



County of Hawai'i

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

CULTURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Aupuni Center • 101 Pauahi Street, Suite 3 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720
Phone (808) 961-8288 • Fax (808) 961-8742

February 11, 2026

Benjamin Barna, Ph.D.
Stantec Government Services Inc.
737 Bishop Street, Suite 3050
Honolulu, HI 96813
Email: ben.barna@stantecgs.com

Dear Benjamin Barna:

SUBJECT: 'Āinakō Subdivision Housing Project Consultation Request (PL-CRC-2025-000022)

Location: Ahupua'a of Punahoa 2 and Pi'ihonua, South Hilo District, Hawai'i

TMK(s): (3) 2-3-030:001 (por.), 004, and 2-3-031:001 (por.)

At its public meetings held on December 10, 2025, January 14, 2026, and February 11, 2026, the Cultural Resources Commission (CRC) reviewed the proposed 'Āinakō Subdivision Housing Project and offers the following comments to inform the preparation of the Environmental Assessment.

- Commissioners requested that additional research and field testing be conducted to determine the origin and function of the boulders and rock mounds present on the parcel. Such mounds may be burials, *heiau* (shrine), or agricultural features. Proper identification is essential to determining appropriate preservation and treatment measures.
- Punahoa, the name of the *ahupua'a* (land division), translates to "friendly springs," suggesting a historical reliance on *wai* (water) in the area. Historically, native Hawaiian communities frequently settled near reliable water sources, which supported food production and provided materials for shelter. The number and variety of cultural features in the area, although many are no longer intact, indicate the presence of a once-thriving community.
- Surrounding place names such as Waiānuenue and Wailuku, further demonstrate the historical presence and significance of *wai*. These names reflect traditional knowledge and narratives associated with the gods of water, guardians, the swamps and the bog in the region.
- Swamp areas may retain important information regarding historical land use. Analysis of phytoliths can provide insight into the types of plants that grew in the area. Commissioners

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suggested that phytolith testing and further evaluation of swamp areas be conducted to provide additional context and address outstanding questions about past use of the landscape.

- Commissioners requested awareness of the presence of *‘ili*, smooth, water-worn pebbles, which are often recognized as symbols of spirituality and the connection between people and the *‘āina* (land).
- While acknowledging the critical need for housing, Commissioners cautioned that once resources are destroyed, they cannot be replaced. Often, only the names and stories remain. The CRC emphasized the importance of balancing development needs with cultural resource protection and urged the project to proceed with care.
- Documentation supports the presence of *‘ōpe‘ape‘a* (Hawaiian bat) in a nearby *pu‘u* (geological cone). Commissioners requested that potential project impacts be evaluated and that opportunities to protect the *‘ōpe‘ape‘a* be considered.
- Commissioners expressed support for the concept of a “memory bank,” consisting of protected or restricted areas designated to preserve sensitive cultural resources.
- A list of former residents and families who have ties to the area is included as an attachment to this letter. This list was received from a *kahu* (pastor) of the association, Ronald Fujiyoshi, Reverend at Ola‘a Church.
- The CRC requested to remain a consulting party as the project continues to move forward.

The CRC expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to offer comments early in the planning stage and looks forward to continued collaboration throughout the project’s development.

Mahalo,



[Desmon Haumea \(Mar 4, 2026 17:23:24 HST\)](#)

Desmon Haumea, Vice Chair
Cultural Resources Commission

KLT:cn

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Attachment: Lineal Descendant List

cc: Cultural Resources Commission Members
Jeffrey Darrow, Planning Director
Neil Erickson, OHCD (NeilC.Erickson@hawaiicounty.gov)
Jessica Puff, State Historic Preservation Division (Jessica.Puff@hawaii.gov)

HILO, HAWAII

Awardee	L. C. A.	Book	Page	R.P.	Book	Page	Location	Area	AP
Aiko, Y.	3205	4	314	4394	18	129	Kukua	1.01 Acs	2
Aipinepine	3779	4	297	1104	3	421	Punahoa	0.68 "	1
Akina	11046-B	3	142	598	3	142	Piihonua	0.96 "	1
Alapai,	M. A. 15	3	327	5711	22	329	Kauhiula 2	7525 "	1
* A. B. C. F. M.	387	3	253	1624	6	101	Punahoa 2	5552.00 "	1
Anderson, John	2257	2	1538	7588	22	545	Ponahawai	0.66 "	1
Apiki	3769	4	299	1103	3	417	Punahoa	0.97 "	2
Barenaba	2327	10	124	7601	22	549	Waiakea	12.25 "	1
Castle, Daniel	198	3	181				Kulaimano	493.00 "	1
Coan, Titus	387	3	253	1949	8	75	Punahoa 2	1908.98 "	4
Ewaliko	4539	4	300	3897	16	553	Piihonua	0.40 "	1
Haai	1106	5	79	1149	3	533	Kukuau	4.66 "	1
Haalou	8069	4	309	4841	19	557	Puueo	2.31 "	1
Halai, L. K.	1279	10	262	8191	35	385	Waiakea	0.60 "	1
Halaki	4598	4	302	2479	11	199	Piihonua	0.21 "	1
Halaki	4598	4	302	5059	20	343	Piihonua & Puueo	1.81 "	2
Hale	4004	10	131	2756	12	621	Waiakea	4.25 "	1
Hanamaikai	4597	4	298	4678	19	229	Piihonua	0.37 "	1
Haumu	3994	4	301	6109	23	385	Piihonua	0.24 "	1
Haoleopunui	3206	4	316	2478	11	195	Kukuau	2.47 "	1
Hema	4599	5	388				Kaupakuea	14.16 "	2
Hewahewa	2578	4	309	4553	18	721	Ponahawai	1.82 "	1
Higgersen, D. C.	72	3	106	2755	12	619	S. Maulilili	150.00 "	1
Hio	1091	6	306	1912	7	601	Kukuau	3.19 "	1
Hiona	1096	4	296	1100	3	405	Ponahawai	1.02 "	1
	4703		208	7822	30	257	Puunoi	1.44 "	1
Hoomoo	3993	4	317	7700	28	669	Kukuau	2.05 "	1
Hoyer, Cornelius	571	3	272	55	22	53	Piihonua	0.75 "	1