

Changing Cities, Changing Views

Living in Kaka'ako is very different compared to living in North Shore or Waianae. The ravishing view of the island has drastically changed over the years. Waking up everyday to the view of concrete and cranes reveal a dull, melancholy atmosphere. The rising use of construction has impacted not only the view of other neighboring residents, but the depreciation of greenery. Although constructing more homes for people supports the population, the prices of these condominiums are suited for the higher elite class. Would we rather see our land get destroyed for the benefit of the rich elite, than appreciate it? It is time to take action. Since we can't stop the construction that is progressing throughout town, we can convince buildings to plant gardens on their roofs, and lanais, or to create local gardens. Preserving our land is very important because it's part of our culture and we are lucky to have beaches, mountains, hills, and rainforests. Although people talk about the deprecation of our 'āina, there haven't been any major changes to stop it. This our time and we need to take action.

Former Governor, Neil Abercrombie, describes the ideal goal for Kaka'ako, "A walkable community of high-rise condos and rentals, including the state's tallest building, plus stores, innovative businesses, and sites for music, dance and artistic expression – all reflecting Hawaii's culture and our Pacific location." It's a great opportunity to advance in our architecture, but representing Hawaii's culture through paintings and displays, doesn't give the idea of authenticity compared to experiencing the land and history. A KHON report states that "the construction industry will increase 12.1 percent, creating 3,880 jobs between the first quarters of 2015 and 2017, and the construction industry will again lead Hawaii's economy with the fastest growth rate." Construction resolves the problem of unemployment, but it creates other potential problems, such as loss and hazardous chemical fumes.

From personal experience, walking around Ward Avenue is chaotic and hazardous because of all the construction signs, chemical fumes, and noises.

Other places in the mainland, for example, Portland, Oregon, have created parks in urban areas to balance the amount of construction and the amount of land that is occupied. The Green Roof Organization supports the idea of benefits from green roofs, or gardens top buildings. Environmental health services on the mainland, such as Urban Planning, state that “Green space must be a key consideration in urban planning if the health of a city and its people are both considered important. A new, broader view of parks has also recently been emerging.” Parks and green spaces are healthy for cities because not only do the plants provide oxygen for us, they also balance the idea of cities and the environment.

New York and Chicago, grand cities, participate in sky gardens. Sky gardens are gardens on the rooftops of buildings. This idea is useful and effective in Hawai'i because it increases the growth of local food production and occupies empty spaces on the roof. Also, by growing colorful and native plants, it attracts people to visit and encourage them to participate. If we can progress further into these ideas, we could go into aquaponics and create wall gardens. These solutions are eco-friendly and it will saves more space. Whole Foods, Kailua, created a variety of vegetables on the wall. It showed a creative idea in gardening. This could be influenced throughout Hawai'i, and teach children about the environment.

By knowing if constructing these will buildings benefit our community or not, we could save more land. For example, Longs Drug Store is being constructed, but down the street is another Longs not too far. Once there is no longer space in town, we would start to expand into rural areas. If no one tries to help prevent this problem of land depreciation, possibly in 50 years from now, the majority of Oahu will be occupied by construction, buildings, and apartments. Making positive changes in our communities are important because it benefits the people and help encourage the next generation to make a change.

Works Cited

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