



Behind the Scenes at Safeway Center

- 1. A retention basin is constructed under the entire Safeway Center ground level parking lot to minimize flooding.
- 2. View from above showing the vehicle ramp leading to rooftop parking.

This fall, Safeway will open its largest store in Hawai'i in the heart of Kapahulu, with 64,000 square feet of shopping space. Called The Avenue Shops at Safeway Center, the project features over an acre of enclosed space with everything you would expect in a cutting edge supermarket, plus smaller retail shops along the perimeter, outdoor seating, a community meeting room, meandering sidewalks and nearly 300 parking stalls at street level and on the rooftop. The store will become the company's flagship store in Hawai'i. The project area includes the former Love's Bakery site and the space previously occupied by a retail building, and is located across from Olu, Mokihana and Paliuli Streets along Kapahulu Avenue.

As impressive as the finished project will be, the work behind Safeway Center is just as amazing. Safeway, Inc., interviewed three civil engineering firms and selected the R.M. Towill Corporation to perform a variety of services, including planning, permitting, surveying and civil engineering. A topographic survey was performed and several existing lots were consolidated to create the 4.7 acre parcel.

The support of the Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) was critical to obtaining project approvals and meeting Safeway's tight schedule. Both the City and County and the State made helpful suggestions to expedite the permitting process and helped Safeway obtain the necessary approvals on schedule. Approvals were given by the DPP's Subdivision, Civil Engineering, Traffic Review, Urban Design and Wastewater branches; by the Board of Water Supply; from the State Department of Health; the City Department of Transportation Services, Traffic Signal Branch; the Disability Communication Access Board;

and The Bus. An NPDES permit application was also expedited. Time was critical to Safeway's schedule; RMTc broke out construction plans into separate grading and sitework packages, which saved about three months of construction time.

One of the challenges of the site was the lack of a drainage system. The predeveloped runoff flowed to a small retention basin and then flooded the streets behind the project. City and County drainage standards require keeping the same discharge points with no increase in runoff. RMTc developed a unique engineering solution which reduced runoff to the surrounding neighborhood. A retention basin was constructed underneath the entire parking lot. The retention basin features rows of 5 foot diameter, perforated high density polyethylene pipes surrounded by crushed rock. A non-woven filter fabric was used to prevent fine particles from entering the retention basin. The under-parking retention basin was designed to support the weight of fire, refuse and delivery trucks, as well as passenger vehicles.

RMTc also designed the widening of Kapahulu Avenue fronting Safeway, ADA access routes, a bus stop, traffic signals, fire and domestic water systems, gravity sewer and gas systems, and was responsible for overseeing other electrical and traffic engineers.

Project manager Craig Luke, PE, credits the entire RMTc team that took the project from surveying to permitting to engineering, and soon to completion—a project Safeway, Inc., regards as its biggest venture and a model for future Safeway developments across the nation. Safeway's Vice President of Real Estate Steve Berndt, who is responsible for the project, commented, "R.M. Towill rocks!"

RMTC PROFILES

Ken Sakai, PE, has learned to be resigned to fate. But it turned out mostly well after he joined RMTC almost 35 years ago. Today, Sakai is a troubleshooter who is assigned to unusual projects to help resolve tough engineering problems.

The Hilo High graduate earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. He freely admits he enrolled in the master's program in civil engineering to avoid the Vietnam War, but the day he graduated there was a notice in the mail. "It said, 'Greetings, you have been drafted into the U.S. Army,'" relates Sakai, who can now laugh at the irony. "A lot of officers were getting killed, and I was a prime target [to be sent into a combat zone]." But fate intervened and Sakai was sent to the top secret Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in California.

Two years later, Sakai was sent to Vietnam—20 miles from the heartland of the enemy—as a combat engineer and engineering advisor to the South Vietnamese Army. For some reason, or fate, as Sakai

puts it, he was never shot at or saw combat. When he got out of the Army, his plan was to collect unemployment at his higher Army pay rate and cruise. "After the first check, the employment office said I had to *actively* look for a job," laughs Sakai. "R.M. Towill was first on the list and here I am!"

In his free time, Sakai has been a champion of organizing activities that bring people together. In the mid-80's, former RMTC President Donald Kim wanted to build a strong University of Hawai'i Alumni Association. Kim enlisted Sakai's help, and like missionaries, the pair promoted membership across all the islands and even on the mainland. The effort took nearly a decade, but today the UH Alumni Association is strong and well established.

Although Sakai didn't play formal high school or college sports because he had to work, he was always a good athlete, playing football, baseball, basketball and golf. He organized the architectural-engineering softball league, insisting that everyone at RMTC participate in some way, including employees' spouses. The league brought RMTC staff together like a close-knit family, win or lose.

While his son was growing up, Sakai found he needed someone to teach his son baseball. (A child never listens to his parents, he explains.) He found George Nitta. Nitta did in 30 minutes what Sakai took five years to teach. He has a system in place, Sakai says, that made it easy to teach a two-year-old or a teenager. So many kids came to Nitta that a fascinated Sakai decided to help, something he has been doing every Sunday for 15 years. The two baseball buffs have been holding free, weekly baseball clinics at Beretania Park, drawing up to 100 people.

On a recent RMTC venture, Sakai was sent to work on Lana'i. Castle & Cooke Resorts, LLC, needed someone with drainage experience, another with construction experience and a civil engineer on Lana'i. Sakai's boss told them they didn't need three people; RMTC had one guy that fit the bill. Sakai left at first light on Mondays and returned Friday nights for four years. He enjoyed his time on Lana'i because he had to dig deep into his "bag of tricks" for solutions, and developed a lot of good relationships. "My wife was happy to see me go," Sakai laughs. "She didn't have to wash or cook."

Looking back on his years at RMTC, Sakai sees overwhelmingly good ones. "I never thought of leaving," he says. "The company treats employees well."



Ken Sakai, PE



RMTC has purchased the former Herbert Horita Building. The building will soon have an entirely new look.

RMTC Moves to N. King

The R.M. Towill Corporation will soon relocate to 2024 N. King St. RMTC has purchased the building and is in the process of renovating the entire second floor, which it will occupy. Central Pacific Bank will renovate and enlarge its first floor branch. Other tenants in the building are currently an insurance agency, physician and dental offices and a barber shop. RMTC President Russ Figueiroa has tried the barber shop a few times, and he is pleased with the results.

RMTC's move will take place in October, or early November. The building, which is on the mauka side of King St., features convenient client parking, a new elevator and an efficiently designed office suite.



808 842 1133 www.rmtowill.com

R. M. TOWILL CORPORATION

420 Waiakamilo Road Suite 411 Honolulu Hawaii 96817-4941

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