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PLANNING DEPARTMENT
COUNTY OF HAWAII

COUNTY OF HAWAII GENERAL PLAN COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From: Concerned Community Members and Members of Orchidland Community Association

August 23, 2016

The County of Hawaii General Plan contains many statements about community development. Safety, emergency planning, transportation, agriculture and recreation are among the areas addressed. The General Plan was deficient because it failed to take into account the growing demographic in the Puna District. The Puna Community Development Plan, followed the format of the General Plan and clearly showed what would happen as Puna subdivisions began to build out. Many people worked on Action Plans to provide a guide for implementation of the PCDP, including the creation of town centers.

Very few of the planners of the 1970s or even the 1980s anticipated what would happen when the subdivisions in the Puna District began to build out. Most people, including members of the County Council, refused to "do the math," to multiply the planning standard of three people per household (regardless of the size of the lot) by the total number of lots shown on the subdivision maps.

The County of Hawaii, which allowed the creation of over two dozen subdivisions, collected property taxes from thousands of lot owners, and then refused to pave roads or to plan and build needed infrastructure for the residents because the subdivisions were deemed "private." Without their share of property taxes these subdivisions were left with unpaved, impassable roads and zero infrastructure such as community centers and parks.

In Orchidland, the subdivision association used private funds to pave two mauka/makai access roads and was court-ordered to pave a third because it was deemed a safety hazard, yet cross-subdivision roads are pitted and unpaved and no parks or community buildings have been constructed in the subdivision.

In spite of difficulties, a town center was developed in Orchidland by private investors. Residents can meet some of their shopping needs without going out to Highway 130. Plans are underway with a private, non-profit organization to create a Farmers Market and a multi-purpose community center. Many people in Orchidland support the town-center concept, but the problems presented by sub-standard roads have devoured much of their planning energy.

Our objective in this planning process is clear. We must write a General Plan which makes it easier to identify real and present community needs, fosters town centers within

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subdivisions and enhances connectivity between communities and subdivisions. The components of this plan must mandate consideration of funding measures and timelines to make Community Development Plans a reality.

These recommendations focus on Orchidland Estates but we recognize that similar needs exists in other subdivisions on the Big Island. Our objective is to connect the plan we are revising to the funding process so that the plan does not sit on the shelf and our tax money or other funding sources are distributed in a just and equal manner.

Please consider these preliminary recommendations:

1. Inclusion and adoption into the County General Plan of the recommendations of the Connectivity Committee, so that the Hawaii County Council will be given a mandate to fund and construct connections between Puna subdivisions within a reasonable timeline.
2. Inclusion and adoption of a plan to mandate paving and maintenance of main access roads in Orchidland Subdivision, beginning with Orchidland Drive, Ilima Street and Aulii Drive. These roads are necessary access routes in case of emergency and they provide access to neighboring subdivisions. Funding could be developed by allocating a per capita percentage of property tax.
3. Inclusion and adoption of a plan to mandate paving and maintenance of at least two cross-streets per year in Orchidland Subdivision. This could be accomplished by appointing a new Connectivity Committee and could include prioritized selection of streets from other Puna Subdivisions as well.
4. Inclusion and adoption of the existing sections of the county General Plan which recommend Neighborhood Parks of approximately four acres, and a District Park of approximately 50 acres to serve several neighborhood subdivisions. Provision of a plan to identify other parks in other subdivisions and a plan to fund them.
5. In conclusion, we recommend the formation of a Neighborhood Board or Subdivision Commission to aid in resolving conflicts within or between community associations.

These suggestions are offered in a spirit of unity and cooperation.

Compiled by Virginia Cote