



Proposed Kealia subdivision taking different tack

by Lester Chang - THE GARDEN ISLAND

KEALIA — The 2,021-acre “Kealiakealanani” agricultural subdivision will be unlike any other agricultural subdivision in Hawai‘i when built out in six years, representatives for the developers said yesterday.

Many agricultural subdivisions on Kaua‘i boast nice, large homes surrounded by agricultural lands.

But Kealiakealanani — which means “pathway to beauty” in Hawaiian — will differentiate itself from others because it will strengthen Kaua‘i’s diversified agriculture industry and evolve into a model community, Andy Friend and Paul Kyno said yesterday.

As the largest agricultural subdivision on island, when built out, the project also will preserve views and help retain the island’s rural beauty, Friend and Kyno said.

For the \$100 million project, Plantation Partners proposes a 190-lot residential subdivision that involves the cultivation, harvesting and marketing of tea leaves, taro plants and cacao.

Tea will also be processed on site and sold internationally. A tea house, a rodeo rink and a small flower and crop market have also been discussed.

“The intent is to have a big agricultural subdivision,” said Kyno, an assistant project manager for Sleeping Giant Sotheby’s International Realty in Lihu‘e. “It will really be used for agriculture.”

Through a deed restriction, 70 percent of the land will be set aside in perpetuity for agricultural use.

The lands were used by sugar plantations in the last century.

Plantation Partners bought the land from Kaua‘i landowners Justin and Michelle Hughes in March for \$49 million.

Plantation Partners Kauai, DCA Hawaii and Kealiakealanani currently have an application before the Kaua‘i Planning Commission for a subdivision of 65 parcels allowing the 190 farm units.

The developers also will seek a final subdivision approval from the county before work on the project can start. Lots could be sold as early as next July, developers said.

Individual lots will range between 2.9 acres and more than 100 acres and will sell for between \$500,000 and \$2.5 million, Kyno said.

Smaller lots with views will sell for more than \$500,000, he said.

The developers hope to sell all the lots by 2012. No timetable restriction has been set for the building of the homes by property owners.

Lot purchasers will be required to engage in some agricultural pursuit or enter into an agreement with others to do the work, Friend said.

The homeowner also will be required to submit an agriculture use plan to a homeowner association, which will have enforcement powers, he said.

Under the terms of the sale contract, a property owner will only be able to build in a certain spot within their lot, Kyno said.

There are also restrictions on areas for agricultural use only.

“The property owners also cannot landscape in an agricultural easement unless it is part of an approved agriculture plan, which includes a marketing plan,” Friend said.

“We want to show as much as possible that there exists an intent to create income from a realistic approach, for an agricultural activity.”

Plantation Partners proposes to set aside 100 acres for the first test crop of tea, and will create a company called Kauai Tea Company to package and process the leaves, and buy leaves from property owners as well.

Friend hired Tea Technology Associates to check out the viability of creating a small tea industry on Kaua'i. The British tea consultant said such an industry could make it.

The tea company will set up the processing facility within the 100 acres, and will rely on machinery to do much of the work.

The entire 2,000-acre project is divided into two huge parcels — one called Kumukumu north of Kealia Road, and another called Makee south of the road.

The tea plantation will be located on the southern border of Kumukumu, while taro fields — to be worked on by three growers through an agreement with the developer — will be created on Makee lands.

Cacao seeds will be planted in valleys, mostly on the Makee side.

“In 2007, we hope to have five acres of taro and five acres of tea leaves, and we will start planting the cacao late this year, or in early 2007,” Friend said.

While underground wells on the property will provide drinking water for homes, the developers have an agreement with a neighbor to draw water from the mountains to grow crops, Friend said.

Related to the project, the developer will set aside 30 acres on the Makee and the Kumukumu lands to build single-family homes.

The developers aren't required to build them but will do so for the good of the community, Friend and Kyno said.

“There was a need, and we live here,” said Kyno, who lives in Wailua Homesteads. “We are here to address a need — good stewardship of the land.”

Friend, who lives in Kilauea, said the developers approached the Kaua'i County Housing Agency with the offer.

Forty-five houses will be built on the Makee lands and 45 will be built on the Kumukuku lands.

All of the three-bedroom/two-bath houses will be placed on lots no less than 10,000 square feet, Kyno said. Some homes will offer views of the Kapa'a Stream and others will be built on knolls, he said.

Half will sell for about \$200,000 each, and the other half will sell for \$260,000, Kyno said.

“The reason for the \$60,000 difference is to address the different income levels of the buyers,” Friend said.

Eight of the 100 affordable units will be kept as rentals for full-time workers at the tea or taro plantations.

**The Garden Island
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