

FIRST THEME: ‘Growth Management’

General comments.

The bringing together of these topics -- built infrastructure, economic livelihood, public institutions, social services – provides a good basis for planning.

“Growth Management” is re-active to failed community self-determination.

What is needed: pro-active claim on (*Rural Village*) community self-determination.

“Sprawl” is the issue, and, as such, a much higher profile for it is justified.

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“Most of the lots that were created in the nonconforming subdivisions are zoned for agricultural use, but many are too small to support viable agricultural activity, for a numbers of reasons: (1) economic feasibility, (2) complaints arising from real or perceived nuisance effects on immediate residential neighbors, and (3) higher real estate values, per square foot, for small lots.”

Strongly recommended rewording: *“There are limited opportunities for commercial agricultural activity in these subdivisions, especially where lots are as little as 8,000 sq ft., because: (1) smaller lots do not allow for economic production of most products; (2) potential for real or perceived nuisance effects on immediate residential neighbors; and (3) higher real estate values, per square foot, for small lots. These small lots offer good opportunities for residents to produce food for their own consumption, as is appropriate for a vision for Puna to maintain a rural character.”*

PCDP must be careful to promote, not impede, food production for home consumption.

Goal #3.

In addition to benefits associated with village centers, the geographic dispersion of public/social infrastructure provides a measure of risk mitigation in the case of Puna where lava inundation is a real possibility. A concentration of such infrastructure in a single location would expose the community to the risk that the entire infrastructure could be lost in the event that one central place was to be inundated.

Objective #3:

“...commercial uses...community gathering places...special needs housing... infrastructure to support more compact development form and multi-modal travel.”

The above are needed for existing village centers and new village centers.

Objective #6:

Both “excessive clearing” and “speculative building practices” will require clear definition before inclusion in legislation.

Action #2

By what process would a “land pooling project area” be designated?

Would the “rural town/village standards” be established in state or county legislation?

Clarification is needed that “town” is a planning designation, not a government jurisdiction designation.

Agriculture and Economic Development

Goal #5

Strongly recommended rewording: “*Puna agricultural products represent an increasing local market share.*”

This wording is less vague and emotional, and more readily definable, than ‘self-sufficient.’ It also corresponds with other work, e.g., at the Kohala Center, leading the way in Hawaii Island food security.

Objective #1

“...lands...identified as having potential value for agricultural use...”

How are the lands so identified?

The large areas of pahoehoe in Puna present a very unique circumstance.

Conventional land capability classifications would identify these areas as useless for agriculture.

Nevertheless, various tree crops (macadamia, tangerine, papaya, lychee, etc) have proven to be productive growing in pahoehoe.

Comments: Puna Community Development Plan “Draft Goals, Objectives, and Actions by Theme”

Objectives #6 and #7

The “support” for training is skewed with more substance directed at “the technology sector” in #7 and minimal support for “agriculture, alternative, energy, and other ‘green’ industry sectors in #6. The consultant’s initial ‘evaluation’ of the Agriculture Working Group Report was very antagonistic to the County being involved in any type of education for agriculture.

The Agriculture Working Group Report Objective #3 (of 4) is:

Development of human capital through training of *skilled* and *capable* agricultural *entrepreneurs*.

Recommended action to achieve this objective:

Establish:

‘Puna Agriculture Scholarship’ (Hawaii Community College).

Purpose:

To pay tuition, fees, and cost of textbooks and supplies, for one year for a Puna high-school graduate enrolled as a first-year Agriculture student at Hawaii Community College.

Funding:

Approximately \$3,000 per year; from County annual appropriation and/or private contributions.

And, a related action for this objective and others:

Establish:

‘Sustainable Agriculture Research and Development Fund’ (University of Hawaii-Hilo)

Purpose:

Seed funding to leverage public and private investment that will enable local agriculture to supply local markets.

Focus of research will be:

~Market research and development to identify and satisfy local agricultural market preferences and requirements.

~Production research and development to make optimum use of land, infrastructure, and local human resources to enable wholly sustainable local agriculture to supply local markets; and

~Local promotion of local agricultural products that fulfill local market preferences and requirements.

Funding:

Portion of property tax collected on all parcels zoned in the ‘Agriculture District’ in Puna; with a target of approximately \$50,000 or more per year seed money to attract matching funding from UHH and/or others in the community.

Action #5

“County assistance” is needed for start-up organization, basic infrastructure, and possibly land. Farmers market operations must be autonomous and self-supporting. The County’s role is not “overseeing” the markets.

Action #6

This is a positive and innovative idea, undoubtedly involving administrative complexities. However, it deserves serious examination.

Note that two farmers markets (one in Keauhou and one in Hilo) have recently opened as ‘certified’ local grown. ‘Slow Food Hawaii,’ organizer of these two markets, drew of the experience of other communities and sees this certification process as having island-wide potential. Certified Local Grown Farmers Markets should be incorporated into the PCDP.

Action #7

The table in the Plan indicates (with an ‘AG’ in the Working Group Reference column) that this idea came from the PCDP Agriculture Working Group – it did not!

“Tours” can be problematic for a rural community, with buses blocking narrow roads. The impact of tours in rural areas has become an issue in Kona, as a result of tours of coffee farms and other on-farm activities that attract visitors in large numbers. Bill 148-05, drafted by the Planning Department, went before the Council’s Committee on Planning in September 2005. This “Agricultural Tourism” bill was an attempt to address some of the issues raised by the community at-large and by agri-tourism operators, especially in Kona. That bill never left committee.

Private subdivision roads as well as narrow rural public roads are unsuited to tour buses. Large orchid growers on SH11 already hosts tours and do not need ‘assistance.’ Many (probably most) farms in Puna are not able to cater to tours. Constraints include the need for liability insurance, parking space, and toilets for visitors; as well as the practical matter of disruption of farm activities.

The first version of this action included a ‘subsidy’ to tours – this is unacceptable!

There are on-farm and off-farm agri-tourism opportunities other than tours.

For example: farmers’ markets; Bed-and-Breakfast/’Farm Stay’; special events (e.g., Annual ‘Papaya Celebration’); restaurant(s) specializing in local food products; fusion of local agricultural products – food, flowers, crafts – with cultural/arts events in Puna.

Off-farm agri-tourism opportunities tend to benefit a wider segment of farms and impose fewer external costs on the community at large.

Strongly recommended rewording: *Develop an agri-tourism policy, including necessary zoning legislation. Provide county assistance and support for agri-tourism, emphasizing and prioritizing off-farm agri-tourism opportunities such as farmers markets, special events (e.g., Annual ‘Papaya Celebration’); restaurant(s) specializing in local food products; fusion of local agricultural products with cultural/arts events in Puna. As a second priority, agri-tourism policy would promote on-farm opportunities such as roadside stands and Bed-and-Breakfast/’Farm Stay’.*

Action #8

"...product promotion programs."

A better description would be, "*marketing skills training*", to include a wider swath of marketing management activities (e.g., distribution, pricing, product development, market research, target market identification, writing marketing plans, etc) and not only "promotion."

Action #11

The term "organic" is frequently used with little or no explanation of what the term actually means. For example, is the reference to *certified* organic farming? If so, there is a considerable effort to be made in fulfilling the protocol, passing farm inspections, and maintaining the organic standard. Nevertheless, considerable economic and ecologic benefit can be expected from such a successful and sustained effort.

There are various 'certification' standards: organic (USDA and some private certifiers); biodynamic; permaculture; etc. An "organic farming operation", would not necessarily include permaculture or biodynamic, or vice versa. USDA organic certification and private certifications are not always mutually interchangeable. For the purposes of PCDP, it is better to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

This proposed action, for a "community-based organic farming operation" is very ambitious though not impossible. Nevertheless, there does not appear to have been given a great deal of careful or informed consideration involved in its inception.

UHH, HCC and Hawaii Organic Farmers Association (HOFA) should be consulted, sooner rather than later.

Action #12

Solar, should be highlighted -- it by a wide margin the most economic and widely available alternative energy opportunity in Puna.

Oil crops for the production of biodiesel are now being actively researched and developed by UHH, and should be included.

There is no objective basis for including "wood chip bio-mass production." Research by Oak Ridge National Laboratory has consistently shown that transportation costs overwhelm the economics of generating commercial electricity with wood-chip biomass. The unavoidable distance between the furthest point of biomass production and the site of power generation has made the overall process uneconomic. This economic constraint exists for both large scale and small scale systems. Small-scale wood chip biomass operations (such as might be considered for Puna) like large operations, face proportional economic constraints in transporting biomass.

The Goals for Puna Agriculture are established by the Agriculture Working Group:

1. Local livelihood opportunities based on wholly-sustainable agriculture supplying local markets.
2. Rewarding individual agricultural enterprise.
3. Community land stewardship commitment.
4. Enhanced green infrastructure and a clean rural landscape.

The Draft Plan needs to better reflect the Working Group’s goals, especially the emphasis on local markets and local livelihood.

Objectives were expressed as policy outcomes from action directed at these policy targets: *land, infrastructure, entrepreneurs, access*:

1. Statutory designation of *essential agricultural land*; with establishment of and rigid adherence to robust standards and criteria regarding changing zoning of any parcel of *essential agricultural land*.
2. Development of *complementary infrastructure*: communications, farm-to-market roads, post-harvest handling and processing, and value-adding capacity.
3. Development of human capital through training of *skilled* and *capable* agricultural *entrepreneurs*; and
4. *Achievable and equitable access*, for skilled and capable agricultural entrepreneurs, to agricultural land and complementary infrastructure.

In addition to the above policy outcomes, associated beneficial outcomes include agricultural lands serving as open space and providing environmental services.

The following section and table, regarding PCDDP Small Group Meetings, are drawn directly from the Agriculture Working Group Report discussion of references.

"Small Group Meetings

The Agriculture Working Group sorted into themes the small-group-meeting input related to food and agriculture (see attached table).

A theme that emerges over all others is seen in the 'development' ideas. This theme reflects understanding of a connection between land, food, people, and community. Furthermore, a clear preference is expressed for local, wholly sustainable farming; and for more than farming. Farmers markets are identified as important for distribution of local food supply. The General Plan does not address these 'development' issues.

The next theme, 'zoning', is essentially focused on using the zoning code to prevent irreversible loss of land to non-agricultural uses. On this issue, the General Plan, supported by zoning regulations, provides a framework that, 'on paper', is in agreement with this community input. However, as previously indicated, this 'on-paper' framework is not at all well-implemented 'on-the-ground.'

The Puna community, as represented in the small group meetings, attaches high importance to retaining agricultural land for agricultural purposes (including open space, aesthetic, and environmental services). There is an expressed desire to avoid irreversible conversion of land to non-agricultural uses. This high importance is based on assuring that local land and local farmers are able to supply local markets

As used in this report, "*wholly sustainable agriculture*" refers to agriculture that meets the needs of the present without compromise of the economic or ecological capability of future generations to meet their own needs; and "*local markets*" are markets within the Puna District, as well as all of Hawaii Island and the entire Hawaiian archipelago."

	development	zoning	environment	GMO	other
AGRICULTURE – ideas from 130 small group meetings	1				
Certified kitchens (county supported) for legal market vendors	1				
Extended hours for farmers' market to twice weekly & until noon	1				
Encourage sustainable agriculture through tax incentive, farmers markets, etc.	1				
Center promoting local Puna agricultural products	1				
Promote preserve agricultural lands & activities	1	1			
Preserve & enhance truck farming in Volcano	1				
Encourage agricultural based light industry/high tech in Puna	1				
a special Hemp cultivation area in Puna to grow multi purpose alternative crop for oil, clothing, fuel, etc.	1				
integration of UHH into economic & agricultural development of Puna	1				
self-sufficiency in food production	1				
Subsidized food production & commercial kitchens for the community	1				
Large organic farming community as food source	1				
arboretum featuring edibles that is free to public/work trade	1				
Legalize industrial hemp to replace sugar cane	1				
Edible landscaping throughout Puna	1				
Grants for home improvements or Ag. Farming	1				
Support our local farmers products	1				
legally grow cash crops (cannabis) in Puna with permit/stamps-county get tax revenue-18 & under	1				
Diversified agriculture (preserve ag land) sugar cane, soy beans, corn, hemp, noni, awa, haw-pepper	1				
Safe agriculture-more organic be able to be safe living next to agriculture land	1				
Incentives for organic & sustainable agriculture-permaculture	1				
composting toilets, compost piles & worm bins	1				
Incentives to plan trees especially food producing trees	1				
Road Hawaiian agricultural farms	1				
Legalize the sale of raw dairy	1				
Sustainable agriculture & forestry	1				

	development	zoning	environment	GMO	other
AGRICULTURE – ideas from 130 small group meetings					
Subsidize food tree nursery	1				
Government land lease for diversified agriculture w/incentive	1				
More emphasis to promote self-sustaining community without need to import food & timber	1				
Encourage people to grow their own food-support local farmers for Sustainability of the Island	1				
Support Agri-tourism	1				
Maintain & expand agricultural opportunities & efforts within the community, particularly vegetable	1				
Encourage local farms/farm coops, community gardens	1				
Encourage local self-sufficiency, sustainable goods & services	1				
Assistance for small farms (existing farms)	1				
Try to preserve & enhance farming as a profitable land use in Volcano	1				
greater community self sufficiency by importing less goods & creating more local products	1				
Small estate farming & processing	1				
Identify & encourage agricultural areas for food production (organic)	1				
Develop Farm co-ops-Organic, Hydroponics & Fisheries	1				
Encourage sustainable farming practices, seed savings	1				
local sustainable agriculture instead of agriculture for export thru land use laws & any other possible	1				
Encourage & support local food supply	1				
More areas for farmers markets/flea market	1				
Better cafeteria food	1				
All people eating fresh organic produce grown in community gardens	1				
Enforce agricultural use on ag zoned areas	1				
Oppose conversion of Ag land to other designation	1				
Keep agriculture lots in Puna area	1				
Protect ag zone land from re-zoning for non-ag development	1				
Leave Ag. Land for agriculture	1				
Ag/residential (combined) classification mixed w/ag/conservation for zoning of current ag 2 -ag5	1				
Keep Ag. Zoning for Hawaiian Acres	1				

	development	zoning	environment	GMO	other
AGRICULTURE -- ideas from 130 small group meetings					
Majority of Puna lots stay ag.	1				
Ag. Zoning priority for lower Puna	1				
Preserve good agricultural land	1				
Preserve good agricultural land	1				
Address the Environmental impact the papaya industry has in Puna			1		
Retaining Forest w/agriculture that compliments forest environment (avoid adding invasive species)			1		
Phase out all toxic chemicals used in agriculture			1		
Promote non-toxic farming & gardening & designate "no spray" areas			1		
GMO free Puna				1	
GMO free Puna				1	
Maintain rural without GMO				1	
GMO free Puna				1	
Legalize local building materials such as Bamboo					1
	46	12	4	4	1
	TOTAL = 67				