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MY COMMUNITIES

Waipahu 'bypass' road to ease traffic

By **Gordon Y.K. Pang**

Advertiser West O'ahu Writer

Motorists traveling between old Waipahu town and the new Waikele region to the north should expect to have a new route by the end of the week.

The \$7 million, roughly one-quarter-mile-long Malakeke Street was dedicated yesterday by Avalon Development Co. and Waipahu community leaders.

The re-emergence of the Waipahu Street-Waipahu Depot Road area as a commercial and business center in recent years has resulted in increasing traffic tie-ups.

Late last year, the Waipahu Festival Marketplace joined with the Filipino Community Center and the new Leeward YMCA, at the old sugar plantation mill site, to form a trifecta of destinations that is drawing more and more people into the area.

Malakeke Street allows motorists to bypass the intersections where Waipahu Street crosses with Waipahu Depot Road and Mokuola Street, thus acting as a de facto bypass road for those traveling between the southeastern section of Waipahu and the northwestern side that includes Waikele and Waipi'o.

Steve Kothenbeutel, Avalon project director and developer associate, noted that many lower Waipahu residents need to drive north onto Paiwa Street to enter H-1 Freeway at the Waikele interchange.

"The roadway will link both east and west Waipahu so that you won't have to use Farrington or continue along Waipahu Street," Kothenbeutel said. "The idea is we're allowing for people to cut across and go up to H-1."

Mike Doss, Leeward YMCA director, travels along busy Waipahu Street to and from home every day.

"Waipahu Street is a windy, two-lane road and it gets backed up to Waipahu Depot Road," Doss said. "This (new road), I'm told, will alleviate some of that."

Lifelong Waipahu resident Maureen Andrade is looking beyond the benefit the new street will bring area residents.

Andrade, a Waipahu Neighborhood Board member, said she hopes the new road will encourage Hawai'i visitors going to shop at the Waikele outlet stores to journey south into the heart of Waipahu.

There they can visit Hawaii's Plantation Village at the Waipahu Culture Park, just west of the Waipahu-Malakeke intersection, as well as the Waipahu Festival Marketplace, located at the old Bigway store on Depot Road.

Kothenbeutel said he hopes residents and visitors alike will also be drawn to the new Plaza at Mill Town commercial center at Malakeke and Mokuola streets. Expected to open in April, the 34,000-square-foot complex will have several medical services offices, a convenience store, a Vietnamese and a Chinese restaurant, and at least two other eateries, he said.

The new street cuts through the historic O'ahu Sugar Plantation section of Waipahu. Malakeke, Hawaiian for molasses, was thus chosen as the name of the street as an homage to the area's molasses-producing days.



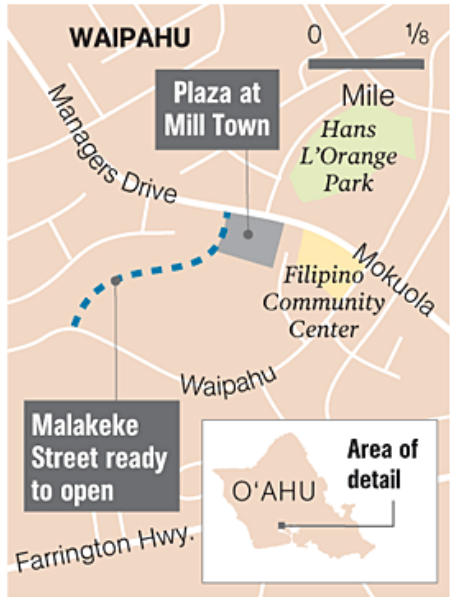
Avalon Development Co. executives and invited dignitaries pose for photos after untying a maile lei at a blessing for the opening of Malakeke Street in Waipahu. Malakeke runs behind them.

RICHARD AMBO | The Honolulu Advertiser

Correction: The new Malakeke Street in Waipahu is about 1,300 linear feet, or roughly one-quarter of a mile long. A longer distance was incorrectly reported in a previous version of this story.

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