

Preserving Papaikou For Future Development

General Plan

The purpose of the General Plan is to guide the pattern of future development in the County of Hawaii based on long-term goals for all of its residents.

The Hawaii County General Plan directs future urban growth on the Hamakua Coast to lands that are adjacent to existing towns. This concentrates settlement, makes the best use of existing infrastructure, reduces impacts on regional agriculture and enhances community. These are some of the factors why Papaikou has been designated in the General Plan Land Use Allocation Map as Low Density Residential.

These are all elements of what the planning world calls “Smart Growth”. Hamakua needs more of this, not less.

Other principals of “Smart Growth” include:

- Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
- Create Walkable Neighborhoods
- Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place
- Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities
- Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
- Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration in Development Decisions

Affordable Housing - The Affordability Challenge

Statistics suggest that young families on the Hamakua Coast have largely moved away, moved in with their parents or moved to Puna for inexpensive and under-served housing options. This out-migration has left local schools with declining populations and once thriving plantation towns with vacant storefronts. This is the case for KALANIANAOLE ELEMENTARY & INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL, across the street from the site and in need of students to ensure its viability.

Building modern, affordable housing is no easy task anywhere in Hawaii. For residential developers today, affordability has to include the cost of sewage collection and treatment, new domestic water sources, modern road and intersection improvements, County and State impact fees and much more. The only way to produce affordable pricing is to build a mix of housing products that allows higher-end housing to carry the shared infrastructure expenses and subsidize the affordable product. Producing future affordable units in Hamakua will require careful land selection, the use of existing infrastructure capacity and a mix of product to carry the costs of modern building requirements.

Protecting Agriculture

There are over 70,000 acres of land classified as Prime Ag between the Wailuku River and O'okala. The vast majority of it is not actively farmed and much of it is in small pasture use as a way to avoid property tax liabilities.

Stopping new urban growth in areas where it is best suited is not the best way to preserve agriculture, here or elsewhere. The struggle for food sustainability is important but it is not won or lost on small urban fringe properties that may best serve other community needs. Community and backyard gardens can be part of new community design and should be part of new growth in Papaikou or any other town on the coast.

Papaikou only represents a small fraction of one percent of agricultural land on the Big Island.

Coastal Access

We understand that coastal access is very important and subsistence practices should be respected and planned for by any future development along the coast.

Establishing access points for fishing purposes will be a requirement of any new development on the coastline that respects traditional uses, honors the rights of land ownership, and addresses the responsibility, maintenance and liability issues that complicate this issue statewide.

The following are additional points that have been raised by some members of the Papaikou community:

Development will result in the Destruction of the rural character of Papaikou.

Comment: Any future development could be designed to ensure that a significant footprint remains in agriculture and preservation. Preserving view planes in Papaikou could serve as an official gateway to Hamakua.

Compromised traffic safety – Note- The belt highway serves as an ideal location to situate a future development since it will have minimal impact on existing neighborhood streets. Any future development would require extensive on-site and off-site highway improvements to mitigate and perhaps improve the existing highway safety conditions (i.e.: a traffic light at pinky's store)

Increased property taxes heavily impacting folks with fixed income.

Comment: Future developments will expand the tax base and help to ensure that there are more people to pay for government's essential services. People on fixed

income are eligible to receive home owner exemptions for their property taxes, which limits the amount of taxes paid based the age of the occupant (e.g. homeowners who are 70 and older receive a \$100,000 tax exemption and an additional 20% off their assessed valuation with a cap of \$80,000.).

Destruction of prime agricultural and conservation lands.

Comment: As stated earlier, this represents a small fraction of a percent of prime Ag land available on Hawaii Island. Concentrating urban growth around urban growth centers will actually help to preserve more Ag lands.

Conservation easements can be designated for intensive farming and open space as well.

No need for newly created housing subdivisions.

Comment: There are currently no other similar housing projects that offer affordable, ocean front, energy efficient housing located within a mix of agricultural and commercial uses. We believe that there is a significant demand for this segment of the market. This would be demonstrated in the market study prepared for the final development concept.

Destruction of view planes and scenic areas.

Comment: Topographic characteristics along the Hamakua coast are sloping to the ocean and allow for the placement of structures with minimal ocean view impact from the highway. This is true within the existing Papaikou community as well. Tree plantings along the highway can be selected for their minimal impact on view planes such as the coconut groves which are currently planted along the property's mauka border.

Blockage of shoreline access and negative impact on self-sufficiency.

Comment: The creation of formal and perpetual public access will be a requirement of any future development and will ensure legal rights of access.

Increased sewage treatment and outfall negatively impacting the coastal area.

Comment: A sewage treatment facility is one of the most important aspects of any future development due to the fact that the County requires that developments with 50 or more homes shall be connected to a wastewater facility. Such facilities can cost tens of millions of dollars and can often make or break a potential development. The existing wastewater treatment facility in Papaikou is only operating at a small fraction of its capacity.

These facilities are regulated and monitored by county, state, and federal agencies to ensure that public health standards are being met. If this is not the case, these agencies should be held accountable and immediate steps should be taken to bring this facility into full compliance.

Significant increase in noise and air pollution.

Comment: Measures can be taken to mitigate these concerns, such as deceleration lanes on the highway as well as the installation of noise screening buffers.

Destruction of conservation lands.

Comment: As stated above, conservation lands can be designated for intensive farming and open space recreation.

Negative impact on tourism.

Comment: Mixed use (Ag, commercial and residential) will allow for the creation of a gateway tourist destination where Ag products can be sold and service industries can be created. This will create local jobs and ag related tourism can be centralized and fostered.

Visions that have arisen from the Hamakua Community Development Planning process

1. Town/Village Project Districts- Papaikou is an existing town – village center. Achieving greater densities in these village centers through smart and strategic land-use patterns makes good economic and good ecological sense.

This allows for locations and designs where carbon footprint improvements and environmental gains are highest (e.g., around fixed transit; walkable shopping, employment and amenity areas; district energy sources), and where affordability and livability are also fostered.

2. Eco-Industrial Districts- The existing industrial zones within Papaikou should be developed to attract value-added Ag processing, creating jobs and centers for residents and tourists alike.

3. Gateway Market Place Districts- Hamakua Gateway- Any development at Papaikou could be designed to create a landscaped entrance or gateway to the historic Hamakua district centered on agriculture, residential neighborhoods and a mix of commercial uses.