

North Kohala Advisory Group
General Plan (GP) Questions and Answers
Tuesday, October 1, 2024

Land Use

Q: How much of the existing agricultural lands are proposed to be Conservation or Natural in the General Plan? (Reference to policy maps page 272 and page 264)

A: Most of the lands that have shifted from Extensive Agriculture (less productive agricultural land) to Natural are in mauka areas, above 3,000 feet elevation, and much of these areas are heavily forested with native species. These native forest areas are critical to the health of our groundwater resources and water availability. Approximately 384,893 acres have been shifted to Natural across the island. While most are in upland forest areas, some are also in lava fields.

It is important to note that Natural falls under agricultural land use, meaning agriculture can still be done on Natural designated lands. Over the years, we received feedback on improving the distinctions between different types of agricultural land uses, which explains the proposed Ag designations. This data comes from studies such as the University of Hawai'i at Hilo Agricultural Land Use Baseline (2015) and the subsequent update in 2020.

As for proposed Conservation lands, most of the Conservation lands noted in the GP are already State Land Use Conservation. This means despite what the GP says, it is Conservation and falls under state jurisdiction. The proposed GP tries to better align the GP Land Use Conservation with State Land Use.

Q: What happens to the landowners who own any agricultural land that has been redesignated in the GP Land Use Maps?

A: The zoning would still be Agriculture, so the landowner still has the full entitlements and would still be able to use their land for agriculture. The GP does not change the county zoning.

Q: What is Rural in the GP Land Use designations?

A: The Rural designation is considered a transition type of land use between urban and agriculture. Rural areas are situated out of the designated Urban Growth Areas (UGAs). These areas retain rural character with low-density residential development and support small-scale commercial development and agricultural land uses.

Q: Will North Kohala's growth management and affordable housing considerations appear in the General Plan?

A: The Planning Department will not be making any changes at this time – the draft as is will be presented to the Planning Commissions. All the feedback we receive will also be forwarded to the Planning Commissions. They will hear testimony, deliberate, and provide a recommendation to the County Council.

Q: Why are Pōhakuloa lands in General Plan Land Use Conservation?

A: The County does not have jurisdiction over federal lands, which is why these lands and uses are not discussed in the GP. However, the GP Land Use maintains Conservation for these lands, which at least helps to protect this land on a County level.

Infrastructure

Q: Clean water and waste management are critical to people living in any community. Major concerns: 1) bathrooms and sewer situation at Hapuna Beach. 2) The Kohala ditch stopped running a few years ago. This fed water to a lot of agriculture practices. How is this issue along with maintenance going to be addressed?

A: At its core, the General Plan is broad and overarching and guides our land use settlement patterns. Guidance and direction are emphasized by the GP. Specific concerns are more directly addressed through agency functional plans. For example, wastewater issues are being handled by the Department of Environmental Management's (DEM) Integrated Wastewater Management Plan. The Department of Water Supply (DWS) is working on its Water Use Development Plan for the county. The GP raises many of these complex challenges, and focuses on providing the policy direction for the county in handling these issues and setting the foundation for collaboration and coordination with other agencies. The GP also addresses asset maintenance through several of its policies and actions, primarily in the infrastructure sections of the plan.

Q: What section of the General Plan discusses surveillance? Is there a section I can comment on?

A: While the GP does not contain specific policies on surveillance cameras on traffic lights, anyone can comment on general traffic or transportation topics which are found in Section 4.2. The plan speaks generally to traffic and transportation policies that either help increase safety or aid in achieving our goal of reducing energy. The plan also discusses public utilities including telecommunications and broadband (Section 4.3.7), which is another place in the draft to leave comments regarding surveillance.

Q: What are the current plans for being more proactive about the infrastructure before the GP can be implemented?

A: The GP is long-range and general as it speaks to future settlement patterns. Those plans you are referring to are the agency functional plans which often occur at the State level. For example, the Department of Transportation has long-range surface transportation plans. Currently, the County is working on its Hazard Mitigation Plan update, with Civil Defense being the lead agency.

Two community groups are also addressing these issues. One is the Parks, Roads, and View Planes Group. They are looking at secondary roads and emergency uses of private roads such as Pratt Road. There is also the Trails and Connectivity Group, which meets quarterly. This group is looking at alternative uses of Akoni Pule Highway, either trails or bikeways. Nā Ala Hele is already looking into a grant that will help this community study this issue of emergency exits and auxiliary roads. *(Response from North Kohala Advisory Group)*

Housing

Q: With this plan, is there consideration for multi-use zoning, where we might have some availability for more commercial and smaller housing options for young adults?

A: Yes, zoning regulations could be amended to provide for multi-family and mixed-use opportunities. Currently, commercial districts only allow for this (e.g., the fourplex behind L&L). We are pushing for zoning that would allow for multi-family and rental units. We are in support of housing for teachers and workers. We are also trying to change the rules with respect to agricultural workers on agricultural land. *(Response from North Kohala Advisory Group)*

In general, the GP supports mixed-use uses to allow more commercial and a variety of housing options island-wide. Within Medium Density Urban (MDU), mixed-use zoning is allowed. That is where we would like to see Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND). In Kohala, there are very small areas proposed for MDU as compared to Hilo and Kona. Overall, the GP supports more mixed-use zoning with more and diverse housing and commercial opportunities.

Process and Implementation

Q: What does it look like when the General Plan is adopted and executed? In 2045, what does the community look like?

A: The General Plan integrates various elements of the Community Development Plans (CDPs). The General Plan aims to foster growth in a way that is appropriate for each community. Environmental stewardship and protection of our natural and cultural resources are also key to the future of Hawai'i Island. The plan promotes local agricultural production and supports small farmers. In the future, we strive for greater self-sufficiency and a stronger and

more resilient local economy, reducing our dependence on imports. The plan calls for more walkable and livable communities across the island as well as housing and economic opportunities for everyone, especially our youth.

Q: If we get our comments in late, will be they looked at and considered?

A: Yes, comments submitted after the September 26, 2024 deadline will be considered and compiled in the package that will be forwarded to the Planning Commissions. We encourage the community to get their comments in as soon as possible, given that the Planning Department will need to submit this package to the Planning Commission at the end of the month.

Q: How much of the county budget has been spent on creating this new plan?

A: The development of the General Plan has mostly been done internally by Planning Department staff. A few consultants were contracted by the County to produce several reports and analyses to inform the plan.

Q: Could you be specific on how people here today could comment on the plan?

A: The quickest way for people to comment on the plan is to email the Planning Department at GeneralPlan@hawaiicounty.gov. You may also write a letter and address it to the Planning Department's Kona or Hilo office.

Q: Once Planning gets input, how do they decide what to integrate or not integrate into the plan, and what role do the consultants play?

A: Consultants do not decide what input is included in the plan. The consultants have provided expert reports, research, analysis, and other information. Planning staff works on developing the plan. Staff also collaborates with other departments and agencies when it comes to specific topics of the plan. For example, if we receive water-related comments, we discuss those with the Department of Water Supply. It's a collaborative effort. We also look at some of the expertise reports, CDPs, and other plans. All comments matter. Not everyone agrees but it is all part of this important public process. There have been many opportunities to incorporate feedback. This is the Final Recommended Draft that will be going to the Planning Commissions, so please keep in mind that the Planning Department will not be making changes to the draft at this time.

Q: What is the General Plan timeline?

A: The Final Draft and all comments received will be packaged and submitted to the Planning Commission at the end of October. The first meeting is November 1 and the second meeting will be on November 4. Future Planning Commission hearing dates will be posted as they are confirmed. The Commissions have 5 months to make formal recommendations, which then

go to the County Council, who ultimately decides on adopting the plan. This is likely to be a long process. The maps will be part of these deliberations.

Q: Transitioning to a sustainable economy will take a lot of money. Where will funds come from to pay for this?

A: The GP's Implementation section serves as a guide for carrying out the policies and actions of the plan. The plan does not lay out the financial details as it is not the document intended for that. The plan looks at different sources of funds and tries to prioritize the things that need to happen. The actions of the plan are things the County departments can act on. For example, one action is to develop and adopt an impact fees ordinance to aid in the expansion of public utility infrastructure. We are looking at how we prioritize projects, leverage opportunities across projects, and collaborate across agencies. For example, looking at a dual-purpose project such as a trail, between the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Public Works. Funding maintenance is the other critical piece. The GP mentions asset management as an opportunity so that we are making sure the capital budget is not spent solely on deferred maintenance.

General Comments

- I think aquaculture needs to be delineated from agriculture. It will support agriculture. Cutting-edge aquaculture is recirculating aquaculture systems. It answers water shortage problems. It recirculates the water that is used for these production systems. It is high technology, but it needs to be implemented, and it needs to be implemented immediately. I think more attention needs to be given to aquaculture as a standalone application. I would like to see more endorsements for land use development for strategic aquaculture sites. The State (DLNR) has a lot of land that can be used for aquaculture development, such as aquaculture parks. I am here as a voice for aquaculture development in North Kohala. I have a plan that involves 52 acres of DLNR land. My plan is ready to be implemented and it is based on the large-scale culture of marine and freshwater microalgae that are upcycled to other systems. RAS stands for Resurveying Aquaculture Systems. The other important word is upcycle and an example of what upcycling would be is using marine algae that we've developed and shed some of that algae to feed shellfish. That's an example of upcycling from one system to make another production system and it goes on from there.
- There should be county plans for the topic of surveillance. If there are transportation regulations or guidance, then I would assume at a county level we might care. This is an opportunity for the county. We have the opportunity to make suggestions for our communities and ask, "How do we feel about that?"
- The Kohala Hospital renovated their parking lot a few years ago and put up cameras that are pointed at several of their neighboring residents' homes and several people

are unhappy about that. Nothing has been done and there is no policy on it. This is another example of something the county should have a policy and does not.

- The CDP is critically important to the island, and yes, it takes 20 years to plan. But I think with this round it would be most helpful if you could figure out if there is an actual bonafide acceptable definition of affordable housing. Is it affordable? Is it low cost? Is it attainable?
- What I would really like to do is be able to evaluate this plan and process because we have tons of problems that are not in this plan. We need the ability to see what we did right and how to integrate changes. I would also like to see the financial accountability being worked into this because we never get to see what taxes came in and what went out. That is a possibility we should put in the plan.
- This (keiki) is the reason why we're doing this 20-year plan, this (keiki) is who it will affect and all of his peers. I just want to address whoever's going to be reviewing, that the real-life impact of our kieki. This should be the uniting inspiration and motivation. I just want to close on a beautiful note but on a strong note, that when County Council goes to make their decisions, these aren't just words, these are lives.