RECOGNIZING THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NUUANU SHOPPING PLAZA AND ITS UNIQUE TREES.

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the State to preserve the architecture, objects, and sites of the numerous cultures that make up our island community; and

WHEREAS, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 states "the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people"; and

WHEREAS, the State of Hawaii recognized its special commitment to historic preservation in Hawai'i Revised Statutes §6E-1, stating in part, "the legislature further declares that it is in the public interest to engage in a comprehensive program of historic preservation at all levels of government to promote the use and conservation of such property for the education, inspiration, pleasure, and enrichment of its citizens"; and

WHEREAS, the Nuuanu-Liliha area was recently selected as the Historic Corridor for the Island of Oahu in a recent publication, a corridor which extends from the Pali Lookout, through Chinatown and ending at Honolulu Harbor; and

WHEREAS, the Nuuanu-Liliha corridor uniquely reflects all of Hawaii from the Battle of Nuuanu, in which Kamehameha the Great unified the Islands, through its myriad of multicultural temples, its quaint "frozen in time" mom and pop stores from the 1940s and 1950s pre-Statehood days, and through Honolulu Harbor, which received many of our multi-ethnic immigrants for over a century; this corridor houses most obviously some of the most important natural and cultural resources of our State and nation; and
WHEREAS, THE NUUANU SHOPPING PLAZA defines the commercial and residential core of the Nuuanu-Liliha Historical Corridor, and stands as a neighborhood landmark encapsulating a unique and spectacular history such as is found nowhere else in the world, and which should be preserved and shared for current and future local generations, as well as the millions of individuals who visit the State each year; and

WHEREAS, THE NUUANU SHOPPING PLAZA, formerly the Chun Afong Estate, and later the Chun Hoon Market, marks a most pivotal moment in the history of Chinese establishment in Hawaii, as the illustrious history of its site is linked on countless levels to the history of Chinese immigration, prosperity, and cultural enrichment in the Hawaiian Islands; and

WHEREAS, the original operator and owner of the site now called THE NUUANU SHOPPING PLAZA, Chun Afong, established himself as the first Chinese nobleman and millionaire in Hawaii after arriving to Hawaii in 1849 from the village of Yeong Mui Cha to work in his uncle's retail store at the age of twenty-four, and ever enterprising, this man soon set up his own shops and became more visible in Hawaiian society as he increasingly prospered; and

WHEREAS, by the 1870s, he had become partner to a sugar plantation on the Island of Hawaii, and incorporated his own sugar plantation in 1884, quickly gathering interests in other sugar and coffee plantations; and

WHEREAS, Chun Afong played a major role in the integration of Chinese immigrant society into local society, directing a major ball in 1856 to fuse cultures and greatly heighten the prestige and prominence of the Chinese in the Hawaiian and foreign communities; and

WHEREAS, he also encouraged Chinese immigration by reserving many labor jobs for Chinese, and increased Hawaii's convenient accessibility from China by continuously sailing a vessel between Hong Kong and Honolulu; and
WHEREAS, in 1879, Chun Afong became the first Chinese to be appointed a noble of the Hawaiian Kingdom, and was almost immediately thereafter nominated Chinese Commercial Agent, a series of appointments which signaled China's awareness that the Chinese population in Hawaii now constituted a sizeable community; and

WHEREAS, he served as trusted confidante to many prominent members of local society, including King David Kalakaua and the influential missionary doctor Gerrit P. Judd, as his wife Julia Fayerweather was foster sister of the former and ward of the latter, and his eldest son became the first Chinese to attend Hawaii's Protestant missionary-established preparatory school, Punahou; and


WHEREAS, contained within the THE NUUANU SHOPPING PLAZA is what is reported to be the oldest lychee tree still existing in the State of Hawaii, which was planted over one hundred years ago by Chun Afong himself, has repeatedly born fruit as recently as 2008, and which has roots so delicate that the lychee tree would not survive if efforts are made to replant the tree elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, THE NUUANU SHOPPING PLAZA and its historical lychee tree are contained within the Punchbowl Special Design District, so that even to discuss the tree's removal as a distant prospect would require a special permit issued after a complex process of review by the City and County, a party who has thus far stood wholeheartedly firm about maintaining the tree in its current planting; and
WHEREAS, numerous private residents of the district and elsewhere on Oahu, as well as organized citizen groups, have already voiced concerned inquiries as to the maintenance of THE NUUANU SHOPPING PLAZA as the cherished town center it has become after over a century, gathering substantial press coverage and further increasing interest and awareness of the issue; and

WHEREAS, a leasehold purchaser bought THE NUUANU SHOPPING PLAZA on May 23, 2009, and has expressed intention to the Outdoor Circle and to the State House of Representatives that it will cooperate to preserve the character and integrity of THE NUUANU SHOPPING PLAZA by maintaining the historical lychee tree and the banyan tree contained within the building of the former Hungry Lion restaurant; and

WHEREAS, THE NUUANU SHOPPING PLAZA was sold to the purchaser with the agent's understanding that "rather than another investor buying the shopping center and allowing it to degrade, the community now has a user who wants to...be part of the community"; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2010, that THE NUUANU SHOPPING PLAZA, formerly known as the Chun Afong Estate and the Chun Hoon Market, and the landmark lychee tree and banyan tree contained upon its site are recognized as historic jewels of Hawaii; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that now more than ever in this competitive environment of tourism destinations, we cannot afford to allow our State's unique identity to be eroded, so it is crucial that we preserve our built environment as well as our natural environment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that THE NUUANU SHOPPING PLAZA and its historical trees should always be treasured and protected by the State of Hawaii and its residents; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Administrator of the State Historic Preservation Division.
OFFERED BY:

Catherine K. Ching

MAR 10 2010