

Introduction

In 2003, a diverse group of community members joined together to establish The Hawai`i Capital Cultural District, creating a partnership of arts and cultural institutions in the downtown, Nu`uanu, and Kalihi areas, arts and culture-related associations, state agencies, and businesses with an interest in working together to nurture and celebrate the legacy of Honolulu's historic core. The organization was re-named the Hawai`i Capital Cultural Coalition in 2008.

The group commissioned a study of the area. The "National Heritage Area Suitability / Feasibility Study" was completed in December 2008. The study chief author was Dr. William Chapman, Director of the Historic Preservation Program in the American Studies Department of the University of Hawai`i, Mānoa. Dr. Chapman is an expert in historic preservation and has no relationship with the coalition other than the authoring of this study. A study team of recognized experts in particular aspects of the study assisted with research and drafting of the study. Coalition partners provided valuable information and photos about their particular cultural sites and programs. Hawai`i Capital National Heritage Area study team included HCCC board president Mona Abadir as project director, HCCC coordinator Lorraine Lunow-Luke as project manager, input by board members and review by key stakeholders. Please visit hawaiicapitalculture.org for a complete listing of acknowledgements in the study.

The Coalition's overarching vision is to collaboratively enhance and create greater opportunities for the people of Hawai`i to tell their own stories. Programmatic federal support, through Hawai`i Capital National Heritage Area designation, is based on three identified themes. These themes are expressed within the Hawaiian context and for their unique contributions to the national and global cultural landscape:

1. Native Hawaiians struggle for cultural preservation and self determination.
2. Hawai`i's exceptional experience in multiculturalism.
3. Honolulu's role as a link between the United States, Asia and the Pacific.

The Coalition continues to serve the community while working to share their stories and achieve their goals. These efforts have only improved over time, as the Coalition has brought more individuals and organizations into its activities. It has achieved its recent success through strengthening a cultural identity, educating the community about the designation area, and building community.

The Coalition has three goals as stated in their mission statement:

- Preserve and promote the rich heritage of Hawai`i's past and present;
- Develop a vibrant live, work, and play community; and
- Generate economic growth.

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Strengthening Hawaiian Cultural Identity

The Coalition has worked hard over the last three years to respond to the community's call to highlight the area's Hawaiian cultural identity. Efforts to achieve this have included: support for cultural research, expansion of the designation area to reflect the traditional ahupua`a boundaries, support for Native Hawaiian projects, and development of partnerships with the Hawaiian community and its members.

Support for Hawaiian Cultural Research

The Coalition has worked tirelessly to further develop the cultural research integrated into the group and its projects. One of the great programmatic achievements of the Coalition is the timeline, which traces the parallel histories of both Hawai`i and the United States. This timeline demonstrates the tremendous potential for the Coalition to develop projects that honor the history of the area, while providing a solid foundation for educational opportunities for schools and the community. The Coalition is also developing an area map that will contain critical cultural and historical information about the designation area. The efforts to conduct and promote cultural research will include research of archival materials and interviews of cherished kūpuna and cultural practitioners from the area so that their words and wisdom can be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

Expansion of the Designation Area to Reflect the Traditional Ahupua`a Boundaries

The proposed area is the *ahupua`a* of Honolulu/Kapālama which encompasses central Honolulu including Nu`uanu Valley, and its adjacent coastal plain. Boundaries identified in the “Pre-Mahele Moku and Ahupua`a,” map prepared by Hawaiian Studies Institute, Kamehameha Schools, 1987 were used. (Jan Becket & Joseph Springer. 1999. *Pana Oahu: Sacred Stones Sacred Lands.*)

Initially, the boundaries of the Hawai`i Capital Cultural District, as designated by the state of Hawai`i in 2003, were utilized for the Suitability/Feasibility study area. However, a general consensus among the study team, coalition members, and others in the community formed regarding the use of *ahupua`a* as an organizing principle for the proposed National Heritage Area. This change came from direct consultation with the community, and a Native Hawaiian review panel, who felt it more appropriate to designate an area consistent with the traditional ahupua`a boundaries of the area. Please see the following section from one of the community consultation meetings held 2006 (Hawai`i Capital National Heritage Area, Feasibility Study, Appendix 12).

The area now reflects traditional ahupua`a boundaries. The ahupua`a of Honolulu has a tremendously rich and important history, and to designate an area that in anyway excluded areas within this ahupua`a would severely compromise the area’s potential to serve the community and honor the history of the Native Hawaiian people.

Since the beginning of this effort in 2003, there are many Hawaiian institutions and individuals who have regularly participated in coalition meetings. The Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association was a member of the NHA Feasibility Study team and provided consultation regarding Hawaiian culture and history of the area and the Hawaiian cultural assets inventory. NaHHA engaged a panel of Hawaiian cultural practitioners and historians to provide comment on the study. These reviewers were: Dr. Davianna MacGregor (UH Mānoa Professor, Ethnic Studies), Marilyn Reppun (Historian), and Peter Apo (Peter Apo Consulting). A second round of review was done by: Maile Meyer (Nā Mea Hawai`i/Native Books), Bill Ha`ole (Kawaiaha`o Church/Hale o Nā Ali`i), Lulani Arquette (Executive Director, Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association), and Ramsay Taum (UH Mānoa, TIM School).

Educating the Community about the Designation Area

Perhaps the greatest challenge for the Coalition has been to respond to constant efforts by private property owners to misinform the community about National Heritage Areas. The Coalition has worked consistently to communicate facts about the designation process and area to residents and other stakeholders. The Coalition has generated various handouts, brochures, and other materials in an effort to respond to oppositional efforts. Despite these efforts, opponents continue their efforts to misinform the community.

Opposition group basically fall into two categories: private property owners and Native Hawaiian constituents.

Private Property Owners

Opposition to heritage area designation by private property owners is not new. Heritage areas all over the country have regularly popped up attempting to argue that heritage designation impacts private property rights. This is simply untrue.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) conducted a study that showed that National Heritage Areas have no impact on private property. The report was released to the public in 2004. The report reads:

Despite concerns about private property rights, officials at the 24 heritage areas, Park Service headquarters and regional staff working with these areas, and representatives of six national property rights groups that we contacted were unable to provide us with a single example of a heritage area directly affecting—positively or negatively—private property values or use. (<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04593t.pdf>)

This designation would have no impact on private rights. In fact, it would bring much needed resources into the area. This is an opportunity to obtain funding for cultural and educational programs that can be developed to teach Hawai`i's children about the area's proud history. The fact that these funds come from the Park Service should not be confused as a jurisdictional issue. This is simply an opportunity to create jobs and support culturally sound programs in the community that would otherwise continue to go unfunded or poorly funded. We have repeatedly encouraged stakeholders to look at the many positive impacts this designation has had on the other 49 areas in the United States, especially for the cultures of native peoples and ethnic minorities to tell their stories to a broader audience. The Coalition has also secured two letters from the City and County of Honolulu to reaffirming the Coalition's position.

Native Hawaiian Community

Since the original area did not include many of the residential areas, including Papakōlea (Hawaiian Homestead), there was a critical need to conduct education and outreach to those stakeholders after the area was announced. As noted, the decision to expand the area to reflect the ahupua'a originated with members of the Native Hawaiian community, nonetheless, misunderstandings about the designation found their way into parts of the Hawaiian community.

Concerns by Native Hawaiians generally fall into two categories: some community members were not provided information as to the history of the area and why the decision to expand the area was made; some community members oppose the designation based on their support for Hawaiian independence and opposition to the United States generally.

It is greatly unfortunate that information about the history of the designation and why the decision to expand the area was made did not reach certain members of the Hawaiian community. The Coalition has worked hard since this time to rectify the situation and truly regrets any confusion and inconvenience this may have caused members of the Native Hawaiian community. Unfortunately, there were individuals who used the gap in the outreach efforts to spread misinformation about the impact of the designation on the Native Hawaiian community. As a result, there are members of the Hawaiian community who have been misled to believe that this designation would have a negative impact on Native Hawaiian rights. This is gravely untrue. This designation would have no impact on Native Hawaiian rights, neither positively, nor negatively. As with the private property owners, it will have no impact on the jurisdiction of the federal government over property rights.

For those Hawaiians seeking complete restoration of independence and succession from the United States, this designation does further strengthen the area's relationship with the federal government in that the funding obtained for the area would be federal funds. Funds would be provided to the area from the National Parks Service through a local non-profit organization, the Hawai`i Capital Cultural Coalition, who would administer the funds to other community organizations. Non-profit organizations, including Native Hawaiian organizations, would be eligible for these funds. Designation creates a unique opportunity for Native Hawaiians to seek federal funds to support and develop programs that celebrate their heritage and history. The planning process begins with designation and is open to all interested individuals

and organizations wishing to tell their stories in their own way. It may take up to 3 years to create the customized plan to fit the cultural programs, initiatives and partnerships of the people in the NHA area.

Education and Outreach Efforts in the Community

Since 2004, the Coalition has spent hundreds of hours conducting outreach to the community and meeting with stakeholders. Its media outreach includes television programs, radio programs, websites, handouts, inclusion in community newsletters, presentations at community meetings, and more. We are confident saying that the Coalition has made a good faith effort to conduct exhaustive outreach to the residents and community in the designation area. As a result of these efforts, the support for the designation is greatly diverse. The Coalition has support from across the designation area geographically, culturally, and occupationally.

Building Community

The Coalition is not a separate entity simply operating within the designation area; it is part of the community. As such, the Coalition, its members, partners and beneficiaries continue to work together to make the area a safer and more cultural dynamic place for all people to enjoy.

Partners

The Hawai`i Capital Cultural Coalition (HCCC) is a dynamic partnership of central Honolulu arts and cultural organizations, businesses, public agencies, service organizations, and residents who have been working together since 2003 to nurture and celebrate the cultural legacy of the area. The NHA initiative has been an ongoing process since 2004. Over that time there have been many organizations and individuals involved and supportive, at various times.

Community Partnerships

From the creation of the designation concept, the Coalition has worked steadily to reach out to residents, organizations and businesses to educate the community about the designation area and activities of the Coalition. Further, the Coalition has collaborated successfully with the community to help develop and support the rich multiculturalism that makes Hawai`i such a unique place.

Conclusion

The Hawai`i Capital Cultural Coalition has grown tremendously as an organization over the last three years. Through capitalizing on opportunities to conduct education and outreach activities to the community, the organization has developed many key partnerships that have helped to shape the nonprofit organization and its shared cultural values.

We look forward to the designation of Hawai`i Capital National Heritage Area and to start the planning process. The ripple effect of our continued outreach encourages open participation in the future creation of the up to 3-year plan. Our hopes are that one day all of Hawai`i's residents, our visitors, the nation and the world may know the stories of Hawai`i and its people.

Mahalo to Senator Inouye, Senator Akaka, Representative Hirono and former Representative Abercrombie in supporting this shared vision.