

1. The Role of the Primary Urban Center in Oahu's Development Pattern

The *General Plan* and eight regional plans guide “the development and improvement of the City” as mandated by the Charter of the City and County of Honolulu. The *General Plan* is a relatively broad document, consisting primarily of one-sentence statements of “objectives” and “policies” that provide guidelines for shaping the future of Oahu. The two development plans and six sustainable communities plans cover eight geographical regions, encompassing the entire Island of Oahu.

The Primary Urban Center (PUC) extends from the core of historic downtown Honolulu to Pearl City in the west and Waialae-Kahala in the east. The undulating shorelines of East Mamala Bay and Pearl Harbor define the PUC's southern edge. To the north, the deep green of the Koolau Range frames the landscape. The busiest parts of the city lie along the coastal plain, while quieter residential communities cluster on ridges and in *mauka* valleys. The volcanic craters of Diamond Head, Punchbowl and Aliamanu rise above the coastal plain.

The Primary Urban Center is a lively, metropolitan city that is home to almost half the island's population and three-quarters of Oahu's jobs. At the turn of the millennium, the PUC is a mature urban center. While there are vacant lots, the PUC has no remaining “greenfields” – i.e., no large reservoir of open, developable land. The planning goal for the PUC is to enhance its livability while accommodating a moderate amount of growth.

As part of the City's overall strategy to “Keep the country, country” and to maintain a compact urban core, the *General Plan* directs most of the projected growth in residential population and jobs to the PUC and Ewa (the Secondary Urban Center), though some growth will also go to urban fringe areas such as Central Oahu. Objective C, Policy 1 of the *General Plan* states: “Facilitate the full development of the Primary Urban Center.” Proportionately, Ewa will have the greatest amount of growth. While the PUC is projected to gain both residents and jobs, the *General Plan* calls for the PUC's share of Oahu's population and employment to decline over the next 20 years.

The *Primary Urban Center Development Plan* (PUC DP) establishes policy to shape the growth and development of the PUC over the next 20 years. Chapter 2 sets forth an overall vision for the year 2025. Chapter 3 presents policies regarding land use and transportation. Chapter 4 sets policies for infrastructure and public facilities. Chapter 5 addresses implementation of the plan.

This update of the *PUC Development Plan* reaffirms the region's role in Oahu's development pattern through the establishment of policies in the following areas:

- Natural, historic, cultural and scenic resources;
- Parks and recreation areas;
- Lower- and higher-density residential neighborhoods;
- Commercial and visitor industry facilities;
- Military installations, transportation centers and industrial areas;
- Design of streets and buildings;
- Neighborhood planning; and
- Transportation networks and systems.

The “Primary Urban Center” planning region is actually a large and diverse mix of neighborhoods, businesses, and industries, as well as health, education and cultural centers. Each neighborhood or district has its own special qualities as well as its own issues and opportunities. Some already have special area plans and/or special zoning districts – e.g., the Chinatown Special District and the Punchbowl Special District. Other neighborhoods are in the process of creating long-range plans. In response to this diversity, the PUC Development Plan establishes broad regional policy and provides a foundation for more specific planning at the neighborhood level.