



Hanalei Pier at Black Pot Beach, North Shore District

## SECTOR: V. SHARED SPACES

**The public realm belongs to all and must be planned and designed in consideration of all users' needs from keiki to kūpuna. Shared spaces, also known as "civic space," are the areas used for everyday community activities such as shopping, recreation, and socializing. Kaua'i's most important shared spaces are its town centers, streets, beaches, and parks.**

Policies and actions for shared spaces are aimed at making town centers, parks, paths, and other common areas more inviting, safe, functional, and vibrant. They should be places where people can relax, interact, and enjoy the things that make Kaua'i special.

Shared spaces also provide a connection to place. When the community is involved in the design and activation of shared spaces, they become points of pride and hallmarks of uniqueness.

From bus stops, public art, park design, and landscaping, there are a multitude of ways that Kaua'i's communities can put their imprint on shared spaces.

This section includes actions for Town Centers, County Parks, Linear Parks and Trails, Passive Parks, and State Parks.

## 1. TOWN CENTERS

**Kaua'i's small towns are the pride of the island, with historic charm and unique character. Town centers are hubs for activity, commerce, and interaction. In spite of the technological progress made in the digital and automobile age, some of our town centers have declined and independent businesses have closed. Presently, we have the opportunity to revitalize these town centers by encouraging a mix of businesses and housing, along with attractive design and safe sidewalks.**

**Objective: To develop town centers as attractive places to work, live, and play.**



### 1.1 Helping Town Centers be Vibrant Shared Spaces

Kaua'i's town centers are the primary milieus for daily civic, business, and commercial activities. Both existing and future town centers are designated "Neighborhood Center" on the Future Land Use Map. In Līhu'e, some town center areas are designated "Urban Center." Residents place a high value on their historic towns and efforts to revitalize business and generate economic activity are ongoing in Waimea, Hanapēpē, Kōloa, Līhu'e, and Kapa'a.

The General Plan supports focused development within towns, also known as infill development. More intense and efficient use of existing urban space will protect open space and rural character. Infill development requires improvements to the infrastructure capacity and physical environment of town centers. This means that in addition to being compact and walkable, town centers must have environmentally and aesthetically attractive features such as street trees, green spaces, convenient and safe pedestrian access, and appealing building facades or public art. At the same time, redevelopment must be balanced with protection of a town's historic character. The preservation of historic plantation architecture creates sense of place,

allowing residents and visitors to feel connected to the town's past.

### 1.2 Supporting Public Art

Public art is art that is placed and integrated into the public realm for everyone to enjoy. It includes a variety of forms such as murals, sculptures, and statues. Art can also be reflected in the design of bus shelters, park facilities, and crosswalks. Public art enhances sense of place and can educate people about Kaua'i's history and heritage. Some examples of public art includes the whale mural by Wyland in Waipouli and the installation at the roundabout at Umi and Hardy Streets. Since 1967, the State has had an "Art in State Buildings" law where one percent of the construction costs of new public buildings is designated for art work.

## A. PERMITTING AND CODE CHANGES

1. Encourage vibrant shared space and destinations in town centers by:
  - a. Implementing design standards to ensure the aesthetic character of buildings blends in and matches the desired scale and character of the town.
  - b. Allowing historic buildings on small lots to redevelop without the imposition of new setbacks or off-street parking requirements.
  - c. Siting new commercial development contiguous to towns, within walking distance of residential development.
  - d. Supporting the creation of and improvement of venues for art and culture.
  - e. Providing comfortable and safe walking environments, including context-sensitive sidewalks along main roads.
  - f. Enhancing shade resources, including trees on streets and in public parks, and improving criteria for species selection and programs for tree maintenance.
  - g. Providing more on-street parking.

## B. PLANS AND STUDIES

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1. Acknowledge the important role of town squares and other civic space in town centers and seek to improve usability of such venues.
2. Establish or update urban design standards through Community Plans.
3. Identify public art opportunities and funding in community and facility planning.

## C. PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

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1. Implement economic revitalization projects in town centers, such as the Līhu‘e Town Core TIGER grant project.
2. Construct centralized parking lots in towns that experience parking management issues.
3. Improve criteria for species selection and maintenance of street trees and landscaping.
4. Identify opportunities for public art installation in projects, such as roundabouts, parks, and streetscape improvements.

## D. PARTNERSHIP NEEDS

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1. Foster civic engagement in town centers through placemaking activities.
2. Conduct community events that bring people together.
3. Activate and revitalize public spaces with artwork, programs, and performances.
4. Use underutilized public space as venues for creative expression.

## 2. PARKS

**Our County park system is an invaluable public asset – essential to both Kaua‘i’s economy and sense of community. Parks should provide abundant opportunities for residents and visitors to experience the island’s renowned beaches and coastlines, and also strengthen community fabric through shared space and amenities for play, exercise, socializing, and enjoying nature.**

**Objective: To provide a variety of quality and accessible parks and recreational facilities.**



### 2.1 Maintaining Our Existing Park System

Kaua‘i’s park system comprises 85 properties varying in size and use, from beach parks to neighborhood centers. Special parks include the 18-hole public Wailua Golf Course, and cultural preserves at Ka Ulu o Paoa, Ka Ulu o Laka, and Kāneiolouma. County parks are managed by the Department of Parks and Recreation, which was created by Charter in 2006. Recently, the Department began systemic facility upgrades, ADA accessibility improvements, and launched a cultural stewardship agreement to restore Kāneiolouma. Since 2000, the park system expanded to include Ke Ala Hele Makalae – the East Kaua‘i Shared Use Path – and Black Pot Park expansion. The location of parks is shown on the Public Facilities and Land Use Maps in Chapter 5.

The range of parks include:

- Regional Parks (serve entire County and have specialized recreation facilities).
- District Parks (serve several neighborhoods with structured recreation activities).
- Beach Parks (support wide range of marine recreation activities).
- Neighborhood Parks (playground and open space for surrounding local community).
- Special Use Areas (golf courses and other unique facilities).
- Passive Parks.
- Linear Parks (addressed in Linear Park subsection).

Given the extensive use of Kaua'i's parks by residents and visitors, park maintenance is a visible and important governmental function. Park management is challenging when dealing with a large number of properties spread around a jurisdiction and with limited financial resources and personnel. A survey conducted as part of the *County's Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2013)* found that improving the maintenance of existing parks ranked as the most important issue. Overall, County parks are heavily used and require more maintenance and upgrades than they currently receive.

While the regional and district parks attract the greatest numbers of users and are easier to maintain from a resource allocation perspective, the County should maintain all of its parks to serve the diversity of users on the island. Budgeting the available resources proves to be an ongoing challenge and illustrates the need to diversify sources of financial and in-kind support. Currently, the Public Access, Open Space, Natural Resources Preservation Fund (commonly known as the the Open Space Fund) receives 0.5 percent of real property taxes and can be used to acquire park land.<sup>35</sup> Other sources of funding, including facility use fees and State and Federal grant programs for land acquisition, are utilized for facility planning, rehabilitation and construction, and trail restoration. Additional support is possible through partnerships with the private sector and community through efforts like Adopt-a-Park programs, recreation partnerships, and volunteer clean-up and improvement programs.

## 2.2 Supporting Communities through a Range of Parks

Most parks provide landscaped refuges with space for keiki to play or for adults to sit and enjoy the outdoors. However, substantial park acreage is underutilized and could support a variety of park types and recreational uses. An active neighborhood park strengthens and connects communities by providing civic space. This type of shared space supports infill development and new growth. Although Kaua'i has many neighborhood and passive parks, most do not provide the full range of facilities desired by residents.

A range of park sizes and types in proximity to neighborhoods supports healthy activities and builds community cohesion. Park land can be used for broad or specialized uses, from community gardens, dog parks, skate parks, and larger multi-use park complexes. The usability of neighborhood parks can be improved by adding playgrounds, walking paths, seating, and pavilions. Facilities for children and the aging population must be considered in park design. Community Plans can identify areas appropriate for park uses in each district. A Civic Space designation with associated standards can be applied to areas intended for parks.

Park creation and improvement is an ideal area to explore public and private partnerships. Creative funding sources and maintenance solutions can be identified with the help of community partners. Community involvement allows parks to be better



Bynum Bridge Playground at Lydgate Park, Lihu'e District

tailored to the unique needs and identities of each neighborhood.

### **2.3 Improving Park Accessibility for Greater Equity**

Park accessibility is important from an equity perspective. Parks and their facilities should be safe and accessible for people of all ages and abilities. ADA requirements ensure a certain level of accessibility is provided, but there are other aspects as well, such as having sufficient parking, or just the simple distance of parks from residential areas with significant numbers of seniors and/or children. Access for seniors is particularly important as the park system must accommodate an aging population. Priority should also be given to communities across the island with a high degree of low-income households, children, and kūpuna.

### **2.4 Facing the Challenges of Beach Park Management**

Beach parks are among Kauaʻi's most treasured scenic and recreational assets. They accommodate a range of uses by visitors and residents alike, both in and out of the water. Sadly, there are those who take advantage of common areas through vandalizing, littering, illegal camping, and crime. Security and maintenance of Kauaʻi's beach parks are ongoing concerns. Many of the facilities, such as restrooms and picnic areas at the most heavily frequented beach parks, are in need of more maintenance, upgrades, and repairs.

The most popular beach parks in South Kauaʻi, East Kauaʻi, and the North Shore are getting more crowded, and public uses occasionally conflict. It is difficult for residents to enjoy traditional recreational beach activities in an overcrowded setting. In order to preserve the local lifestyle, many residents desire for some areas to be reserved primarily for local use and not heavily promoted to visitors. Furthermore, visitor safety in these areas, which often lack water safety officers, is another valid concern.

Access and parking at beach parks can limit the enjoyment of residents and visitors. Many parking areas are too small to accommodate demand. In some cases, development near popular beaches provides little to no public parking, forcing people to find street parking along the highway or in residential areas.

Shoreline erosion and sea level rise are discussed in other areas of the General Plan; however, it is worth noting that Kauaʻi's beach parks are profoundly affected by ongoing beach loss. It is important

to preserve and treat well the areas that we have remaining, and ensure they can be enjoyed by all.

## **A. PERMITTING AND CODE CHANGES**

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1. Provide comprehensive, well-designed, and highly functional parks and recreational facilities that meet public needs, provide attractive places to exercise, accommodate diverse groups and activities, make suitable use of resources, and are compatible with surrounding uses.
2. Provide a range of civic space and functional parks in large residential projects and in new communities.
3. Streamline permitting of public facilities to efficiently coordinate the development and expansion of parks.
4. Allow in-lieu funding expenditure on facility capital improvements through the Park Dedication Ordinance.

## **B. PLANS AND STUDIES**

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1. Plan for safe routes to parks, especially in areas with high concentration of youth.
2. Utilize vacant or underused County-owned land for community purposes.
3. Update and implement the *Kauaʻi Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2013)*.

## **C. PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS**

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1. Support priority projects in the *Kauaʻi Parks & Recreation Master Plan*.
2. Prioritize park improvements and provide safe routes to parks, especially in low-income neighborhoods with high concentrations of youth.
3. Implement a playground development and rehabilitation program to provide high quality play environments, especially in underserved communities.
4. Enhance parks by making them more conducive to physical activity through shared use paths, play equipment for more than one age group, skate parks, disc golf, tennis facilities, and other improvements.

5. Promote social interaction through facility improvements, such as pavilions, shade trees, and seating.
6. Expand indoor recreation spaces at selected parks.
7. Ensure safety and cleanliness at Kaua'i's beach parks. Use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) when planning improvements.
8. Address illegal camping in parks.
9. Provide accessibility features at popular facilities such as beach parks.
10. Develop and install uniform signage, including interpretive signage that promotes a sense of place and educates the public at County beach parks regarding sensitive coastal and marine ecosystems and wildlife.
11. Provide canopy trees and shading at regional parks, such as over unshaded bleachers, to guard against heatstroke and other heat hazards, especially during football, baseball, and soccer seasons.

#### D. PARTNERSHIP NEEDS

1. Expand the County's park stewardship agreement program.
2. Explore alternative sources of funding for priority park improvements, such as crowdfunding and community initiatives or collaborations.
3. Implement programs for beach and dune restoration, especially at beach parks experiencing erosion such as Po'ipū Beach Park.
4. Encourage expansion of programs and legislation supporting septic systems in place of cesspools located within 200 feet of a shoreline, perennial stream, or wetland.

### 3. LINEAR PARKS AND TRAILS

**Pedestrian and biking paths and trails are special public recreational assets. They offer a scenic and safe refuge from traffic and development, allowing residents and visitors to experience Kaua'i's natural environment. Trails are identified in the Heritage Resource Maps in Chapter 5.**

***Objective: To expand and improve access to Kaua'i's shared use paths and trails.***



#### 3.1 Extending Kaua'i's Shared Use Path Network

Shared use paths, often located within a linear park, are separated from roads and provide a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages. Benefits of shared use paths include lessening dependence on fossil fuels, improving community health, increasing public access, and providing economic development opportunities. Since the last General Plan, the County has constructed over eight miles of shared use path along the Kapa'a-Wailua Coast, also known as Ka Ala Hele Makalae. In addition to allowing residents and visitors to enjoy an uninterrupted traverse of the coastline or open space, shared use paths increase travel choice by providing important non-vehicular connections between towns or nodes of activity. Based on the success of Ka Ala Hele Makalae, other paths have been planned for the North Shore, South Kaua'i, and Waimea-Kekaha.

#### 3.2 Increasing Recreational Opportunities through Trails

Kaua'i's people have a long tradition of using trails for subsistence activities in the mountains and along the coast. Today, trails are an invaluable resource providing access not only to recreation, but to experience cultural history, hunting game animals, managing natural resources, and suppressing wildfires. The majority of Kaua'i's public and signed trails are maintained through the State – either State Parks or the Nā Ala Hele Program. The Nā Ala Hele Program also regulates activities, plans future trails,

and conducts maintenance activities. The Kaua'i Nā Ala Hele Advisory Council provides a venue for public input on program implementation.

## A. PERMITTING AND CODE CHANGES

1. Provide safe and convenient access to beaches and inland resources through the park system.
2. Identify and design new shared use paths to provide safe corridors for pedestrians and cyclists.
3. Encourage the development of accessways to the path, when development is adjacent to or near a shared use path.
4. Increase opportunities for public access to mountainous and forested areas in a way that is ecologically sustainable.

## B. PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

1. Complete Ka Ala Hele Makalae from Anahola to Līhu'e.
2. Construct the Waimea-Kekaha Shared Use Path.
3. Construct the North Shore Shared Use Path.
4. Construct a South Kaua'i Shared Use Path.

## C. PARTNERSHIP NEEDS

1. Explore expansion of the Nā Ala Hele trail system, especially in Planning Districts without formal trails.



Ka Ala Hele Makalae in Wailua, East Kaua'i District

## 4. STATE PARKS

**Kaua'i's more than 14,000 acres of State parks include the world-renowned Nā Pali Coast and Waimea Canyon. Several parks are Hawai'i's most visited with over 500,000 recreational visits a year. In addition to being major visitor destinations, State parks improve residents' quality of life by providing access to trails, hunting areas, coastlines, and beaches. At the same time, the lack of upkeep and maintenance of State parks is a persistent issue, reducing the quality of the park experience for resident and visitor alike.**

**Objective: To improve the resident and visitor experience at Kaua'i's State Parks.**



### 4.1 Improving the Experience of Visitors and Residents at State Parks

The State manages nine parks on Kaua'i, including larger parks at Kōke'e and Waimea Canyon, and the world-famous Nā Pali Coast Wilderness Park (see Table 3-2). The County is an important partner in helping to ensure the best possible management and improvement of State Parks for the residents and visitors who use them. The degree of park-related problems is illustrated by a recent visitor survey.<sup>36</sup> Approximately 85 percent of visitors were very satisfied with Kaua'i's beaches, whereas only 61 – 69 percent of them were very satisfied with the island's parks.

### 4.2 Adequately Funding State Park Improvements

In addition to traffic and parking issues, Hāena State Park, Kōke'e State Park, and Waimea Canyon State Park are underfunded relative to the demands placed on them. For example, limited parking at Hāena State Park has led to illegal parking and frustration

36 *Kaua'i Visitor Survey, 2015*

**Table 3-2 State Parks on Kaua'i**

Park Name	Planning District	Master Plan Status
Kōke'e State Park	Waimea-Kekaha	Approved in 2013.
Polihale State Park	Waimea-Kekaha	Master plan not updated.
Waimea Canyon State Park	Waimea-Kekaha	Approved in 2013.
Waimea State Recreational Pier	Waimea-Kekaha	Master plan not updated.
Russian Fort Elizabeth Historical State Park	Waimea-Kekaha	Master plan not updated.
Ahukini State Recreational Pier	Līhu'e/East Kaua'i	Master plan not updated.
Wailua River State Park	East Kaua'i	Master plan not updated.
Hā'ena State Park	North Shore	Draft plan released in 2015.
Nā Pali Coast State Park	North Shore/Waimea-Kekaha	Master plan not updated.

for visitors and residents seeking to visit the many attractions nearby. An unmanaged parking situation has contributed to high rates of theft and vandalism at the parking lot.

State Parks has completed or is in the process of developing master plans for major parks, such as Hā'ena, Waimea, and Kōke'e. In order to implement solutions and improve park facilities per the master plans, funds will have to be provided.

### **A. PARTNERSHIP NEEDS**

1. Implement the Waimea Canyon, Kōke'e, and Hā'ena State Park Master Plans.
2. Complete master planning for Russian Fort, Polihale, and Wailua River State Parks.
3. Support adequate funding and staffing for capital improvements, including maintenance and enforcement for public parks, trails, and recreation areas.
4. Improve and coordinate infrastructure and transportation to reduce visitor impacts.



Hiking trail in Kōke'e State Park, Waimea-Kekaha District