

# PUNA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## First Annual Progress Report on Implementation of Actions

April 2011



### **Puna Community Development Plan Action Committee:**

**Barbara Bell  
Gregory Braun  
Frank Commendador  
Madie Greene  
Larry Higgins**

**Keikialoha Kekipi  
Jeffrey Krepps  
Wesley Owens  
Daniel Taylor  
Tim Tunison**

### **Puna Community Development Plan Staff:**

**Larry M. Brown**  
Project Manager

**Elizabeth J. Hultman-Salfen**  
Community Planning Assistant

**Cynthia Lahilahi Verschuur**  
Meeting Recorder

The Puna Community Development Plan (PCDP) was adopted by ordinance on September 10, 2008 and amended by Ordinance 10-104 on November 4, 2010. The PCDP is intended to serve as an extension of the County of Hawai'i General Plan by articulating district sensitive specific growth management strategies and the delivery of government services through a broad-based community input process. According to Chapter 16-4 of the Hawai'i County Code (HCC) each community development plan shall have an Action Committee (AC), which is advisory to the Planning Director, to serve as a proactive, community-based steward of the plan's implementation and update.

The progress of this initial Puna CDP AC has been gaining momentum since its appointment, confirmation and first meeting in November 20, 2009. Initially, the AC focused on identifying processes by which it could meet its goals and responsibilities and also respond to the proposal for significant amendments to the CDP contained in County Council Bill No. 194.

Later the AC was able to prioritize specific Actions in the plan for immediate implementation activities. The top five priority items for implementation determined by the AC are as follows:

1. Preparation of a County-wide Mass Transit Master Plan
2. Establishing a hub and spoke transit system in Puna
3. Upgrade wastewater disposal facilities in the Kapoho area
4. Create the Biosphere Reserve Buffer Zone (BRBZ) for the greater Volcano area
5. Plan and design the Puna Makai Alternate Route (PMAR) through and environmental impact statement that meets Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) standards and therefore qualify for federal funding.

To facilitate the implementation of the PCDP the AC has:

1. Adopted an Implementation Matrix, which is posted on the PCDP website, that is designed to keep an up to date detailed status on the progress for the implementation of each Action in the plan;
2. Adopted Work Plans that each ATG develops and maintains for each Action in the plan;
3. Created five subcommittees, which include at least one, but not more than two, AC Member liaisons to facilitate active community participation in the implementation of PCDP Actions and other matters impacting the PCDP and the AC; and
4. Adopted a process to allow the formation of Action Task Groups (ATG) under each appropriate subcommittee to identify and take responsibility for the implementation activities of individual Action items that can be completed or monitored by citizen-based groups.
5. Produced a Fact Sheet about the PCDP and AC for distribution to community groups and organizations throughout the Puna district to broaden the level of public awareness and participation.
6. Set up, and about to launch, a web-based forum to facilitate broad-based community dialogue on the implementation activities that will allow for greater community participation without having to attend meetings.

## Subcommittees

**Amendment Subcommittee:** This committee was tasked with identifying a process for the review and evaluation of the Amendments to the PCDP proposed in Hawai'i County Council Bill 194. AC Members and participating Puna citizens of this subcommittee brainstormed on strategies the AC should employ that would allow for broad-based community input and to confirm, to the extent possible within the allotted time frame, the community sentiment towards the amendments being proposed. To that end some Amendment Subcommittee members sought out and met with several community groups seeking their opinions on the proposed amendments. The subcommittee drafted recommendations on behalf of the AC for transmittal to the Planning Director, which the AC approved on April 15, 2010. The AC letter of recommendations regarding the proposed amendments was included with the Planning Director's recommendations to the Hawai'i County Windward Planning Commission and County Council. On November 4, 2010, the Hawai'i County Council passed Bill 194 substantially as it was introduced.

During its review of the proposed amendments in Bill 194 the AC considered suggestions for other amendments to the PCDP offered by members of the community. This resulted in several additional amendment recommendations to the Planning Director, some of which the Director agreed with, but determined would need to be submitted for consideration by the Windward Planning Commission and County Council separately because of their substantive nature. At the time of this report three amendments have received a favorable recommendation from the Hawai'i County Windward Planning Commission and have been forwarded to the Hawai'i County Council for consideration.

Those amendments call for:

1. Mass Transit Hele-On bus service to Hilo and Keahole airports;
2. Changes to the location of a proposed scenic turnout and restroom facility in Lower Puna; and
3. The deletion of certain site specific language for proposed Community Parks in the Hawaiian Acres Subdivision.

**Mālama I Ka 'Āina Subcommittee:** Three identified Actions or projects in support of Actions under the Historic, Cultural, and Scenic Resources and the Aquifers, Coastal Waters and Stormwater sections were identified and recommended to the full AC as being either ripe for implementation or of significant importance to warrant commencement of implementation activity. These are as follows:

1. Upgrading wastewater disposal systems for the Kapoho area:

An ATG led by Barbara Bell has been working with residents in the Kapoho area to upgrade the private wastewater disposal systems currently utilized in these residential communities. Ms. Joy Gannon with the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) is assisting the community in a strategic planning process to determine how the community might upgrade wastewater disposal in

these subdivisions. The strategic planning process has identified the need for at least four community meetings and is being paid for through a grant from RCAC.

- Meeting #1 is planned for week of April 18, 2011 and will provide an overview of the problem and an introduction to options available for solutions.
- Meeting 2 will discuss options for solutions.
- Meeting 3 and 4 will set timelines, explore what is possible, and design a plan to move forward.

2. Creating the Biosphere Reserve Buffer Zone for the greater Volcano area:

This ATG is led by Tim Tunison and Dan Taylor and members of the Volcano Community seeking the designation of Volcano, adjacent state-owned lands, and portions of or all of neighboring subdivisions as an International Biosphere Reserve. This designation would add to the existing Hawai'i Islands Biosphere Reserve granted in 1980 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that includes the Volcano National Park. A UNESCO biosphere reserve serves to recognize areas of significant biological and cultural value, and to demonstrate the willingness of people living within the reserve to embrace a style of living that is biologically and economically sustainable, and to demonstrate to local and international communities the art of living harmoniously with the natural environment.

3. Establish a County Historic Preservation Commission:

Given that this specific action originally called for in the PCDP was removed as one of the amendments contained in Ordinance 10-104, no ATG has yet to form to identify strategies to address the issues prompting the call for this Action by the Steering Committee during the planning phase of the PCDP. However, there has been discussion by the AC for the need to have the Hawai'i County Cultural Resources Commission authorized by Ordinance 08-42 amending Chapter 2, HCC, seated and staffed and possibly the need for some amending provisions to the ordinance.

**Transportation Subcommittee:** With increasing traffic congestion on both the Kea'au-Pāhoa Road and Highway 11, the acknowledgement that three of the five most dangerous intersections in the State of Hawai'i are on the Kea'au-Pāhoa Road, and confirmation of the rapid rate of population growth in Puna by the U.S. Census 2010 population data showing an increase in Puna's population to 39,522 people transportation is a top priority. The recognized need to implement the transportation options identified in the PCDP has led to activity by AC and community members focused on several Actions related to mass transit and roadways each with its own ATG. Wes Owens has been serving as the AC liaison to the Transportation Subcommittee.

1. County-wide Mass Transit Master Plan:

The Transportation Subcommittee has been focusing on the need for increased Hele-On bus service throughout the district, attempting to identify specific obstacles preventing service over private subdivision roads, and a meaningful public input process in the development of a County-wide Mass Transit Master Plan. Although there has been an increase in the level of service in Puna since the adoption of the PCDP through the addition of routes and frequency of runs in Puna, members of the community and the AC have expressed a desire to see more progress in expansion of County transit services. The ATG are willing to work with the Mass Transit Agency (MTA) at developing the County-wide Mass Transit Master Plan as well as Hub-and Spoke System.

2. Develop Hubs within the Hub-and-Spoke System:

Some community participants in the Transportation Subcommittee have been particularly interested in the implementation of the proposed hub-and-spoke system, including the development of transit hubs called for in the PCDP. In 2010 the MTA was awarded a federal grant of \$350,000 to help implement a hub-and-spoke system in Hawai'i County.

3. Puna Makai Alternate Route (PMAR):

The Planning and Public Works Departments have been taking steps to get the PMAR project underway by:

- Getting funds appropriated in the Hawai'i County Capital Improvements Project (CIP) budget to help fund the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) for the PMAR.
- Taking steps to getting the PMAR functionally classified as a major collector so as to qualify for placement of the project on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Projects (STIP) and federal funding for the design and construction phases.
- Requesting release by the Governor of the \$1.5 million in the State of Hawai'i CIP budget appropriated for the PMAR EIS/PER.
- Developing and maintaining a Work Plan for the PMAR that suggests a timeline and identifies specific tasks that need to be completed.
- Initiated steps to form an ATG consisting of stakeholders potentially impacted by a new roadway in the Puna Makai area that will attempt to identify the level of support for the PMAR and specific public outreach strategy recommendations to be employed in a Context Sensitive Solutions planning process for consideration by the County and the yet to be selected EIS/PER consultants.

**Managing Growth Subcommittee:** Initially, Jeffrey Krepps and Larry Higgins accepted responsibility as AC liaisons to the Managing Growth Subcommittee. Implementation activities under the Managing Growth theme of the PCDP are concentrated in the Land Use Pattern and Parks and Recreation sections of the PCDP. After the resignation of Larry Higgins from the AC, Frank Commendador has volunteered to assist with the effort to implement the village center concept.

1. Village and Town Centers:

Although little progress has been made to advance the process of implementing the village center concept articulated in the PCDP, the AC has recognized its importance and seeks more community participation to help identify strategies and opportunities for local communities that may be ready to initiate master planning efforts. However, with the current financial constraints in the County budget, funding has proven to be a significant obstacle to initiating any master planning efforts. This is particularly troublesome for the Pāhoā Regional Town Center, since the Pāhoā area has been experiencing the most significant pressure for commercial and industrial growth over the last several years.

Frank Commendador is seeking community participation in developing an ATG to identify Actions in the PCDP that a community-based group can initiate in moving the village center concept forward or that are critically necessary to that end.

The Planning Department is currently working with a consultant in developing a Form-Based Code that is hoped to serve as an island-wide tool to guide the development of livable and sustainable communities, including village centers.

2. Parks and Recreation:

Jeffery Krepps is seeking community participation in the forming of an ATG for each of the following three park projects:

- Pāhoā Regional Park;
- Cape Kumukahi; and
- Hawaiian Paradise Park Regional Park.

The Action Committee is not working in isolation to implement the Puna Community Development Plan. The State of Hawai‘i, the County of Hawai‘i and community groups are working at implementation of the PCDP. The attached table is a listing of action items and an update on their progress.

**Puna Community Development Plan  
Implementation Update  
April 2011**

<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Update</b>
2.2.3 a. Enact a Biosphere Reserve Buffer Zone (BRBZ), either separately or as an overlay district for the Volcano Area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The AC ranked as a top five priority item.</li> <li>• Action Task Group (ATG) formed under Mālama I Ka ‘Āina subcommittee</li> <li>• ATG consulting with UNESCO &amp; Volcanoes NP.</li> <li>• ATG considering BRBZ boundaries and input from potentially impacted communities</li> </ul>
2.3.3 e. In areas below 100 feet above Mean Sea Level, propose amendments to the applicable laws, ordinances and regulations that require all black wastewater disposal systems to be contained, pumpable units or be connected to a collective treatment facility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The AC ranked as a top five priority item.</li> <li>• ATG formed under Mālama I Ka ‘Āina subcommittee to explore options to deal with adverse impacts resulting from private wastewater systems in Kapoho area subdivisions.</li> </ul>
3.1.3 b. Establish the following general classifications and locations for village and town centers in Puna: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kea‘au, Pāhoā and Hawaiian Paradise Park shall serve as Regional Town Centers to provide a wide range of services for the Puna district.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The County opened the new Pāhoā police station in February 2011, which offers driver’s license renewal and vehicle registration services.</li> </ul>
3.3.3 a. Develop a centrally located, 24-hour, full-service medical facility, with trauma care, in Puna. Establish multiple level facilities offering primary medical and dental services in village centers in Upper and Lower Puna. Expand existing County-funded transportation service to carry people from subdivisions to medical facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puna Community Medical Center, a non-profit, has opened in the Pāhoā Marketplace.</li> <li>• Kea‘au Urgent Care clinic opened in Kea‘au village.</li> </ul>
3.3.3 b. Establish “one-stop” social services assistance center at various locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Neighborhood Place of Puna opened their second site in Mountain View offering one-stop access to a variety of social services.</li> </ul>
3.3.3 c. Build partnerships between County and non-profit organizations for social services and economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HCBED offering savings accounts to students.</li> <li>• Puna Community Action Team providing Ohana Family Fun Days at various locations to bring social services and County program information to each community.</li> </ul>
3.4.3 a. Develop permanent fire stations ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New County of Hawai‘i fire station opened in Pahoā.</li> </ul>

Action Item	Update
3.4.3 f. Boost the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) recycling budget to develop an economy and to create more jobs related to recycling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DEM's plan for upgrading the Pāhoa transfer station, including new recycling facilities, approved and scheduled for construction.</li> </ul>
<p>3.5.3 c. Improve and expand Community Parks as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop new Community Parks in various locations.</li> <li>Pāhoa Regional Park</li> <li>Convert the existing fire station into a one-stop community center providing, but not limited to, a senior center with certified kitchen for congregate meals program...</li> <li>Develop a new District Park on a 20-acre site owned by Hawaiian Paradise Park...</li> <li>Provide accessibility, playground and other improvements at Mountain View Community Park and A.J. Watt Gym.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major expansion, including camping and restrooms at Pohoiki Park completed.</li> <li>Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) Budget amended to include \$5.5 million to plan, design and construct a new County park on a 20-acre site in Hawaiian Paradise Park.</li> <li>The Department of Parks &amp; Recreation has accepted the old Pāhoa fire station for conversion to a senior center. Facility renovation is being facilitated through a Government and community collaborative effort.</li> <li>Mountain View's A.J. Watt Gym is scheduled to reopen in the summer of 2011 with the completion of the lead paint removal project announced by the Department of Parks and Recreation on 2/17/11.</li> </ul>
4.2.3 a. Prepare a county-wide Transit Master Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The AC ranked as a top five priority item.</li> </ul>
<p>4.2.3 b. Improve transit service operations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adding two additional runs during peak hours.</li> <li>Demand responsive transit in subdivisions.</li> <li>Commuter express services Pāhoa to Hilo.</li> <li>Establish Hub-and-Spoke transit program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mass Transit Agency (MTA) added service in Leilani Estates to Pāhoa Route.</li> <li>MTA has added 6 daily runs between Hilo &amp; Pāhoa and 1 daily runs between Hilo and Volcano. MTA added 2 additional Saturday routes from Hilo and Pāhoa and 6 routes from Hilo and Volcano.</li> <li>Express services at 8:00 am Pāhoa town direct to Prince Kuhio Mall</li> <li>AC ranked establishing Hub-and Spoke as a top five priority item.</li> </ul>
4.2.3 d. Provide park-and-ride lots at various locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maku'u Farmers Market Park and Ride opened in July 2010.</li> </ul>
4.3.3 a. Short Term (2008-2012) Plan and design PMAR alignment through and Environmental Impact Statement...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AC ranked as a top five priority item.</li> <li>County is working to have a Functional Classification Report completed for the PMAR so that the project will qualify for federal funding.</li> <li>County of Hawaii has requested Governor to release State CIP funds for Environmental Impact Statement &amp; Preliminary Engineering</li> </ul>



Action Item	Update
	<p>Report (EIS/PER).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directors for Department of Public Works and Planning Department submitted request to the Mayor for County CIP Budget amendment to include \$500,000 for EIS/PER.</li> <li>• ATG being formed to assess community support for PMAR and public outreach strategy recommendations for the EIS/PER process to the County and consultants.</li> </ul>
<p>4.4.3 a. Short Term (2008-2012)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intersection Improvements on Hwy 11 &amp; 130.</li> <li>• Reduce speed limit on Highway 130 to 45 mph between Kea‘au Bypass and ‘Āinaloa Blvd.</li> <li>• Conduct a study to determine the most efficacious way to create greater highway safety.</li> <li>• Implement the Shoulder Lane Conversion project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kahakahi Blvd. at the new Woodland Center has opened a right in and right out.</li> <li>• Hawai‘i State Department of Transportation (HDOT) has identified Kahakai Blvd. &amp; Hwy. 130 intersection for safety improvements including possible construction of a roundabout.</li> <li>• HDOT has reduced the speed limit on Pāhoa Bypass to 45 mph.</li> <li>• HDOT has listed Kaloli Dr., Ochidland Dr. and ‘Āinaloa Blvd. intersections on Hwy. 130 on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Projects (STIP) list for interim safety improvements.</li> <li>• HDOT has announced intersection improvements at Kulani Rd and Hwy 11.</li> <li>• HDOT is nearing completion of a Context-Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Kea‘au-Pāhoa Road (Hwy 130) Improvement Project.</li> <li>• EA for Shoulder Lane Conversion project completed, design work is nearing completion and construction is expected to begin in 2011.</li> </ul>