

Waikiki Mall Nears Renovation Completion



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Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center, reinventing itself by returning to Waikiki's royal roots, is nearing completion of a \$115 million makeover.

Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop enjoyed pastoral contemplation in a coconut grove on the same site.

Kamehameha Schools, endowed in her name, owns and is renovating the vintage 1979 shopping center.

"About 95 percent of the Royal Grove is done," spokeswoman Sam Shenkus said Monday. "We have a beautiful water feature and a lot of ethnobotanical plants."

In Pauahi's memory -- and in the interest of beautifying Waikiki -- it has replaced the center's original heavy concrete bridges with a single lighter pedestrian bridge that makes it possible to see the coconut palms it has newly planted, and the Royal Hawaiian Hotel behind them.

That part is now complete. All that remains are some fences, soon to be removed, which are protecting the new sod for a few days so it can take firm root on the site.

There is also a plan to put in a statue of Pauahi. Look for that in December.

The actual palms also form the artistic inspiration for palm-motif light fixtures and other design features that have been installed throughout the shopping center, which occupies three blocks in the center of Waikiki. The installation of these features is also now complete.

What remains to be done, shopping center officials said Monday, is raising the roof -- literally -- to accommodate "Waikiki Ne," a high-tech show that will be offered in the former McNerny space adjacent

to Royal Hawaiian Drive starting next July.

Stores and restaurants are still coming online: Island Soap & Candleworks was to open Tuesday. Ultimately there will be 10 main restaurants and 110 shops.

Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center is already home to the busiest Cheesecake Factory in the nation and bills itself as having Hawaii's largest concentration of flagship stores.

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