

June 1, 2015

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Planning Department  
County of Hawaii  
101 Pauahi Street, Suite 3  
Hilo HI 96720

Re: Input for Phase 1, Comprehensive Review of County General Plan

My comments are based on my experience of returning to Hilo after 30 years of living in many places on the mainland. I have much love and appreciation for my hometown and am grateful to be able to raise my children here.

Jane Jacobs, William Whyte and similar urban planners advocated for community-based planning to create workable cities for a diverse population. Keep Hilo the kind of place that welcomes many kinds of people who call this place home.

#### COMMUNITY:

- Villages within and outside Hilo – for example, Waiakea Houselots, Villa Franca, Keaukaha, and the surrounding plantation towns.  
Celebrate them, name them, publicize their history.  
Give incentives to maintain and preserve housing and character of these neighborhoods. Visitors and residents appreciate the charm, uniqueness of these places. A growing number of people look for old houses to rehab, and Hilo can become attractive to these investors looking for affordable projects; think Vallejo CA, Detroit MI and other cities with rejuvenated neighborhoods of older housing stock. Not everyone wants to live in new housing in suburbia.
- Residential neighborhoods:  
Keep commercial development on the perimeter roads.  
Encourage a mix of shopping, services, transit, mixed housing styles.  
Friendly to pedestrians, bikes, pets, kids, seniors, disabled, young adults.
- Street life – important to create vibrant areas where people want to linger, shop, eat, walk, people-watch. Empty places encourage loitering and unlawful activities.
- Get police out of their cars to mix with the public. If people are out on the street, then police should be too. Build relationships.
- Homeless population. Follow the lead of cities which prioritize housing, then follow up with services. More effective to first get people off the street, then deal with their personal issues, rather than insist on sobriety in order to get housing. Banning sit/stand does not solve homelessness and loitering.

- University area: Needs a comprehensive plan for transportation, housing, services, after-hours activities for young adults, student-friendly ambiance.  
HCC/UH is an economic opportunity that, if nurtured, will benefit both students and residents. Create the right environment and more students might decide to stay after they graduate.
- Transportation:
  - ✓ Major transit hubs, e.g., Civic Auditorium seems to have become a place for car to bus transfers. Ideal because of ample parking and room for buses. Improve bike access. Lights for evening use. Run frequent shuttles to downtown, university, Kuhio Plaza.
  - ✓ Minor transit hubs, e.g., Komohana/Puainako off-road parking where people can ride share, park and transfer to bus/bike/walk.
  - ✓ Online ride share or car pool match services.
  - ✓ Lyft, Uber for rides; City CarShare works great; bike sharing (leave bike at certain stations); other innovative ways for people to travel besides having to own a car.
  - ✓ Traffic calming techniques to slow cars down on appropriate streets.
- Beautify Kanoelehua Av, Kamehameha between Keaukaha and soccer fields.  
Show off the open space, proximity to ocean, rainforest.  
Plant trees to create shaded walkways. Install rain shelters, seating.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL:

- Recycling. A must. Make it easy by reducing the need to sort; have bulk bins with sorting done after.
- Solar hot water, electricity generation. Even in Hilo, this works.
- Graffiti abatement – immediate removal is important to deter more tagging. Could service clubs take this on with County support?
- Hilo is rainy. Make surfaces permeable rather than paved. See San Francisco where sidewalks, parking lots are built with rain-permeable materials to absorb rain rather than create run-off. Our frequent heavy rains makes for uncontrolled run-off in the streets and drains into the ocean.

*John V. [Signature]*

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