

## 7.0 DETERMINATION, FINDINGS, & REASONS FOR SUPPORTING THE DETERMINATION

To determine whether the proposed action may have a significant impact on the environment, including all phases of the project, expected consequences, both primary and secondary, cumulative as well as short- and long-term effects have been evaluated. Based on the research performed and studies evaluated, the Accepting Agency, the County of Kauaʻi Department of Public Works, is anticipating a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) as detailed in this section.

### 7.1 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

According to the Department of Health Environmental Assessment Rules Section 11-200-12 HAR, an applicant or agency must determine whether an action may have a significant impact on the environment, including all phases of the project, its expected consequences both primary and secondary, its cumulative impact with other projects and its short and long-term effects. In making the determination, the rules establish “significance criteria” to be used as a basis for identifying whether significant environmental impact will occur. According to the Rules, an action shall be determined to have a significant impact on the environment if it meets any one of the following criteria:

- (1) Involves an irrevocable commitment to loss or destruction of any natural or cultural resources;**

The area proposed for site improvements has been extensively modified from its natural state. It is heavily urbanized with existing buildings and parking lots. Even the County Lawn is a modified environment with its manicured lawn and formal rows of royal palms. The proposed improvements primarily consist of landscaping, pedestrian paths, roadway and parking improvements and therefore do not involve an irrevocable commitment to loss or destruction of any natural resources.

The proposed improvements will not impact the historic buildings listed on the National and Hawaiʻi Registers of Historic Places. No changes are recommended for the historic buildings. In fact, most of the existing buildings, historic or not, are not affected by the proposed improvements.

Should any archaeologically significant artifacts, bones or other cultural or archaeological resources be discovered during construction, excavation or grading, work will stop immediately within the area of the find and the State Historic Preservation Division will be contacted for appropriate action and mitigation if necessary.

**(2) Curtails the range of beneficial uses of the environment;**

Most of the improvements involve the enhancement of the existing facilities and will not alter the existing uses. Proposed site improvements include adding pedestrian paths and walkways between existing buildings, reorganizing existing parking areas, expanding open spaces and installing landscaping. Thus, the proposed master plan will enhance, rather than curtail, the beneficial uses of the environment.

**(3) Conflicts with the State's long-term environmental policies or goals and guidelines as expressed in Chapter 344, HRS; and any revisions thereof and amendments thereto, court decisions, or executive orders;**

The proposed site improvements are consistent with the Environmental Policies established in Chapter 344, HRS as follows:

- Encourage management practices which conserve and protect ... open space areas (HRS 344-4 (2) (D)).
- Foster the planting of native as well as other trees, shrubs, and flowering plants compatible to the enhancement of our environment (HRS 344-4 (3) (B)).
- Establish, preserve and maintain scenic, historic, cultural, park and recreation areas, including the shorelines, for public recreational, educational, and scientific uses (HRS 344-4 (4) (A)).
- Promote open space in view of its natural beauty not only as a natural resource but as an ennobling, living environment for its people (HRS 344-4 (4) (C)).

The proposed master plan increases the amount of open space made available for public enjoyment within the civic heart of Līhu'e. Native plants are recommended for the landscaping within the project area. Historic buildings and scenic views are preserved by the proposed improvements. The proposed master plan fits well within the State's environmental policies as established in Chapter 344 HRS.

**(4) Substantially affects the economic or social welfare and cultural practices of the community or State;**

The proposed site improvements are expected to positively affect the social and economic welfare of the Līhu'e community. By creating more comfortable, convenient and safe pedestrian environments, the proposed master plan provides opportunities for the community to gather and enjoy the outdoor areas of the Civic Center. Cultural practices of the community are enhanced by the installation of interpretive signage for historic resources, educating the public about their significance. Construction activities will provide temporary employment benefits while the revitalization of the Civic Center could encourage economic redevelopment in Līhu'e Town.

**(5) Substantially affects public health;**

Impacts to public health may be temporarily affected by air, noise, and water quality impacts during construction. However, these will be short in duration and minimal when weighted against the social benefits associated with the proposed improvements.

**(6) Involves substantial secondary impacts, such as population changes or effects on public facilities;**

The proposed site improvements are not expected to have substantial secondary impacts such as population changes since the use remains the same. The Civic Center itself is a public facility and therefore serves rather than affects public facilities such as schools, fire, and police protection requirements. The proposed improvements will have a positive impact on public facilities in that the Civic Center itself will be revitalized.

**(7) Involves a substantial degradation of environmental quality;**

The project site is located in an existing urbanized area and will not involve a substantial degradation of environmental quality. The area has been extensively modified by development and urbanization over the past 180 years. The Master Plan seeks to improve the environmental quality of the area through the expansion of open space and permeable surfaces and through the use of Native landscaping. Stormwater runoff will be further reduced if rooftop catchment systems are installed for irrigation.

**(8) Is individually limited but cumulatively has considerable effect on the environment, or involves a commitment for larger actions;**

The proposed site improvements will not have a cumulative negative effect on the existing urban environment nor will it involve a commitment for larger actions since all the proposed improvements are focused on revitalizing the Civic Center. The improvements could be undertaken in many ways that fit the priorities and fiscal capabilities of the County at any moment in time. In addition, various alternatives and their estimated costs are presented in the plan in order to provide options to County decision makers. Construction-related impacts would be short term and would occur over several years as the facilities are built.

**(9) Substantially affects a rare, threatened or endangered species or its habitat;**

The Civic Center area has been significantly modified from its natural state by urbanization. No rare, threatened or endangered species are known to exist within the area. However, shielded, downward-facing outdoor lights will be used to minimize the impact to the threatened Newell shearwater should they fly over the

site. Also, the expanded open spaces and increased landscaping could provide habitat for other species in the vicinity.

**(10) Detrimentially affects air or water quality or ambient noise levels;**

During construction, short-term potential impacts on air quality, noise, and water quality may occur. However, these impacts are temporary and will not negatively affect long-term air or water quality or noise levels. The additional landscaping and will help clean the air by absorbing carbon and producing oxygen. Street trees will help trap air pollution particles. Stormwater runoff should be reduced with the increase in pervious surfaces. In addition, the trees and landscaping will help buffer noise from surrounding roads and other uses.

**(11) Affects or is likely to suffer damage by being located in an environmentally sensitive area, such as a flood plain, tsunami zone, beach, erosion-prone area, geologically hazardous land, estuary, freshwater, or coastal waters.**

The Civic Center is not located within an area of flood concern. It is located inland, away from the shoreline and beaches and is outside of the tsunami evacuation area. It is located outside of the 500-year floodplain. The proposed site improvements are not located in erosion-prone areas or geologically hazardous land. There are no estuaries, freshwater or coastal waters within the project site. See Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 for more details.

**(12) Substantially affects scenic vistas and view planes identified in County or State plans or studies;**

There are no scenic views or vistas related to the Civic Center in the County's Heritage Resource Map from the General Plan. However, the Civic Center is located on a plateau with distant views of Ha'upu and Wai'ale'ale. The proposed master plan preserves those views by recommending that parking structures be built below grade and overhead utilities be relocated underground. Additional landscaping including large canopy trees will be installed. However, the landscaping will ultimately beautify the area. No other proposed improvements are anticipated to affect scenic views.

**(13) Requires substantial energy consumption.**

Construction of the proposed project will not require substantial energy consumption relative to other similar projects. Once implemented, the improvements will not require significant amounts of additional energy consumption. The main improvements that will require energy are the lighting and irrigation system. The additional trees and increase in landscaped areas may help to reduce energy consumption of the Civic Center buildings by reducing the heat island effect, common in urbanized areas, reducing the need for cooling. The proposed site

improvements may also reduce the number of motorized trips and gasoline consumption by creating a pedestrian-friendly environment that encourages people to walk rather than drive their cars in and around the Civic Center.

## **7.2 ANTICIPATED DETERMINATION**

On the basis of the above criteria, the discussion of impacts and mitigation measures contained in this document, it is anticipated that the Accepting Agency, the Department of Public Works will find that the Līhu'ē Civic Center Site Improvements Master Plan will not have a significant effect on the environment. Pursuant to Chapter 343, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, the Accepting Agency is anticipated to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the proposed project.

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