

2. Vision for Kaua'i 2020

This Chapter presents the text of the Vision for Kaua'i 2020, as well as the statement of Community Values. Section 2.1 presents the values statement, which provides the philosophical foundation for the Vision. Section 2.2 presents the Vision itself, describing the intended outcome of the General Plan.

2.1 COMMUNITY VALUES

The Community Values were formulated by the Citizens Advisory Committee, using input from 25 outreach meetings with a variety of community, business and public interest groups. The statement was revised based on public review and the initial round of Planning District meetings in June 1998.

- Protection, management, and enjoyment of our open spaces, unique natural beauty, rural lifestyle, outdoor recreation and parks.
- Conservation of fishing grounds and other natural resources, so that individuals and families can support themselves through traditional gathering and agricultural activities.
- Access to and along shorelines, waterways and mountains for all. However, access should be controlled where necessary to conserve natural resources and to maintain the quality of public sites for fishing, hunting, recreation and wilderness activities valued by the local community.
- Recognition that our environment IS our economy, our natural capital, the basis of our economic survival and success.
- Balanced management of our built environment, clustering new development around existing communities and maintaining the four-story height limit.
- Diverse job and business opportunities so that people of all skill levels and capabilities can support themselves and their families.
- Government that supports and encourages business.
- Balanced economic growth development promoting providing good jobs and a strong economy, without sacrificing our environment and or our quality of life.
- Respect and protection for the values and rights of our many cultures, in compliance with our laws and responsibilities as citizens.
- Preservation of our cultural, historical, sacred and archeological sites.
- Appreciation and support for the traditions of the Native Hawaiian host culture and the many other cultural traditions and values that make up the Kaua'i community.

- Appreciation and support for the visitor industry 's role in preserving and honoring all cultures and their values as Kaua‘i’s leading source of income and as a supporter of community festivals, recreation, arts and culture.
- Protection of Kaua‘i’s unique character.
- Recognition of the uniqueness of our communities, supporting people with roots and history in those communities to continue to live and raise their families there.
- Safety for all citizens and visitors.
- Support for our youth, educating them to succeed.
- Broad participation in the public process.

2.2 VISION FOR KAUA‘I 2020

The Vision describes conditions on Kaua‘i in the year 2020 and is written from the standpoint of that point in time. It reflects not only the Community Values but also the issues and opportunities foreseen by community members. The Vision expresses what Kaua‘i should strive for, in the context of realistic conditions as they are understood in 1999. The Vision is presented first in summary, then in a longer narrative.

We envision that in 2020 Kaua‘i will be . . .

- a “garden island” of unsurpassed natural beauty;
- a rural environment of towns separated by broad open spaces;
- a vital modern society formed by the people and traditions of many cultures;
- an island of distinctly individual towns and communities, each with its own unique history and character;
- a community which values its historic places and where people practice and draw strength from ancient languages and cultural traditions;
- a rural place whose population size and economy have been shaped to sustain Kaua‘i’s natural beauty, rural environment and lifestyle;
- a community which cares for its land and waters, leading the way with best management practices in the development of roads and other public facilities and in its land development and environmental regulations;
- an agricultural center, producing a wide range of crops, food, and forest products for local consumption and export;
- a resort destination where visitors are welcomed, supported with adequate facilities, and provided with a variety of cultural and recreational opportunities;

a resort destination whose government and industry leaders respect the island's residents and their need to have a community life where visitors are not always present and who find effective ways to protect residents' customary use of special places for religious and cultural observances, fishing, gathering, hunting and recreation; and

an island whose government supports the labor force and small business owners, firmly holding to essential policies and regulations while eliminating unnecessary red tape.

Zooming in for more detail, we envision that in 2020 Kaua'i will have these characteristics and qualities:

Caring for Land, Waters and Culture

The people of Kaua'i, along with the State and County governments, practice careful stewardship of the island's land and waters. The high mountains, forested watershed areas, the ocean and coral reefs, beaches – these areas are managed as part of the public lands trust. Over 50 percent of Kaua'i's land area lies in the undeveloped highlands of central Kaua'i and the steep cliffs and valleys of the Nā Pali Coast. Major landmarks include the peaks of Wai'ale'ale and Kawaikini; Waimea Canyon, and the Alaka'i Swamp. Nurtured by careful conservation practices, these lands support recovering populations of native forest birds and other native plant and animal species.

Over 40 percent of the land remains in agricultural use, interspersed with agricultural communities. Only four to five percent of Kaua'i's land area is developed with urban uses almost all of it on the coastal plains ringing the island.

Kaua'i's groundwaters, rivers and streams are managed to supply water for human consumption and agricultural irrigation, while maintaining surface flows needed to support native aquatic life, taro cultivation and other riparian uses, and recreation.

Kaua'i's coastal areas are safeguarded to preserve beaches, natural landmarks, Hawaiian fishponds and other Native Hawaiian sites. Coral reefs, surfing sites and fishing grounds are also protected. The beaches and shoreline area belong to the public trust, and the County assures that access from public roads to the shoreline is maintained and improved.

Kaua'i's land and waters are imbued with history and legends fundamental to Native Hawaiian culture. Ancient place-names convey meaning. Landmarks such as Hā'upu and Pu'u Konaenae frame the landscape and guide our travels around the island and on the ocean. The County is vigilant in protecting the visual integrity of important land features. The Kaua'i community and the County government respect and protect the special rights in land and waters that are rooted in the Native Hawaiian culture.

Prior to Western contact, Hawaiians managed the environment and organized their society through a land division system whose basic element was the "ahupua'a." The ahupua'a is an area of land usually extending from the mountains to the sea, including not only the highest inland areas but also the shoreline, fishponds, reefs, and deep sea fishing areas. Like the modern concept of "watershed," the ahupua'a system recognizes the integral connection among land-based, stream-based, and ocean-based resources and activities.

In 2020, management of development, agriculture and other activities on Kaua‘i is based on the related principles of ahupua‘a and watershed. Land is developed and used in ways that conserve natural streams and streamflows; conserve habitat for native species of plants and animals, both on land and in the ocean; and preserve sandy beaches and coral reefs. Best management practices used by government agencies, agricultural companies, other businesses, and individuals are effective in avoiding increases in floodwaters downstream; preventing beach loss; and minimizing pollution of ocean waters. All of Kaua‘i’s waters are “fishable” and “swimmable.”

The Kaua‘i community values its cultural and historic places and traditions. Many Kaua‘i residents observe the ceremonies and practices of their ancestral cultures. Special care is given to preserving and restoring the language, practices, artifacts and sites important to the Native Hawaiian culture. In building public facilities and in planning and regulating land use and development, the County of Kaua‘i assesses project sites’ archaeological and historic resources and acts to conserve those resources and to preserve significant sites and artifacts.

Museums and botanical gardens care for valuable sites, objects and plants and provide unique educational opportunities. They focus on providing programs for Kaua‘i residents and schoolchildren. They also attract tourists, educating them about Kaua‘i. Recognized as important assets for the community and the visitor industry, museums are well-funded and staffed to provide valuable programs.

Native Hawaiian organizations manage and care for cultural sites such as heiaus. They have developed cultural centers near important sites, where dance, language, and arts are practiced and taught. People trained in Hawaiian culture interpret the history and meaning of the sites as a paid service to visitors. The centers also market native crafts and other products.

Through planning and land use regulations, the County of Kaua‘i carefully safeguards its heritage of ecologically- and culturally-important lands, waters and sites. Through planning, the County identifies important resources and sets forth policies for responsible conservation and appropriate development. Zoning and other land use regulations are based on clearly-defined policy and design objectives. The County avoids rigid land use formulas in favor of flexibility in achieving desired ends.

For our most heavily used parks, rivers, and other natural sites, we have a practice of giving the land and waters one day’s rest each week. The rest-day reduces wear on these special places and allows caretakers time to carry out special tasks. Similarly, we observe one day of quiet each week. On the day of quiet, loud machines may not be used, and noise is kept to a minimum.

A Strong, Diverse Economy

Kaua‘i’s economy is strong, stable and diversified. While the visitor industry still provides the largest number of jobs (30-35 percent of total jobs), new businesses in diversified agriculture, aquaculture and high technology provide an increasing proportion of total jobs.

Job opportunities are many and varied, with wages that allow people to comfortably support their families. Unemployment is at an all-time low of 3-5 percent. Kaua‘i has a four-year college with agricultural, business, and high-technology programs to support our youth in finding well-paying, rewarding careers on Kaua‘i.

Key factors in Kaua‘i’s economic success include:

- Preservation of Kaua‘i’s special environment and culture.
- Expanding local markets for local products and reducing imports, resulting in more money remaining in the local economy.
- More jobs with higher wages, reflecting a variety of profitable businesses seeking qualified employees.
- A strong education system which prepares Kaua‘i’s children, teens, college students and adults to work in the diversified economy.

Carrying on community traditions, some Kaua‘i residents provide a substantial portion of their own food and subsistence through hunting, fishing, gathering and cultivating. These activities support the traditions of family and community working together, sharing the bounty of land and ocean.

Agriculture and Aquaculture

Agricultural enterprise helps to keep Kaua‘i green and economically healthy through a variety of crops sold locally and exported. Aquaculture is also a strong and growing industry contributing to local markets and exports. Agriculture and aquaculture businesses employ five to seven percent of our workforce, up from three percent two decades ago.

Kaua‘i is exporting coffee, seed crops, papaya and exotic fruits, and seafood, as well as refined sugar and other value-added food products. In addition, small farmers grow a variety of unique crops such as kava, hemp, herbs, nutraceuticals, exotic flowers, and perfume ingredients. The taro industry is the largest in the state and a major supplier to O‘ahu and to the mainland markets. Many taro products are produced on Kaua‘i, including chips and poi.

Kaua‘i residents support the farmers by buying locally-grown fruits, vegetables, taro and other basic foods. The market for organically-grown crops is increasing. In place of imported meat, Kaua‘i residents enjoy grass-fed beef from cattle raised in Kaua‘i’s pasturelands and prepared in local processing facilities. Kaua‘i now produces 50 percent of its own food, reducing food imports and keeping more money within the community.

Small farmers on Kaua‘i are thriving and profitable. They are known for their high-quality products, including exotic fruits not available elsewhere. They are supported by high local demand and exports to Asia and the Mainland. Many farmers work directly with restaurants and the visitor industry. Local agricultural products are an important attraction for visitors. The visitor industry showcases Kaua‘i agricultural and aquacultural products, and collaborates in the promotion of exports.

Small farmers work together in co-ops, collaborating to control costs and effectively market their products. By developing strong local demand, they minimize their vulnerability to transportation problems and fluctuation in overseas markets.

Kaua‘i’s aquaculture businesses produce shrimp, frog legs, trout, and fish for local consumption and export to Asia and the mainland. Located mostly on the West Side, aquaculture farms continue to be a growing industry. State and county government support

aquaculture with leases of government lands, a supportive and proactive permitting process, and education and training. Prime aquacultural land is identified and preserved.

The college, as well as other organizations, help farmers to acquire business skills essential for success. There are specialized programs for tropical agriculture and aquaculture. Many of Kaua'i's youth are finding careers in these fields.

Kaua'i's larger corporate agriculture and aquaculture businesses are volume exporters for niche markets. Locally-managed, they work in cooperation with small independent producers. Their financial strength provides for new crop research and extensive marketing, resulting in increased demand for unique Kaua'i products. Their ability to weather varying market conditions lends stability to the Kaua'i economy.

The forest products industry is growing hardwoods in a number of locations throughout the island. Kaua'i sawmills cut the rough timber to provide local building materials, as well as to provide fine woods for local craftspeople making and exporting wood bowls, musical instruments, furniture and other products.

State and county government support diversified agriculture by offering tax incentives; maintaining the agricultural irrigation and road infrastructure on State-owned lands; providing State lands for agricultural use at affordable lease rents; and reducing land use requirements for private entities giving long-term leases for agricultural use. They promote cooperatives and partnerships for central processing; provide facilities for disinfestation and shipping; and offer technical and marketing support. Airport facilities have been improved to facilitate the direct shipment of Kaua'i agricultural products to the mainland. State and county government maintain rights to irrigation water and oversee shared usage and maintenance of irrigation systems. They also walk their talk by buying local products.

While 5-10 percent of residences continue to be built in agricultural areas, there is still an ample amount of prime agricultural land for existing use and future cultivation. Through a government-private landowner partnership, an inventory of small agricultural lots, with irrigation water, is maintained for lease to individual farmers and small cooperatives. This public-private partnership is supported by innovative tax incentives and zoning regulations.

Land, facilities and systems of the former sugar plantations are used primarily for farming, forestry, and aquaculture. Viable irrigation systems are maintained and enhanced. They are managed by joint government/private boards and supply Kaua'i's diversified agriculture industry island-wide. Enough water is available to return some to stream systems for kuleana, ahupua'a and recreational use.

High Technology

Kaua'i's high quality of life attracts knowledge-based businesses working in high technology enterprises. These businesses are linked with the college and the high schools, providing internship and training opportunities for Kaua'i students. After attending college, students are able to find well-paying high-technology jobs on Kaua'i. All parts of the island are served with fiber optic cable, allowing high-speed communications.

Many residents have been trained in technological skills. A large number of them have their own businesses. Many work from their homes and service a world-wide market through global computer communications systems.

New high-technology businesses include a computer animation facility for the movie industry, and a solar energy research and development facility, and a bio-engineering company. Kaua'i has also become a center for electronic marketing, and several large national companies operate marketing centers here. Electronic marketing allows people to work from their homes, taking advantage of Kaua'i's excellent communications system. High-technology businesses employ about three percent of our workforce, a slight increase from two percent 20 years ago.

The Pacific Missile Range Facility is a major testing and evaluation facility, supporting civilian as well as military projects. As one of the most important T and E centers in the Pacific, it attracts high-technology businesses to locate on Kaua'i. PMRF remains a federal installation, with substantial federal funding. Scientific and commercial research constitute the largest portion of PMRF activities, yielding an ever-increasing amount of operating revenues. With a proactive program to hire current and returning residents, PMRF and its associated companies provide training programs and works in cooperation with the college and the high schools. Continuing agriculture and aquaculture operations on adjacent State lands provides a buffer and uses surface water that would otherwise inundate the base.

State government supports technology through funding research and development, providing solar tax credits and other tax incentives, making land and infrastructure available with appropriate zoning, and subsidizing the telecommunication infrastructure. They provide assistance in reaching global markets, in encouraging local employment and business ownership, in stimulating the development and use of alternative power generation; and in educating Kaua'i students so that they can fill high-technology jobs.

County government supports technology businesses by zoning appropriately located lands for high-technology uses and by providing County infrastructure.

Business Health and Diversity

Small business is the foundation of Kaua'i's economy, employing the largest percentage of the population. There is a wide variety of business opportunities, including outdoor recreation, with environmental tourism and sports facilities; support facilities for movies and television; healing, health care, wellness and retreat centers both in alternative health and traditional medicine; assisted living facilities for retirees; innovative power generation; light manufacturing and food processing; authentic Hawaiian cultural businesses and cultural education; and home-based cottage businesses networked with electronic marketing.

Some of the former sugar mills are now commercial centers with shops, museums, crafts and artisan areas, and restaurants. They are preserved for their historical significance and promote local products and culture. Other mills support food industry and industrial businesses.

Kaua'i businesses and government work together to combine the key ingredients of a successful island economy. The County supports business by providing needed infrastructure to towns and urban centers; by funding business assistance programs; by minimizing regulations and making them understandable; and by providing limited tax incentives. New

businesses are nurtured to ensure their success. Venture capital is available through local banks and private investors.

State and county governments continually streamline their operations. Business, health and land use regulations have been simplified, without sacrificing important health, safety and welfare objectives.

Opportunities and Prosperity

Kaua‘i’s diverse economy has provided its residents with more challenging work at a variety of skill levels, better paying jobs, and greater economic stability. The cost of living has gone down and the standard of living has gone up for the average resident. People have more time with their families and to provide service to their communities.

Everyone shares in Kaua‘i’s prosperity. An attitude of government and community responsibility translates into effective programs that improve employment, housing and educational opportunities for Kaua‘i’s less advantaged citizens.

Kaua‘i’s public schools benefit from a reinvented Department of Education, which places primary responsibility and authority for facilities, curriculum, and personnel at the level of the school. Teachers, working individually and in teams, have the ability to adopt innovative approaches to learning. Standardized tests are used to provide feedback on student, teacher and school performance. Parents and teachers are involved in school governance. Kamehameha Schools’ programs reach most students and families of Native Hawaiian ancestry and are coordinated with the public school system. This contributes to raising the level of performance throughout the DOE system.

Health and social service programs are integrated with the public school system to provide effective and coordinated assistance to families and ohanas. Education and youth programs are a top priority for Kaua‘i. The State is responsible for funding and operating the schools, and the County government plays a supporting role.

Kaua‘i’s non-profit health and social service agencies operate with stable sources of funding. They are valued and nurtured as community assets. Wilcox Hospital continues to be the leader in health services.

The County, through its Offices of Community Assistance and its Office of Economic Development, works with federal and State programs, business, and the non-profit sector to develop employment opportunities for Kaua‘i’s less advantaged citizens.

The County housing agency, State housing agency, and Department of Hawaiian Home Lands base their efforts on a philosophy of opportunity. While rental housing and rental subsidies remain important, the housing agencies are focused on providing homeownership opportunities for low-wage working families. This means building very low-cost housing. To leverage government funding and expand programs, they work closely with landowners, banks, major businesses, and for-profit and non-profit housing developers. As a result of this concerted effort, the percentage of Kaua‘i residents who are homeowners is 65 percent.

Crime and drug use are declining. In general, there is a greater sense of stability, peace of mind, and hope for the future. The diverse economy fosters the expansion and improvement of our education system, so that our youth can fill the available jobs.

A Vibrant, Stable Visitor Industry

Kaua‘i has a vibrant, stable visitor industry, with high occupancy rates and a strong mix of first-time and return visitors. Kaua‘i is known not only as the Garden Island – a place of outstanding mountain and coastal scenery, but also as a community friendly to visitors and as a place whose residents and businesses nurture the natural environment and cultural traditions.

Visitors can choose among a variety of activities: relaxed recreation and entertainment, in either basic or luxury accommodations; touring by motorized vehicle or by bicycle; adventures in ocean and wilderness exploration; and unique cultural experiences. Kaua‘i is known for its extraordinary variety of activities.

While it is a major visitor destination, Kaua‘i maintains its rural character. Limited in height and size, visitor accommodations and attractions are designed to complement the rural setting. Most hotels and resort facilities are located in the major resort areas of Princeville, Wailua-Kapa‘a, Lihu‘e/Nukoli‘i, and Po‘ipū. Development is managed to feature the natural environment, using tropical Hawaiian architecture and natural materials. Traffic flow is controlled to minimize noise and crowding.

The island is safe, and commercial and public facilities are clean and well-maintained. Kaua‘i’s residents, businesses, and government care for visitors and nurture the visitor industry. They share a common understanding that “The environment is the economy, our natural capital, the basis of our economic survival and success.” Together, they plan for visitor industry development which is compatible with the environment, supports the community’s quality of life, and sustains the qualities which attract visitors.

Visitors occupy various types of accommodations, buy from local businesses, and bring outside money into the Kaua‘i economy. Kaua‘i attracts higher-spending visitors, and their average length of stay is increasing because of the wide variety of cultural and recreational activities. Hotels and other resort accommodations have an average occupancy of 80 percent. Average wages and benefits for industry employees are the highest in the state.

In Kaua‘i’s original visitor destination areas, older buildings have been renovated or replaced, consistent with architectural guidelines and environmental requirements. With the exception of a few larger hotels, resort accommodations built since the year 2000 are smaller, more low-key and intimate. New visitor accommodations on the West Side, designed with community input, consist of inn- and residential-style buildings.

Vacation rentals, inns, and bed and breakfasts provide alternative visitor accommodations. They are licensed and monitored by professional associations, which promote cooperative relationships with neighbors.

People visit Kaua‘i to learn about Hawaiian culture. Ancient Hawaiian sites and cultural practices are presented with respect and authenticity. They are protected, restored and interpreted appropriately. Some areas are off-limits and visited only under approved

circumstances. Cultural sites and centers are managed by Native Hawaiians and preserved by laws and regulations of the State and the County.

The people of Kaua‘i appreciate the many benefits the visitor industry brings to the island. They, in turn, give the gift of aloha, encouraging guests to return and to stay longer. Residents support the industry's role in strengthening the economy, preserving the culture, and protecting the environment. In general, residents agree that a healthy, well-managed visitor industry is a major contributor to the quality of life on Kaua‘i.

A Rural Place

The Island of Kaua‘i is a rural place. “Rural” describes many aspects of Kaua‘i that people value: green, open lands; raising crops for food; small communities where people know each other; the absence of city noise and lights; not feeling crowded.

Kaua‘i’s rural character lies not just in those lands classified as “rural” or “agriculture”. Rather, it lies in how the whole island fits together – the relationship of urban settlements to open lands, how the built-up areas relate to the natural features of the landscape, how people get around. Some important elements of Kaua‘i’s physical environment:

- Small towns and communities that have a distinct character and are compact rather than spread out.
- Wide expanses of open lands – natural areas and lands in active cultivation – provide separation between the towns and communities. The rhythm of communities alternating with open lands is pleasing; and the separation highlights the special identity of each community.
- Buildings are relatively small in scale and low in height, complementing rather than dominating the landscape.
- The relatively small scale of Kaua‘i roads, the presence of natural vegetation along the roads, and the absence of medial concrete barriers.

Kaua‘i is a place of great natural beauty and green open spaces, valued by residents and visitors alike. Rural and urban development are carefully planned and regulated to ensure that Kaua‘i continues to be "The Garden Island."

Urban Areas

Businesses, residences, and other urban uses are concentrated in Kaua‘i’s towns and residential communities, occupying only five percent of the total land area. To minimize highway traffic and avoid urban sprawl, new residential communities are centered around the major towns and job centers of Līhu‘e-Hanamā‘ulu-Puhi and Kōloa-Po‘ipū. In the past two decades, the largest number of new residences have been built in two new developments on either side of Līhu‘e – the master-planned community of Puakea/Puhi to the west and, on to the east and north, an extension of Līhu‘e town, filling in around the airport and Hanamā‘ulu. Another new residential/resort community continues to develop at Kukui‘ula, near Po‘ipū.

Expansion of urban areas, particularly new shopping centers and other retail developments which attract a large amount of vehicular traffic, are controlled to avoid urban sprawl and

strip development along the highway. Town edges are clearly defined, and scenic corridors are maintained along the highways and major roads between towns.

Agricultural Lands

Agricultural areas are characterized by broad expanses of open space – a mixture of pastures and large-scale agricultural plantations, small farms, and clusters of residences. Land use regulations specifically provide for agricultural communities, with design standards for subdivisions to preserve open space and landscape features. Land use regulations and tax incentives are structured to promote legitimate agriculture enterprises and to increase opportunities for small farmers.

Agricultural communities consist of clustered houses surrounded by open land dedicated to conservation or agriculture. Development standards require new residential development to match the character of the rural landscape. Roads and structures are integrated into the topography, designed to be compatible with the landscape rather than to stand out. Large trees and important natural features, such as streams and hills, are preserved. Residences and other structures are sited and designed so that they do not visually dominate the landscape. Building height, size, color and materials are carefully controlled.

Rural Roads and Highways

Our rural roads retain their "country character." They are limited to two lanes, bordered with natural vegetation. Speed limits are kept low for safety reasons. The right-of-way may include grassed drainage swales, but there are no sidewalks, curbs or gutters. One-lane bridges have been preserved in the Hanalei-Hā'ena region, both for their historic value and because they slow traffic. Some historic bridges have also been retained in other communities, where traffic volumes are low. Traffic signage is minimal. Safe bicycle and pedestrian routes are provided.

Highways in agricultural/rural areas are designed to retain a natural appearance, affording uncluttered views of the ocean and the countryside. State and county agencies have adopted "flexible highway design," in order to enhance scenic and historic qualities and to strike a balance between flow of automobile traffic and safe facilities for buses, bicycles and pedestrians.

Highway signage is minimized and is designed to enhance the travel experience. Electrical utility poles and lines are designed to be unobtrusive, and, where feasible, utility lines are placed underground. Trees and other plantings have been added along highways in places where they enhance scenic qualities. Scenic pull-outs, built with natural materials, are placed in key locations.

Where four lanes are required to carry traffic in a particular corridor, the roadway is divided by a landscaped median or separated into two smaller roadways. Long stretches of highway between towns, such as the expanded section of Kaumuali'i Highway between Līhu'e and Maluhia Road and the Kapa'a Bypass, are designed as scenic parkways.

Keeping our roads and highways beautiful is a successful public/private effort. State and county agencies ensure proper roadside maintenance. Highways are bordered by low-care

landscaping that does not require herbicide control. The County and community groups maintain an effective litter control program.

Most of what is seen along Kaua'i's highways is open land in active agricultural or conservation use, such as farming, ranching, wild areas and forest. To avoid the appearance of sprawl, County scenic corridor regulations require new residential developments to observe deep setbacks from the highway. New commercial developments outside of existing towns are required to limit highway frontage, screen parking lots from the highway with landscaping, and provide access from a side road where feasible.

Coastal Development

In new resort developments and subdivisions along the coast, buildings are setback from the shoreline in order to serve the following purposes: to avoid potential tsunami or hurricane damage; to preserve dunes, coastal bluffs, and other important physical features; to allow space for coastal erosion, so that there is no need for a seawall and dry beach area is preserved; and to preserve views. Setbacks are based on historic coastal erosion trends, damages during past hurricane and tsunami events, the nature of the topography, and scenic values.

Visitor industry development along the shoreline provides well-marked, easy-to-use public access and clean shower/rest room facilities, with ample parking. Buildings are set well back from the shoreline, providing an open, landscaped area with a street or walkway facilitating public access up and down the beach. Residents and visitors share the beaches comfortably.

Development along the shoreline is designed and landscaped to moderate visual impact. There is a transition zone which allows increased building height with larger setbacks, up to the four-story height limit.

Residences and other buildings are excluded from undeveloped shoreline lands which are in the State Conservation District. In newly zoned areas, residential and resort development has been required to set back beyond the historic hurricane inundation zone and beyond areas at hazard of chronic beach erosion. We have also landbanked oceanfront whenever possible, to protect views and open space. Residences along the shoreline are required to meet special design standards for height, size, set-back, and color.

Increased setbacks have reduced the need for seawalls or artificial hardening of the shoreline. Along sandy shorelines, shore protection structures are allowed only in special instances as a last resort.

Parks and Access to Mountains and Ocean

We manage the access to public lands and shoreline by enforcing laws, working out solutions with all concerned, and establishing dedication and acquisition programs funded by developers. Landowners are offered incentives such as tax credits and limits on liability for public access. Conveyance taxes are used to acquire public lands, parks, and shoreline areas. We plan ahead for access by purchasing areas deemed necessary, using clear guidelines established through community-based planning.

Visitors share Kaua‘i’s parks, natural areas, and waters in harmony with residents and the environment. The County is implementing a long-range park master plan which is regularly updated and sets priorities for park operations and capital improvements. Each of the major State parks also has an up-to-date master plan, prepared in collaboration with the community. Increased funding to maintain and expand parks comes from State tax revenues as well as user fees paid by out-of-state visitors. Parks are safe. Restrooms are clean. Parking is ample. Facilities are available for local gatherings and public events.

The County Parks Program supports thriving youth and adult sports leagues, as well as providing a diverse range of recreational and social opportunities for people of various ages and interests. The Parks Program also recognizes the need to support the visitor industry and to balance visitor and community needs. An alliance between the County Parks Division and the visitor industry insures that park facilities used by visitors are well-maintained, supported by visitor fee revenues and industry resources.

The updated County Parks Plan is used to prioritize capital improvements and development of new parks and indoor recreation facilities. The Plan is fiscally-constrained, balancing projected capital expenditures and long-term operating costs against projected available financial resources. The Parks Plan’s priorities are adjustable, based on comparison of community benefits and consideration of the degree to which costs are offset by user fee revenues and/or community volunteer work.

Towns and Commercial Development

The County has completed major actions to revitalize and improve central Līhu‘e and Kaua‘i’s historic small towns and communities. Actions include upgraded sewer and water facilities, increased public parking, and pedestrian-friendly improvements to sidewalks and streets. These were coordinated with County zoning, private landowner initiatives, and highway and road development through collaborative planning among County agencies, community and business organizations, and the State Highways Division.

Under the General Plan, new commercial development has been focused on meeting community shopping needs while supporting local small businesses and older business areas. With strategic decisions about highway development and new commercial zoning, the County has avoided strip development and urban sprawl.

Public Facilities and Services

Solid Waste. The County of Kaua‘i leads the state in having the lowest per capita rate of waste generation and the highest rate of reuse and recycling. The County and/or private companies provide reliable collection service and environmentally-sound disposal, with the cost being paid by service users. By setting fee and tax rates in proportion to the amount of waste collected and disposed, the County assures equity in service payments and provides an incentive for reducing waste generation.

Drainage. Kaua‘i streams run freely in their natural courses, carrying nutrients and draining rainwater to the ocean. In coastal areas, wetlands and vegetated stream banks filter runoff before it reaches coastal waters. In some cases, old agricultural ditches and reservoirs are maintained as part of the existing drainage/flood prevention system. Commercial and residential developments have swales and shallow basins to detain stormwaters, in order to

reduce erosion from typical storms. The County limits construction along streams and on steeply-sloped lands. Where there is a serious hazard of flooding, the preferred methods are to enlarge the undeveloped floodplain area and/or relocate structures. The County is a leader in adopting and applying “best management practices” for land use, site development and construction. Because of careful management and regulation, Kaua‘i is free of concrete-lined drainage channels.

Electrical Power. The electrical power companies serving Kaua‘i take advantage of new technologies to offer alternative power sources that do not depend on fossil fuels. Renewable sources of energy such as solar, hydroelectric and biomass, supply a growing portion of energy needs. Fuel cells are commonly used to provide an individual power source for homes and businesses, especially in outlying areas. The power generating companies have been able to reduce power transmission facilities and costs, with savings passed onto the consumers.

Residents of Kaua‘i County are dedicated to the efficient use of energy and to minimizing the deleterious health, safety and aesthetic impacts of power installations. In particular, the county seeks opportunities and economic methods to render facilities (including transmission lines) inconspicuous in order to enhance a “parklike” appearance throughout the island.

Airports and Harbors

Līhu‘e Airport is continually upgraded in order to support the desired level of visitor industry development and the export of agricultural products to the mainland. The commercial harbors at Nāwiliwili and Port Allen are continually upgraded to accommodate the latest cargo shipping systems.

Several cruise lines visit Kaua‘i and serve the travel industry and local residents with cruises of varying lengths and cost. Cruise ships are welcomed in Nāwiliwili and Port Allen Harbors. Some moor offshore of Waimea and ferry visitors ashore via Kikīaola Small Boat Harbor. Passenger reception areas are attractive and well-designed, with easy circulation among visitor welcome stations and ground transportation staging areas.

Our small boat harbors provide for the recreation and commercial needs of Kaua‘i’s fishermen and boat owners. Commercial use of the small boat harbors is managed by the State, assuring that facilities are adequate to accommodate resident fishermen and recreational boating, as well as providing for boat tours and rentals for visitors. The Department of Land and Natural Resources manages and regulates boat tours and use of rental boats on Kaua‘i’s rivers, assuring that commercial boating does not degrade natural or recreational resources and does not crowd out resident use and enjoyment. Limits on boat tour landings in wilderness coastal areas are strictly enforced.

Helicopter tours are another popular way that visitors experience Kaua‘i. Tour companies work closely with the Federal Aviation Administration and residents to minimize negative impact and employ the latest technology to reduce noise. They control their routes to prevent intrusion on communities, sacred sites, and wilderness areas such as Kalalau Valley.

Helicopter tour operations are centralized at Līhu‘e Airport. Helicopters also operate from Princeville Airport and from other private sites, as regulated by the County Planning Commission. Proposed expansions of operations from these sites are negotiated with the

neighboring communities. To avoid spreading uncontrolled noise impacts, no other State-owned heliport facilities have been developed.

Community Participation

Kaua‘i citizens enjoy a rich civic life because of their individual and collective commitment to each other’s well-being and respect for the place. Key values are trust, mutual respect, and a determination to maintain open dialogue. Citizens of all ages, ethnic heritages, and income levels actively participate in community life at many levels and through a variety of activities. Community organizations inform citizens and mobilize them to participate in dialogue. Government agencies and public officials provide fair and equal access to information and assistance for all citizens; give adequate notice of proposed actions; conduct open meetings; and make public records accessible.

The County government reaches out to involve stakeholders and the interested public at the earliest stages of important public decisions, bringing people together to frame the issues, hear different viewpoints, and propose action. Government empowers and encourages citizen participation, especially in the betterment of their home communities.

Plans for individual towns and communities are prepared by broad-based community coalitions collaborating with the Planning Department. The community plan is action-oriented and provides specific guidance for enhancing the community and accommodating change within the islandwide framework of the General Plan.