



Posted on: Wednesday, July 26, 2006

'Era of openness' for Turtle Bay Resort

By [Lynda Arakawa](#)
Advertiser Staff Writer

The company planning to build five hotels at the Turtle Bay Resort on the North Shore said resolving a years-old labor dispute with hotel employees last week should help smooth discussions on the expansion plans.

"This welcomes a new era of openness between us and the employees and the community," said Nicola Jones, CEO of Turtle Bay developer Kuilima Resort Co.

UNITE HERE Local 5, representing nearly 400 Turtle Bay hotel workers, and Benchmark Hospitality, which manages Turtle Bay Resort, reached a contract settlement last week, ending a long, bitter labor dispute that led to the union organizing a boycott of the resort and suing to stop the construction of new hotels.

Kuilima Resort Co. in March outlined plans for five new hotels with 3,500 rooms and condominium units, as well as four public parks. The plan is based on an agreement reached in 1986 by developers, the city, the state and members of the North Shore community.

The project has drawn opposition from some residents and others who say it will significantly impact traffic, infrastructure and the environment on the North Shore.

"It's great that (the labor dispute) is settled and they can move on," said Gil Riviere, a director of Keep the North Shore Country, a group of residents that filed a lawsuit against Kuilima and the city. "But that doesn't change the underlying situation that it's time to update their environmental impact statement."

LAWSUITS FILED

Keep the North Shore Country and the Sierra Club's Hawai'i chapter filed a lawsuit in May asking the courts to order Kuilima to complete a new environmental impact statement on the project, to add to one done about 20 years ago. The Local 5 lawsuit filed in February makes a similar argument.

While at least some North Shore residents oppose the new hotels, some residents have praised the plan as one that would bring much-needed jobs to the area.

A Circuit Court judge in April rejected the union's request for a preliminary injunction that would have prevented the city from issuing permits for the expansion.

Jones, who became CEO of Kuilima in June, wants to put a friendlier face on the project.

Jones said she and Bob Boyle — who became resort managing director in late May — "both agreed that we need to communicate more openly with the community and the press, and also importantly, with the employees."

"I honestly believe that we can create a very thoughtfully planned resort community and still keep the country country," Jones said. "I think in order to do that we really want to have people's input and to understand the issues.

"We're going to be speaking on a more ongoing basis with everybody and we really do see our employees and our neighbors as stakeholders in the project. And we really want them to be involved and to hear their views and what are their concerns about specific issues.

"Certainly over the next six months we're going to be trying to more firmly define a package of community benefits and the way that the project is going to proceed.

RELATED NEWS FROM THE WEB

Latest headlines by topic:

- [Financial Services](#)
- [Hotels](#)
- [Investment Services](#)

Powered by [Topix.net](#)

"It (settling the labor dispute) enables people to perhaps have input where they might have felt reluctant to before this was settled," Jones added. "And that's very important to us. Now that this dispute is behind us, I think that just opens the door and allows us all to talk to each other more readily."

POSITIVE CHANGE

Eric Gill, secretary-treasurer of UNITE HERE Local 5, would not comment on whether the union would drop its lawsuit after the resolution of the union contract.

Gill, however, noted a positive change in Turtle Bay's approach during recent negotiations.

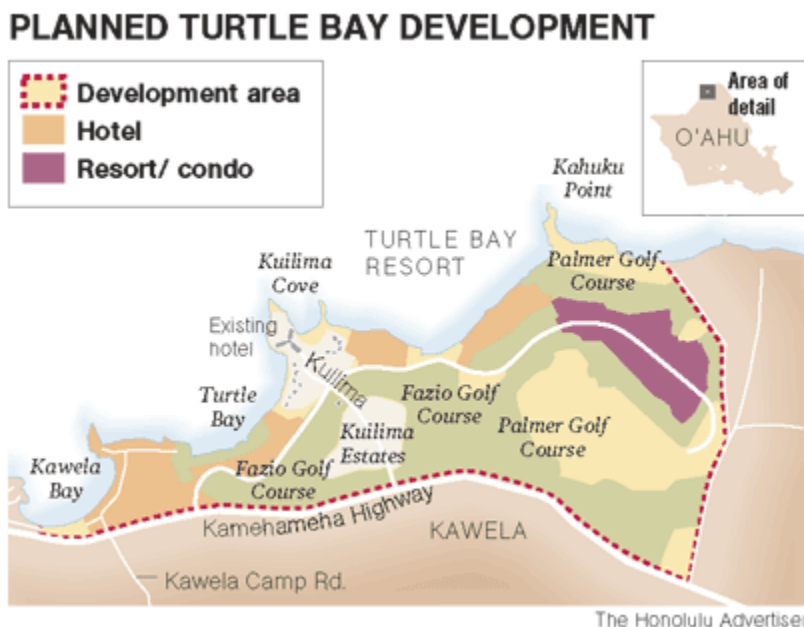
"They offered to talk to us and to the community about other things that are of mutual interest. Obviously development plans are in that," Gill said. "So I think Turtle Bay and Oaktree (Capital Management, which owns Turtle Bay Resort) have made a major change in their policy at least on how they approach the community. We'll wait and see what that means when it gets down to the details on what they actually are willing to do in terms of trying to get community support for their project."

"I have no idea if there's something in the middle that people can agree on but at least they're willing to talk, which is a step forward for Oaktree. They're willing to engage us now which is good. A lot of the problems we've had out there have been the result of faulty communication."

In general, Local 5 is "still concerned about the development even though we do have a contract," said union spokesman Cade Watanabe. "We're definitely encouraged by the fact that we were able to get a settlement."

Reach Lynda Arakawa at larakawa@honoluluadvertiser.com.

...



[Back](#)

© COPYRIGHT 2006 The Honolulu Advertiser, a division of [Gannett Co.](#) Inc.

All materials contained on this site are protected by United States copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, published or broadcast without the prior written permission of The Honolulu Advertiser. You may not alter or remove any trademark, copyright or other notice from copies of the content.