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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

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MEETING NOTES

DATE: April 15, 2005

MEETING DATE: April 9, 2005

LOCATION: County of Kaua'i
Mo'ikeha Building, Room 2
10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

SUBJECT **LĪHU'Ē TOWN CORE URBAN DESIGN PLAN
Citizen Advisory Committee Workshop**

PRESENT: Russell Seacat/Architect
Morton Yamasaki/Landscape Architect
Mike Furukawa/Grove Farm
Palmer Hafdahl/Palm's Hawaii
Pat Griffin/KHPRC, Griffin Noyes Assoc.
Laurie Ho/Garden Island RC&D
Sonia Topenio/Bank of Hawai'i
Jerry Hirata/Private Citizen
Marc Ventura/Marc Ventura, AIA, LLC
Avery Youn/AY Architect
Kurt Bossart/Private Citizen
Myles Hironaka/County of Kaua'i
Barbara Pendragon/County of Kaua'i
Bryan Mamaclay/County of Kaua'i
Frank Brandt/PBR HAWAII
Grant Murakami/PBR HAWAII
Kimi Yuen/PBR HAWAII

DISTRIBUTION: Keith Nitta/County of Kaua'i Planning Department
Steve Kyono/State DOT Highways-Kaua'i
Glenn Yamamoto/State DOT Highways-Kaua'i
Cheryl Lovell-Obatake
Neil Clendeninn
Clyde Kodani/Kodani & Associates

PURPOSE: To review and refine draft plans and proposed guidelines for the various neighborhoods within the Līhu'ē Town Core with the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC).

The main discussion points, comments and questions that followed are summarized below:

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1. CIVIC CENTER/COMMUNITY/PUBLIC FACILITIES NEIGHBORHOOD

Land Use

- Wilcox School – School adds to the mix of people and uses within the town core.
- DOE needs Wilcox School since it seems they are changing their facility planning standards to smaller schools and smaller class sizes.
- If elementary school moves out, perhaps a Technical School of some sort could replace it. An educational facility in town would be a positive element within the civic core.
- Currently, the residences around the school are older families. Many of the school children are driven to school. However, with the way demographics change over time, these older residential areas will become younger again. It is cyclical.
- CAC agreed that existing land uses are fine as they are.

Architecture

- Performance zoning standards are preferable to design guidelines that regulate too strictly. Relationships to neighboring and historic buildings more important.
- There are times when a higher building height is good. If it is done like a campus-type setting.
- High-rises allow for more open space around – allow some flexibility in design. Some of the CAC members felt that buildings should not exceed a height limit of about two-stories, they were especially concerned that they did not want to see another building like the State Office Building constructed in Līhu'e.
- CAC recommends that the State Courthouse and Annex Building (Hart Wood design) be preserved. The design guidelines should be worded so that new and renovated buildings surrounding the historic buildings are designed with respect to historic buildings. Emphasis on performance standards.
- Avery suggested that it would be helpful for those at the County who have to administer the guidelines and check for conformity that the guidelines be as specific as possible. Otherwise, much discretion is left to the Planning Commission.
- It was recommended that the civic core area be included in a special treatment (planning) area with lower buildings. Example: Washington, DC buildings not above a specific height so that landmark buildings such as the Capitol and Washington Monument stand out. There are other places in Līhu'e that are more appropriate for high rises.
- Downtown Honolulu – civic area was provided as an example of how government buildings are sited within a campus-like atmosphere.
- Density, building heights, and the space between buildings are important.

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- Maintain view planes – view of Mt. Wai'ale'ale from the Mayor's office should be preserved.
- There should be height limits, not just a limitation based on the number of floors/stories since that can be exploited. The guidelines should be more setback/density/performance related to allow for more flexibility in design. In other words, context of a new building to its surrounding is the key consideration when designing a new building.

Site Planning

- Consider providing a pedestrian connection to school from Ka'ana Street.
- Halekō Road is on the State's master plan for widening. PBR will recommend changing this proposal. May require CAC support.

2. KŪHIŌ HIGHWAY NEIGHBORHOOD

- Connectivity to west side of Kūhiō and the residential areas there.
- Connectivity to 'Akahi/'Ēlua and the Civic Center neighborhoods. Propose pedestrian shortcuts perpendicular to Kūhiō Highway. Russ Seacat pointed out that the area by the Līhu'e Theater senior housing may be a good location for a shortcut.
- The west side of Kūhiō Highway has space to do streetscape improvements, provide tree wells and wider sidewalks. On the east side of Kūhiō Highway, many of the sidewalks are outside the street right of way. Would require incentives or easements to improve sidewalks/pedestrian environment.
- Community members questioned if it makes sense to improve the pedestrian environment on the west side? Maybe give it up to the car-oriented businesses that exist there and work on the east side where the businesses are more pedestrian-oriented. Maybe provide/require continuous sidewalks at a minimum, improvements to site planning rather than trying to squeeze out wider sidewalks and landscape easements on east side.
- Perhaps put the trees only on the west side since there is space to try to provide shade there. East side does not need much. At least it is shaded by buildings.
- If the Līhu'e Bypass Road is built, this would open up many opportunities to narrow down Kūhiō Highway to two lanes in this area and create a pedestrian friendly streetscape.

3. 'AKAHI (40' R.O.W., CG ZONE)/'ĒLUA (40' R.O.W., R-10 & R-6)/'UMI STREETS (60' R.O.W., R-6) NEIGHBORHOOD

- In this area, land uses are transitioning from residential to commercial use. PBR recommends mixed use, live-work uses be allowed, except for Umi Street. However, they also wanted to get the CAC's input on where the line should be drawn for residential and mixed-use.

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- Design standards should be more residential in character. Try to preserve what is left of the neighborhood homes built in the 1930s and 40s with the garage/parking in back. It is one of the few examples left of a residential area built within a single design era. On 'Ēlua, many of the new buildings have tried to keep to the scale and feel of a residential neighborhood with pitched roofs, etc.
- Concerns of private citizen: 'Umi Street has high traffic to Ahukini, noise is the main problem. No problem getting in or out of driveways. Do not need on-street parking on a residential street.
- 'Umi Street – 60' ROW width was meant to function as a pass thru street and eventually expand to four lanes if needed. Recommended that the road remain residential in character. Landscape strip might help buffer noise.
- 'Umi Street – Do residents want trees?
- 'Umi Street – Do we need curbs and gutters to force people to park on street? What about rolled curbs? Sidewalks should be installed to provide safety for early morning walkers. 'Umi is used quite heavily at around 5:30 AM by pedestrians.
- 'Akahi & 'Ēlua Streets – take parking only on one side and alternate back and forth from side to side based on pedestrian corridors/links.
- CG Zone Areas – Do we need height limits? Currently 50'. Consider views to the west from the civic center.
- The 'Akahi and 'Elua Street area would be ideal for a mixed-use zone. Many houses in the area are over 50 years old. Save building styles of these houses.
- Special Planning Area – create Special Design Guidelines for the area.
- Concerns of private citizen who lives on 'Ēlua Street (left meeting early, but called PBR 4/11/05): drivers are using 'Ēlua to get to Walmart. However, the Walmart driveway is offset from both 'Ēlua and 'Akahi. Traffic backs up trying to turn into Walmart. The driveway should either be realigned or make the turning lanes longer. They are too short right now.

4. RICE STREET/LOWER RICE STREET (JUST EAST OF 'UMI STREET)

- Façade along Rice Street should be pedestrian friendly/oriented.
- Near Avery's office, parking should be behind buildings fronting Rice Street and restriped so that the parking stalls are 90 degrees to the building and double loaded parking lane. The parking lane would be two-way, but only a single travel way rather than the looped road that is there now.
- The problem is that the parking areas are privately owned. Some lots have driveways and their own on-site parking. Any changes will require coordination with all land owners. The only way they will get onboard is to show that the redesign will give them more parking than they have now. There was discussion as to whether a parking structure could fit on this location.
- Parking structure

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- Proposed parking structure sites were identified. A concern was raised as to how they would be constructed, would they be publicly financed?
- Provide a pedestrian connection between Fairview Tract (Kress/Kalena/Old Dairy area) and the area behind bowling alley near Hamura's Saimin.
- Toyota dealership is moving to Village West (near Home Depot).
- The street frontage on Rice Street is currently at 2 stories now. It would be appropriate to have 2-story buildings continue along Rice Street.
- P.O./ BOH parking area
 - Coordinate driveways and circulation
 - Make parking more efficient
 - When Līhu'e Plantation Company (LPCo) was there, there were no separations between parking areas. There was a loop around the big monkey pod tree. Can we go back to this kind of parking arrangement?
- Parking in this area has become territorial.
 - Added curbs, guards to monitor parking
 - Current LPCo building owner offering monthly parking (\$100)
- LPCo Building owner may be working with neighboring owners to access the parking area from Halekō Road. Might be an opportunity to provide pedestrian connection from Kukui Grove area via Halekō to Civic Center.
- Līhu'e Post Office – Mark Gowan (postmaster) considering moving operations to airport to open up space for parking and customer service. There are over 3,000 post office boxes as the Līhu'e PO.
- Railroad Right-of-Way: There is a pedestrian access from Wa'a Road and by the mill.
- Grove Farm Homestead Museum – Railroad- connection to Mill – historic link. Would GF Homestead Museum consider buying the Mill site? It would be a synergistic link to the homestead and railroad they are already presenting. (Bob Schleck)
- Along Rice Street, the commercial areas are service oriented businesses, boutique stores.
- Fairview Tract: add parking lots in vacant lots.
- Options and incentives for redevelopment:
 - Parking credits – pay a fee rather than build stalls (currently, applicants must get a variance if they cannot build adequate off-street parking)
 - Incentives to preserve deco row and false front buildings – reduce parking requirements
- Pedestrian paths to public parking are key if County offers public parking for businesses. There may be ADA requirements for continuous ADA paths to front doors of businesses.

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5. KAUA'I HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW COMMISSION (KHPRC)

- Only those properties listed on the County's Inventory is reviewed. The inventory is outdated but typically if the structure is over 50 years old, it should be on the list.
- For historic properties, there is already a procedure in place. We do not want to complicate the procedure or add another layer of permitting.
- KHPRC is an advisory body only
 - Recommendations go to Planning Department who forwards it to either the Planning Commission (PC) or Council if required. Recommendations do not always become conditions of approval unless PC or Council involved. Cannot count on KHPRC recommendations to have weight of law.
- Try to work out incentives for landowners and developers to find financial benefit to preservation.
- Would preserving building fronts along Rice Street be enough? Some do not like the idea of a building front without relation to the rest of the structure.

6. MILL SITE

- Not much left that is historic. Of the stacks, the historic brick one fell. The tall steel stack is structurally okay but not significant. The four shorter ones are not significant (built in the 1980s). The mill is in a depression so it is not very visible.
- Some like the "jungle" effect of the overgrown greenery right outside the civic center.
- P. Griffin had nominated the mill for national recognition as an endangered site but it did not get selected.
- Brownfield: new landowner can claim federal funding as a Brownfield. Amfac could not since it owned the property
- What about the idea of storing the GF Homestead Museum's trains in the roundhouse on the mill site? It would be a historic connection to the mill, homestead and railroad. The railroad tracks used to cross Halekō Road. There is evidence of the crossing still near the site. Someone should speak with Bob Schleck at the Museum regarding their plans for the area and possible use of the mill site.
- GF Homestead Museum is buying up pieces of the railroad R.O.W. in Pua Loke from Grove Farm. It is not clear how this will connect to the railroad in Līhu'e or how it will cross Nāwiliwili Gulch.
- Another idea mentioned was running a Farmer's Market at the mill site?
- It was suggested that no uses should be implemented at the mill site that will increase traffic on Halekō Road.
- Two recommended solutions:
 - Open space/park

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- Retain as is – reuse for train
- It was suggest the County consider rezoning the parcel with an ST – C District (Special Treatment-Cultural). It would allow the landowner/developer to save the mill stack, buildings. It would also allow museum or some other cultural use.
- From a developer's standpoint, usually I-G is highly desirable zoning. However, realistic potential is limited because of the surrounding uses (residences, civic center, etc.), the fact that the property is in a flood zone, and traffic concerns. I-G may not be as valuable here.
- A comment was also made about the possibility of reuse shell of building for incubator for light industrial uses.

FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:

1. CAC Meeting #5 postponed. New meeting date to be announced.
2. CAC members to help compile a stakeholders list for each of the neighborhoods.