

HAWAII NEWS

 Add as a preferred
source on Google

Petitioners want to preserve monkeypod trees at Manoa Marketplace

By Nina Wu

Jan. 4, 2018

1/3 *Swipe or click to see more*

CRAIG T. KOJIMA / CKOJIMA@STARADVERTISER.COM

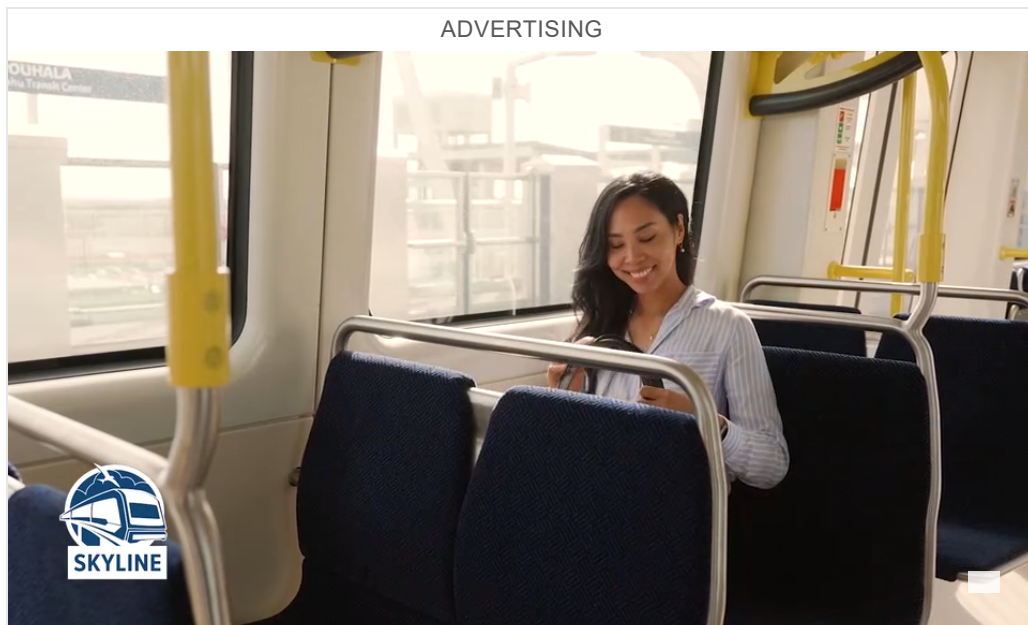
Manoa resident Nancie Caraway, left, talked with Neil Bond and Kohala Mazanek, his granddaughter. Caraway is among those trying to save seven monkeypod trees at Manoa Marketplace slated to be cut down by property owner Alexander & Baldwin.



They're "the heart and soul of Manoa Valley," or they're a safety hazard.

Either way, the seven large monkeypod trees at Manoa Marketplace have become the center of controversy — and another example of how the struggle to balance development and preservation has led to activism in some communities.

The Manoa Alliance, a group of concerned residents, launched an online petition on New Year's Day urging property owner Alexander & Baldwin not to cut down the seven mature monkeypod trees in the parking lot between Safeway and Longs Drugs, and to relocate another two.



"We cannot allow this to happen," said Manoa resident and former Hawaii first lady Nancie Caraway. "You just can't come in and remove nine, over 40-year-old canopy trees. It's just a stab in the heart of everyone who lives in the valley and cherishes it."

A&B presented an improvement plan at a neighborhood board meeting in December but has put it on hold to continue discussions with the community.

Manoa Marketplace was built in 1977, said A&B spokesman Darren Pai. A&B Properties Inc., a real estate subsidiary, acquired both the lease fee interest and buildings at the retail center about a mile from the University of Hawaii at Manoa at 2752 Woodlawn Drive in 2016.

Since assuming management, the company took a careful look at deferred maintenance issues, Pai said. Tenants also have complained about leaks in the roof and quality of air conditioning, which A&B said it will work on sometime soon. Unfortunately, he said, some of the monkeypod trees' roots have broken through the parking lot asphalt, creating a tripping hazard.

"These are safety complaints our tenants and customers have made us aware of," Pai said. "Because they have made us aware of it, we need to do something about it."

A&B consulted with a professional arborist, he said, who examined all 51 trees in the Manoa Marketplace parking lot and offered recommendations that were shared with the local neighborhood board in December. There also have been ongoing discussions with the community and groups like Outdoor Circle and Malama Manoa.

But Caraway said she would like reassurance from the top executives that the trees will be kept. The trees, she said, are perfectly healthy, and make up the "very heart and soul of Manoa Valley."

The petition, launched on [change.org](https://www.change.org) , aims to get 200 signatures and is addressed to A&B CEO Christopher Benjamin. It had as many as 189 signatures by late Wednesday afternoon.

"Manoa Valley is really under siege," Caraway said. "We have Paradise Park wanting to expand in the back of the valley to a huge theme park with tourists bused in from Waikiki ... and then

we have the monster homes going up ... and this, the very spirit of Manoa Valley.”

Her husband, former Gov. Neil Abercrombie, also supports preserving the trees.

“It’s a very emotional issue,” she said. “We’re trying to stave off this never-ending development crisis that is just taking over our island.”

A&B also is facing a petition drive from a group of Kailua residents trying to save the Pali Lanes, which is located on property the company is planning to redevelop and is forcing the closure of the bowling alley sometime next year.

The Manoa petition said that A&B was originally planning to add 57 parking spaces by cutting down the monkeypods, but that residents have rarely found the lot to be full. It urges A&B to consult with experts at the University of Hawaii’s Urban Forestry and Landscape Design departments.

“There’s all kinds of creative landscaping and planning suggestions, ” said Caraway, citing The Pacific Club and YMCA’s Nuuanu branch as examples.

Winston Welch, executive director of Outdoor Circle, hopes to present at least three proposals to A&B that would preserve the trees while addressing liability concerns and providing more shade overall.

“We believe we can address the liability concerns that the shopping center faces,” he said. “We have a lot of passionate, dedicated people that do not want to see these mature, healthy canopy shade trees removed. We’re working with A&B and in good faith.”

There are 16 monkeypod trees, and A&B initially proposed building planters around some of them, replacing the seven with

bottlebrush trees, relocating two, and planting a new one at a stream bank bordering the center.

“Unfortunately, those trees between Safeway and Longs, those are the ones with the most aggressive root systems, so we were looking at replacing them with other types of trees,” Pai said.

“Again, we’ve had a lot of feedback from the community on this, and we’re looking forward to hearing the recommendations.”

He added, “Our first priority is to make sure Manoa Marketplace is a safe, comfortable environment for everyone.”

See more: [Editors' Picks](#)



0 COMMENTS

