

## South Kohala Community Development Plan

### WAIMEA TOWN PLAN WORKING PAPER

#### DRAFT CONCEPTUAL PLAN – January 21, 2008

By: BT/Townscape

**PURPOSE:** This (Draft) **Waimea Town Conceptual Plan** presents in graphic and narrative form general guidelines for the long-range – 20+ year look-ahead – future of Waimea Town, with emphasis on:

- **Preserving Waimea’s “sense of place”**
- **Moderating the pace of growth and change in Waimea**
- **Transportation and circulation improvements**

This Conceptual Plan is presented as an important **linking step** between the Focus Group discussions and the resulting “Planning Notes” (November 2007) and the more detailed **Action Plans** that we are developing on specific plan elements, including:

1. Strategies to “save the pu`u”
2. Strategies for preserving small farms and open space, and expanding farming activities
3. Plans for implementing walkways and bikeways along major roads

**There are a number of inter-related, policies for the future of Waimea Town that should be considered for incorporation into the South Kohala CDP. Suggested Overall Policies for Land Use in Waimea Town are:**

- Policy 1. “SLOW GROWTH” shall be the overarching land use policy for Waimea.
- Policy 2. The Waimea community shall work closely with the County Government to preserve and protect important agricultural lands and visually and environmentally important open space areas in Waimea Town, including the *pu`u* that are located *ma`uka* of Waimea and small farms/open spaces in East Waimea.
- Policy 3. The County Government shall preserve and protect the “country town” character of Waimea by denying any rezoning proposals and subdivision applications that would negatively impact important agricultural lands or visually and environmentally important open space.
- Policy 4. The Waimea community and the County Government shall work with major area land owners, including the State of Hawaii, Parker Ranch and

the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, to ensure that future development is planned such that benefits to the community are maximized, and negative impacts are minimized.

**Important elements of the Waimea Town Conceptual Plan are summarized below.**

Note: See graphics “PLANNING NOTES – NOVEMBER 2007” and “DRAFT WAIMEA TOWN CONCEPTUAL PLAN – JANUARY 21, 2008.

**PRESERVING THE SENSE OF PLACE OF WAIMEA TOWN**

- 1. Save the Pu‘u** – The green *pu‘u* above Waimea Town have great cultural, historical, and visual importance for the community. Together with the grand views of Mauna Kea to the southeast of the town, the *pu‘u* define the special landscape “sense of place” of Waimea. A state-owned parcel that contains three of the most important *pu‘u* of Waimea was recently “downzoned” by the County Council from Ag-1a and Ag-5a to “Ag-400” – a zoning designation that will prevent the land from being divided up into small ag lots. An overall protection plan is now needed for the other important *pu‘u*. The overall **Pu‘u Protection Plan for Waimea** can include a combination of voluntary downzonings, the acquisition of conservation easements, and special land use controls such as a “cultural/scenic overlay zoning district.” See the **Pu‘u Protection Action Plan** for details. (Note: We are still working on this Action Plan, and will include it in the “Preliminary Draft CDP” that will be submitted to the Steering Committee in March.)
- 2. Acquire Critical Open Space Areas** – Some of the *pu‘u* lands may need to be acquired – either by the County through the recently formed Open Space Commission, or by a non-profit entity like the Hawai‘i Island Land Trust. Some of the visually important small farm lots in East Waimea may also be priorities for acquisition – either fee purchase or acquisition of conservation easements. Depending on the disposition of the land owner, “downzoning” or special overlay districts may not be the best strategy to use for preserving critical open space areas, as these measures can lead to legal challenges and litigation. Acquisition of the fee interest or of conservation easements for critical open space parcels can therefore be, in some cases, the best approach. Of course, the constraint for this strategy is the availability of acquisition funds.
- 3. Protect important cultural and historical sites, structures, and landscapes** – Waimea Town has a wealth of cultural and historical resources, and these sites, structures, and landscapes should be protected and preserved as important elements of Waimea’s heritage and sense of place. The “Waimea Concept Plan” graphic identifies only a few of these important resources: the Waimea Field System to the west of the Lalamilo Farm Lots, the Puopelu complex near Waimea

Town Center, the *pu'u ma'uka* of the Town, and the complex of historic ranch buildings and corrals located just to the south of the Town Center. There are many other important historical properties, including the Anna Ranch, the churches of "church row," the old Lindsey house, and the Parker Ranch houses at Puopelu, to name a few. Overall, Waimea needs to establish an official "historic district," at the state and/or federal level, to preserve and protect its cultural and historical heritage.

4. **Encourage small-scale farming through expanded tax credits** – There has been much talk of late about the need for "food security" for Hawai'i, and the need to expand diversified agriculture. However, recent statistics from the state Department of Agriculture indicate that the number of farms, farm acreage, and farm workers is declining in Hawai'i. This trend appears to be especially acute for animal products, including dairies, chicken and egg farms, and pig farms. If farming, including small family farms and part-time farms, is to continue to be an important part of Waimea's landscape and lifestyle, incentives for farming are needed. These incentives could include County real property tax incentives and state farm income tax credits. *(Note: we still need to discuss tax incentives with the County Finance Dept.)*
  
5. **Expand the Lalamilo Farm Lots** – The Lalamilo Farm Lots were originally subdivided and made available to farmers in 19\_\_\_. There were a total of \_\_\_ lots, ranging in size from \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ acres, and totaling \_\_\_ acres. Today, there are approximately \_\_\_ farm operations active here, employing about \_\_\_ full-time and \_\_\_ part-time workers, and with an estimated annual sales value of \$\_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_ of these farm lots are now owned in fee, and \_\_\_ are still leased from the state. There are several hundred acres of state-owned land located between the existing farm lots and the historical "Lalamilo Field System" that could be developed for expansion of farming activities. Assuming an average farm lot size of 5 acres, this expansion area could provide about 60 new farm lots, and something in the range of an additional \_\_\_ full-time and \_\_\_ part-time jobs, and additional agriculture products sales of \$\_\_\_ per annum. *(Note: we still need to consult with DOA staff re: expansion of the farm lots. Also need some data to fill in the blanks above.)*

## MODERATING THE PACE OF GROWTH AND CHANGE IN WAIMEA

- 6. The County should not approve any rezoning or subdivision applications that would negatively impact important agricultural lands or culturally, visually and environmentally important open spaces in Waimea.** Time will be needed to implement a number of important open space preservation tools and programs, including acquisition of fee interest or conservation easements for important *pu`u* and some of the East Waimea farm lots, enactment of a cultural overlay zoning district for the Waimea *pu`u* and/or voluntary downzoning of critical *pu`u* lands. While these tools and programs are being put into place, the County government can discourage any “rush to rezone or subdivide” by having County Council pass a resolution that institutes a moratorium on rezonings and subdivision approvals for lands that are critical to Waimea’s “sense of place.”
- 7. Work with Parker Ranch to phase the “Parker 2020” Development over a 20-30 year build-out period.** The original Parker 2020 Master Plan envisioned a total of 750 (?) homes and 250,000 square feet (?) of retail and office commercial development on Parker Ranch lands located at the center of Waimea Town. To date, about 240 lots have been subdivided and 80 homes have been built and sold. Pursuant to a major re-organization, we understand that the newly appointed Parker Ranch Trustees will be taking a fresh look at the goals and objectives of this major development. If the additional 670 homes per the original Master Plan were to be built by 2020, **this one project alone** would add some 1800 people to Waimea’s population over the next 12 years – a population increase comparable to the increase of 1,400 people in Waimea’s population during the decade 1990-2000. We understand why profit-driven projects of this size typically have an aggressive “build-out” schedule. However, for the good of the Waimea community, the size and development pace of this project needs to be scaled back. Community leaders and the CDP team need to participate in the plan reassessment process with the new Parker Ranch Trustees.
- 8. Work with DHHL to phase the Lalamilo Homesteads Project and the Pu`ukapu Homesteads Project over a 20-30 year build-out period.** The Department of Hawaiian Homelands (DHHL) is a state level department with a unique federal mandate: to provide pastoral (ranching), agricultural, and residential homesteads to native Hawaiian people that have a “blood quantum” of at least 50% Hawaiian. With its unique mandate, DHHL’s land development projects are not controlled by County zoning, County subdivision, or State Land Use laws. Nevertheless, the DHHL’s proposed 400-unit residential project at Lalamilo at the west end of Waimea, and its 181 pastoral/agricultural homesteads project at Pu`ukapu at the east end of Waimea could have significant impacts on the Town, including additional traffic and increased demand for educational, social, public safety, and medical facilities and services. Community leaders need to establish a productive

working relationship with the DHHL Commissioners and DHHL senior staff, and work out a “Memorandum of Understanding” for a phasing program that will meet DHHL’s goals to provide homesteads for its beneficiaries, but at the same time minimize adverse impacts to the Waimea community.

**9. Revise the County Subdivision Regulations and Planning Department policies and enforcement procedures such that “Country Estates” masquerading as agricultural subdivisions can no longer be approved.**

State Land Use statutes restrict residential structures in the State “Agriculture” District to “farm dwellings.” In practice however, the Hawai`i County Planning Department has approved many “agricultural subdivisions” – including the now notorious “Hokulia” second home project – that are actually country estates for the wealthy. There is certainly a demand for and a place for projects of this kind. However, “country estates” projects should be required to apply for and receive State Land Use “Rural” classification, and County “Rural Residential” Zoning designation. As a corollary, any and all agricultural subdivisions should be required to submit an agricultural business plan together with their preliminary subdivision documents, and the Planning Department should design and implement a monitoring program that will ensure implementation of these agricultural business plans. Note: these suggested amendments to County subdivision regulations have County-wide implications. The details of these amendments should therefore be developed in coordination with the other active CDP’s – e.g., the North and South Kona CDP and the Puna CDP.

**10. Amend the County of Hawaii General Plan “LUPAG” map by reducing the acreage of “Low Density Urban” land in Waimea Town.**

The current County General Plan LUPAG map for the Waimea area includes over 1,000 acres of “Low Density Urban” land in the Waimea area. This designation is defined in the General Plan (page 14-7) as: *“Residential, with ancillary community and public uses, and neighborhood and convenience-type commercial uses; overall residential density may be up to six units per acre.”* Note that “six units per acre” translates to 5,000 square foot minimum lot size. The “Low Density Urban” areas on the LUPAG map include some existing development, but also include important cultural, historic, agricultural, and open space lands both mauka and makai of Mamalahoa Highway. Also of concern are the several hundred acres of “Urban Expansion” land shown on the south side of Kawaihae Road just west of Waimea Center, and the several hundred acres of “Rural” land shown along the south side of Kawaihae Road, roughly between Waimea and Kawaihae. Further development of these areas would continue the “suburban sprawl” development pattern that is not compatible with the goal of preserving Waimea’s “sense of place.”

## TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION IMPROVEMENTS

Note: with the exception of plan element no. 11, “Walkways and Bikeways along the main roads,” the projects described below are all at some level of planning by various community, county and state entities. We have included a brief description of these projects because they are very important for the future of Waimea. However, the CDP does not propose to alter or amend these projects.

**11. Plan, design, and construct walkways and bikeways within the existing rights of way of the main Waimea Roads: Kawaihae Road and Mamalahoa Highway.**

Except for sidewalks for a few blocks within the center of Waimea Town, there are no walkways or bikeways along the major roads that could be used by pedestrians and bicyclists, including children walking to and from school. Constructing safe bikeways and walkways along Mamalahoa Highway and Kawaihae Road would provide people with alternatives to travel by car, and would thus potentially alleviate to some degree the peak hour traffic jams that now characterize Waimea. The typical right-of-way of the main roads leading into and out of Waimea is 50 feet in width, and the average paved roadway, including travel lanes and a narrow paved shoulder, is about 26 feet. Thus, there is typically about 24 feet of right-of-way, or an average of 12 feet on each side, that is available for walkways and/or bikeways. The Waimea Town Plan section of the South Kohala CDP provides a detailed **Action Plan** for the planning, design, and construction of these walkways and bikeways. (Note: We are still working on this Action Plan, and will include it in the “Preliminary Draft CDP” that will be submitted to the Steering Committee in March.)

**12. Support the implementation of the Waimea Trails and Greenways Project** – Plans for the Waimea Trails and Greenways project have been developed over a period of some 13 years. The first phase of the project, about ½ mile in length, from Lindsey Road to the beginning of the Sandalwood subdivision, will begin construction in 2008. This multi-purpose path is planned to eventually extend to the vicinity of “church row.” This stream-side trail will be an important complement to the planned walkway/bikeway system that the CDP proposes along the main roadways.

**13. Plan, design, and construct a system of equestrian trails for Waimea** – There has been considerable discussion in recent years about the need and desirability of equestrian trails in the Waimea area. Of course, a generation or two ago, horses and riders were a natural part of the Waimea scene, and as recently as the 1980’s, it was not uncommon to see people walking their horses along the main roads. Now, however, traffic volumes effectively preclude horses and riders in town. Community leaders need to work with Parker Ranch and other land owners to

develop a system of equestrian trails that will be compatible with existing and future residential, commercial, and institutional land uses.

- 14. Implement short-term traffic mitigation improvements in and around Waimea Town Center** – The recently published *“Draft Waimea Traffic Circulation Study”* by the engineering company “Parsons Brinckerhoff” provides recommendations on relatively near-term improvements that could be implemented to lessen the severity of peak hour traffic congestion in Waimea Town Center. These improvements include widening a section of Mamalahoa Highway from 2 lanes to 4 lanes, and improvements to the main intersection of Mamalahoa Highway/Lindsey Road/Kawaihae Road. As of January 2008, the details of these recommendations were still being discussed. However, it is clear that some improvements are needed as soon as possible.
- 15. Design and construct the Parker Ranch Connector Road** – Parker Ranch and the County of Hawai`i recently reached an agreement regarding design and construction of the “Parker Ranch Connector Road.” This much needed road would extend from Kamamalu Street in east Waimea to Mamalahoa Highway just north of the Parker Ranch racetrack and rodeo grounds. Construction of this road would allow traffic between East Hawai`i and Mamalahoa Highway south to bypass the congestion of Waimea Town Center. The estimated cost of the road is \$15 million, to be paid for by Parker Ranch, and the estimated completion date is 2010. Engineering design work for the project is to proceed in early 2008. Details of the multi-purpose path that will parallel the new road have yet to be finalized.
- 16. Design and construct the Lalamilo Connector Road** – This planned road would extend from the Parker Ranch Connector/Mamalahoa intersection to Kawaihae Road in the vicinity of the existing County solid waste transfer station. Construction of this road, together with completion of the Parker Ranch Connector Road, would allow traffic between Kawaihae and East Hawai`i to completely bypass Waimea Center. The estimated cost is \$9 million, and the road would be paid for and maintained by the County. As of January 2008, the Environmental Assessment and detailed design work for this project was “on hold” pending finalization of the *Waimea Traffic Circulation Study.*”
- 17. Work with the State Department of Transportation to resolve the best alignment for the proposed Waimea/Kawaihae Bypass Highway** – This major state highway project has been studied and debated for some thirty years. This Bypass Highway would be a major regional arterial 2-lane highway that would provide a new route for traffic between East Hawai`i and Kawaihae Harbor. The most recent proposed alignment for this road in the vicinity of Waimea extends from near the Mud Lane/Mamalahoa Highway intersection, through the upper sections of the DHHL Pu`ukapu Homesteads, through Parker Ranch lands just north of the Waimea

Airport, across Mamalahoa Highway south, and then south of the Lalamilo Farm Lots and the Waimea Field System. Some community members have suggested that the alignment should be south of rather than north of the Airport. Other community members have commented that the entire alignment of this road in the vicinity of Waimea is obsolete, and that the alignment should be much farther south of Waimea Town. Also, some members of the local Hawaiian community are opposed to any highway construction within the Pu'ukapu Homesteads. An "Environmental Impact Statement" for this project has been "in the works" for approximately 10 years. Actual design and construction of this bypass highway may take another 10 years or more.

### **Next Steps in the CDP planning process:**

1. Review the Conceptual Plan with the South Kohala Steering Committee (January 23 and February 27, 2008) meetings and with the Waimea Town Plan Focus Group (January 26, 2008);
2. (January-February 2008) Develop **Action Plan** details for at least the following elements of the Plan:
  - o Strategies to "save the pu'u"
  - o Strategies for preserving small farms and open space, and expanding farming activities
  - o Plans for implementing walkways and bikeways along major roads
3. (mid-Feb 2008) Community-wide meetings: progress report on the CDP.
3. (Feb-March 2008) Compile the background material, planning notes, conceptual plans, and Action Plans for Waimea, Waikoloa, Kawaihae, and Puako into a **Preliminary Draft South Kohala CDP** document, and submit this preliminary draft to the South Kohala CDP Steering Committee and the Focus Groups for review.
4. (March-April 2008) Review the Preliminary Draft CDP with the Steering Committee and with the Focus Groups and revise/refine as needed.
5. (May 2008) Publish the **Public Review Draft South Kohala CDP** document and present highlights of the Draft CDP at community meetings.