

Thriving, Diverse, and Regenerative Economy – Introduction

Public Comment Summary

County of Hawai'i Draft General Plan 2045

The public comment period for the Draft General Plan 2045 was held from September 18, 2023 to April 1, 2024. This comment summary contains the key themes derived from community feedback on the Thriving, Diverse, and Regenerative Economy- Introduction section of the draft plan.

1. Agriculture and Sustainable Management

Several comments touch upon the need for more sustainable agriculture, support for small-scale and independent farmers, agricultural tourism, and the impact of zoning and taxation on farming activities. There is a call for more environmentally sustainable management practices, with suggestions for supporting backyard farming.

2. Economic Diversity and Development

Comments highlight the necessity for economic diversification, particularly through technology, education, and emerging industries. Commenters express the significant challenges posed by an over-reliance on tourism, the brain drain phenomenon, and limited resources. Comments refer to the challenges and opportunities associated with tourism, such as its impact on local communities and the need for diversification to reduce dependence on this sector.

3. Housing and Land Use

Several remarks address concerns regarding housing availability and land use, especially relating to agricultural zoning, vacation rentals, and the necessity for better planning and design in housing developments.

4. Education and Workforce Development

Comments underscore the importance of education and workforce development in retaining and attracting talent, coordinating with local educational institutions, and boosting technical skills.

Comment	Page Number (in the online Konveio platform)
The UN's plans to virtually eliminate all livestock and materials that emit CO2 into the atmosphere is indicative of the control that the UN is striving to have over people's lives. Eliminating livestock and ranching would devastate Hawaii's economy. Read more here: https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/commentary/the-united-nations-agenda-2030-and-the-sustainable-development-goals The County of Hawaii is a poor rural area. Spending taxpayer funds and other valuable resources to eliminate man-made atmospheric CO2 is a misuse of these resources. Certainly, there are more worthy projects that would benefit the people that live in Hawaii. Cleaning up the beaches and ocean, planting more trees, improving schools, roads and meeting other infrastructure needs would be a much better use of these resources. Solar and wind energy sources are inefficient, unreliable and costly. They require redundant energy generation systems and fossil fuel backup supplies to meet Hawaii's energy needs when the sun is not shining and when the wind is too weak or too strong for wind turbines to operate. In addition, solar farms are a blight on the landscape that require large tracts of land that could be better utilized for the development of more housing, agriculture, farming, ranching, industry and other economic drivers that would provide jobs and higher standards of living. Communities that have adopted solar and wind energy sources have seen their electricity costs increase significantly. As shown in the chart below, Hawaii's cost of electricity is already 3 times higher than the U.S. average. The cost of covering for the intermittency of the wind and solar power generation is hidden, giving the false impression that the cost of intermittency is not something caused by the addition of wind and solar facilities. ***attached images in EPIC***	162
Agriculture and Food Systems p.164 Support should be Increased for backyard farmers, including gardening advice.	165
Promote innovation to solve island challenges, including opportunities for waste-to-energy and agriculture advancements. p. 164 See comments under Climate Mitigation, p. 15.	165
Support the expansion into industries such as astronomy, renewable energy, diversified agriculture, and aquaculture. p. 164 Astronomy: the protest against the Thirty Meter Telescope, involving thousands of people over many months, demonstrated clearly that building for astronomy has gone too far. Aquaculture: land-based aquaculture has many benefits, but ocean-based aquaculture has many impacts. Concentrated waste damages ecosystems. Densely packed fish spread disease among themselves and to wild populations. Operators resort to antibiotics, which can increase antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Fish bred for farms, but not for survival in the open ocean, inevitably escape and weaken the genetics of wild fish. Runaway cages damage ecosystems.	165
There is a need to increase resident satisfaction with the visitor industry p. 163 The visitor industry is not a reliable economic driver for the island, and the impacts are severe- construction; traffic; need for additional police, fire, and waste disposal services; elevated land and housing prices; crowding out of local culture.	164
Data centers may be proposed, but they can use tremendous amounts of electricity and water for cooling, and can generate stressful levels of noise 24 hours a day, every day.	164
Tourism drives the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services industries and much of the retail trade, representing a large portion of employment. p. 162 Measures should be taken to reduce dependence on tourism and focus on producing food and other necessities locally.	163

Poverty Persists p. 161 Information on the number of wealthy people on the island should be included.	162
Agriculture and Food Systems p.164 Support should be Increased for backyard farmers, including gardening advice.	164
Data centers are a tremendous drain on electricity and need water for cooling. They generate stressful levels of noise 24 hours a day. Data centers and nuclear power plants should not be considered.	164
Tourism drives the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services industries and much of the retail trade, representing a large portion of employment. p. 162 Measures should be taken to reduce dependence on tourism and focus on producing food and other necessities locally.	163
Information on the number of wealthy people on the island to include total land ownership should be included.	162
Under Economic Challenges of the Visitor Industry Add: "better planning/design and management,"	164
This concept might be good, however, not to remove or limit ANY OF THE PROPERTY RIGHTS of the owners of real estate.	169
As long as they are not stakeholders modeled after those of the Hawaii Community Development Authority. The ACT 190 SB2398 has been used on Maui and the current one under consideration the Lele Community Development District is the most scary and communistic taking of land, allowing management by non-owner stakeholders with most ALL OF THE CONTROL by the governor! We will fight any attempt to initiate what is proposed in Lele or those in SB2398 Pulehunui, or Kalaeloa or Heeia community development districts! How we got here is beyond me. Our legislators are asleep or over-worked.	169
Happy to see this in here - I think that there is significant potential of agriculture to create more opportunities for small independent farmers to ensure they have the means to supplement their income with farm tours, value added products and agri/eco-tourism.	165
PTA/military: federal and state jurisdiction. For growth sectors, the GP pulls from the CEDS Plan (e.g astronomy)	166
Consider adding policy re: grant writing capacity and management in integrated system elements. Grants can help supplement County critical needs (Infrastructure) -improve and maintain capacity- staffing retention, needs to address in Economic section-Should the GP mention Pohakuloa training area? the GP talks about emerging fields but does not discuss military	166
Barriers to growth/health of small businesses include shortage of storage space; non-ceded lands; state issues; healthcare costs. -county can advocate for non-county issues mom & pops shops need greater support due to multitude of factors that are financially straining -R&D partnerships with small business community-how to attract industry and what is the marketing strategy for it? Making Hilo R&D center of pacific-Bring industry from the outside and elevate/grow locally- we lack critical mass to develop local grown industry	166
Identify UH and other partners to support education, workforce development, etc.	166
A very valid point, but without the arrangement you mention, the rancher may not ever have an opportunity to raise those heads of cattle. Could a rancher lease the same land at a true market rate (based on actual value) and raise cattle profitably? I suspect not. As we all know, land is so expensive that unless it was inherited or purchased long ago, it is very difficult to profitably farm it. Altruism is the only way land will be purchased at today's prices and be productively farmed. Tax incentives are needed. Maybe a better solution would be to eliminate property taxes on new Agricultural ventures that actually generate	165

income and/or provide some sort of housing benefit to their workers and/or help solve the food security problem. That would help a real farmer trying to achieve profitability and certainly would be consistent with the General Plan.	
This is supported by practicing a philosophy of resource management rather than waste management.	168
the octopus business closed and the shrimp farm is not far behind. Is anyone in ED monitoring what's going on and providing access to support as needed to maintain existing business opportunities?	169
is it the quality of existing job centers or access?	168
What about coordinating these programs with HS and college campuses on-island as well as trade unions?	166
why not just "to strengthen skillsets" instead of having the leadership and entrepreneurial text in there? Those are part of whole not its entirety. Technical skills are desperately needed.	166
Much needed - create more and clear opportunities for agricultural tourism for all sizes of farms that are actively and productively involved in agricultural efforts	165
Consider adding that there is an increasing demand for agricultural and eco-tourism without clear guidelines on how farmers can participate in this. Agricultural tourism is both supported in the GP and CDPs but there need to be clear guidelines, requirements, and programs that encourage and support participation.	164
Consider adding that it is becoming increasingly difficult for farmers to support themselves on agricultural activities alone.	164
better planning/design and management	164
Add something along the lines of this: "and for post-trauma and post-treatment long-term body/mind healing as an aspect of the healthcare industry ideally suited to Hawaii's cultures, open space, and climate."	168
Add: "Meaningful islandwide discussion of the benefits, burdens, and enforcement feasibilities for the residential-agricultural land based "vacation rental" industry should be had, and a vacation rental/TAR management plan should be adopted."	165
Add: "The burgeoning "vacation rental" or TAR industry rooting into agricultural and residential neighborhoods island-wide is deeply controversial in many locales, and despite substantial economic benefits realized by some operators, residents are divided on allowing or supporting this use in their neighborhoods."	164
This isn't necessarily an ECONOMIC challenge, as opposed to a TRANSPORTATION challenge. Providing lots of housing in or at the edges of resort areas, for example, means a full range of public and private services, including elementary and secondary schools, healthcare, police/fire, parks, and on and on, now have to have facilities there. This is completely contrary to the key principles of this GP! This whole thing of handwringing because workers commute to resort area intentionally far from urban area needs to be re-thought. We don't have enough money/resources/people to service more disparate housing villages than we already have. Some short-term transitional rental units for revolving new hires, fine. But beyond that, bad planning.	164
work on becoming an exporter of technology and services.	168
recruit tech businesses into our downtowns to help diversify it and help develop the work/live/play community	167
start to utilize technology to pivot our ag industry so that we can do more with less resources, this includes human, land, water, fertilizer, etc. this will also help with our food security and safety.	165

the island has a small high quality chocolate industry, consider building east Hawaii into the "Napa Valley" of chocolate	165
there have been many of these over the years and it does not seem to be too successful. We may want to consider another approach	165
look at educational tourism for our island both family oriented and scientific/educational and other types of conferences.	165
Hilo doesn't have enough hotel rooms and airlift	164
due to the brain drain, businesses that would tend to provide higher wages either cannot exist, grow or in some cases maintain themselves. if we can make an effort to attract these higher paying industries to our community with the idea that it will eventually provide opportunities for our population and for people that have left and want to return. our University can and should play an instrumental role in this.	164
currently all industries have having difficulty finding human resources to fill vacant positions, this stifles economic growth and diversification.	164
due to the brain drain, there is a lack of human resources to fill many vacant positions, especially in industries that require higher education.	164
Currently lots zoned for ag- use are bought by retired people from the mainland, who have no intention of ever farming. Other states have a system of requiring the landowner show a minimum income from farming before they area allowed to build a residential home. The amount is usually based on the amount of acreage. For example a 40 acre ag lot may have a requirement of \$80,000.00 a year of income. Another problem in Hawaii is the way ag lots are taxed, these same retirees, buy 20 acre ag lot, get a local rancher to put a couple cows on their property and the taxable amount per acres is \$210, no work by them, no income, no help local economy, big tax break! The harder the work of the farmer the higher the tax rate is. Coffee farmer taxed as an orchard, rate is \$3000.00 per acre. A dedicated farm use ag lot must show \$2000.00 income per year. Could go on but you get the idea we are giving away farmland forever for next to nothing in return	165
Make sure you very specific definitions regenerative, sustainability, renewable .	162
Ganjanomics - multimillion dollar cannabis industry is easily achievable within 120 days from start up.	161
enable	166
delete this "of"	166
increasing	166
on - instead of to	166