that “out of 50 states, Hawaii was the lone one not to have participated in the FEMA post-flood buyout program that has increasingly become the nation’s roadmap for moving people out of harm’s way inclusive of properties affected by Climate Change and SLR.” The high cost of Real Estate in Hawaii was one of the reasons stated.

The article also documented that research indicated that the three-decade-old buyout program tends to favor wealthy communities over lower-income ones. The National Institute for Building Standards also pointed out that “*a major reason why Hawaii didn’t receive any funding is also because it has outdated building codes that don’t conform to national standards. Adopting current building codes should be a no-brainer as Hawaii confronts impacts from climate change and sea-level rise. However, this will take buy-in from builders. Modern building codes that take climate resilience into account could add costs to new construction. In the midst of a severe housing shortage and sky-high real estate prices in Hawaii, that could be a tough sell.*”

CMISLR therefore questions if this will be the future for Hawaii with now accelerating, unstoppable SLR?
