

**SOUTH KOHALA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
PUAKO WORKING PAPER
DRAFT PUAKŌ CONCEPTUAL PLAN – January 21, 2008**

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PURPOSE: This (Draft) **Puakō Conceptual Plan** presents in graphic and narrative form general guidelines for the long-range – 20+ year look-ahead – future of Puakō.

This Conceptual Plan is presented as an important **linking step** between the Focus Group discussion held on November 7, 2007 and the more detailed **Action Plans** that we are developing for specific plan elements. Suggested overall policies for Puakō are:

- Policy 1.** The Puakō Community shall work closely with the County Government to reduce the risk of damage from natural disasters to lives and property.
- Policy 2.** The Puakō Community and the County Government shall work with other State and Federal agencies to improve the marine water quality along the Puakō Coastline.
- Policy 3.** The Puakō Community shall work closely with the County Government to improve traffic safety within the community.
- Policy 4.** The Puakō Community shall work closely with the County Government to manage the effects of growth and development in a responsible manner

Important elements of the Puakō Conceptual Plan are summarized below.

Note: See graphics “DRAFT PUAKŌ CONCEPTUAL PLAN – JANUARY 21, 2008. A number of the Land Use elements are illustrated. (*) Other Programmatic elements are not illustrated.

Policy1. Reduce the risk of damage from natural disasters to lives and property.

1. Support the construction of the southern Paniau Evacuation Route for Puakō Village*

Puakō has one paved access road, Puakō Beach Dr. which provides access into and out of the community from the North. Having only one access way to the north is potentially hazardous, especially since brushfires may come from the northeast and go in a southwest direction from trade winds, cutting off a northern path of escape. There are current plans to

design a second southern evacuation route near Paniau. The CDP should support construction of a southern escape route from Puakō.

2. Increase the number of easily accessible mauka tsunami evacuation roads*

Puakō residents have expressed the need for escape routes from tsunami events. The current northern and planned southern escape routes run parallel to the coastline and offer no benefit for tsunami evacuation. There is a need for escape routes that run mauka, perpendicular to the coast. Currently there are two mauka escape routes in Puakō (*need to confirm this with focus group*). One escape route exists behind the Catholic Church in the center of the community. The other mauka escape route is located on the northern end of the community near the Puakō Small Boat Ramp. A Tsunami would strike with little time to react. Residents living on the southern end of the community may not have enough time to reach the two other northern escape routes. A mauka escape route is needed toward the southern end of the community.

3. Maintain existing firebreak behind mauka houselots in short-term; plant more fire resistant succulent native plant species in existing fire break as a long term solution*

After the October 2007 wildfires, buffel grass was planted in the firebreak. Buffel grass was needed as an immediate short-term solution to prevent dust from entering the mauka beach lots. Buffel grass still allows for more longer-term solutions such as planting more native succulent plant species in the firebreak areas. Planting native plants that are more fire resistant would not only help to propagate native plant species, it would also create a natural firebreak which would need less frequent maintenance.

4. Construct a fire break wall on the north and east corners of the Puakō Kiawe Forest to protect the forest*

The current firebreak is located in close proximity behind the mauka beach lots. The location of the current firebreak does little to prevent wildfires from burning the kiawe forest. Should a wildfire reach the forest, the fire may increase tremendously in intensity as kiawe wood has a high fuel load. The location of the current firebreak may not prevent a strong fire from engulfing homes and the uniqueness of Puakō's kiawe forest would be destroyed.

Constructing a permanent rock wall around the outer north and east edges of the forest would better protect homes and also protect the kiawe forest as well.

5. Develop a Puakō Kiawe Forest Management Plan

In addition to firebreaks, a sustainable forest management plan also needs to be developed to mitigate the threat of wildfire. From time to time, the forest needs to be thinned in order to reduce the fuel load. If done in a prudent, well-planned manner, thinning the forest may not

only reduce the fuel load, it can also be economically profitable as the kiawe wood can be sold as firewood. Money earned from the sale of kiawe wood could go back into the management of the forest.

6. Mitigate flooding from Kamakoa Gulch*

Much of the flooding that occurs in Puakō comes from the Kamakoa Gulch. Flood mitigation measures around Kamakoa Gulch need to be implemented either at the mouth of the Gulch or further up mauka to control the flooding in Puakō.

7. Establish a community program to report, monitor, and clean-up dumping of rubbish in public areas

Wildfires may also be caused by littering and illegal dumping of rubbish in public areas, especially if the rubbish includes glass fragments. In the hot sun, glass may cause grass to catch fire. Regular monitoring and cleanup of rubbish may help to reduce the chance of wildfire, especially along Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway.

8. Encourage more community members to undergo Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. CERT members also are encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community.

9. Construct emergency warning signals in close vicinity of the community*

An early warning system for natural disasters would give residents more time to prepare for oncoming natural disasters and may save lives.

Policy 2. Improve the marine water quality along the Puakō coastline

10. Require future SMA permit applicants for residential developments to include septic tanks or construct a wastewater system. Developments with more than ___ units should be required to construct a wastewater system

11. Work with Mauna Lani Resort, County Department of Environmental Management, and other State and Federal agencies on possible construction of sewerage system for the Puakō community

A sewer system would reduce the amount of untreated effluent from entering the ocean. However, this idea has been proposed in the past, but has never been implemented because the project would be very costly. Coordination among various government agencies at different levels of government for funding may be possible because the coastal waters are a natural resource not just for the immediate community, but for the larger region as well.

12. Establish a community marine monitoring program to watch and report illegal poaching and mooring

Currently, State DLNR's Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) does not have the resources to regularly monitor the coastline for illegal poaching and mooring. A "community watch" type program may help DOCARE officers to prevent future illegal poaching and mooring along the coast.

13. Community and the County should collaborate with Malama Kai and DLNR to share information and provide community resources to manage and protect Puakō coral reefs

The Malama Kai Foundation (MKF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to ocean stewardship for current and future generations through community service and public education. The organization raises funds to sponsor projects that help conserve Hawaii's coastal and marine resources, and educate people about these resources. The Malama Kai Foundation allocates these funds based on the advice of the Big Island Reef Fund Advisory Group. Currently MKF has helped to install seven day-use mooring buoys along the coast within the vicinity of Puakō. Eventually, more than seven day-use mooring buoys will be needed to accommodate future larger populations of recreational boaters.

14. Establish a South Kohala Watershed Management Group

What happens up mauka, eventually affects what happens down makai. A district wide watershed management group that monitors and implements activities that help to improve the health of watersheds from mauka to makai is needed for the long term health of South Kohala's coastal resources.

Policy 3. Improve traffic safety within the community

15. Install stoplight at intersection of Queen Ka’ahumanu Highway and Puakō Beach Drive*

Installing a stoplight at the intersection of Queen Ka’ahumanu and Puakō Beach Drive would help to improve traffic safety of motorist entering and exiting Puakō as vehicles traveling along Queen Ka’ahumanu Highway often travel at 50 mph or more.

16. Install a speed bump on northern end of Puakō Beach Drive*

It is easy for cars entering Puakō to speed because of the downward slope of Puakō Beach Drive. Installing a speed bump would encourage drivers to slow down prior to entering the residential community.

Policy 4. Manage the effects of growth and development in a responsible manner

17. Extend the Hapuna Beach State Recreational Area to include the Puakō Kiawe Forest*

The kiawe forest is a one of a kind natural resource unique to Puakō. Kiawe trees in this forest are 60 feet high, while average Kiawe trees only reach heights of 15 ft. It has been suggested that the kiawe forest could be utilized as a multi-use park for recreation, food production, and the restoration of native plant species. Designing a system of trails and access ways into the forest would allow people to safely hike through the forest. The forest is also a source of food production, as small local company produces organic honey. The honey is of gourmet quality and is world renowned. The dense canopy of the 60 foot kiawe trees would shade native plant species and allow them to grow. Putting the forest into the State Hapuna Beach Recreational area or some other type of conservation easement protect this unique natural resource from future development.

18. Prohibit time-shares in non-resort areas

Allowing timeshares in residential areas may cause unwanted nuisances to neighbors within close proximity of those establishments. Timeshares are a more appropriate use for resort-zoned areas rather than residential areas.

19. Monitor the existing mauka and makai rights of way so that they are not blocked by adjacent property owners

There are several mauka and makai rights of way in the community that are blocked. Some of the property owners adjacent to rights of away have used these public accesses as driveways or have let vegetation from their property block pathways. Blocked access ways need to be reported to the proper authorities.

20. Require new communities and developments to have more than one way in and one way out, no more cul-de-sac communities

District wide, communities such as Puakō and Waikoloa Village were initially designed with only one access roadway, leaving communities vulnerable to natural disasters. Future communities in South Kohala should have design guidelines requiring more than one access roadway into the community.

21. Preserve the historical integrity of Puakō*

Historically, Puakō was a small finishing village. During the 1800s Parker Ranch would herd cattle down to Puakō so that the cattle could feed on the kiawe tree pods. These elements of Puakō's past should be preserved. Also, Hokuhoa Church and the Puakō Petroglyph Field are unique historical and cultural resources to Puakō, while both are already on historical registries, the CDP should continue to support the preservation of these two sites.

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 Puakō Plan Focus Group (January 26, 2008);

2. (January-February 2008) Develop **Action Plan** details for at least the following elements of the Plan:
 - Strategies for preserving the Puakō Kiawe Forest
 - Strategies for mitigating impacts of natural disasters
 - Strategies for improving marine water quality
 - Plans for implementing traffic safety measures

3. (mid-Feb 2008) Community-wide meetings: progress report on the CDP.
(Feb-March 2008) Compile the background material, planning notes, conceptual plans, and Action Plans for Waimea, Waikoloa, Kawaihae, and Puakō 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.