

April 18, 2011

LAND USE COMMISSION
STATE OF HAWAII

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Land Use Commission:

My name is Yukio Kitagawa and I wish to express my concern of the recommendation to re-designate 96 acres of land, owned by Tropic Land, zoned agriculture to industrial. The loss would reduce lands available for crop production at a time when food security is a major issue and would put more pressure to re-designate other agricultural lands in the vicinity.

I am a member of the Agricultural Development Task Force established by the County Council several years ago to help address agricultural issues for the Council. Today I am not speaking for the Task Force but as an individual. I can tell you though that our Task Force continues to be concerned with the loss of good agricultural lands.

Many years ago, when I was with the College of Tropical Agriculture, I worked with the producer who began farming the land in question. I can tell you that the land was productive and successfully produced quality eggplant, bell pepper and cucumber to name a few, despite the claim by some that the soil is inherently not the best. In fact a good percentage of the productive crop lands in the valley is the same soil type and crop production was a major use of lands in the whole Waianae area, besides the production of livestock.

The obvious question than is why is it not being used for crop production? The major rationale I know is the cost to rent the land. This was the reason that the first producer who farmed the land left and I think the subsequent farmer faced the same problem.

Highest and best use of the land is often cited as the rationale to re-designate zoning but this adage can be contradictory because the best use of agricultural lands is not always the highest use which is generally based on economic returns. I believe that balance must be managed by zoning.

Therefore to zone lands for agriculture is the best way to sustain the balance and growth of agriculture.

The best use of the land in question I believe is agriculture for now and in the future.

Thank you,
Yukio Kitagawa