

**TO STRENGTHEN THE IDENTITY OF OAHU AND BE
BETTER ABLE TO COMPETE IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY.**

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C & C OF HONOLULU

Good morning.

On the flight over from Oahu last night, I had a chance to read an article in Hawaiian Airlines' Hana Hou magazine. It was a story about a Hawaiian historian by the name of Samuel Kamakau. Samuel was born in my district, on the North Shore of Oahu in Mokuleia almost a century ago. He was a prolific writer who gave us vivid accounts of Hawaii's early history, including the rise of Kamehameha the Great.

The importance of oral history to the first Hawaiians contributed to their survival, the article claims, as they carried the experiences of their ancestors with them on their voyages. They also passed down an ancient Hawaiian proverb that still resonates today; particularly for those of us in government:

"In the future is the past".

I realized how well this idea fits into our discussions today. Like the early Hawaiians, we need to remain aware of past experiences that can shape success in our future.

Honolulu began its economic life as a trade center for nations bordering the Pacific. It's location in the mid-Pacific makes it a major stopover for trans-Pacific sea and air shipments. Honolulu Harbor has a highly successful Foreign Trade Zone and several major shipping companies serving the port.

The harbor also has terminals for commercial fishing, cruise ships, and ferries.

Trade is certainly a part of Hawaii's economic future, continuing the tradition of serving as a business and trading hub of Asia and the Pacific region. It is one of Honolulu County's four major industry sectors, along with tourism, government, and business services that account for about two-thirds of our total employment. Services and trade are considered the two largest growth industries for Oahu County.

Honolulu has also made great strides as a center for research and development, especially in the areas of oceanography, astrophysics, geophysics, and biomedicine.

A team of University of Hawaii Cancer Research scientists recently created a new type of anti-cancer drug that can destroy a key protein that triggers the development of many types of cancer including lung, breast and skin cancers.

Breakthroughs such as this and others have helped to establish Hawaii's international reputation in the field of medical research. Hawaii is also an appealing location for the establishment of health and wellness centers that can attract thousands of clients from around the world.

One-fifth of the land in Honolulu County is zoned for agriculture. With a single cash crop no longer economically viable, diversified agriculture is our best hope for keeping most of that land available for cultivation.

Once lost to development, it cannot be re-claimed. But to survive the pressure for development, the land must be productive.

Aquaculture, which includes cultivated species of shellfish, finfish and algae, holds much promise for the future, just as it sustained early Hawaiian families generations ago.

We can pay lip service to sustainability but early Hawaiians lived it, supporting a population of hundreds of thousands of people with no imported goods. If we want to preserve our unique island culture and identity, we need to seriously lessen our dependence on imported food and fossil fuel.

With investments in various forms of alternative energy production from wind to solar to sea-water cooling systems, Oahu is vigorously pursuing energy independence that can help us achieve sustainability. A clean, green economy is once again in our future.

But not all the news is good. Unfortunately, Hawaii is one of the top ranking states in housing costs. About 65 percent of housing in Honolulu is condominiums. Housing rentals, fuel, and food costs are among the highest in the country, ranking us second in the nation for multiple part-time employment.

If we are to maintain a decent quality of life on Oahu, we need to deal with the housing shortage and the growing problem of traffic congestion. I believe Oahu's rail project can help us meet both of these challenges.

The solution can be found in transit oriented development. Rail is gaining international popularity as major cities struggle to deal with congestion. Here locally, it represents countless opportunities for foreign investment.

Increasing the density along the development corridor will also provide more affordable housing and encourage people to park their cars and ride the rail. Ancient Hawaiian settlements were usually located near the resources necessary for everyday life.

Likewise, transit-oriented development will provide for more complete communities that lessen the need to travel very far from home for people's basic needs, saving time and conserving resources.

Last September, largely due to the initiative of then Council Chair Nestor Garcia, all four Hawaii counties participated in the Sister-Cities Summit at the Hawaii Convention Center. Participants had many opportunities to interact and to share information about economic opportunities in sister cities in the Philippines, in China, Japan, South Korea and the Marshall Islands.

Since the inception of the sister city program more than forty years ago, Honolulu has established sister city ties with twenty-eight international cities, of which two are cities in the Republic of Korea.

The Incheon Metropolitan City Council recently expressed an interest in establishing a friendship relationship with the Honolulu City Council to foster our legislative association. I am pleased to report that the City Council will soon finalize a unique friendship council relationship with the Incheon Metropolitan City Council.

I firmly believe that fostering such relationships will stimulate economic development as it promotes harmony in our part of the globe. We are connected to these countries through our history. We will remain connected through mutual interests in the future as well.

From an isolated group of islands in the Pacific to a center of global trade and communication, Hawaii has a bright future ahead. It is part of the legacy from those that came before us that in our future is our remarkable past. Aloha.