

PREFACE

The Ko‘olau Loa *Sustainable* Communities Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Charter-prescribed requirements for development plans and is to be accorded force and effect as such for all Charter- and ordinance-prescribed purposes. It is one of eight community-oriented plans intended to help guide public policy, investment, and decision-making through the 2020 planning horizon. Each of these plans addresses one of eight geographic planning regions on Oahu, responding to specific conditions and community values of each region.

Of the eight documents, the plans for ‘Ewa and the Primary Urban Center, to which growth and supporting facilities will be directed over the next 20 years, have been entitled “Development Plans.” They will be the policy guide to development decisions and actions needed to support that growth. Plans for the remaining six areas, which are envisioned as relatively stable regions for which public actions will focus on supporting existing populations, have been entitled “*Sustainable* Communities Plans” in order to appropriately indicate their intent.

Ko‘olau Loa is a *Sustainable* Communities Plan. Its vision statement and supporting provisions are oriented toward maintaining and enhancing the region’s ability to sustain its unique character, current population, growing families, lifestyle, and economic livelihood that all contribute to its vitality and future potential.

P.1 THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PLAN PROCESS

This document is the culmination of a planning effort lead by the City and County of Honolulu’s Planning Department and its successor agency, the Department of Planning and Permitting. This effort comprised a process that encouraged and enabled significant involvement from the region’s neighborhood boards, community associations, groups of business leaders, religious and cultural organizations, private landowners, institutions and numerous individuals. In its final form, the plan will have incorporated input received from seven meetings of a 26-member Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and two community-wide meetings held from November 1997 to December 1998.

P.2 THE HONOLULU LAND USE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The City and County of Honolulu guides and directs land use and growth through a three-tier system of objectives, policies, planning principles, guidelines and regulations. The General Plan forms the first tier of this system. First adopted by resolution in 1977, the General Plan is a relatively brief document, consisting primarily of one-sentence statements of objectives and policies. It has been amended several times, but the basic objectives and policies set forth in the 1977 plan remain intact.

The second tier of the system is formed by the Development Plans and *Sustainable Communities Plans*, which are adopted and revised by ordinance. These plans address eight geographic regions of the island, including the Primary Urban Center, East Honolulu, Central Oahu, 'Ewa, Waianae, North Shore, Ko'olau Loa and Ko'olaupoko. Under the current revision program, the Primary Urban Center and 'Ewa retain the title "Development Plan." The other regions are now referred to as "*Sustainable Communities Plans*" to reflect their policy intent.

The third tier of the system is composed of the implementing ordinances, including the Land Use Ordinance (Honolulu's zoning code) and the City's Capital Improvement Program. Mandated by the City Charter, these ordinances constitute the principle means for implementing the City's plans. These ordinances are required to be consistent with the General Plan, the Development Plans, and each other.

In addition to these three Charter-mandated tiers, the Development Plans are supplemented by two planning mechanisms that are not required by the Charter, including the functional planning process and special area planning. Functional planning activities, some of which are mandated by state or federal regulations, provide long-range guidance for the development of public facilities such as the water system, wastewater disposal, and transportation. Special area plans are intended to give specific guidance for neighborhoods, communities or specialized resources.

P.3 AUTHORITY OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PLANS

The authority of the Development and *Sustainable Communities Plans* is derived from the City Charter, which mandates preparation of a General Plan and Development Plans to guide "the development and improvement of the city." Together with the General Plan, the Development Plans provide a policy context for the land use and budgetary actions of the City. This is the authority the originally adopted Development Plans carried, and it remains unchanged in the revised Plan presented in this document.

The Charter provides that "public improvement projects and subdivision and zoning ordinances shall be consistent with the development plan for that area." Although the Development Plans are not themselves regulatory, they "regulate the regulators." They are policy tools and are to be used, in conjunction with the programs and budgets of the City, to accomplish the objectives of the City and as guides for the decisions made in the private sector.

P.4 WHY THE DEVELOPMENT PLANS HAVE BEEN REVISED

In 1992 the City Charter Commission recommended, and the voters of Honolulu adopted, amendments to the City Charter. Chief among its findings, the Charter Commission concluded that the Development Plans were overly detailed and had created processes that duplicated the zoning process. To eliminate this unnecessary duplication, the 1992 Charter amendments changed the definition of Development Plans from "relatively detailed plans" to "conceptual schemes."

The 1992 Charter amendments established that the purpose of the Development Plans is to provide:

- "priorities . . . (for the) coordination of major development activities;" and
- sufficient description of the "desired urban character and the significant natural, scenic and cultural resources . . . to serve as a policy guide for more detailed zoning maps and regulations and public and private sector investment decisions."

In response to the 1992 Charter amendments, the Planning Department launched a thorough review of the Development Plans. The goal of that review was the revision of all eight of the Development Plans to bring them into conformance with the Charter-mandated conceptual orientation. The revised plan presented in this document conforms to that mandate.

P.5 BASIS FOR THE KO'OLAUI LOA SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PLANS

This section traces the origins of the major themes that are the core of this *Sustainable Communities Plan*, and which were developed through direct input by Ko'olau Loa residents.

P.5.1 VALUES, ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY VISION

In an initial meeting in November 1997 focused on the values, issues and vision for Ko'olau Loa, a series of questions were discussed with the CAC, including:

- 1) Values: *What do you like about Ko'olau Loa and your community?
What makes Ko'olau Loa special?
What do you think of when you picture your community?*
- 2) Issues: *What don't you like about your community and your region?
What changes are happening that you like, which don't you like?*
- 3) Vision: *What do you want in the community for the future of your children's children?
What should we keep and what should we change?*

This interactive process helped the City to document the core values of the Ko'olau Loa people, the most important issues, and people's hopes and dreams for the region's future. A brief summary of CAC/resident comments is provided below.

a. Values. Ko'olau Loa is an uncrowded rural area. Each community has a small-scale commercial and economic base and agricultural enterprises which exist in harmony with its towns and villages. The natural beauty and dramatic scenery is a lasting impression for residents and visitors, with "more green than concrete." From its mountain watersheds and streams to its coastal wetlands, nearshore waters, beaches, reefs, and offshore islands, the region is endowed with natural and scenic resources.

This country community is made up of a series of coastal villages and inland areas distinguished from each other by the mountain ridges which extend from the main Ko'olau Loa spine to the area's coastal plain. Area residents value community involvement in the planning process to beautify, preserve, redevelop and revitalize the region. Ko'olau Loa people care about youth and education. They believe they are part of a "healthy community". Ko'olau Loa is a close knit, small community, characterized by an island feeling of the *aloha* spirit and *'ohana*, which values the revitalizing of its culture through *lōkahi* (unity), *ho'opono* (to correct), *laulima* (cooperation), *mālama* (care for), and *aloha 'āina* (love of the land). Its ocean, beach parks and inland/*mauka* open space areas are valued recreational resources.

b. Issues. Residents want to maintain and enhance the country communities with an *ahupua'a* collection of villages. Efforts should be made to beautify, preserve, redevelop and revitalize the area, with community involvement to have an impact on the planning process. People want to protect the natural beauty and rich resources of the mountains, watersheds, streams, wetlands, coastline, reefs, and offshore islands.

The community is looking for ways to create employment in the area, to provide options to the long commutes to jobs in town, and to encourage the creation of low-impact businesses that are compatible with the country setting, such as health industry, eco-tourism and diversified agriculture. It has suggested re-thinking of certain regulations for rural areas to respond to the country setting. Overcrowding in local housing should be relieved with quality affordable housing that fits the region's rural character.

Other issues include the need for improvements to enhance safety on Kamehameha Highway, more dependable sewer, water and drainage systems, improved beach park and inland park facilities, and protection of open space areas with scenic and recreational values. The State of Hawai'i should be encouraged to help Ko'olau Loa with more funding for facilities and services. The communities should be free from crime, gangs and drugs, with the help of community policing. The area should focus on becoming a "healthy community" with strong educational institutions. The Hawaiian culture should be revitalized in Ko'olau Loa through *lōkahi*, *ho'opono*, *laulima*, *mālama*, and *aloha 'āina*.

c. Preliminary Vision. Ko'olau Loa should remain as an uncrowded rural area with low population density, and limited growth in Kahuku, Lā'ie and Hau'ula. Each community will have its own small-scale commercial and economic base. Elements of the vision include the following:

- Agricultural interests should exist in harmony with built areas. This includes expanded diversified agricultural activities, agriculture-related commercial opportunities tied into the region's communities, centralized facilities for processing to share costs, and farmer's markets/aquaculture markets serving both local residents and attracting visitors. Products sold would include shrimp, prawns, fish, fruits, vegetables, cut flowers, ornamental plants, and crafts by local artisans.
- Resource areas will be managed in mountain watersheds, streams and wetlands, as well as the coastline resources, reefs, and offshore islands. Scenic views in Ko'olau Loa will be preserved through land use policies and guidelines which protect the most sensitive areas of natural beauty and dramatic scenery.

- Activities on land will be properly planned to protect water quality in nearshore waters and streams. Future development in Ko'olau Loa will integrate natural buffers, and implement erosion controls and best management practices to protect surface water quality.
- Quality affordable housing will be made available in the communities of Kahuku, Lā'ie and Hau'ula. Housing sites will be planned to fit the rural character. A model for rural area affordable housing will be created, possibly incorporating use of clustered, low-rise development, integrated open space, and single-family and multi-family types. Rural infrastructure standards will be instituted to enable dedication of roads without excessive built features for streets, drainage, etc.
- O'ahu's tourism industry will be promoted and encouraged by retaining and enhancing Ko'olau Loa's image and setting as an uncrowded rural area, as it provides visitors an experience of the "old Hawai'i". Tourism to Ko'olau Loa will be encouraged, centered at the existing Kuilima Resort and Polynesian Cultural Center. Beach parks, *mauka* parks and ecologically compatible outdoor recreational opportunities are other visitor attractions that will be promoted and encouraged.
- Kamehameha Highway will be improved with safety measures such as wider shoulders, turning lanes, improved lighting, drainage and intersection configurations. Each community will have dependable sewer, water and drainage systems. Energy conservation will be expanded through commercial wind and solar power operations.
- Country communities will be maintained as intact units in an *ahupua'a* type of organization, defined by significant landscape features. Design character will be improved in village highway corridors with scenic design areas. Redevelop/expand village centers behind Kamehameha Highway in well-planned, clustered commercial centers, instead of stringing retail outlets along the highway frontage.
- Ko'olau Loa will have safe communities, free from crime, gangs and drugs, with caring neighbors and community policing. Ko'olau Loa will continue and expand its effort to function as a "healthy community" with strong educational institutions that capitalize on the unique resources and setting of the region. Promote the various commercial health industry uses possible, such as elder care/assisted living, health retreats, specialty clinics, etc. Improve public educational facilities in the Windward region to a level comparable with other districts on O'ahu.
- Hawaiian culture will be revitalized in Ko'olau Loa communities through *lōkahi*, *ho'opono*, *laulima*, *mālama*, and *aloha 'āina*. Redeveloped areas and new developments will be planned with sensitivity to the culture and environment. Beach park facilities will be improved for residents of the region and visitors. Ecologically compatible outdoor recreational opportunities, such as hiking, biking, camping, agricultural tours, eco-tours, etc., will be encouraged, provided the activities do not have adverse impacts to existing resources and uses.

P.5.2 SURVEY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

In March 1998, a Briefing Package was issued to the CAC to provide a background and setting for the Ko'olau Loa *Sustainable* Communities area. A second CAC/public meeting held in April focused on a slide presentation which elicited specific comments regarding the values and vision for the region. The presentation addressed the regional land use types and the specific identity of each community in Ko'olau Loa. Photographic slide images were shown to depict the existing character found within seven major land use categories. Examples from within and outside Ko'olau Loa were used for images of Open Space/Scenic Areas, Agricultural Areas, Commercial Centers, Residential Neighborhoods, Resort Areas, Community Facilities and Recreational Areas.

The community development patterns survey considered the future vision and identity for the six settlement communities found in Ko'olau Loa. Representative images of each community were presented in slides showing the communities of Kahuku, Lā'ie, Hau'ula, Punalu'u, Kahana and Ka'a'awa. Participants provided oral and written comments regarding the images presented. The responses form the basis for the City's documentation of a community development pattern in Ko'olau Loa. The following is a summary of these responses:

Open Space Preservation - Preserve the rural character of Ko'olau Loa. The regional setting of uncluttered scenic vistas is vital to the character of Ko'olau Loa. The recommendations and policies of the Coastal View Study should be adopted.

Parks and Other Recreational Facilities - There is a need for parks with playfields, especially for soccer. Other new facilities could include a skateboard park, an indoor facility (gym), pool, ball fields, and biking/walking trails near the ocean. Build facilities to serve the local population, not as an attraction for islandwide park users, and improve existing facilities.

Economic Development: Agriculture - Promote diversified agriculture and aquaculture. Preserve and maximize the use of existing agricultural lands. Develop niche markets for Hawaiian crops (taro, ti leaves), and exotic and tropical fruits. Link to resort/visitor industry. Market items in small roadside stands or larger farmer's markets. Combine other uses with agriculture such as agricultural tours, open produce markets, and Bed and Breakfast operations.

Economic Development: Commercial - Renovate and maximize the use of existing commercial centers. Establish areas in each community for cooperative markets: corn, watermelon, aquaculture in Kahuku, taro and greens in Lā'ie, and arts and crafts in Punalu'u. Commercial centers should have a rural, village-style character. Strip development should be avoided, and commercial centers should be clustered, except for a few country stores and roadside stands.

Economic Development: Resort/Visitor Industry - Encourage creative resort/visitor industry attractions and accommodations such as small-scale Bed and Breakfast operations, smaller inns, retreats, cultural attractions, luaus, weddings, eco-tours, and water-based and outdoor recreational activities. Existing resort/visitor destinations generally should be contained, or allow for controlled expansion or enhancement based on market demand and infrastructure capacity. Acknowledge Turtle Bay Resort and the Polynesian Cultural Center as major attractions that may be sufficient to accommodate long-term visitor industry needs.

Economic Development: Health Industry - Maintaining Kahuku Hospital and its emergency care is viewed as critical before any new facilities can be considered. Other facilities or services requested by community members include a dialysis center, drug treatment and mental health programs, preventative care health and wellness programs, and the expansion of existing clinics into outlying areas. Traditional culturally based healing practices could be integrated, where it is economically viable/feasible and with proper licensing.

Economic Development: Light Industrial - Appropriate types of light industrial uses should be sited in Lā'ie and Kahuku. Light industrial uses could be combined or mixed with compatible commercial uses.

Economic Development: Education/Research/Technology - BYU-Hawai'i could serve as a catalyst for new facilities or enterprises in education, cultural studies, technology, language, business, computer software development, and Hawaiian horticulture. BYU-H could be a training center. A technology park could be developed adjacent to the campus. Emphasize agriculture and aquaculture training/education in local schools. Support the 20-year long-range plan for Kahuku High School.

Housing Communities - The existing older housing stock needs to be rehabilitated and brought up to code and, in some cases, provided with adequate water, sewer, drainage and electricity. New housing is needed for area residents first. It should not be built for people from other parts of the island, but for Ko'olau Loa residents. Housing should be "affordable" and well-designed. Multi-family housing is needed and could be clustered with surrounding open areas for landscaping and play. There is a need for affordable rental housing and apartments, some of which are needed for senior citizens.

Areas identified for new housing were Lā'ie, Kahuku and Hau'ula. There should be a balance between containing the communities' growth and maintaining the open countryside. Housing should be sensitively sited so as to protect *mauka* and *makai* views. There was a split response regarding drawing a "hard line" at the base of the slopes to limit any *mauka* housing development. Responses included: it should be looked at on an individual basis, the "no-pass line" should serve as the boundary, restrict housing to where it can be built, most of the available lands are *mauka*, and it varies by community.

Other General Comments - Rehabilitate, improve and fully utilize the existing assets of Ko'olau Loa (parks, housing, commercial areas, agricultural land, resort areas, etc.). The area needs rural development standards and village-style design. People would like to be employed within Ko'olau Loa and not drive into town. Need to bring/create employment opportunities within the district. Create more affordable housing, multi-family housing and rentals. Maintenance of the area's existing infrastructure is important. We need a delineation between town and country.

P.5.3 INTRODUCTION OF MAJOR THEMES

The third CAC/public meeting was held in June 1998 to discuss the proposed conceptual basis for the Ko'olau Loa *Sustainable Communities Plan*. The concept for Ko'olau Loa emerged from the community's input and participation at the November 1997 and April 1998 meetings, as well as from various planning studies and agency meetings that have been undertaken. These concepts

are expressed below in the overall "Vision" for Ko'olau Loa, the "Major Themes" which organize the living environment in accordance with the vision, and finally the "Implementation Tools" which are mechanisms to achieve the vision. Together, they are intended to provide the foundation for the *Sustainable Communities Plan's* more detailed policies and guidelines, which will direct the future land use and development decisions in Ko'olau Loa.

VISION: *Maintain the Rural Character of the Ko'olau Loa Region*

THEMES:

- *Rural Communities:* Maintain the existing rural development pattern in Ko'olau Loa through in-fill of vacant lands in Ka'a'awa, Punalu'u and Hau'ula, with moderate targeted growth in Lā'ie and Kahuku.
- *Agricultural Areas:* Reserve agricultural lands for diversified agriculture.
- *Preservation and Park Areas:* Provide for access to mountain and shoreline resources for recreational and cultural purposes. Preserve scenic views of ridges, valley slopes, prominent land features and coastal views.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS:

Ko'olau Loa consists of natural resource elements and man-made expressions. The tools we use to protect its rural character include: *ahupua'a* divisions, rural community boundaries, village centers and rural development standards.

Ahupua'a Divisions: As recommended by the CAC, we must recognize and enhance traditional *ahupua'a* divisions and distinctions between the various communities in Ko'olau Loa. Natural breaks between existing communities (open areas and shoreline views) must be retained or expanded to preserve a separation between the natural and built environment within each *ahupua'a*.

The *ahupua'a* concept is a way of defining the region's distinctive communities by establishing organizational boundaries along mountain ridgelines which extend from the Ko'olau spine to the coast, as shown in Figure 2-1. This defines the prototypical rural Hawai'i community, surrounded by agricultural areas, with preservation along *mauka* slopes and oceanfronts. This pattern extends along the entire coastline, with significant natural open space breaks between built areas, enabling the unique identities of individual communities to be expressed.

Rural Community Boundary: To maintain an identifiable rural community edge and to prevent sprawl and encroachment into agricultural lands and open space, a rural community boundary is proposed. This preserves the relationship between the natural landscape of the mountain range and ocean to the man-made landscape of agricultural fields and small rural communities so as to maintain the rural character of the region. This implementation tool recognizes that lateral development along this coast has been the trend, and now seeks to contain and manage growth *mauka/makai*.

The rural community boundary is shown as a generalized line around the settlement area (as shown in the *ahupua'a* concept image). In the *Sustainable Communities Plan* this is not a fixed line but rather an expression of the policy intent dividing agriculture and residential uses. Without this line, lateral expansion along the coast will continue, open space breaks are lost, and Ko'olau Loa's communities will lose their unique identity. The *Sustainable Communities Plan* intends to reinforce this policy by recognizing the *ahupua'a* division and creating a rural community boundary.

Village Centers (*Kauhale*): Establish village center design guidelines to help ensure that new development will be in keeping with the low-rise, low density rural character of the region. (*Kauhale* is the Hawaiian reference for a village center.) Another image (Figure 3-3) was prepared to present a typical reinforcement of what might exist at centers in Ko'olau Loa. The Kahuku center was used for this example, providing an expression of how the village center could be revitalized. The center needs more critical mass and signage to increase visibility. There would be community-based retail activities to reinforce the existing center. The theme of Kahuku is the plantation heritage, and the commercial center is developed in relation to the theme. This would not be a western style front like Hale'iwa town – it's more a plantation quality/camp. The center could consider converting small old houses into shops in a cluster, through which people could wander through, enjoy, shop, eat, and learn about the culture. Consistent with the community's desire to re-energize the commercial centers, we build around what exists and express the specific community theme in design.

Rural Development Standards: Establish rural standards for new housing developments in order to preserve the country lifestyle. Encourage rural housing clusters or neighborhoods which are defined by open space and blend into the surrounding landscape with as little disruption as possible to the scenic quality of the area.

Promote a new ordinance for rural development standards that is appropriate to the country with reduced pavement widths, curbs, gutters and sidewalks. This keeps subdivision costs lower and makes the neighborhood more livable.

The image (Figure 3-2) is a rural neighborhood with ample landscaping, narrow pavement, and no curbs, gutters and sidewalks. The individual lot appears bigger - or it feels bigger. The street side is an informal mix of public and private domain. It's like some of the old Kailua neighborhoods, or the mill camps. It gives a greater sense of community, instead of feeling like a standard urban subdivision.

P.5.4 CONCEPTUAL *SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PLAN* LAND USE MAP

The Conceptual *Sustainable Communities Plan* Land Use Map in Appendix A was also presented and discussed at the June 1998 meeting. Major themes were presented for each *ahupua'a*, with arrows identifying the primary visual orientation along each section. A proposed Rural Community Boundary was shown as a heavy dashed line around each community, with some pockets of agriculture or park/preservation within this boundary. Major themes identified for each *ahupua'a* are summarized as follows:

Kawela. Major themes are resort *makai* of Kamehameha Highway and diversified agriculture *mauka* of it. There would be no change to the Kuilima Resort development area. The only new change would be the military lands *mauka*. Between Kawela/Kahuku, the major themes

are wetlands and aquaculture *makai* and diversified agriculture *mauka*, with a continuation of the existing pattern here. This forms a natural/open space break between the resort and Kahuku town.

Kahuku. The major themes are plantation heritage, health and wellness, and agriculture/aquaculture. There is potential for expanded health-related support facilities adjacent to Kahuku Hospital. Expansion of the Kahuku High School campus is included. Limited expansion of the residential area is allowed, primarily to accept affordable housing that is conditioned in the Unilateral Agreement for the Kuilima Resort zone change approval.

Mālaekahana. Major themes of ranching and aquaculture would continue *mauka* of Kamehameha Highway. On the *makai* side, any increase in density or redevelopment should be avoided. Mālaekahana should remain as an open space break between Kahuku and Lā'ie to avoid lateral growth.

Lā'ie. Major themes for Lā'ie are sustainable community, education and cultural tourism. Aside from Kuilima Resort, this is the employment center of Ko'olau Loa, and a community-based master plan has been developed. The Lā'ie plan includes light industry, commercial, technology enterprise/BYU-H, and residential uses. The rural community boundary includes: a portion of light industry *mauka* of the Cackle Fresh Store site, a new tech park, and expansion of the commercial area, Polynesian Cultural Center, and *mauka* residential area.

The natural break of open space/agriculture which separates Lā'ie and Hau'ula should be maintained to retain the identity of each community. If the current pattern continues, the communities of two district characters will eventually meet. The break between Kahuku and Lā'ie should also be retained. This is a good example of the application of the *ahupua'a* concept and rural community boundary. Limited development that will occur will be *mauka* - not lateral, and it will not diminish the rural character of the region. Yet these changes will accommodate the need for modest growth for jobs and housing at Lā'ie.

Hau'ula, Punalu'u, Kahana and Ka'a'awa. These are stable communities, with no significant projected growth. Some new homes could be built as a result of infill on lands with existing zoning and *Sustainable Communities Plan* designation. There are major themes of managed growth at Hau'ula, diversified agriculture/healing center at Punalu'u, environmental/cultural heritage at Kahana, diversified agriculture and eco-tourism at Ka'a'awa. No new expansion areas are proposed for these communities. In addition, scenic *mauka* and *makai* views should be preserved and enhanced.

CONCLUSION

As a result of comments from the CAC/public meetings and community-at-large, the *Sustainable Communities Plan* for Ko'olau Loa has been formulated around the core value of retaining and enhancing the rural quality of the region. The fundamental concept for facilitating this is the use of an *ahupua'a* concept for organizing and distinguishing individual communities. With implementation of rural community boundaries, current and future needs of the region are accommodated without compromising rural quality. Other implementation tools, such as enhancement of village centers, and creation of rural subdivision standards, are used to further reinforce the rural character.