

## SHAVE ICE

By TOM STEVENS, For The Maui News

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It seems strange to consider, but I've been traveling various Maui roadways for more than 50 years now as visitor and resident.

Over those decades, one travel pastime has remained constant: the imaginary "where would you live on Maui?" game.

Hamoia Beach was the winner when I was 8 years old. At 12, I first gazed into Haleakala Crater, but it felt too blustery for habitation. Surfy Lahaina beckoned when I was 15. A Polipoli visit pulled my coattails a few years later to the majesty of Ulupalakua.

In my late 20s, I moved to the island and was actually able to live in some of the remarkable places I had seen from bouncing pickup trucks and old Army jeeps. Iao Valley. Waiehu Beach. Kuau Cove. Keokea. The Maalaea "pali."

One place that always caught my eye was the "blink-and-you-miss-it" seaside village of Olowalu. For 30 years, the family store there was my regular pit stop for hard-boiled eggs and peppery tuna sandwiches after west side surf trips.

Chipping eggshells at the covered picnic table, I'd gaze across Honoapiilani Highway into some of Maui's deepest shade. Planted in Territorial days, the town's shaggy monkeypod trees formed a canopy so lofty the houses underneath seemed Hobbit-like.

The shady road across from Olowalu Store led to a magnificent oceanfront home that once housed the manager of the Olowalu Plantation. Lining the road to this "manager's house" were humbler but still imposing "lunas' houses" assigned to various plantation supervisors. What a place to live, I thought, munching.

By the time Olowalu Store became a regular stop for me, the plantation had been folded into Pioneer Mill, and most Olowalu residents had moved to Lahaina. St. Joseph's Catholic Church was still in use, but a residential camp for wayward teens now bordered the church grounds. Across the highway, the Episcopal church operated a modest seaside retreat called Camp Pecusa.

For quite a few years, the two camps, the store, the Chez Paul restaurant and the "manager's road" houses basically comprised Olowalu. Those seeking the region's famed petroglyph wall might pass a few dusty kuleana homesteads mauka of the highway, and on certain days you could hear rifle reports from the Ukumehame shooting range.

It was, in other words, a "town that time forgot." Maui used to have many of those, but as the tourist and real estate economies grew ever more robust, the island's "forgotten" towns were rediscovered. Soon even Kahakuloa and Kaupo were overrun with honking rent-a-Jeeps.

Somehow, Olowalu dodged that bullet. Although tens of thousands of tourist vehicles speed past each year and thousands more pull over for snorkeling at "14 Mile," Olowalu itself still feels like a destination overlooked.

That's about to change.

As with other former West Maui cane-growing regions laid fallow by Pioneer Mill's exit, Olowalu is now available for other uses. Agriculture seems an obvious one – cane grew bountifully there for a century, watered by Pioneer Mill's ingenious mauka water diversion system. But if Kaanapali and Launiupoko are any bellwether, view housing is a likelier candidate.

The former Pioneer Mill lands stretching from Honokowai to Ukumehame are among the most dazzling tiaras in Pacific island real estate. As this "agricultural" acreage is shepherded onto the market, its developers likely will offer the usual upscale packages: gated luxury "ranchettes" and 5-acre "gentleman farms" raising just enough limes to tarten the after-tennis gin and tonic.

Lately, though, one unusual idea has surfaced. A pair of Maui-based developers proposes to "re-establish a sustainable community at Olowalu." Using the Hawaiian "ahupua'a" model that integrates land use from a district's offshore waters to its mountaintops, former Hawaiian Canoe Club teammates Bill Frampton and Dave Ward are blowing the conch shell for a new style of civic planning.

Rather than endlessly subdividing and selling one gated luxury compound after another, Frampton and Ward foresee the future Olowalu as a "traditional town" with an identifiable center, a generous mix of housing types and low-rise neighborhood shopping. The town would be "walkable" and bicycle-friendly, with schools, parks and municipal services easily accessible from the neighborhoods.

Sound familiar? It should, at least to old-timers. For what Frampton and Ward are proposing at Olowalu is basically a plantation town without the plantation. Dozens of these towns still stand throughout Hawaii. Some are in genteel decline. Others have morphed into snappy little shopping villages. Still others struggle to find a viable identity in post-plantation Hawaii.

Olowalu is unusual in that it would be "new"; that is, reimagined from the ground up. To that end, Frampton and Ward have invited the general public to help plan the future Olowalu. Meetings start Tuesday afternoon at the former Grand Waikapu resort golf clubhouse and continue all week.

Friends of Olowalu should check this out.

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