



# MidWeek

This column by Senator Michelle Kidani  
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## **Diversifying West Oahu**

A story in a local business publication last month didn't get very wide public notice, but I think it is an important development for the island's economy – especially for folks in West Oahu. It reported that the State is getting ready to solicit proposals from developers to build a multi-stage film studio complex on our side of the island. The facility would be located on 30 acres adjacent to the University of Hawaii West Oahu in a public-private partnership. A state-of-the-art sound stage would greatly expand the state's ability to attract and support TV and motion picture film production here and help to diversify our economy.

This is a next step in the process we began a few years ago. The Legislature allocated \$1 million for a studio feasibility study that identified the West Oahu site, contracted with the local architecture and planning firm G70 for some preliminary design work, and committed the state to conduct an environmental impact study.

In addition, UH West Oahu expects to break ground by the end of this year on its \$33 million

Academy for Creative Media education building, with completion expected in mid-2020. It would support the University's programs in media – TV, film, storytelling, digital media production including web and video game design, and perhaps other applications that exist now only in someone's imagination.

All in all, we are looking at some tremendous job opportunities in what is expected to be a growing creative arts industry. The Legislature believes the demand for facilities is there and is committing resources to encourage and support it.

## **Delayed projects moving to conclusion**

It's frustrating when projects take so long to move from the drawing board to reality, but it appears that a couple of long-standing state/city jobs are about to wrap up.

It has been two years since we broke ground for construction of the new ambulance station along Kamehameha Highway in Waipio Gentry. At that time, it was expected that the EMS facility would already be fully-operational by now. Delays of one kind or another cropped up along the way, but now we are informed that the checklist of pending issues should be resolved by the end of March, with furnishings and fixtures in place during April, and the opening of the building expected in May.

This is one of the first priority projects I pushed for when I was elected to the Senate ten years ago. To say the least, I am looking forward to the dedication!



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On another matter, I have been following up on a Waikele resident's inquiry about a malfunctioning emergency warning siren across Kamehameha Highway in Crestview. The Crestview siren was eventually replaced, but during the process, I was told that a brand-new siren would be installed at Waikele Community Park "soon." Regrettably, that was four years ago, and the siren is still not in place. The Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) now informs me that a paperwork bottleneck between the state and the city has now been cleared, engineering work is proceeding, equipment is being procured, and the new siren should be up and running in about 6 months. I will continue to monitor their progress.

With all of the recent attention to disaster preparedness and emergency response, the Waipio EMS station and the Waikele warning siren are both key elements of the HI-EMA network for our area. It's unfortunate that we have had to wait so long for these upgrades and enhanced services.

