

Hāmākua Community Development Plan **Values & Vision Statement**

We, the residents of Hāmākua recognize that the foundation of our life, livelihood and well-being comes from the ‘āina - the land, the seas, the rivers and streams, the forests, and the skies. As active stewards, we mālama the ‘āina as the source of sustenance for ourselves and future generations. This Kanaka Maoli wisdom guides our actions with the principle that “what is good for the land, is good for the people.”

‘O ka mea kūpono ‘āina ka mea kūpono kanaka.

Our pristine landscapes and rich agricultural lands from mauka to makai, native forests to coastal waters, streams and watersheds, the sweeping views and open spaces are protected and enhanced. We protect our culturally significant and sacred places, and nurture our diverse cultural and plantation heritage. Access to natural resources and care for the ‘āina supports and perpetuates subsistence and recreation, Native Hawaiian, and other cultural traditions.

Hāmākua is a rural community of distinctive small towns and villages thriving on sustainable agriculture and ranching to provide ourselves and the rest of Hawai‘i with healthy food and locally grown products.

Our vibrant economy is based on local businesses that are able to provide living wage jobs and ensure access to goods and services so that our families can work and shop close to home. We produce and rely on clean, renewable energy to power our communities and businesses.

Our high quality of life is rooted in our strong sense of ‘ohana and community. We support lifetime learning through the expansion of educational opportunities for all residents. Access to quality healthcare, elderly care, and affordable housing is provided. We host festivals for music, culture, arts, and agriculture, and are known for our parks, gathering places, and recreation programs.

Our communities are connected by a network of safe, well maintained roadways and we enjoy multiple transportation choices. Our community prides itself on its heritage roads as alternative, slower routes between our popular destinations and our historic plantation villages.

Hāmākua is a place where change is thoughtful & deliberate. Our deep aloha for the ‘āina compels and ensures smart, sustainable development, and the protection and perpetuation of Hāmākua’s uniqueness now and into the future.

~ adopted by the Hāmākua CDP Steering Committee on March 1, 2011



Hāmākua Community Development Plan **Values & Vision Report**

Community Input: Building the Foundation for Planning

In order for residents, property owners, business people, and others who make up the broad constituency in the planning area to buy into a Community Development Plan, it makes sense to understand how they view their community and how they imagine the future. So before the planners began collecting data about the physical, economic, and cultural landscape of the CDP planning area, the County of Hawai'i went straight to the experts. They went to people of all ages, all ethnic backgrounds, and from all the communities within the Hāmākua CDP planning area (Hāmākua, North Hilo, and Rural South Hilo).

Between September 2009 and May 2010, the County asked two questions in surveys and in “talk story” sessions:

What do you love about Hāmākua?

What would you like to see in Hāmākua in 20 years?

The results have helped frame the planning discussion, keeping the Project Team of professionals focused on what matters most to the CDP's ultimate beneficiaries, the people who live, work, and play in the CDP planning area.

Over 2,400 people responded to the County's invitation to share their values and vision for the future and generated over 17,000 comments. That participation number represents 15 percent of the planning area's population, a record participation rate for County community engagement efforts.

From Values & Vision to the Hāmākua Community Development Plan (CDP)

The purpose for gathering all of this community input was to identify core values and a shared vision. Achieving a meaningful, consensus-supported Community Development Plan depends upon recognizing those values and that vision and assuring that the priorities they imply are reflected in the final plan.



The Values: Defining What Grounds Us

Since stakeholder responses will inform a CDP process that translates broad goals in the County's General Plan into place-specific actions, the first step was to organize the responses in relation to the 13 elements of the General Plan. The County's analysis of the community's values and visions did that in great detail. The analysis revealed that the community's priorities often fell outside of or spanned across General Plan elements.

Over half (3,166 of 5,890) of the total responses in the values surveys and "talk story" sessions, fall under "did not fit the General Plan elements." Most of those uncategorized reactions to the "what do you love?" question are variations on two closely related core themes: community character and rural lifestyle. Respondents used words such as: community, rural and small town, agriculture, peace and quiet, aloha, education, 'ohana, lifestyle, heritage, and diversity.

Many responses also referred to places or landscapes that represent community character: shoreline, natural beauty, natural resources, views, open space, and environmental quality. There is clearly a people/place/lifestyle connection that is central to area residents' affection for where they live.

VALUES

This grouping of values comments captures the people/place/lifestyle connection in the CDP planning area.

COMMUNITY/'OHANA (community, aloha, education, 'ohana, heritage, cultural and ethnic diversity)

'ĀINA/NATURAL RESOURCES (natural beauty, viewplanes, natural resources, shoreline, weather, open space, environmental quality)

COUNTRY/RURAL LIFESTYLE (rural/small town, agriculture, peace and quiet, lifestyle, no traffic, controlled development, sports and outdoor recreation)

From Values to Vision: Imagining the Future

The challenge for the community and planners is to address Hāmākua’s future in ways that are consistent with its unique character. From responses to the vision question asked on surveys and in “talk story” sessions – “What would you like to see in Hāmākua in 20 years?” – we can identify categories that rank high on the community’s to-do list.

Economic issues, including local business and agriculture, received the most responses. Additional analysis demonstrates the community’s desire to address economic needs while maintaining the rural community character that defines the planning area.

KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

This grouping of topics illustrates the top issues identified in responses to the 20-year vision question.

LOCAL ECONOMY (economically and environmentally sustainable agriculture, local business, jobs, retail, services, dining, renewable energy, housing)

RECREATION (parks and gathering spaces, facilities, programs, youth recreation, outdoor recreation)

EDUCATION (improved schools, quality education, adult/vocational/higher education)

HEALTH CARE (hospital/clinic, elderly care, more medical professionals, social services)

‘ĀINA (natural resources, land use, public access, environmental quality, natural beauty, sustainability)

PUBLIC SERVICES (transportation, roadways, mass transit, public utilities, protective services)

Off to the Side: Responding to Vision Priorities Beyond the County's Jurisdiction

To give stakeholders maximum opportunities for engaging in a process like this, we asked open-ended questions such as: “What do you love?” and “What would you like to see in the next 20 years?” As a result, we found concerns that require solutions beyond the scope of the project and beyond the jurisdiction of an entity like the County of Hawai'i.

In some cases, there are overlaps of jurisdiction that are clear to government authorities but not to those who enjoy the resources. The CDP planning area, for instance, involves privately held land and land under the control of county, state, and federal agencies. In other cases, it's a matter of clearly drawn lines of authority – in education, for instance, or in health services, where the County may have influence but not control.

Both of those categories – education and health – appear among the priorities of stakeholders when asked about their visions of the future. If the County invites residents into a conversation in which it can offer no assurances that their concerns will be addressed, how can it avoid disappointing people who are investing so much energy in engaging in the process?

The key will be building and sustaining relationships across jurisdictions. Already, that process is underway with consultation with state and federal agencies for collecting data essential to the Community Profile. Also, the Project Team is including agency officials and staff as key stakeholders invited to participate in the planning phase of the CDP process. In that collaborative environment, it will be easier to see common ground.

A CDP that acknowledges interdependencies between the people, agencies, and institutions beyond County jurisdiction and achieves planning goals through collaboration will leverage change that benefits everyone. Ultimately the task of influencing policy for the long term will rely on the people of the CDP planning area, who will play an integral role in implementation of the community development plan.