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# The Maui News

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Good Morning!

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## MCC dorms approved, deadline set

Students from China to begin arriving in fall 2006

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Staff Writer

WAILUKU - Delayed by thunderstorms, Maui Community College Chancellor Clyde Sakamoto barely made it back from Beijing in time for Tuesday's Maui Planning Commission hearing on a proposal to build residences for 400 MCC students.

The dorms, for which a special management area permit was approved, could be ready next year. From MCC's standpoint, they need to be done.

Sakamoto advised the commission that Beijing Union University has signed an agreement to begin sending students to Maui in the fall semester of 2006. MCC hopes its partner, Agora Realty, can have the dormitory finished by August 2006 to accommodate those students.

"We all need to learn Chinese," said Sakamoto before dashing off on another trip.

However, he and his staff emphasized that the need for student housing always has existed and the local students will get first priority in assigning dormitory rooms.

Flo Wiger, dean of instruction, said the tuition from out-of-state students (\$7,000 vs. about \$1,700 for residents) will allow MCC to expand its offerings and benefit all students.

This expansion is vital for the college's future, especially as it evolves into a four-year school.

The dormitories, to be built on an open lot on Vevau

Street near the Kahului Public Library, will be the first phase of a two-part project intended to provide housing for MCC.

The companion project, Kahului Town Center, will trail by about a year in providing a mixed-use commercial-residential development that could include additional housing, some of it affordable, for college faculty and married students.

The commercial project along Kane Street, now home of the Maui Go Karts track, is targeted for 2007.

Both projects won unanimous votes on special management area permits. Since the land already is zoned for business, that is all that was needed.

Developers Michael Bollenbacher and Cary Lefton (who developed Pillani Gardens in Kihei) picked their firm name, Agora, from the Greek word of a marketplace, and their proposal calls for "neotraditional town planning."

Their consultant, Chris Hart, acknowledged that the look of their two related projects "will be a departure from design practice in Kahului."

Instead of buildings set back from the street, with parking in front, these buildings will line the street (behind a wide sidewalk) and encourage pedestrian movement and gatherings.

The Kahului Town Center Student Housing Project will present a quadrangle fronting on Vevau Street. Its four stories will accommodate 100 two-bedroom, two-bath apartments (with kitchens and living rooms, a total of 760 square feet) for four students each, along with a larger apartment on each floor for the resident supervisor.



Riders circled the 170-yard track at Maui Go Karts Tuesday afternoon in Kahului. The track is part of a 4-acre parcel that is planned for development as the Kahului Town Center, a commercial-residential complex that will also include new dormitories for Maui Community College.

The 3-acre lot, once a plantation camp for workers with the Kahului Railroad, is covered with old mango trees, which will be removed. What will be the back of the lot touches on Kaahumanu Avenue, which will provide a pedestrian-bicycle access, although automobile access will be from Lono Avenue.

A portion of Vevau from the library to Lono Avenue is a public road. From School Street to Kane Street, it is owned by Alexander & Baldwin, which will complete the sale of the land to Agora now that the SMAs have been passed.

In an earlier master plan, A&B had contemplated turning Vevau into a pedestrian thoroughway, said Hart.

That concept has been modified. Now the private part of Vevau will become a one-way street (east, toward Kahului Shopping Center), with a sinuous pavement designed to keep drivers from speeding.

The notion is to make it a pedestrian-friendly pathway, perhaps with a sidewalk cafe, between the dorm and the school. Two buildings of the Kahului Town Center will be on the opposite side of Vevau from the dorm. Their commercial tenants are expected to include some that cater to student needs.

Kahului Town Center, on nearly 4 acres and now used for the Go Karts and a radio-controlled model track, will have about 15,000 square feet of commercial space in four buildings and 103 two- or three-bedroom apartments, most in one building, but others in the upper stories of the three commercial buildings.

The buildings will front either Vevau or Kane streets. The vehicle entrance will be via a new driveway to be cut opposite the driveway entrance to Foodland (probably requiring a traffic signal).

Nearly half the housing units (51) will be affordable, according to county guidelines, to persons making up to 120 percent of the county median income.

The rest will be sold. Bollenbacher said he hopes many will be sold to people who will in turn rent them to married students or to college faculty, some of whom are hired for only a few years and need housing that is convenient, cheap and temporary.

Hart said the design is meant to echo the Territorial style.

By combining the students, perhaps some faculty and student-oriented services, he said, Kahului Town Center could spark revitalization in a part of Kahului that already is dominated by commercial uses.

Between the Kahului Shopping Center, damaged by a fire in February and scheduled to be rebuilt, and the Queen Ka'ahumanu Center, the vacant former plantation camp had become a late-night hangout that caused commission members to express concern over the security of the area. Sakamoto and Hart said it is also a concern of theirs.

The dormitories are planned to meet a growing need for the Kahului campus. Today, MCC has about 3,000 students, almost all commuters, since it has only 44 dorm rooms available.

Dean of Students Alvin Tagomori said a larger resident student population would "expand the quality of life on our campus."

Several students testified that the student housing is much needed and would strengthen campus life.

But with Sakamoto reporting on an expected influx of foreign students, commission members were concerned about keeping the school welcoming for locals.

Sakamoto said MCC has done more local outreach, per capita, than any other part of the University of Hawaii, with branches in Lanai, Molokai, Hana and Kihei and soon to come in Lahaina. It also has about 23 percent Native Hawaiian and 23 percent Filipino-Hawaiian students.

"We certainly want to serve Maui County students first," he said.

Locals will get first crack at the dorms, which are estimated to rent from \$525 to \$580 per student per month. Students and new applicants will be advised that if they are interested in dorm space, they should let the school know by December.

Wiger said the influx of students (and their tuition money) will result in "a far more vibrant and robust curriculum."

MCC already has a substantial foreign student enrollment, partly generated by the Maui Language Institute and partly by a partnership with EARTH University of Costa Rica.

Beijing Union is a consortium of 13 colleges, starting out with "higher vocational" courses but evolving since 1985 into a full university.

Sakamoto said the students expected to come to Maui would be seeking both credit and noncredit courses.

Since 2001, student visas have been harder to get, but Sakamoto said the American Embassy told him that policy soon will "be reversed" and that allowing foreign students in will "be a top priority."

The agreement with BUU "is very, very important to the college and to the future of higher education on Maui."

Sakamoto acknowledged that getting housing in place by August 2006 puts "a formidable schedule before us." Hart said Agora is prepared to file for building permits as early as next month.

Sakamoto said existing relationships among the college, A&B and Agora allowed the project to develop swiftly. Bollenbacher said A&B made an agreement to let Agora apply for its permits without having to complete the land purchase until the SMA permits were obtained.

Although Agora will own and at first manage the dorm, Bollenbacher and school officials hope that ownership of the facilities eventually will transfer to the college.

For more information on Beijing Union University, go online to [www.buu.edu.cn](http://www.buu.edu.cn).

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