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February 8, 2007

From: Norman Cabaluna, President  
Community Development Hui of Fern Forest

To: Puna Community Development Plan Steering Committee Members  
John Whalen, Plan Pacific, Inc.  
Larry Brown, County of Hawaii Planning Department  
Stephen McPeck, County of Hawaii Research & Development Dept.  
Alex Frost, County of Hawaii Research and Development Dept.

Re: Recommendations to the Puna CDP

Aloha,

The Community Development Hui of Fern Forest board of directors wishes to provide the following information, in hopes that it will help CDP planners develop a good plan for the future of upper Puna.

Fern Forest is one of the substandard Puna subdivisions developed in the late 1950's. It was carved from 300-500 years worth of quality native flora that provides habitat for native birds and insects on the southeast slope of Kilauea volcano. It is situated between 3,000 and 2,000 feet elevation. The land area of Fern Forest is roughly 8,500 acres. It contains about 2,600 A-3a classed parcels, and 45 miles of road. Most of the roads are still bare rock today, with the look and feel of riverbeds, although potholes are filled with gravel several times per year to make them easier to travel. The two main roads off the highway are now fully paved. Captain's Drive, or Ala Kapena, is the main entrance to the subdivision. It begins at the Old Volcano Trail at the end of South Glenwood Road. The second entrance is Kahauale'a, and it begins at Highway-11, by Akatsuka Orchid Gardens. This community shares borders with Royal Hawaiian Estates and Hawaiian Orchid Isle Estates at the mauka end, Kahauale'a State Natural Area Reserve and Wa'o Kele O Puna Forest Reserve on the southern border, Eden Roc to the east, and five miles of the Old Volcano Trail along its northern boundary.

The community is typical by Puna standards, including people of all ages, backgrounds, lifestyles and professions. Many residents work at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, some work nearby in agriculture or the visitor industry, still others work at home and some people don't have jobs. The population seems to have doubled since the 2000 census, and will probably

double once more inside of another decade. Many people moving here these days are young adults who have or will have children to raise, educate and feed. Most people who have lived here a long time, raising their children here in the forest, are now becoming grandparents. The next generation of Fern Forest kids are here, and most have no interest in leaving home. Instead, we are looking for ways to improve the quality of life here, so they can stay. Our young generation is interested in having more and better educational facilities closer to home. Our adults would like to see more essential services like medical clinics and better bus transportation. Everyone needs more community gathering places, and everyone wants more farmers markets and certified kitchens, so we can buy, sell and trade with our neighbors for fresh goods and economical services, locally.

While we strive to develop our own community lot for the betterment of our residents, we still look to government for support for regional infrastructure improvements. The greater Mountain View area at large is important to regional planning. We believe that it is a good central location for development in upper Puna, since it is centrally located and already has commercial zoning (albeit, along the highway). It could use a large community gathering place that will encourage us out of our own neighborhoods to mingle with our neighbors from Eden Roc, Kopua Farmlots, Fern Acres, Hawaiian Acres, Mountain View (proper) and elsewhere. Specifically, we are looking at the Mountain View school campus. This campus would make a great community gathering place for all neighborhoods from Glenwood to Kurtistown. We recommend that the County explore ways and places to build a new K-12 school in Mountain View, off the highway, and also to plan for a community college for agriculture, culture and historic preservation and natural sciences in the area some day. To accomplish this, we ask the County to work with the State to convert the current Mountain View school property to a Neighborhood Place for upper Puna.

In addition to this, we agree with sentiments and recommendations that we've heard about from CDP participants, such as:

We support the PCDP Land Use recommendations for Preserving Land, Air and Water, and the Biosphere Reserve Buffer Zone, and CDP Agricultural Lands working group recommendations.

We support the PCDP Natural Resources working group recommendations for a Forest Protection Ordinance, tighter regulations for grubbing and grading, and a revision of the special permit process.

We do not want County water lines to our community.

We are opposed to excessive street lighting that washes out the wonders of the universe in our night skies.

We are opposed to new commercial development along Highway-11 from mile marker 15 to Volcano.

We need more bus routes and a secure, multi-purpose (farmers market) park-and-ride location, between Glenwood and Hilo, and routes between Glenwood and Mountain View.

We support the General Plan recommendation for a new fire station in Glenwood, or we would be supportive of a new fire station in Mountain View if it were combined with other county services (police, vehicle licensing, etc.).

We would be happy to work with Puna CDP Transportation working group initiatives to suggest appropriate connectivity and alternative corridor options.

We would also be happy to participate in discussions with State and County officials involved with the development of the Old Volcano Trail and the Pu`o O`o trail, since both trails are attached to or accessed by Fern Forest roads.

We`d like to see a bigger & better post office in Mountain View.

Commercial development in Mountain View should include financial institution outlets so that money can be deposited into accounts without having to go to Hilo or Captain Cook. Bank machines only work in one direction.

Very few Fern Forest residents travel to Hilo on a daily basis. Most highway traffic generated by Fern Forest residents is related to getting to or from school in Mountain View and Keaau.

We believe that the County should tax tour helicopters per flight to finance basic infrastructure to the communities that endure their noise and intrusion several times a day.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input and recommendations from the Community Development Hui of Fern Forest, a non-profit organization since 1991.

Sincerely,

Norman Cabaluna, President  
Community Development Hui of Fern Forest