

6.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

In compliance with the provisions of Title 11, Department of Health, Chapter 200, Environmental Impact Statement Rules, Section 11-200-17(f), the “known feasible” alternatives to the proposed project are limited to those that would allow the objectives of the project to be met, while minimizing potential adverse environmental impacts. As such, the Līhu‘e Civic Center Site Improvements have been evaluated in terms of the following alternatives.

6.1 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Although the Civic Center is the government seat of Kaua‘i, it lacks a sense of place and does not currently embody the spirit of a Civic Center. Although it has several civic and historic buildings onsite, it lacks the physical clarity and aesthetic quality of a Civic Center. There are no clear pedestrian paths connecting the buildings, vegetation is sparse and inconsistent, and nearly half of the site is covered with asphalt.

The “no action” alternative is not viable as the Civic Center will continue to be unsafe and uninviting to pedestrians. Parking lots will remain unorganized and dominate the view of the Civic Center. Multi-modal transportation systems are not supported. Traffic will continue to worsen, creating unsafe situations on the surrounding roadways and down the center of the Civic Center on ‘Eiwa Street. As stated in Section 5.6.1, the only way to mitigate future traffic conditions at either end of ‘Eiwa Street is to signalize the two intersections. The Civic Center would continue to lack a sense of place. The “no-action” alternative does not meet any of the project objectives or the vision for the Civic Center described in the General Plan.

6.2 DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

Several design alternatives were studied throughout the development of the master plan. The main differences between the alternatives involved ‘Eiwa Street and the parking structures. This section reviews these design alternatives and discusses the rationale behind the pros and cons of each. It will also consider how well each alternative meets project objectives.

6.2.1 ‘Eiwa Street Alternatives

There are five basic design alternatives for ‘Eiwa Street: 1) leave as is, the “no action” alternative described above, 2) realign ‘Eiwa Street to intersect directly with ‘Akahi and Wa‘a Streets, 3) narrow ‘Eiwa Street and provide curbs, sidewalks and street trees, 4) close a portion of ‘Eiwa Street, and 5) close ‘Eiwa Street entirely as recommended in the preferred alternative. Since the first and last alternatives are

described in Sections 6.1 and 6.3, respectively, the remaining alternatives will be discussed in this section.

6.2.1.1 Realigned 'Eiwa Street

Realigning 'Eiwa Street would have the benefit of simplifying intersections along Rice and Hardy Streets by creating four-way intersections with Wa'a and 'Akahi, respectively. This alternative was actually recommended in the 1976 Lihu'e Development Plan (see Figure 10). However, in order to have 'Eiwa Street match with Wa'a road, several large monkey pod trees at the County Lawn would have to be removed. It would also negatively impact the County Lawn which is in the Historic District by making it smaller. The realigned road would also create angled spaces on both sides of the road since 'Akahi and Wa'a do not line up with each other. This leads to less efficient design such as triangular shaped parking lots and unusable remnant spaces. This alternative leaves the Civic Center bisected in two halves and continues to allow cut-through vehicle traffic through the center of the Civic Center.

6.2.1.2 Narrowed Traffic Lanes, Sidewalks, and Landscaping on 'Eiwa Street

This alternative would make 'Eiwa Street safer and more pleasant for pedestrians by providing curbs, sidewalks, and street trees within the right-of-way. It would also narrow the traffic lanes which shortens the distance pedestrians must cross across the street. However, it does not improve the future traffic conditions at its intersections with Rice and Hardy Streets and mitigation at those intersections will eventually become necessary. Cut through traffic would still be allowed through the center of the Civic Center although the narrowed travel lanes may encourage drivers to slow down.

6.2.1.3 Partial Closure of 'Eiwa Street

There are three areas in which 'Eiwa Street could be partially closed: 1) on the Hardy Street side, 2) on the Rice Street side, or 3) in the center of the road. While there are a variety of benefits to this alternative, the same issue of the unaligned intersections at either one or two places would exist. Cut through traffic would be eliminated. However, multiple accesses and offset intersections along Rice and Hardy Streets unnecessarily complicate traffic movements. These conditions require drivers to monitor many situations which can lead to accidents or long delays. Safety in these areas would not be improved.

6.2.2 Location of the Parking Structures

Besides the two preferred locations for the parking structures, several onsite and offsite locations were considered.

6.2.2.1 Onsite Locations

Two other locations for the parking structures were considered onsite. The first is the Rice Street parking lot. This alternative was quickly eliminated since the depth of

that parking lot is too narrow to fit two double-loaded parking aisles required for the parking structure. Typically, a minimum of two driving aisles is recommended for parking structures so cars can circulate around the structure. Also, since parking structures are expensive to build, maximizing the number of stalls accessed by each aisle is encouraged. Therefore, two double-loaded parking aisles with a total depth of about 125 feet is the minimum depth needed for a parking structure.

The other alternative location considered was between the State Office Building and the Historic County Building. While there is sufficient space for a parking structure, this alternative was eliminated since it cuts through the Lihu'é Civic Center Historic District.

6.2.2.2 Offsite Locations

Offsite locations for parking structures and parking areas are still viable alternatives. Several of them are described in Section 2.4.2.4 and should be considered during the design process. These alternatives could either supplement or supplant the proposed parking structures within the Civic Center.

6.3 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The preferred alternative is shown in Figure 1 and described in Section 2.0. It is the preferred alternative because it best implements the goals and objectives of the Civic Center, and balances the input from the County and the numerous recommendations gathered from the community. The proposed master plan closes 'Eiwa Street which unifies the project site into a pedestrian-friendly campus-like environment. Pedestrians can walk uninterrupted by traffic through the middle of the Civic Center from the Historic County Building to the Mo'ikeha Building. Traffic and parking areas are organized and simplified. The Civic Center gains 2.4 acres of landscaped public open space and improves its sense of place. The proposed master plan provides flexibility in its design while best meeting the projects objectives.

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