

EDITORIAL

Opposition grows in Ewa

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Plans for a development of 12,000 homes on agricultural land on the Ewa Plain have been set aside for technical reasons by the state Land Use Commission. The developer plans to try again to obtain the commission's approval, but it will do so at its own risk against mounting and legitimate opposition on more substantive grounds.

By a 5-3 vote, the commission found last week that the petition by D.R. Horton-Schuler Division was "deficient" because the company had not produced an incremental development plan for its Hoopili project. Horton-Schuler would need to specify the timing, phasing and location of each step of the development and could return to the commission in October. The petition was filed in January 2007, and another try could extend the issue before the commission for another year.

Opponents contend that the development between Kapolei and Waipahu would pave over some of the most productive agricultural soil in the state, with lots of sun, gentle winds and cheap water, preferable to land at higher levels.

In an opinion column published last month, Mike Jones, president of Horton-Schuler, contended that only some of the land is "prime" agricultural and that the company would help the farmers relocate. Kioni Dudley, president of the Friends of Makakilo, responded that other arable land on Oahu already has been built upon or lacks the attributes of the Hoopili land.

The developer's strongest argument is that the development would fit into the area's "Second City" scenario, but it may do too much too soon. The H-1 freeway east of Kapolei is highly congested during morning and afternoon rush hours, and more than 30,000 homes in the

Leeward area already are zoned and ready for construction.

Horton-Schuler wants to start building houses in the area in 2012, but the rail transit

from Kapolei to Ala Moana is not scheduled to be operational until 2019 at the earliest.

Brennon Morioka, the state transportation director, told the commission that the project would worsen congestion on the H-1 freeway and Horton-Schuler has presented "no proposals for mitigation." Bryan Yee, attorney for the state Office of Planning, warned that the development would result in "a parking lot from Waiawa to Makakilo."

Horton-Schuler's response essentially is that urbanization of the land will include retail outlets and the development's residents will stay there to work. That was the plan for Kapolei, which has been somewhat successful in that prognosis, but the development of Kapolei also has added immensely to the H-1 congestion.

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