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RL: 2175

LATE TESTIMONY

HB 2607
RELATING TO THE LAND USE

House Committee on Economic Development and Business Concerns
Public Hearing – February 26, 2008
10:00 a.m., State Capitol, Conference Room 325

By
James Juvik, Geography, University of Hawaii at Hilo
Peter Rappa, Environmental Center

HB 2607 directs the Office of Planning to petition the Land Use Commission to reclassify certain lands along the North Kohala coastline in Hawaii County from the agricultural district to the conservation district. We emphasize that our testimony on this measure does not represent an official position of the University of Hawaii.

This Bill essentially preserves open-space, rural green-belts and coastal view-planes in North Kohala. As massive coastal development continues to proceed rapidly in nearby South Kohala and North Kona, it is essential, both for local residents and the tourist industry, to preserve regional vestiges of "old style Hawaii" in selected areas of the Big Island (e.g. the "Heritage Coast" in Hamakua). Ongoing suburban residential sprawl makes inappropriate use of "Agricultural" zoned lands that are transformed into gated private estates for wealthy families without significant agricultural use. This type of land use benefits neither local residents nor the successful marketing of the Island as a "different" rural tourist destination accessible from nearby Kona and South Kohala. Residential development has proceeded rapidly in North Kona and South Kohala in a pattern that can be characterized as sprawl. Associated with this type of development are increases in infrastructure costs, provisions of services and amounts of impervious surfaces that interfere with aquifer recharge. Changing the State land use designation from agricultural district to conservation district will help stem the urbanization of North Kohala.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.