Waikiki Beach Walk
Blessing and Groundbreaking

By David Carey

(Dr. Kelley is traveling. His column will return on April 16.)

Friday, April 1, marked the opening of a new chapter in our company’s history, as we blessed and officially broke ground on Waikiki Beach Walk, our new, premier hotel-retail-entertainment redevelopment in the heart of Waikiki.

Although the morning started off with cloud cover and rain, the sun broke through, as more than 100 dignitaries, government officials, community leaders, and business associates gathered alongside the Outrigger ‘ohana on the roof of the OHANA Waikiki Tower to celebrate the momentous occasion.

Although we were on the roof for a “groundbreaking,” the mana (spiritual power) was strong as Ka’ipo Ho welcomed the guests with an oli (chant), and Kehau Kruse responded with an answering prayer. Kumu John Lake commented on the unusual circumstance of a groundbreaking atop a building, until it was explained that we were gathered in the courtyard of the apartment of our founders, Roy and Estelle Kelley. It was not hard to feel their presence. Kumu Lake then spoke in his blessing of bringing together the elements of land, sea, and air—all integral parts of the design of Waikiki Beach Walk.

Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle, Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann, Speaker of the House Calvin Say, and our retail development partner Dick Gushman joined me in the ceremonial turning of dirt. Following the ceremony, Governor Lingle and Mayor Hannemann spoke of their support of the project.

Governor Lingle called Waikiki Beach Walk a “visionary project,” and went on to say, “This is a symbol of hope and optimism and belief in the future of the state of Hawaii.”

Mayor Hannemann reminded those in attendance of the first time Mel Kaneshige and I talked to him about the project when he was a member of the Honolulu City Council. “My first reaction was ‘WHAT?’ But coming from the school of ‘no scared ’em, go get ’em,’ I am very happy that everything has come together,” he said.

The transition on Lewers Street and Beach Walk has been marked with emotion. In the weeks leading up to the groundbreaking, we’ve seen many long-time tenants close their doors in anticipation of the coming construction. It has been sad to say aloha to our many friends and associates, but this time has provided us an opportunity to reflect on all the many wonderful memories that have been generated over the years. When Waikiki Beach Walk is complete, hundreds of new jobs will be created, and there will be many opportunities for some of these businesses to return and for new businesses to open. New memories and experiences will be created for the next generation.

About 175 of our ‘ohana have also been affected by the closing of the OHANA Reef Towers, OHANA Waikiki Village, and OHANA Waikiki Tower. Happily—thanks to the efforts of many in our organization and with the financial support of the company—all of these employees were either offered another job within Outrigger, or for those who were eligible and so chose, to take advantage of a generous early retirement package. I am very proud to work for a company where we have the opportunity to take such care of our long-time ‘ohana.

Waikiki Beach Walk is one of the biggest and most exciting redevelopments in the
Thank you for inviting me to participate in the official blessing and groundbreaking.

Waikiki Beach Walk builds on Outrigger’s deep history in the area. The 184-room Edgewater Hotel, which opened in 1951 and is at the heart of the new Waikiki Beach Walk complex, was the second hotel built by company founders Roy and Estelle Kelley, and for years remained the only major building in that part of Waikiki. It was the first hotel in Waikiki to have an automatic elevator and a swimming pool, and it set the standard for Outrigger's growth in the following decades, meeting the needs of generations of travelers seeking moderately-priced rooms in Waikiki.

The senior Kelles began a tradition of Hawaiian hospitality more than 55 years ago that is legendary throughout the world today. Waikiki Beach Walk enables us to continue building on that rich legacy and to deliver the Outrigger promise of an authentic island vacation experience for our guests.

Waikiki Beach Walk's distinctive architectural style, which celebrates Hawaii's voyaging and ocean heritage, incorporates design elements from the Hawaiian outrigger canoe and the sea. Graceful glass canopies will be suspended over the outdoor plaza and take their inspiration from ocean waves; supporting beams will be shaped to represent the aro (outrigger) of a Hawaiian canoe. Water features, tropical plants and flowers, and stone walkways are also being incorporated throughout the project, giving it the natural, open-air feeling of Hawaii. When visitors and guests enter Waikiki Beach Walk, they will experience a truly special place that looks, feels, smells, tastes, and sounds like Hawaii.

Orlando-based Fairfield Resorts, Inc., the world’s largest vacation ownership company, will totally renovate and convert the 480-room OHANA Reef Towers into a brand new 195-unit vacation ownership resort, Fairfield’s first resort in Waikiki.

Outrigger will completely renovate the existing OHANA Waikiki Village and OHANA Waikiki Tower hotels and reopen them as the upscale Embassy Suites Hotel-Waikiki Beach Walk. A brand new, 90,000-square-foot entertainment-retail complex, being built by a partnership between Outrigger and local developer Dick Gushman, will capture the essence of Hawaii and feature local flavors and Island influences. World-renowned Roy’s Restaurant, whose new Waikiki location will be a significant draw to the area, and Wolfgang Puck Express have already come on board as key tenants. Six specialty retailers, including Whaler’s General Store, ABC Stores, Maui Divers, TT&K Hawaiian Shirts, Malibu Shirts, and Freaky Tiki Tropical Optical, will also be part of the new center. Additional restaurants and retail tenants will be announced within the next few months.

Phase One of construction is slated to begin within the next few weeks and is expected to take 15 to 18 months. Phase Two involves redevelopment of the block bordered by Saratoga Road, Beach Walk, and Kalia Road. Outrigger remains in the planning phase of this stage of the development, which will affect the OHANA Reef Lanai and OHANA Royal Islander hotels, as we complete our vision for a more beautiful visitor and resident-friendly destination in the heart of Waikiki.

Outrigger has always been synonymous with world-class service and genuine, Hawaiian-style hospitality. We’re proud to continue that tradition with Waikiki Beach Walk, an innovative development that sets a new standard for excellence in Waikiki.

Message from Governor Linda Lingle

Thank you for inviting me to participate in the official blessing and groundbreaking.
ceremony for the Waikiki Beach Walk project. It was a beautiful ceremony, even with the unexpected blessing from the skies. I enjoyed the opportunity of touring the remodeled Embassy Suite on display, and was very impressed. It was a small-scale glimpse of how grand the rest of the Waikiki Beach Walk renovations will be. Also, thank you for the commemorative wooden paddle, which symbolizes our movement forward to a better and brighter future for Waikiki. Please pass along my appreciation to the rest of the Outrigger staff, who all worked so hard to make the ceremony run smoothly. Best wishes for continued success.

Linda Lingle
Governor, State of Hawaii