

PUNA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
ACTION COMMITTEE

COUNTY OF HAWAII
FINAL MINUTES
FEBRUARY 27, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Leilani DeMello called the Puna Community Development Plan (CDP) Action Committee (AC) to order at 5:02 p.m. This meeting was held in person at the Kea'au Community Center and online via the Zoom platform.

The full YouTube video of this meeting can be found here:
<https://youtu.be/dRJwEdwsD00?si=SQmgGAhQCfBgXK5i>

ROLL CALL

Members Present (in person): Chair Leilani DeMello, Susan Osbourne, Martha Morishige

Members Present (via Zoom): Leila Kealoha, Franny Brewer

Members Absent: Kanoe Wilson, Vice-Chair Gregory Henkel, Jennifer Scheffel

County Staff Present: Maryam Palma, Kawelo Kalili, and Shan Miller (in person)

County Officials: County Council Member Ashley Kierkiewicz (via Zoom)

There were approximately 6 members of the public in attendance (5 in person and 1 via Zoom).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 4:24*] Committee Member Osborne moved to approve the minutes from the December 5, 2024 meeting as drafted. Committee Member Morishige seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 4:41*] There were no public testifiers at this time.

BUSINESS:

1. Overview of Ordinance 2024-070 (Bill 123) – Overview of recent accessory dwelling unit (ADU) bill. Potential discussion and decision making to follow. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 6:42*]

This item was called to order at 5:08 p.m.

Norren Kato, Planning Program Manager for the Administrative Permits Division, gave a presentation on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). The presentation addressed the definition of an ADU, where they are allowed, and limits and restrictions.

An ADU is a single-family dwelling with only one kitchen, which can be either attached or detached from an existing dwelling. It is intended for single-family occupancy, with a maximum of three ADUs allowed per building site.

In Hawai'i County, ADUs are permitted under Chapter 25 of the Hawai'i County Code in single-family residential (RS), double-family residential (RD), residential agriculture (RA), and family agriculture (FA), and agriculture (A) zones. For the agriculture district, there is a caveat, which the ordinance states that any building in State Land Use Agriculture shall be subject to Agricultural requirement of the Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS). ADUs must comply with both County Zoning (Chapter 25, Hawai'i County Code) and State Land Use regulations (Chapter 205, HRS), which categorize land into agricultural, conservation, rural, and urban areas. State Land Use Agriculture does not allow ADUs, which is why there is a caveat for agriculture zoned land.

There are specific restrictions on where ADUs can be built. They are prohibited in State Land Use Conservation areas, affordable housing projects, and locations explicitly restricted by ordinance. Additionally, only one dwelling unit per site can be a short-term vacation rental (STVR), and sufficient sewer and water service must be available. The maximum allowable size for an ADU is 1,250 square feet per County ordinance, and the number of bedrooms is limited to five per septic system according to Hawai'i Department of Health regulations.

[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 23:03] Committee Member Morishige raised a question on the State's involvement in getting three dwellings on a parcel. County Council Member Ashley Kierkiewicz provided insight to the question regarding legislation on the State side that required the county to do this. During the 2023 State Legislative Session, Act 39 was passed, requiring the counties to adopt an ordinance that allows for at least two ADUs in residentially zoned areas in urban areas.

Hawai'i County was the first county in the State to adopt legislation allowing three dwellings on a property, which is ahead of the 2026 deadline for counties to adopt this legislation. In the current session, there is legislation focused on the ability to build ADUs on agricultural properties. However, this would not be called an ADU but rather an accessory farm dwelling. This requires proof of agricultural activities occurring on your site in order for the Planning Department to allow you to build. This legislation that is currently being considered would allow for the building of ADUs so long as it is for an affordable price point or workforce housing.

Council Member Kierkiewicz emphasizes the urgent need for infrastructure to accommodate Puna's rapid growth. Expanding infrastructure is essential not only to support the existing population but also to facilitate the potential development of ADUs. It was suggested that the Planning Department begin tracking ADU requests to map where they are being built and identify who is utilizing this opportunity. Additionally, gaining insight into the approval

processes of the Department of Water Supply (DWS) and the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) for ADU requests would be beneficial.

Regarding an alternate route for Puna, Council Member Kierkiewicz shared that there will be a presentation by the Hawai'i State Department of Transportation (HDOT) and the County Department of Public Works (DPW) on Thursday, March 6, 2025 at County Council. This will include a discussion on the movement of this project.

Planner Maryam Palma provided a demonstration on how to view the land use layers in the Planning Department's GIS web map:

<https://www.planning.hawaiicounty.gov/resources/resources-references/maps>

A Permitted Interaction Group (PIG) was suggested as an avenue to study and monitor current legislation, particularly regarding the development of additional units on agricultural zoned land. This group would engage with the State delegation to address concerns about the impacts on the Big Island.

The AC recommended keeping this business item on the agenda for the next meeting. Committee Member Brewer agreed to provide any legislative updates to the Planning Department's CDP staff, who will then share them with AC members.

This item concluded at 6:02 p.m.

2. Orchidland Estates Infrastructure Letter – Discussion and decision making on submitting drafted Communication No. 2025-01 to relevant agencies. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:00:22*]

This item was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

Virginia Aste provided testimony regarding the need for infrastructure in Orchidland. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:01:24*]

Virginia, speaking both as an individual and as a co-author of the Puna CDP, is dedicated to tracking infrastructure development in the region.. She highlights the lack of infrastructure in Orchidland, despite the presence of businesses like a church, a store, and a few restaurants. To address community needs, she helped to secure a four-acre parcel on 36th Avenue for a multi-purpose community center. . She emphasized that the absence of critical water infrastructure has become a major barrier to implementing the Puna CDP. Virginia expressed her hopes for the Puna CDP AC to engage the new administration and raise awareness about the urgent need for water infrastructure in Orchidland.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:08:20*] Brennan Low provided testimony on this matter.

As a resident of Orchidland Drive, Brennan expressed interest in the potential for water infrastructure in his neighborhood. He suggested evaluating existing water flow patterns and exploring the feasibility of a horizontal water line along 40th Avenue. He also recommended including a statement about the Orchidland Subdivision's willingness to accommodate public infrastructure on private property in exchange for potential road improvements, such as those on 40th Avenue.

Committee Member DeMello suggested incorporating relevant language from the Puna CDP into the letter, along with a reference to the appropriate section number or a similar citation.

Committee Member Kealoha suggested adding a Tax Map Key (TMK) number to identify the four-acre parcel mentioned in the letter. She also recommended that the purpose of the letter and any requests should be clearly stated earlier on in the letter.

[*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:37:46*] Committee Member Morishige motioned to accept this letter with revisions to the paragraphs 2 and 4 in order to better support its connection to the Puna CDP. The letter will be submitted to the appropriate agencies such as the Department of Public Works (DPW), Planning, Water Supply, and the Mayor's Office. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Kealoha. The motion passed unanimously.

This item concluded at 6:40 p.m.

3. Puna Connectivity Letter – Discussion and decision-making on submitting drafted Communication No. 2025-02 to relevant agencies. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:38:20*]

This item was called to order at 6:40 p.m.

Committee Member Osborne motioned to approve the drafted letter; seconded by Committee Member Morishige.

Patti Pinto, Recovery and Redevelopment Assistant with the Planning Department's Kīlauea Disaster Recovery Division, offered to answer any questions regarding this letter on the Puna Connectivity.

Committee Member Osborne commended Patti for her years of work on improving connectivity in Puna and expressed gratitude for her dedication in drafting the letter. Patti noted that now may be an opportune time for the Mayor's Office and the Department of Public Works (DPW) to consider their request. She welcomed suggestions for edits to the letter. The letter will be addressed to the Mayor, the DPW Director and Deputy Director, the Planning Department, and the two council members representing the Puna District. Ideally, the first step would be to meet with these officials to bring this issue back onto their agendas. Patti requested that the AC approve the letter and authorize it to be signed.

Committee Member Osborne asked whether the final statement of the letter could be made more specific and moved to both the introduction and conclusion for emphasis. She also suggested referencing the Puna CDP. Committee Member Kealoha recommended adding bullet points to highlight the top connectivity priorities, making it easier for the new administration to understand the request. It was also suggested to include Senator Joy San Buenaventura and Representative Greggor Ilagan, as they are actively working on connectivity-related initiatives. [*SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:45:40*] Council Member Kierkiewicz expressed full support for Patti's drafted letter. She confirmed that a bond ordinance was adopted in 2020 under Mayor Kim's administration to fund a connectivity route between Upper and Lower Puna. She suggested including this information if it had not already been mentioned. Additionally, she recommended involving Council Member Fresh Onishi in

the communication, as he also represents Hawaiian Paradise Park, bringing the total to three council members engaged in the Puna region.

Council Member Kierkiewicz recommended inviting the administration to attend AC meetings quarterly to provide updates and ensure accountability. She also highlighted a significant issue in project tracking – the absence of a public-facing repository listing ongoing and needed projects. This lack of documentation caused confusion during the transition from Mayor Roth to Mayor Alameda’s administration. She emphasized the need for a system to track project progress and make it accessible to both the administration and the public.

[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:48:54] Stephanie Bath provided testimony on this matter.

Committee Member Osborne recommended drafting the strongest possible letter from the Action Committee, giving the new administration a clear opportunity to respond to and address the community’s current needs.

[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 1:55:00] Committee Member Osborne revised the previous motion to include the stated amendments for approval. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Morishige. The motion carried with a unanimous aye voice vote.

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING:

[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 01:57:03]

1. Ongoing updates on State bills currently in legislation session, including SB 321.
2. Presentation by Council Member Ashley Kierkiewicz on revitalization efforts for downtown Pāhoa, including a potential special district. Additionally, a discussion on the County Code provision requiring a review of the village design guidelines every 10 years.
3. Update on the Public Access, Open Space, and Natural Resources Preservation Commission (PONC) application for the consolidation of certain properties at Kumukahi to support iwi kūpuna preservation and area management. This update will include a letter of support, which Committee Member Osborne will draft on behalf of the AC.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

[SEE YOUTUBE TIMESTAMP 2:02:19]

- The next meeting of the Puna CDP AC will be held on Thursday, April 24, 2025.
- The Environmental Notice for the Hawaiian Paradise Park District Park – Final Environmental Assessment (EA) is available:
https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/erp/The_Environmental_Notice/2025-01-23-TEN.pdf
- The Planning Department is currently seeking applicants for the Puna CDP AC and requesting assistance to get the word out to interested community members. Applications can be found on the Mayor’s Office website:
<https://www.hawaiicounty.gov/our-county/boards-and-commissions/boards-and-commissions-application>
- Committee Member Morishige provided an update on a proposed rezone for a 20-acre subdivision along the old Kea‘au-Pāhoa Rd, across from Kea‘au High School. The County Council passed an Ordinance 25-1 (Bill No. 219, Draft 2), allowing the area to be

subdivided into one-acre parcels. There are community concerns about the development of a medical center in this area and increased traffic congestion. Council Member Kierkiewicz clarified that in addition to a subdivision, the rezone request included the possibility of a medical facility. The Council cannot grant the property owner the ability to move forward with the health center. This would require a special permit from the Planning Commission.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

These minutes and all related documents are available in the Planning Department's Puna Community Development Plan Action Committee folder via the County of Hawai'i [Public Documents Repository](#). These documents may also be requested from the Planning Department by calling (808) 961-8288 or emailing cdp@hawaiicounty.gov.