

COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT GENERAL PLAN POLICIES (AUGUST 2016)

Respectfully Submitted by Anne Walton on Sept. 5, 2016

(Without the text of the DGP as a reference point, I don't have a full understanding of the context and application of the policies. As such, my comments are limited to the principles as provided by the Planning Dept. in August 2016)

POINTS OF CONSIDERATION

In General:

- If we were to set some specific targets for much of the policy points below, it would be far more binding and functional in terms of actually realizing some measureable results in regards to managing growth and determining more specifically what kind of growth we would like to see. Otherwise, this is just guidance and there is nothing binding about it.
- If those targets could also be linked to meeting sustainability targets (e.g., the Aloha+ Challenge targets), then we can actually serve 2 purposes – controlling growth *and* moving towards a more sustainable model for the future on an island with limited resources, space, and opportunities correcting mistakes. Our Mayor signed onto this initiative in July 2014.
- Having said the above, I would strongly recommend we set specific short, long and mid-term measureable and accountable milestones for what *has* to be achieved within certain time increments between 2020 and 2035. If these milestones are not achieved, then there needs to be some accountability by the county and a course correction made in a timely manner *before* the next milestones are to be met.

Specific Comments on the Policy Points:

POLICY 1. Manage Growth to Preserve Rural Character

- “... by limiting supply of developable land to an amount adequate for future needs”:

A) We need to consider an island-wide target for percentage of non-developable vs developable land to be maintained as such in perpetuity. There are several possible ways to achieve this goal:

- 1) Inventory all existing developable land including residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural lands and put a cap based on what already exists, allowing no new development or land use designation changes – effectively put a freeze on where we are today.
- 2) Set “sustainability” standards for how these existing land designations can be developed including statute of limitations on any new permit terms issues from the effective date of the GP. Sustainability standards should

include working within limitations of existing infrastructure, providing solution-based considerations for addressing transportation/traffic/congestion, waste and energy management plans consistent with island requirements, and environmental quality standards (e.g., native plant use in landscaping).

3) Ensure that there is no net loss of green or open space (this will require a legal definition to ensure we are all talking about the same thing).

B) We need to be prescriptive about a more stringent due process for preventing or controlling changes in land use designations (e.g. Hokua Place).

C) We need to put statutes of limitations on land development permits if not exercised within a given time frame (10 years?).

D) We need to have the ability to change the terms and conditions of a land development permit if not exercised within a lesser time frame (such as 5 years) based on extenuating circumstances (i.e., unanticipated rate of coastal erosion).

- “... ensuring new development occurs inside growth boundaries and is compact and walkable”:

A) Need to be more descriptive and set targets for high density development areas (e.g., to include mixed uses, easy access to public transportation, incorporating green areas, incorporating common use areas, etc.).

B) We also need to set targets (% of new developments) for how many of these “high density models” should be part of our future planning.

1. This percentage should reflect the current island birth rate.
2. This is a good place to make a nexus between high density areas that also include: housing for working families (policy #2), healthy and complete neighborhoods (policy #4), reduce the cost of living (policy #6), etc., etc.

POLICY 2. Providing Housing for Working Families

A) see comments above

- “... eliminating onerous regulatory barriers”:
This is a slippery slope and if regulatory standards are set for the protection of civil society, then they should apply to all development projects regardless of what kind of housing. “Eliminating regulatory barriers” means cutting corners, and/or making exceptions. This is not acceptable. If there is a problem with the “regulatory barriers”, then fix that, don’t make exceptions to the rules.

- “... forming active public-private partnerships”: The best way to do this is through high density, multiple-use development which will more attractive to investors - so it might be good to be more explicit about the “how”.

3. Recognize the Identity of Kauai’s Individual Towns and Districts

- no comments

4. Recognize the Identity of Kauai’s Individual Towns and Districts

- “safe roads”: Needs a definition and examples such as – “maintained for safe and comfortable transit for motorized vehicles, as well as ample space for alternative forms of transportation such as bicycles to co-exist with vehicles on the road bed, and safe walking corridors for pedestrians”.
- “functional parks”: 1) Also needs a definition. 2) We should set targets for “urban green space” as a driver for converting derelict or underutilized space into parks; for identifying appropriate locations for new parks as “rest areas”; and, encouraging the county to invest in parks by purchasing undeveloped areas (e.g., the space next to the 2 new hotels going up next the Marriott Courtyard is a perfect example of what should have been set aside as a park).
- “... access to jobs, commerce, transit and public services”: Again, this eludes to the need for high density, multiple-use housing development areas – so why not set targets in order to be explicit about this need (see policy #2 comments).

5. Make Strategic Infrastructure Investments

- The way the sub-text is written only speaks to future growth and does not address current deficits in meeting our basic infrastructure needs. As such, we should be addressing current needs *before* we start addressing future development needs (with the intent of considering both present and future needs for the purpose of creating some efficiencies). And, at the same time, it should be explicitly stated that no new development can take place (or new permits issued) until we first meet our current infrastructure needs.

6. Reduce the Cost of Living

- “Reduce the cost of housing and transportation . . .”: huh? This whole policy piece makes no sense to me and seems a bit misguided. Take a look around, are folks willing to give up SUVs and pick-up trucks to ride the bus and by doing so reduce the cost of transportation to their pocket and consequently reduce the cost of living? No. I think this policy would serve the people of Kauai better by identifying the need to “diversify income generation opportunities”. That would make a more significant contribution to improving families’ standards of living and ability to afford living on Kauai. I don’t know about national statistics (for either neighbor islands or mainland), but don’t think 50% of income going to housing and transportation seems all that unusual – and I am sure it must be higher on Oahu and/or the west coast. (Note: also see comments for policy #14)

7. Build A Balanced Transportation System

8. Address Wailua-Kapa'a Traffic

- These 2 should be combined and eliminate the heading for #8. Maybe no one has been paying attention, but over the last bunch of years while we have been complaining about Kapaa, equally frustrating congestion is occurring in every direction from Lihue. There needs to be an island-wide transportation plan.
- Although this does mention "multi-modal transportation options", bottom line is we have to either create incentives or disincentives for people to stop the dependency on their cars. You can keep adding lanes and by-passes ad nauseum, however, in time there will be more cars filling those new spaces and we will be back where we started. Time for specific controls on this one.

9. Protect Kauai Scenic Beauty

- Let's set some specific targets for percentage of open space vs developed space.
- In regards to "views between towns", this will require specific standards about visual distractions such billboards – so let's be explicit about what we mean.

10. Uphold Kauai as a Unique Visitor Destination

- This fails to identify the need to preserve the very thing that brings visitors to Kauai – the natural environment. This should include specific language about managing both visitor and resident impacts on the natural resources of Kauai and how were going to do that – perhaps establishing both regulatory and voluntary guidelines on best management practices. This should apply to tourism providers and hotels as well in terms of managing impacts. We loose our natural environment and we loose our largest employer. We also loose our quality of life.

11. Help Business Thrive

- This might be better stated as "Help (Small Scale) Local Businesses Thrive".
- I would be careful about compromises made by "streamlined approval processes". This seems a little contradictory and maybe the "approval process" needs to be examined before making exceptions to it.

12. Help Agricultural Lands Be Productive

- This policy looks good, however, also needs to point to the need to keep a percentage of our land zoned as truly agricultural to ensure there is ample land and enough affordable ag land to make farming profitable.
- Aloha+ Challenge has specific target for sustainable food supply that should be adopted (20-30% grown and consumed locally).

13. Protect Our Watersheds

- We have a state sanctioned ahupua'a management framework, and a traditional knowledge base for how to manage watersheds. There needs to be a strong reference to this as a foundational piece for how we protect our watersheds.

- The Aloha+ Challenge has a target for watershed protection should be adopted.

14. Complete Kauai's Shift to Clean Energy

- This looks good, but might also suggest how this could be linked to income (job) diversification through the development of a green workforce.
- The 80% by 2050 should at least match or exceed the target established by the Aloha+ Challenge (70% by 2030).

15. Prepare for Climate Change

- This whole description sounds so reactive rather than proactive. Why don't we talk about: 1) building more resilient communities, 2) building disaster preparedness plans, 3) mitigating the impacts we are already seeing from climate change, 4) incorporating basic climate change precautionary principles into our development plans and permit requirements, infrastructure planning, sustainable food plan, etc.
- Basically, this should be a cross cutting component of most all the other 19 policies.

16. Respect Native Hawaiian Rights and Wahi Pana

- This is missing a critical piece about making use of traditional Hawaiian knowledge and practices as the underpinning and guidance for decision making about all future policy directions, management and human interactions with both the land and sea. We should make use of the models that have been formally (codified) by the state such as the ahupua'a model, konahiki model (e.g., Haena community based fisheries rules), as well as the less formal models based on traditional knowledge.

17. Protect Access to Kauai's Treasured Places

- In agreement with this but also think it is important to mention responsible use of these places – meaning engagement with the land and sea that takes into consideration the need to leave it a better place than it is now for future generations. (I really think that access should be stated as a “privilege” rather than a “right” but this can get sticky).

18. Nurture Our Keiki

- This will require more than “valuing youth”. We, as a whole Kauai community, have a responsibility to guide, nurture, mentor and direct the next generation to a future where they first of all have choices, and secondly are guided towards making wise and informed choices about their own future. This piece is huge and cannot be underestimated in importance. It also depends on us making sound decisions right now, starting with this DGP.

19. Honor Our Kupuna

- In agreement but also think we need to make a statement about valuing the Kupuna knowledge, their connection with the past, and their role as stewards of the traditional Hawaiian culture. We need to keep these qualities of the Kupuna alive and honor it by incorporating it into all the place-based decisions we make about Kauai.
- Need to make a statement about the value of intergenerational sharing of knowledge and guidance between the Kupuna and Keiki (connect this policy piece to policy #18).

20. Communicate with Aloha

- I would add to this that we need to live our lives with Aloha – walk the talk and be living examples to others and let our actions reflect the same Aloha that we expect from the guiding principles of this plan – the responsibility belongs to everyone.