

JOSEPH FERRARO DIRECT TESTIMONY

MODIFICATION HEARING

Land Block 4, Project 2 (Block E) (KAK 23-038)

Q Please state your name, place of employment, and position.

A Joseph Ferraro, FAIA, LEED AP; Principal and Chairman of the Board, Ferraro Choi.

Q Please describe your educational background and experience.

A Please see my resume, marked as an exhibit in this proceeding. I co-founded Ferraro Choi in 1988, and I am licensed in Hawaii and New York. In 2008, I was recognized as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects for significant contributions to environmentally sustainable professional practice, and I am a past president of the Institute's Hawaii Chapter.

I currently serve as a director on a number of boards including the Hawaii Architectural Foundation and the Liljestrand Foundation, and also serve as a member on various advisory committees, including the University of Hawaii's School of Architecture, and Malama Manoa, a local community-based organization.

Q Please describe your firm's experience.

A Ferraro Choi's mission is to preserve, protect and enhance the natural and built environment through sustainable architecture, interior architecture and research. Since 1988, our firm has provided architectural planning design and interior design services for commercial and institutional projects for private and government clients. My recent projects in Hawai'i include the corporate offices for HEMIC, Central Pacific Bank, the NOAA Inouye Regional Center on Ford Island, The Entrepreneur's Sandbox in Kakaako, and the Advanced Outpatient Healthcare Access (ALOHA) Veterans' clinic in Kalaeloa. Ferraro Choi was also the architect of record for the renovation and preservation of the now iconic IBM Building.

Our firm is a recognized leader in sustainable design in Hawaii. We value quality design, and strive to provide an environment that is both aesthetic and functional for every project.

Q What has your firm been retained to do for this Project?

A Ferraro Choi has been requested to provide architectural peer review assistance for various projects at Ward Village, including Block E.

Q Please describe the modifications requested for this Project.

A As contemplated by the Ward Neighborhood Master Plan (“Ward MP”), and consistent with other developments in Ward Village and the Mauka Area, Victoria Ward, Ltd. is requesting two modifications to the 2005 Mauka Area Rules (the “Vested Rules”) for Block E to:

1. Increase the development’s mixed-use platform height from forty-five (45) feet to sixty-five (65) feet in order to move the parking up and away from the street front, accommodate more open space in and around the development, and create street-level, mixed-use commercial space; and
2. Permit a continuous building façade on the platform above twenty (20) feet (instead of the 1:1 setback) on the Ala Moana Boulevard view corridor in order to facilitate additional ground level commercial space and pedestrian activation, better define the edge of the street, and allow for a more interesting and active pedestrian experience along Ala Moana Boulevard and Auahi Street.

Q Hawaii Administrative Rules (“HAR”) §15-22-22 provides that modifications are permitted if the applicant can demonstrate that: (1) the modification would provide flexibility and result in a development that is practically and aesthetically superior to that which could be accomplished with the rigid enforcement of this chapter; (2) the modification would not adversely affect adjacent developments or uses; and (3) the resulting development will be consistent with the intent of the Mauka Area Plan.

In your professional opinion, do the modifications provide flexibility and result in a development that is practically and aesthetically superior to that which could be accomplished with the rigid enforcement of the rules?

A Yes. First, it’s important to note that the developable area on Land Block 4 is reduced by more than 49,000 square feet (or nearly 30 percent of the total land block area) because of the planned Diamond Head Plaza Park on the ‘Ewa side of the land block, and the IBM Building on the Diamond Head side of the land block.

Both the Diamond Head Plaza Park and the IBM Building are important components of Ward Village and both provide significant public benefits in different ways. Among these, the Diamond Head Plaza Park will add nearly 37,000 square feet of open, public space within the established Kamake‘e Street view corridor, enhancing the recreational opportunities within Ward Village, while also simultaneously enhancing the mauka-makai views to and from Ala Moana Beach Park. The IBM Building, completed in 1962, is an iconic building designed by celebrated local architect Vladimir Ossipoff, and the design of its brise soleil has evolved to become a mid-century modern classic and a distinctive feature of the Honolulu skyline. The preservation and renovation of the IBM Building by VWL ensures that this urban Honolulu landmark will remain to connect Kaka‘ako’s past with its present, and its future.

Given these features on Land Block 4, the site for Block E is relatively compact, and the modifications are particularly important to implement Block E's focus on street-level pedestrian activation.

The flexibility provided by the podium height modification, for example, permits the inclusion of street level retail within a colonnade on Auahi Street that connects with Block D, and further, with the Diamond Head Plaza Park. The inclusion of retail and associated features within the podium greatly enhances the streetscape environment and contributes to an active, walkable neighborhood. The taller podium also allows for greater architectural expression, including decorative screening, recessed fenestration, planter boxes, and other features that visually connect the architectural elements of the tower with the podium facade. These features contribute to a more engaging and visually appealing streetscape.

The platform setback modification also provides flexibility in design and results in an aesthetically superior architectural form. The platform façade along Ala Moana Boulevard results in a better-defined and more cohesive building edge along this major thoroughfare (instead of the 1:1 "stepped" approach contemplated under the Vested Rules). This also allows flexibility to provide architectural variety and interest along Ala Moana Boulevard by continuing the pedestrian-scale architectural character evident on Auahi Street and integrating this with landscaping, seating, planted berms, and pocket parks to encourage walking and gathering along the boulevard.

In my opinion, Block E's platform design thoughtfully and effectively implements the concepts originally proposed by VWL's Ward MP, which HCDA determined, among other findings, would "provide flexibility for different uses and various design strategies noted in the Master Plan, including concealed parking structures and pedestrian-friendly facades, which will result in a development that is practically and aesthetically superior to one which could be accomplished without such modifications."

Q In your professional opinion, do these modifications adversely affect adjacent developments or uses?

A No. Both the platform height and the platform setback modifications are fully consistent with the Ward Master Plan, and significantly, are also consistent with other developments approved and constructed within Ward Village, including Anaha, A'eo, Ke Kilohana, 'A'ali'i, Kō'ula, Ulana, The Park Ward Village, and The Launiu. In my professional opinion, granting these modifications will not adversely affect adjacent developments or uses, but instead will ensure that Block E is consistent and compatible with the design and architectural character of other developments within Ward Village and the Mauka Area. This facilitates a more cohesive, aesthetically pleasing experience for the residents and visitors of the Ward Village community and the greater Kakaako area.

In addition, the modifications also do not adversely affect other elements of adjacent uses and developments. The modifications will not materially impact Mauka-Makai view corridors, and will alleviate the need for (and potential impacts caused by) subsurface excavation for parking. The modifications will also not result in adverse shadow effects on the neighboring uses.

Q In your professional opinion, do these modifications result in a development that is consistent with the intent of the Mauka Area Plan?

A Yes. The Mauka Area Plan envisions the development of mixed-uses, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, preservation of major view corridors, open space, and recreational space.

As contemplated in the Ward MP, and as recognized in HCDA’s Decision and Order approving the Ward MP, both modifications to the platform are consistent with these design objectives. The modifications will result in a platform that will significantly increase street-level pedestrian interaction, activation, and access; provide additional open space in and around the building; facilitate a more aesthetically-pleasing streetscape; and materially preserve the Kamake’e view corridor. Both modifications will advance the Mauka Area Plan’s (and the Ward MP’s) vision for an active, pedestrian-oriented mixed use urban community with compatible design characteristics.

Q In your professional opinion, are these modifications necessary to implement the live, work, play vision of the Mauka Area Rules and the Ward MP?

A Yes. As demonstrated through other developments in Ward Village and the Mauka Area, the proposed modifications for Block E are integral to the project’s planning and architecture in creating a neighborhood where residential, commercial, and retail uses are seamlessly incorporated to be mutually beneficial to each other.

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