

To Whom it Concerns at the Hawaii County Planning Department:

It has been a long-standing observation that Orchidland Estates has been needing many types of infrastructure. The original developers made no provision for designated land for a community center or recreational parks of any kind. Another glaring problem, caused by poor development, was the lack of water provisions, not even a community cluster of spigots. On top of all that, many of the Orchidland Subdivision roads are still rough lava paths. Now the residents are paying high property taxes and have not seen any infrastructure improvements in their subdivision. The county needs to remedy this lack of infrastructure, and this letter addresses the first priority as decided by the Puna Community Development Plan Action Committee.

The County Puna Development Plan details that the Village Centers are ideal for the Puna agriculture subdivisions, especially for the subdivisions on the mauka side of Hwy 130. The idea around the Village Centers was that basic products and services would be made available so residents would not need to go on Hwy 130 for all their needs. For example, the opening of a laundromat and a grocery store would be a great benefit to the residents of Orchidland Estates. A basic infrastructure to make a Village Center possible is a water line. That is the priority.

A non-profit group named Orchidland Neighbors has been proactive and raised funds and bought a four acre vacant lot to build a community center and develop a small park on 36th Avenue, just off of Orchidland Drive. Their plan includes a multi-purpose community complex with a large meeting room, several classrooms, and a commercial kitchen. On the property, the plans also include a walking/jogging path, a pickleball court, a practice soccer field, a children's climbing set and picnic tables. A water line on Orchidland Drive would make this project possible.

The Committee also wants to make the Planning Department aware that a major project was started on the north side of Orchidland Drive, between 35th Avenue and 36th Avenue intersections. It appears that a small shopping center was intended there. This could have been the major start of the Village Center concept. The large project skeleton and parking area now sits idle, probably due to the lack of water and major investors. With a water line, this project will again attract developers and make the Village Center a reality for the residents of Orchidland Estates.

After considering the needs of the residents of Orchidland Estate Subdivision and the Village Center concept priorities, the members of the Puna Community Development Plan Action Committee urges the Planning Department to support the funding of a water line on Orchidland Drive up to the 40th Avenue intersection. In conjunction with a water line, the Committee supports that community water spigots be built. The Committee looks forward to working with the county on this important goal.

Written by Martha Morishige, member of the Puna CDP Action Committee