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## Keep a broad view in planning for Ho'opili

What's most encouraging about the newly unveiled plans for the Ho'opili development is that its planners are looking beyond the project's boundaries, and envisioning its fit within the 'Ewa community.

Perhaps it's more than encouraging: It's a great relief. The Schuler division of developer D.R. Horton seems to be applying some careful thinking to its plans for Ho'opili. It would be difficult to imagine such an enormous project succeeding without very careful thought.

Assuming that the state Land Use Commission approves the plan and the rest of the permits fall into place, Ho'opili will add 11,700 homes to the 'Ewa plain, in addition to schools, parks and businesses. It's the largest master-planned community ever developed on this island.

The planning work has begun where it should - at the grassroots level, with community leaders and residents registering their opinions on the need for adequate roads, sewer systems, schools, parks, jobs and other elements of the "second city," which has been on O'ahu's drawing board for decades.

As it's being discussed, Ho'opili will be a relatively dense mix of urban and suburban settings, a radical change from the area's agricultural past. Many current residents are understandably worried, after watching roads and other public facilities lag behind housing construction. Witness the debacle of Fort Weaver Road.

So the fact that the planning is going on now, with the first homes not due on the market for five years, is something to celebrate.

In the 10 years since Schuler proposed what was then called East Kapolei, the momentum has quickened for other developments, especially the long-awaited University of Hawai'i-West O'ahu campus, the proliferation of Hawaiian Homes subdivisions and, most recently, the commitment to a fixed guideway transit system.

All of these facets are being considered in Schuler's current blueprint. Given the proximity of transit stops, for example, its residential planning seems to favor a more urban design, office space co-existing with apartments.

How well this will fit with the local housing market remains to be seen. As the project is fine-tuned, it's important that state and city governments keep an eye on the project's balance with the rest of 'Ewa - and an ear tuned to public comments. Only then can Ho'opili's idealized concept move closer to reality.

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