



The Ka`ū Listening Project:
“Talk Story until There is a Balance”

An Assessment of Community Issues by

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Enhancing Productive Harmony between Human and Natural Environments



Section One

Summary--Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Findings

Human Qualities. The people of Pahala, Na`alehu, Ocean View and surrounding settlements were found to have vitality and talent, bringing to bear enormous resourcefulness and creativity to make a life for themselves, their families and their communities. These four human qualities--*vitality, talent, resourcefulness and creativity*--are the core upon which the future can be built.

Natural Resources and Families. People want to take care of both the natural resources and their families. They are especially concerned that their children will have options in their lives—options in Ka`ū. They are also concerned about the extent of long commutes to West Hawaii for those who have jobs and the exodus from the area of young people who do not have jobs.

Physical, Social, and Financial Capital. The Ka`ū area is rich in natural capital (physical resources) and social capital (people resources), but weak in financial capital (economic resources). Residents believe active efforts to promote economic development are necessary to foster a balance among the three capital elements for sustainable communities and resources.

Conservation vs. Preservation. People reflected in their talk the concept of *conservation* rather than *preservation*. The notion that a resource would be locked up and taken away from people (preservation) was foreign to them. Instead they want a future where the people resources can interact with the natural resources—to the benefit of both.

Save Both the Turtles and the People. The concern for taking care of natural resources was virtually universal, and there was full agreement about the importance of preserving access to the ocean, a local feel to the Punalu`u beach, and protection of shoreline resources. At the same time, residents don't want people to be sacrificed for environmental protection—“*Save the turtles and save the people, too,*” was a theme throughout the communities.

Controlled Development. People want some form of economic development but want to be very careful about what it is. People are most concerned about the scale of development. They want “controlled

development” to avoid the problems of Waikiki, Honolulu and Kona, and to maintain the rural character of Ka`ū.

Taking Sides. People do not want to have a decision-making process that is based on having to “take sides” in the debate about resource use. They want instead to use the Island cultural process of *talk story* until a balance in resource use is found that works for the people in the present and in the future

Ownership of Important Values. Ka`ū Preservation’s focus on resource *preservation* for the ocean, land and turtles symbolizes for many the important values that they want to see addressed in policy choices. These values, it was found, along with taking care of the people, are embedded in the values of the area. Therefore it seemed misplaced to many of the people that Ka`ū Preservation would fight for these values as though they “owned them”—as if they had a monopoly or exclusive attachment to these values that did not exist in the rest of the community. This advocacy position created resentment and a concern that the organization does not care about the needs of the community. Moreover, the tactics of Ka`ū Preservation leadership created fear among the citizens for their safety, and a reluctance to go to formal meetings where confrontation rather than *talk story* is routine.

Scale and Size. The majority of people had issues that concerned them regarding the Sea Mountain Five proposal. Scale and size of the development were common fears expressed as “not being able to absorb the development” into the existing communities. People had an intuitive sense that Sea Mountain Five was out of proportion to what would be beneficial to the area.

Even citizens who favor more economic development think that the size of the present Sea Mountain Five development proposal is too large. People don’t believe that the community can absorb the growth—the additional demands from all the additional workers and visitors who will impact the infrastructure and the social support systems. “It is too big.”

Community Benefits Package. The absence of a completed process to build a community benefits package was of critical importance. Citizens wish for a safe environment in which to work out the details of a community benefits package that is of appropriate design to enhance their physical, social and economic environments. They want to be involved in working out the details of such a package.

A Listening Project. Many residents expressed appreciation that decision makers would make an effort to listen to their points of view and a few expressed anger at what was considered a waste of taxpayers’ money.

There have been three recent attempts to reach out to the citizens of Ka`ū to learn what type of future they desire.

1. County Council proposed through Resolution of 169-07 to negotiate with Sea Mountain Five to purchase one third of their total land holdings—that part that lies along the coastline and goes mauka about 2000 feet. County hearings on this proposal yielded many hours of public testimony.

In relation to this action, the citizen consultation process for a Community Benefits Package with Sea Mountain Five was never completed. The tactics of disruption by the few created a fear among many people that inhibited attendance at meetings and free expression. The developer failed to follow through on the unfinished elements, and several public officials backed away from discussion as the polarization deepened.

In addition, the implications of Resolution 169-07 were not clear to residents. Most people believe the county does not have the money for such a purchase, nor the capacity to manage the land if it were acquired. The majority of people we talked with are very clear in not wanting Ka`ū Preservation to manage the park and coastline, citing their divisive tactics, lack of capacity and lack of experience.

2. Mailed questionnaires were distributed through the four post offices of the Ka`ū District by Council member Yagong to determine a preference for the proposed Sea Mountain development plan vs. favoring Resolution 169-07.

At the time the mail survey was conducted, there had been no prior attempt to learn where people stood if they were to “take sides.” This survey measured the side taking very well. However some residents felt it was a false choice because the options were not clear. Even so a 25% return on the survey is a high number and indeed gave an insight into the situation not seen before.

3. The County Council has received nearly 900 letters regarding the passage of Resolution 169-07.

Regarding the nearly 900 letters received by County Council, most were reportedly in support of the purchase of 153 acres of Sea Mountain land. This is considered a good response by supporters of Resolution 169-07. The mediators found the same thing—almost everyone strongly favors saving the turtles, their habitat, and the whole coastline. No disagreement there. But from the fieldwork, there is a large majority which favors some modest

expansion of economic opportunity, with conditions, in order to promote the general well being of the people and to keep their families together.

All of these recent efforts of visioning the future were attempts to try to come to an understanding of what the people who live in the geographic area actually wanted—at present and for their future. The conflicting findings from these three efforts led to the hiring of mediators to conduct a listening project in the Ka`ū District.

Conclusions

The people want a future that secures the natural environment and increases their economic opportunity to enhance the quality of their lives. Neither of the two major options on the table—Resolution 169-07, or accepting the Sea Mountain Five proposal in its present state--moves the community to where it wants to go. Further, the forced choice of having to choose between only these two options is out of sequence with the proposed Ka`ū Community Development Plan.

Recommendations to the County Government

1. Proceed to implement a consistent and predictable process that honors citizens' effort to balance the dual goals of protecting their environment and their families' futures.

From discussions with the citizens, there appears to be no point in passing Resolution 169-07 at this time since Sea Mountain Five has not offered to sell the coastal part of its property. The County has publicly said that it does not have the money to purchase it, to develop requisite infrastructure, nor maintain it. Moreover, the Hawaii County Public Access, Open Space, and Natural Resources Preservation Commission has already established a list of priorities for the purchase of open space, of which Kawa`a Bay is listed as #1 and Punalu`u is listed as #4.

2. Change the process for obtaining citizen input.

Formal meetings don't work for two reasons: They are not part of the cultural practices of much of the population, and the disruptive tactics by the few have made people feel unsafe. Instead, rely on individual and family meetings, chat sessions, and neighborhood meetings to do talk story in small groups—before

going to community-wide meetings. The use of privacy voting pads could be used in one or two community-wide meetings to culminate this effort, while preventing disruption of the public process and the domination by a few. Section Six elaborates on these ideas.

3. Commit to accomplishing on an accelerated time schedule the Community Development Plan for Ka`ū to tie in and give leadership to these recommendations.

A completed Ka`ū CDP would allow the Ka`ū community to avoid its current situation of reacting to each development proposal, and instead would allow the community to set the “standards of development” for all to know. In this way, all parties to development—citizens, proponents, government—would have a greater sense of predictability and reliability that would foster better policy choices in the long run.

4. Encourage public officials to model protocols of civic behavior and to control behavior that deviates from the protocols. Threats of violence and disruptive behavior are not conducive to the democratic process. In addition, residents believed that several public officials withdrew from communication with the Sea Mountain Five developer, particularly as the polarization deepened, thus rewarding the tactics of disruption and intimidation. Rather, officials must strive to promote communication between local residents and change agents so that responsiveness is optimized. Training programs are available which would assist public officials in developing these skills.

Recommendations to Sea Mountain Five

5. Consider an approach which is oriented to the rural character of the area and to the nature of the Punalu`u Beach.

Such an approach could include lodges of modest scale, integration of taro fields and other agricultural, rural features, and a learning center for the fabulous ecology, culture, and history of the Ka`ū area. The lodges would focus on bringing people to the area who want to participate in a learning experience about the ocean, land and people. Such an anchor for a resort would bring a select type of person to the Ka`ū area—a guest who appreciates the uniqueness of the environment and at some level wants to be a part of its magic. In order to be absorbed by the existing

communities, the resort could be designed as a residential village that is pedestrian based and has opportunity for permanent residents as the core. Permanency and predictability emerged as a high value of the people in the Ka`ū area.

Recommendations to the County Government and Sea Mountain Five

6. Delay review of the Sea Mountain Application for its Special Management Area until the final development proposal and the Community Benefits Package are finished.

Consider the insertion of the Community Benefits Package as a social impact mitigation into the EIS because people need commitments which are in a legally enforceable document, so that agreed-upon conditions will be implemented. Critical items still to be negotiated include the following:

- Setbacks from the shoreline.
- Appropriate scale for the components of this project or any subsequent application.
- Creation of a plan and commitment to ensure a reasonable opportunity for local hires at all levels from management to maintenance.
- Creation of a plan to ensure a reasonable opportunity for local businesses to provide goods and services to the Resort and its allied subsidiaries. This plan and commitment should include the opportunity for local businesses to locate in the resort.
- Truly affordable housing based on local wages of residents.
- Development practices under LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a national third party certification program).

Section Two Background and Methods

Background

The Mayor of Hawaii County, Mayor Harry Kim, asked James Kent Associates (JKA) to field a team in the Ka`ū District to talk with people about their concerns involving development and change.

Two questions focused the JKA listening project:

1. What do people in Ka`ū want for their future?
2. What balance is possible between conservation of resources and economic health of the community, especially related to the Sea Mountain Five proposal?

The Mayor's focus was that the process of talking with people in settings comfortable to them, with assurances of privacy and confidentiality, would identify opportunities for a deeper communication and resolution of key issues in the community. He wanted to "quiet the anger, deal with misinformation, and figure ways so no one loses."

"It is critical that you listen to those who don't come to meetings."

Methods

James Kent Associates is comprised of social scientists that use a form of ethnographic research called the Discovery Process™ to learn about community life. The Discovery Process has been used in more than 200 communities over the last 40 years and is an accepted and valuable form of research. Field workers "enter the routines" of the community in order to observe everyday life and to experience life as local residents do. Workers go to gathering places like grocery stores, cafes and the beach, get invited to people's homes, network to others in the community—all with the attitude of learning from the people. What is life like? What do people like and don't like? What are important challenges for people in everyday life?

The Discovery Process represents a broad-based approach to citizen contact, independent of any person's political views. Because team members are mingling freely in the community, finding the full range of views on a subject is a process that occurs naturally. In a qualitative research methodology such as this, after a period of time, patterns begin

to emerge about what is important, who is well regarded, how communication occurs, and how things get done.

We stressed with citizens that JKA and its team are neutral on the question of whether or not Sea Mountain Five should be developed. That is clearly something for the communities to decide. Residents were informed that the information they shared is confidential, and that no names would ever be attached to something they had said.

The methods of the Discovery Process included:

1. Hanging out in gathering places to interact with residents and to observe routines.
2. Continually asking, “Whom else should I talk to about this?” in order to network broadly in the community. We would then approach the referred individual and ask to talk story. We particularly sought out people whose names continually came up, reasoning that they were key caretakers or communicators in their community.
3. Attending public events to observe and to talk story.
4. Attending meetings of community groups and churches to make announcements of our purpose and to ask people to call us to talk story.
5. During the last ten days, we placed flyers around the community called, “Have you been heard?” with phone numbers of the field team to call to talk story.

These efforts resulted in long lists of people who wanted to talk story and numerous phone calls and personal visits. People were eager to talk and to share their stories of community, changes, and hopes for the future. The team engaged in many dozens of informal conversations in the gathering places of the communities, and attended numerous community group meetings, church gatherings, and public events. Residents were invited to take our cards and call the team or to indicate on a sign-up sheet if they were interested in a return call. Some people said that the commitment to confidentiality was important for their participation. Some people chose to be anonymous in their phone calls, and their input is included here.

“People are very timid and don’t come out--you must go to them.”

In all, JKA received input on our key questions from 551 individuals between August 11 and September 7, 2007. Through group presentations, we estimate that a total of 1250 people were informed and invited to participate, in addition to the flyers around the towns announcing the opportunity.

The Report

In this report, we use quotes very liberally. Since our job was to listen, our responsibility is to faithfully present what the people said. That we have done. We did, however, categorize people's comments around several topics. While the hurried reader will thus be able to skip around easily, we do believe there is a richness in listening to unfiltered stories from Ka`ū residents.

Questions did not follow a set format but were deliberately open ended to allow the person to set the direction. The team member would ask follow-up questions or clarifying questions but did not try to steer the conversation.

The open-ended questions, related to community life were:

1. Why do you live here? (This gives insight into traditions, beliefs, stories of place)
2. Why do you stay? (This gives insight into daily survival mechanisms, caretaking of each other, and how the culture is maintained)
3. What would make staying here better? (This makes visible the issues that if resolved enhance and enrich individual, family and community life)
4. Whom else should we talk to? (This makes clear the informal networks people that people are involved with on a routine basis)

The open-ended questions underlying the JKA mission are repeated here for clarity:

1. What do people in Ka`ū want for their future?
2. What balance is possible between conservation of resources and economic health of the community, especially about the Sea Mountain Five proposal?

Geographic Area:

Figure One shows a map of the Ka`ū area in relation to the state of Hawaii as a whole. The geographic areas of coverage were Ocean View, Waiohinu, Na`alehu, Discovery Harbor, Mark Twain Estates, Green



Sands Subdivision, Pahala, Wood Valley and Volcano. Most of the effort was devoted to Pahala, Na`alehu, and Ocean View.

Figure One:
Map of the Ka`ū District in Relation to State



Who Was Involved

There were 551 individuals involved in the talk story process over a five-week period.

Through group presentations, we estimate that a total of 1,250 people were informed and invited to participate.

The groups and publics that were involved are as follows:

Community Organizations:

- AOAO Colony One
- Boys and Girls Clubs, Pahala and Ocean View Discovery Harbor Community Association
- Department of Economics, Hawaii County
- Family Support Services, Na`alehu
- Friends of Kahuku Park
- HOVE Road Maintenance Corp
- Ka`ū Calendar
- Ka`ū Chamber of Commerce
- Ka`ū Coffee Growers Cooperative
- Ka`ū Filipino Civic Club

Ka`ū Hawaiian Civic Club
Ka`ū Hospital, Pahala: Director, Director of Nursing, staff, employees
Ka`ū Police Department
Ka Lae Quilters
Ka`ū Rural Health, Pahala
Kids of Kona
Kou Ka`ū Ka Ko
Main Street, Na`alehu
Men's Golf Club
ML Industries, Mac Nut Association: workers, staff, office, pickers
Neighborhood Watch of Ocean View
Ocean View Community Development Corporation
Ocean View Estates
O Ka`ū Kakou
Pahala Volunteer Fire Department
Sea Mountain Resort employees
The Nature Conservancy
Union leader ILWU
Volcano Volunteer community development plan
Volcano Community Association

Community Meetings and/or Events, Churches

Assembly of God, Na`alehu
Assembly of God, Pahala
Christian Church Thy Word Ministry Christian Church, Na`alehu
Discovery Harbor Home Owners Community Association monthly meeting
Food Bank, Ocean View
Governor's Meeting, Pahala, Dylan Ninoka
Holy Rosary, Pahala
Ka`ū Chamber of Commerce
Ka`ū High School, Principal, teacher, coaches, athletic director, students
Na`alehu Elementary School, counselor, janitor, teachers, office clerk
Na`alehu Farmers Market
Ocean View Community Association
Ocean View Community Pancake Breakfast
Pahala Hongwanji
Pig Hunters meeting
Quilters Society
Red Hat Society
Senior Center Nutrition Lunches, Ocean View, Pahala, Na`alehu
Sacred Heart, Na`alehu
United Methodist, Na`alehu

Political Representatives and County Department Directors:

Rep. Bob Herkes
County Council Bob Jacobson
Mayor Harry Kim
Nelson Ho, Hawaii County Environmental Management
Brad Kurokawa, Hawaii County Planning
Roy Takemoto, Executive Assistant to the Mayor
Alan Parker, County of Hawaii Department of Aging Senior
Nutrition Program
Joe Villa, County Parks and Recreation, Kahuku Park

Publics:

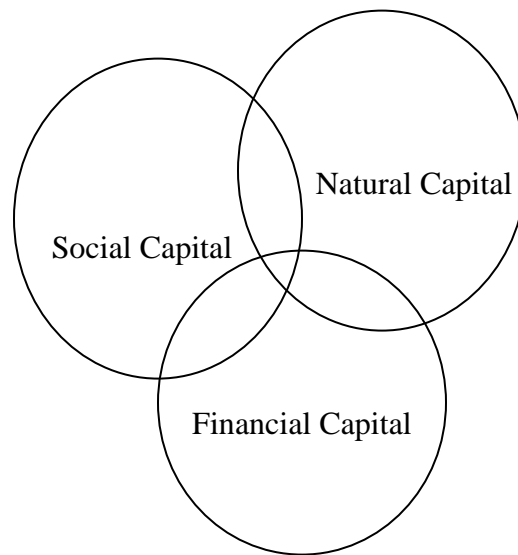
Kids and youth
High School kids
Kids who attended Cousteau summer camp
Working families
Members of all ethnic groups
Retired people
Born and raised people
Newcomers
Kama`aina
Business community
Macadamia farm workers
Coffee growers
Former sugar workers
Paniolo
Occupational groups of all kinds, such as construction workers,
maintenance workers, professional people such as educators,
health specialists, etc.
Fisher people

Section Three The Current Situation

Introduction

Sustainable community is frequently conceived as the successful interaction of natural, social and financial capital, as shown in Figure Two. As the stories below will show, the Ka`ū area is rich in terms of natural and social capital and weak in financial capital. Residents of course know this and they actively seek a balance by which economic activity can be encouraged without compromising their natural and social capital.

Figure Two:
A Model of a Sustainable Community Ecosystem



This section describes the current status of these three community elements in the area, as perceived by local residents.

“Economic health must be balanced with spiritual, mental and physical. Put those in a triangle and you have *pono*--balance.”

Natural Capital

Natural capital is the physical and biological environment within which human communities are situated. It is the stock of resources by which a community can sustain itself and it also refers to the values and meaning that people ascribe to their physical surroundings. Ecologists often compare natural resources to a savings account—that if human communities live off the “interest” of the resources and do not take the “principal”, then that is sustainable.

The stories that people told make it clear that the sense of space in Ka`ū has been an outstanding feature from the beginning of human settlement. The independence of spirit born of living in such a remote area was evident during the days of the Hawaiian kingdom and it is true today for the political district of Ka`ū.

Many people said that the core value and wonder of Ka`ū is the sense of space along that stretch of coastline. The big sky, the tremendous open space and the uncluttered view seem to be part of the blood and bones of the people who live here.

The key feature of space, the unblemished coastline, and mountain uplands, are why residents say development and change has to fit in so that the view plain is undiminished, as later sections will show.

The special place of Ka`ū was also used from the beginning as a place of livelihood. As in the past, local people live and play along the shore and sea. Many still fish for food for family survival. Some fishing catch is still sold for a living.

“Ka`ū has living *mana*, creation is still going on here.”

People told stories about their place and its resources:

“I was born and raised here. We came down to this beach all the time. My father sat with ____ at those pavilions talking the future. Before the pavilions there were homes there.”

“My parents’ home was there on Black Sands Beach. It was destroyed in the 1946 tsunami. We called it ‘high seas’ in those days. There were tsunamis in 1960 and 1975 also. All rocks on the beach used to be covered with sand. The beach was long before you got to the water.”

“I grew up in the highlands. I had a pet goat with real big horns on it. I convinced my family not to slaughter him. He was my favorite, real big horns. He died of old age. I took his body out to the wilds where he roamed and after a few months I got his skull with horns and took it home. I loved it up there. We eat fruit and root plants and know the season to harvest.”

“We used to eat the turtles.”

“My husband and I found the first nesting turtle there on the beach and notified C. Brewer. When the 2nd nest was found, we notified a marine biologist that we knew. Then it became law not to catch them, or sell them. We used to catch them with a 3-prong tool to snag them under the fin or under the neck. Anyplace that was soft.”

“The pond used to have bulrushes. Wildlife would come drink from the pond. The name means the waters that rise. There are springs there by the concession stands. People used to wash their clothes there and kids used to learn to swim in the pond. That pond was wiped out by the tsunami in 1946.”

“There are so many turtles. When I was a girl, little cages of chicken wire would be put around the turtle eggs. I don’t think they do that anymore.”

“The chapel on the hill is very special. It’s spiritual. No development around the chapel.” [Common]

And now,

“I like that it is not crowded and that it is beautiful.” [Teenager]

“I like this area because of the beaches.” [High school student]

“I never saw a native bird until I move to the Big Island from O`ahu.”

Community Issues Related to Natural Capital

Black Sand Beach

“I’m concerned about over-crowding at the beach.” [Common]

“The public road just next to the Black Sand Beach has been closed. The Mayor promised to look into this issue. Now, the maintenance crews do not come to throw accumulated sand back into the shoreline. The beach is losing more and more of its sand. It’s not good.” [Reported by several people]

Fishing

“Authorities won’t let us throw nets anymore. Species become endangered and they shut off subsistence activities, but they don’t understand we only take what we need. Then they go overboard, and they don’t listen to the knowledge we have. There are too many turtles now.” [Fisherman]

“We fish, we know secret places to net. We try hard to not let others, especially haoles know, because they will fish there and finish off the fish.”

Hunting and Access

With the break up of plantation lands into larger parcels, local residents complain about the increasing loss of access to traditional lands represented by the nearby state forest preserve. In the old days, access was accepted and traditional. New owners apparently have the means to fence their properties. In addition, the Nature Conservancy recently purchased a large parcel, of which 1,200 acres are currently being fenced in order to control the pig population and restore native vegetation.

“There are wild pigs out there. Families for years have depended on them for food, and still do. Some people want to eradicate them, also goats, sheep. A long fence was put in to keep them away from plants. Now we really can’t go and hunt for the animals for our families, because we are not allowed to go inside of fence.”

“The loss of easy access from times past has an upside. People have to go in and out in the same few places. It will help us cut down on poaching. There will be less illegal cutting of the hapu tree.”

“More and more, we can’t get to the state forest for pig hunting. Money people buy up old plantation land and close it off. Screw up our way of life. Shut us out with guns, cut us off.”

Recent Successes in Resource Protection

Table One shows the lands set aside for conservation and protection purposes in the last several years. It reveals that nearly 134,000 acres have been given additional and long-term protection from development.

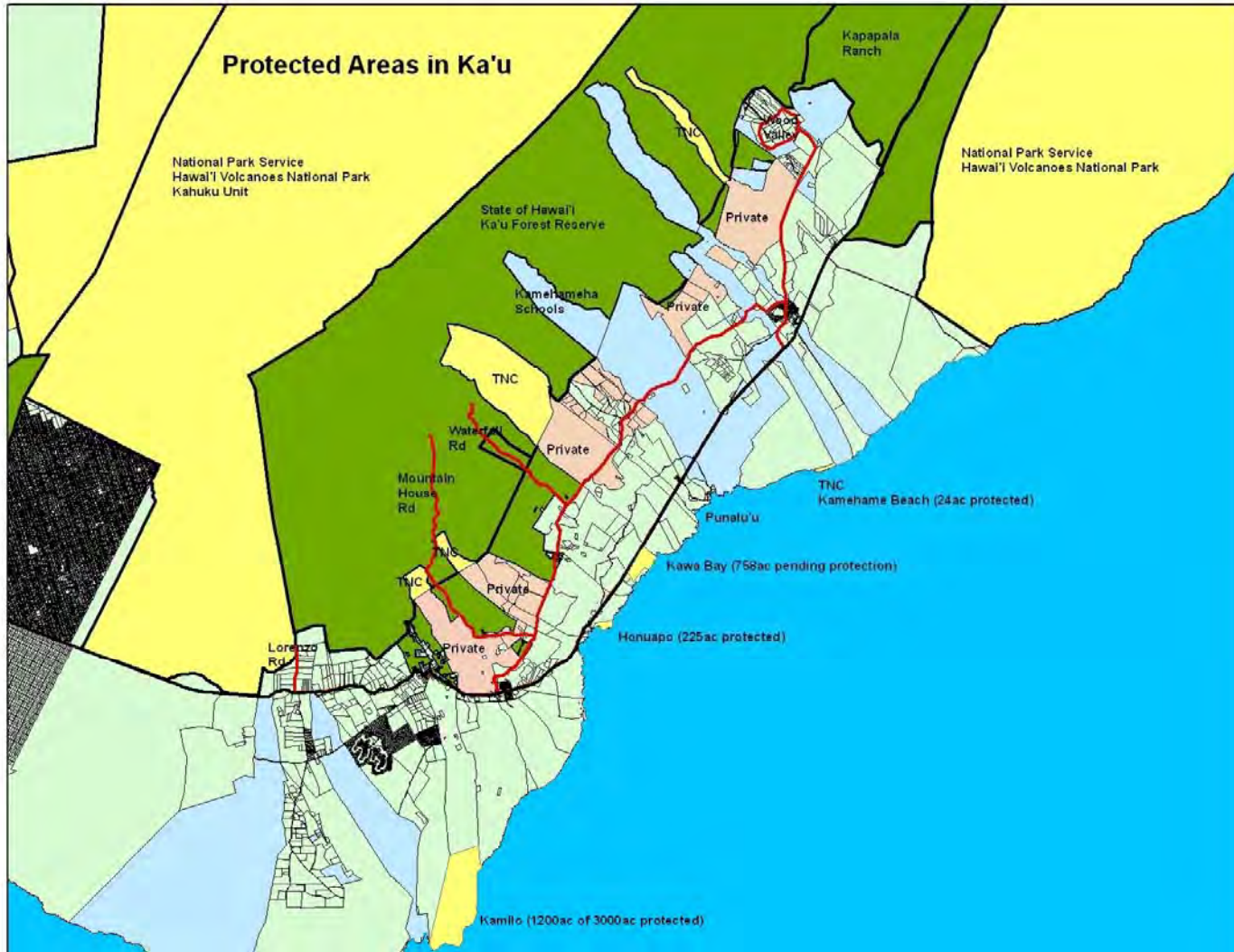
Table One:
Lands Set Aside for Protection, 2001-2007, Map of the Ka`ū District

Place and Disposition	Approximate Date	Approximate Acres
Kahuku Ranch to National Park Service	2002	129,000
The Nature Conservancy	2001	
a. Keaiwa		50
b. Kahilipali		60
c. Kioloku		167
d. Kaiholona		2500
e. Kamehame Beach	2004	24
Honu`apo, Trust for Public Lands, to State and County	2005	225
Kamilo/Waiohinu, Hawaii Wildlife Fund, to DOFAW*	2007	1200
Kawa`a (Kawa) Beach, 4 parcels to County, pending	2007	758
Total Acreage		133,984
Total Acreage in the Ka`ū District		625,000
% of Protected Land in Ka`ū District		21.4

*Department of Forestry and Wildlife, State of Hawaii

Figure Three contains a map showing the location of these acquisitions.

Figure Three
Map Showing Recent Acquisitions for Land Protection (Shown in Yellow)



Social Capital

Social capital is the glue that holds a community together. It is the patterns of cooperation in which people exchange services and support each other in order to survive and to complete projects for the good of the larger community. It is those points of social overlap where differences in ethnicity, income and personality are not as important as the similarities of sharing the same place and of creating a healthy community for individuals and families. Here are statements people made that are related to social capital:

“As *haoles*, we are accepted. Ka`ū people are very respectful, and friendly and accepting. [Two teenagers at Ka`ū High School]

“We want to be able to have choice in our lives.”

“Change is coming like it or not.”

“I see that the biggest issue in this community is about giving the community tools to succeed.”

“When I look at the children of our community, I know that I cannot walk away.”

“When I go to the post office now, I don’t recognize anyone.”

“I like the small town. Everyone knows each other. Everyone helps each other.” [High School student]

“I was born and raised here. I want to raise my kids here. I like it because it is mellow. Not too much crime.” [Teenager]

“People buy here because it’s beautiful and then figure out they can’t make a living here and move back to the mainland.”

“It is a privilege to stay here, fit in and be part of what’s here.” [Lifelong resident]

Stories of Social Capital in Ka`ū

Social capital has many features to it, including special places, the value of taking care of family members, and the informal caretaking within networks by which people sustain themselves. Social capital also reveals the strong reliance that people in Ka`ū have had with each other to survive and prosper in an isolated rural area. It reveals the qualities of

individuals that we found really stand out among the area's residents: vitality, talent, creativity and resourcefulness.

“People feel so connected to this place. My most frequent clients are former residents of Ka`ū who come back for reflection, memories and family reunions. They feel so good about reconnecting even though they live elsewhere now.”

“I came back because I love this place. It is home. My family lives here.”

“I stay because it is the best place on earth for me.”

Special Places

A key feature of social life, of residents throughout the Ka`ū District, from Miloli`i to Volcano, is the ability to enjoy Punalu`u Beach. As far back as the memories of current residents go, families have enjoyed days at the beach, fishing, swimming, cooking, visiting and making music.

Residents to a person asserted that the beach is highly value for its unspoiled naturalness, beauty and accessibility. They want no change that would impose restrictions like hours of operation, gates, or rules against camping. They want no change that would degrade the environment or add risk to valued sea life.

“We have camped here every major holiday for the last 20 years. These kids grew up here together and now they have kids. Letting them grow up here gave them a good attitude—one that they could take care of each other and independence.”

“The local way of living is fishing and hunting and being at the beach. That's all we want.”

“My father took us everywhere, he was *holo holo*, (go out and have fun). We have wonderful memories of the beach here. My grandfather worked cattle ranch here and then moved to Hilo.”

“Our life style is to camp, fish, hunt, this is our freedom. Don't take that away from us.”

“We use the big pavilion. We have one of our group reserve one, we meet there to play music and sing. The community uses the area, whole families meet there. We have always met there.”

“Punalu`u has been a place we run away to when we want to be in the ocean or walk in the wind. We used to play golf at Sea Mountain frequently before the course got so run down. Punalu`u is where we take out grandchildren when they visit so they may play in the tidal pools and pay their respects to the *honu*. Punalu`u is where we go when we want to picnic and feel like we're carefree kids again. There is something very special about this area. It is steeped in Hawaiian history and culture. It is old Hawai`i.”

“My family, friends and I have always treasured the unique area of Punalu`u by visiting, camping, hiking, swimming, exploring, and just being there to feel the essence of a pure coastline habitat. My kids have grown up with this special place as being sacred in its unspoiled naturalness. Although slightly impacted by our use and by others, we have always respected Punalu`u as a giving and healing spot to share. We have had our groups (girl scouts, family campers) help pick up rubbish to clean the area. We have studied the ponds, the star-studded night sky, the *heiau*, the little coves, the vegetation, the turtles, the beach, and the ocean...all at Punalu`u.”

An important feature of the Punalu`u Beach of years passed that many residents spoke about was Black Sand Restaurant. Something about that restaurant was so compelling for residents that they mentioned it time and time again in interviews. For many, it represented a time to relax, have a meal with friends, and talk story. It was a place for locals and visitors to mingle, “each enriching the other.” It seemed like a place that could absorb all the differences and communicate *aloha*, a place of connection with others and with the shoreline.

For some, the Black Sand Restaurant was a place of employment. Many people shared stories that it was their first job or their first boyfriend.

“It was a nice place. The restaurant was my first job.”

“I did hula there as a girl. I wish we could get it back.”

“Fix the restaurant. There used to be a lot of weddings there.”

“We used to have leisurely meals there in the old days, it was great. Mom saved swizzle sticks from the restaurant that she still has.”

“I did many of the repairs for the restaurant, built the bridges over the ponds.”

“My grandfather helped erect the beams in the Aspen Institute and some of the other building there. I worked on the golf course for 8 years.”

“The restaurant was nice. Lots of locals used it. We liked the entertainment.”

Strong Family Caretaking

Countless people mentioned how they take care of other family members and how important that value is to their beliefs and their lifestyle. Whether it was a disabled child, elderly parent, or teenagers that needed extra attention because of the prevalence of drugs, an adult often reported staying home for these reasons.

“I came back to help take care of my father, who is bed ridden. My dad worked for sugar plantation 45 to 50 years. My mom worked for Mac Nut for couple of years. My wife, son, and daughter are still in Las Vegas. When my daughter graduates, she will move here too.”

“The Filipino style is you take care of family, your parents.”

“I was a junior in college when the plantation closed. I thought that I was going to have to quit in order to help make ends meet. My father said no, my husband said no. My father reminded me that I had talked about being a teacher since I was ‘this high.’”

Widespread Caretaking among Informal Networks

“The Red Hats Club, the Senior Ceramics Club and the Kalai Quilters all created projects and have raised some \$28,000 to date for specific equipment. The community support has been amazing and wonderful. I am from rural health care in Canada and this community that has so little gives so much.” [Hospital personnel]

At the Pahala Boys and Girls Club, The Assembly of God Church donates their room for the club. The Club is funded through grants and donations, with 105 enrolled members and about 60 kids each day after school. County people do Meth/Ice education. Community volunteers teach hula, sewing, juggling, and ukulele.

“These are rough times. There is lots of volunteer work.”

“The Ka`ū Research and Distance Learning Center does an emergency response academy where students learn C.P.R., fire fighting, and so on. If kids are in good standing, they can go there after school, just to hang out, study, talk stuff over. There’s a computer lab there.”

Accomplishing Community Development Projects

“Farmers market is in its 6th year and going strong. We encourage local arts and crafts and growers. We have 36 growers in the Ka`ū coffee coop.” [Na`alehu Farmers Market]

“The 4th of July celebration in Na`alehu back in the sugar days was outstanding. It had a parade, booths, rodeos of all kinds, and several levels of competition. It was throughout the community. Everybody helped out. That went away when the mill closed.”

Vitality, Talent, Resourcefulness and Creativity

“The expansion of coffee growing in the last few years is nothing short of remarkable. It shows the resourcefulness of people as they persevered with very little support.”

“My father came from Philippines in 1946. He started saving for college money before his kids were ever born. He was very supportive of education.”

“Ocean View is and has come a long way and we have so much more than we used to, and everything we have is because of the dedication of the community citizens. We built the community center. We built and maintain the road system. We built and set up Kahuku Park. We have lobbied for the water system that is finally coming in.”

Community Issues Related to Social Capital

This section describes the current challenges residents face for which they are seeking some change or improvement.

Commuting

“Transportation is a big deal here.”

“People are surviving here, but that’s not living. You can’t make the trip to Kona everyday and live, it’s just not possible.”

“It’s hard to leave at 3:30 and come back at 7:30. There’s no time left for kids, usually they are asleep when I return home. It takes a little over 3 ½ hours to get to Kona. Coming back, it’s longer.”

“Lots of workers have left me for Kona but it’s difficult and there are a lot of costs driving to Kona. We have found that it takes \$10/hr extra before it is worth it. It’s an extra 5 hours a day, many workers come back.” [Employer]

“With all the commuting, there is no time for your kids. Kids have no time either. We need a kids’ club. I know one family, the wife commutes to Hilo and the husband to Kona. Can you imagine the fuel costs?”

“My husband and I have 7 sons, all working in various hotels in South Kohala, and one daughter, a single-mom, working in Hilo with Hawaiian Air. All of our 8 children graduated from local Ka`ū schools. When the sugar company closed, some went to work first in macadamia farms and eventually in different hotels in South Kohala. They commute about 3 hours everyday, including weekends.”

“I don’t have access to the parents of the students because so many of them commute long distances to work and thus have long days.” [Teacher]

“I don’t like all this commuting. It affects the whole family. Kids are left alone. We wonder why there is no family life. If my parents are on welfare, I think I’m set, no problems.”

“I wanted to shift to carpentry but I got into an accident commuting to Kohala. Now I have nerve damage and I can’t do heavy work.”

“My nieces drive too much. It is just a matter of time. It’s Russian roulette before they are hurt. If you can’t eat, what are you going to do?”

“I commute to Kona everyday from Pahala because I want to come home to a country rural life style where there is no hustle and bustle. I don’t mind commuting 2 hours each way so that I can have a way of life I want. I can fish, hunt, come to the beach

anytime with no gates and anyone telling me to stay off the beach or when to come and leave.”

“Mothers wonder if their kids will come home from work in Kona and Hilo. A car can be replaced but not human life. When you leave work everyone has a right to get home safely. What chance do they have when on the road 4 hours a day, none.”

“People don’t want to commute. However, the bus system has really improved the quality of life around here.”

“My son commutes to Waimea, some 87 miles to the north, to work in construction. I think about 85% of Pahala working people commute to work, caught up in terrible traffic on the way to Kona or Waimea.”

“I commute with four other people to Kona, to work there as a chamber maid in a hotel. I have to come home to Na’alehu everyday, to take care of my kids, the second one being only two years hold. I would prefer to find employment closer to home.”

“I know commuting is a burden but I have a friend who has a job and no one came to fill it.” [Common]

“I have roots here. We are the working people. My son is in construction in Waikoloa. He has to drive all day.”

“With the parents being gone long after the kids are home, they get into trouble. There is no aunty, or grandparent to take care of them because now everyone in the family is working.”

Family and Community Life

“I can barely make the rent and pay the bills. I have an upstairs apartment. The kids stay outside my place all night and do drugs and race up and down the street. The kids got no future, nothing constructive to do.”

“There needs to be some place for people to congregate. I’m a musician, and there is no place to just hang out and play. People used to play at the theatre but now it’s closed down”

“You have a tremendous artist community here and they need an outlet.”

“Commuting steals from the family, takes away so much family time. Your quality of living is so depleted. We used to come to beaches as family. No time for that now.”

“Camping is not an impact on the land, there needs to be more camping sites.”

“The elderly parents of my classmates have to leave too because there family is not here to take care of them. I see deterioration of the family unit because of youth drug abuse and teen pregnancy.”

Kids and Youth

The lack of jobs, especially for young people, was the most widespread of all community issues.

“Kids would come over to my shop all the time and ask me for a job. I just had no work for them.”

“Students graduate here and then nothing. No jobs for them.”

“I want to go to college and come back here after college.”

“We need more parks and recreation for kids so they don’t get into trouble.”

“I myself will probably have to go to the mainland to be near my kids. It hurts to feel that my kids will never move back. We have to be near them for our old age.”

“Youth face such issues as drug abuse, being by themselves too much, teen pregnancy, and lack of jobs. Even if a teenager gets pregnant, the Hawaiians nurture them as if she is a flowerbed—the seed has been planted. Now honor that and teach them to be good parents.” [Youth services professional]

“I worry about the kids. Will they have to move to the mainland?”

“This is a nice retirement place but not so good for the youth.”

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

People associated drug and alcohol abuse to a depressed economy and the lack of alternative activities. Residents describe the Ice use as endemic and including all levels of society from professional people to workers.

“If you are young and into drugs, you have to leave to get out of it.”

“Ice is a huge problem. People I was raised with are into it and I’ve had to disown them. It’s one thing to hit on 19-year-old girls but these guys are going after 14-year-old girls. These guys, they just go around in circles when they get on Ice. It’s bad.”

“There are no opportunities for employment. When hopelessness sets in, drugs are the result.”

Housing

“We need affordable housing here in Ka`ū. Prices are going up. We live in Discovery Harbor because it was affordable.”

“Money talks and we are out.”

“Speculators take advantage, leaving many native people homeless. Jobs can be found but prices are high. All of the pay check goes to commuting, rent, etc.”

“I like the OHA housing model best because you could build a shack on it and it was OK. It is not important if people didn’t own the land. The house doesn’t have to be great because you live outside.”

“This area needs affordable houses.”

“The plantation homes in Pahala are now running from \$250,000 to \$300,000. You think local people are buying those? No, they are newcomers.”

“To pay \$150,000 is affordable, and \$200,000 is too much. Hawaii Homelands built homes at Discovery Harbor but they were too expensive for us.”

“I resent the fact that Pahala people are losing their homes to outsiders who exploit the economic hardships of the owners.”

“My wife knows households that have 3-4 families in them. It’s not good.”

“My son has a \$178,000 mortgage and pays \$1400/mo. A mortgage like that means that locals are working 2-3 jobs.”

Education

A number of parents and community members are currently working together to address perceived shortcomings in local schools, particularly Na`alehu Elementary. Concerns include passing students on without competency, an inappropriate focus by DOE on new buildings instead of additional staff, and the lack of communication between parents and administrators.

People expressed pride in Ka`ū High School, particularly for its growing athletic program. Participation in sports activities has gone from 37% to over 80%, attributed largely to three buses kids can use to get to and from after-school programs. They are the hele-on buses, the regular bus and the sports bus. The decision by Hawaii County to provide the hele-on bus for this purpose has been especially appreciated.

Sports activities have now expanded to include riflery and many other choices. Both school personnel and young people have reported that attitudes are much better now and that fighting has gone down. The majority of students at the high school come from Ocean View.

The central issue for high school students remains, what to do after school. Youth and parents throughout the community brought this topic up frequently. Parents are deeply worried that their children have to leave to get meaningful employment. Kids don't want to go into agricultural work, and very few other options exist.

“I talk to the seniors as they are getting ready to graduate. They don't know what they are going to do. They are not motivated by school and have no future plans. The high school does not teach applicable skills. There is no auto mechanic shop. The agricultural program is going down hill. There is talk about a carpentry class starting this year but I don't know if it started.

“I like the school. My kids like the school. My oldest likes reading. I am so lucky my kids like going to school.”

“The educational system here is poor and the only jobs people are qualified for after school are menial labor.”

“I'd like to see after school activities.”

“I'm one of the very few local kids who went to college and also came back. When I told my folks what field of study I was going into, they said I was nuts. But now they love what I am doing.”

“I am the only one in my family to go to college.”

“Parents are stretched with long commutes and little resources. Need to help them see that they are partners with the schools.”

“There is a scarcity of teachers, with high turnover and lots of substitutes. We need separate school districts rather than the state-run system we have now. That way, communities will feel ownership and pride of their local schools.”

An educational center was important to a great number of people. Some people talked about a community college or a vocational school. In several conversations with some key individuals, suggested topics were:

Drug & alcohol education	Plumbing
Substance abuse program	Electrical contracting
Counseling	Police and emergency services
Language & literacy instruction	Early childcare
Cosmetology	Aging classes
Hairdressing	Real estate
Barbershop	Tax preparation
Emergency Medical Technicians	Ecology
Marine sciences	Marine ecology
Fire sciences	Plant husbandry
Carpentry	Welding
Woodworking	Solar contracting

“Maybe we can use the theater for a community college. Offer classes that are compatible with the community, perhaps with certification. The people will come if classes are non-threatening and an honest, humanistic approach is used.”

“The people here, if given an opportunity, they could excel at higher education.”

“I think there should be a university extension campus out here and that would keep students and adults here to get education in the sciences, with all the ocean and fish what a perfect place to learn.”

“We cannot get skilled work here, in a whole range of jobs.”
[Frequent]

“Adult and youth classes are needed to improve lives.”

Hospital, Medical and Emergency Services

“Our community support is high. As the community grows, outpatient services and care will grow. We must be able to meet the growing needs of the community. We are a long-term care facility and so we don’t have the beds for the short-term care. They have to be transported to Kona or Hilo.” [Hospital administrator]

“People of this community have fought to keep this hospital open. Through various means this is a hospital funded and supported by the people who live here.”

“This last year, the Red Hat ladies, Ka Lae Quilters and Na`alehu Senior Citizens’ Ceramics group raised almost \$30,000. All for much needed emergency room equipment. This frees the nurses up to do other important work. I’ve never been at a hospital like this, where people care so much.”

“We need an assisted-living, better acute medical care.”

“The area needs elderly care and elderly housing.”

“There is no drug treatment inpatient or outpatient support or clinic here and we desperately need one. There is a high percentage of drug use and with no access to help. They have to go to Kona or Hilo.”

“We need more home-health care providers. Right now, there are two in Na`alehu and one in Pahala. There is a large senior community living in the area and moving here. The Ka`u Hospital needs to provide for more long-term patients and for more emergency needs and outpatient needs.”

“We don’t even have the basics at this hospital. We need everything. More beds, long-term care, better phone system, more staff, update equipment, and new equipment.”

“Health care is so bad here that when we get to an age that we need care, we’ll have to move back to the mainland.”

“We badly need a fire-suppression team and Emergency Medical Technicians here.”

“We need more police patrolling the beaches and roads.”

“Fire protection, first responders, and ambulances are in short supply.”

“If you’re fairly healthy, OK, but if you have to go to the doctors often or need special care, you’d better live somewhere else. Medical care is minimal here. We go to Kona or Hilo to buy our needs, go to the doctor, dentist etc.”

Civil Services

“Waiohino is our closest waste station and some people who don’t have much money will not drive that far and throw their trash into a *puka*, just any ol’ hole. That is also the problem with non working cars—people drag them up on to the road and now it’s a county problem. Well, maybe that’s okay. At least it’s not collecting in their yard. The county has taken away some 365 junk cars since the beginning of the year.”

Financial Capital

Financial capital refers to the ways money is channeled and allocated in a community to serve human needs and also provide a profit for the owners of capital commensurate with the risk. When development projects are driven strictly by economic and profit considerations, negative impacts to natural and social capital may result. Conversely, financial capital that addresses the economic, cultural and ecological health of an area contributes to sustainability in the long term.

The forms of livelihood in a community change over time. In the Ka`ū District, sugar cane production dominated the economy between 1868 and 1996, when the last mill closed in Pahala. The Ka`ū area is still undergoing a transition from the plantation economy. In the eleven years since the C. Brewer plantation closed, residents have continued to make adjustments.

“In 1972 the Hutchinson sugar mill closed. It’s that old building on the right as you start up the hill to Na`alehu. It combined with the other existing mill. So they went from 2 shifts a day to 24/7 shifts and it changed the cycle.”

“Plantation managers were kings and there were differences. Na`alehu got a club house, and an elaborate 4th of July tradition. I miss that 4th of July tradition.”

Cattle production similarly has supported a large portion of the population for many generations. The subsistence economy of gathering, fishing, hunting, and gardening helped people survive for hundreds of years and remains important today for many families.

In this mix of economic sectors present at any one time, individuals and families have to create their own strategies of livelihood, responding to opportunity as they can, creating opportunity when possible. For example, since the close of the sugar plantations, coffee growing has slowly increased in Ka`ū, and residents report an upsurge in production and interest, especially since Ka`ū coffee won a number of prestigious taste competitions recently.

Today, residents say that the major ways of making a living are with mac farms, schools, medical services, cattle ranching, construction, and commuting to the labor markets in Hilo, Kona, and the Kohala coast.

“They used to railroad sugar up to the warehouse that was up there at Black Sand Beach. Ships would come into the harbor and they would row boat the sugar sacks out to the ships. I remember playing on the sugar bags.”

“Sugar was our economic engine that made the community work. We need a new one.”

“The economy is diversified but a core business focus would be a blessing.”

Community Issues Related to Financial Capital

Economic Base

“The hospital, the macadamia farmers and DOE [Department of Education] are the main employers here in Pahala.”

“The dairy just closed last year, that was really too bad.”

“We have the highest teen pregnancy in the state. We need education and training for local people that need jobs. Simple jobs like auto mechanics or jobs that need some technical certification. We have plenty of tourists who don’t have the chance to spend much of their money because the bus doesn’t stop anywhere else except the bakery in Na`alehu.”

“Baby boomers are retiring over the next 20 years. This place will grow there is no choice. How it grows is what we have a choice about.”

“The retirement community is stable. They have pensions and social security. They could be a significant impact on the area, forcing better medical care, elder care. The quality of life would improve for all ages.”

“Refrigerated Containers come in here just to Kmart, WalMart and Costco from the mainland and China. They are filled with goods and they go home empty. Why not find an export and fill those containers?”

“I’d like to start a bakery. There is none here and it’s needed. They need better schools here. My granddaughter came to visit me and she had nothing to do and there was nowhere I could take her.”

“I am concerned about the roads and the ability of people to get around, especially if there is a natural disaster. That one road will be a nightmare if there is ever an emergency. The roads are unsafe and crowded and need to be addressed.”

Agriculture

Since the plantations closed, large tracts have been sold to a small set of owners who are doing a variety of things with them. Some lands have been protected, some reportedly have subdivisions planned for them, and some of them have been subdivided into 5-20 acre lots and leased for coffee and vegetable growing. Local observers feel optimistic about coffee and believe the acreage devoted to it is expanding. Coffee recently won international taste tests which are expected to increase demand for Ka`ū coffee. The Ka`ū Coffee Growers Cooperative with about 12 members was formed recently, and are talking about developing processing capability.

Some of the largest landowners have banded together and formed a water cooperative, with interest in refurbishing some of the 30 vertical tunnels drilled decades ago, which at the time transmitted water to operate the sugar cane flumes. Although apparently not all the legal issues have been resolved, the water coop hopes to sell water for agricultural and residential purposes.

Large farm supervisors and small farmers stated that it is impossible to find farm labor. Small farmers rely on family picking operations, while M.L. Industries has relied on importing foreign workers, an enterprise fraught with uncertainties.

“DLNR [Department of Land and Natural Resources] has 2000 acres coming up for bid and I want to create a co-op of farmers that all want to sign on for a designated amount of years to farm small 5/10 acre farms up mauka of Na`alehu. It’s hard work but really important and worth while.”

“There could be a great orange crop and it would produce 2 or 3 times a year. It could be an international market. We’d never really compete with the big boys in Florida, but it would be another Hawaiian crop. Just like coffee is coming along. Well let’s look at other agriculture. The plant here could grow, pick, process, package, and ship. It would require both skilled and unskilled labor. Holland is the largest grower of orchids. We could come a long way in international competing for the flower. Create a mac nut co-op so the smaller farmers can join in and create a larger presence.”

“There is no place to sell your mac nuts locally. Mac farms used to buy from local farmers but they don’t now. Our neighbor just got 1,400 lbs. and they took their nuts to Hilo to the Mauna Loa factory.”

“We have a number of cottage industries here. There are 4 lettuce growers that market to the Kohala Coast to the high-end restaurants and resort hotels. If they are growing in Ocean View, then water is an issue because it costs a lot to be a farmer. High tech businesses could come in—we have high speed Internet in Ocean View. Coffee is grown and Ka`ū is getting better known for coffee.”

“This area should consider a world-class slaughter house, so you can ship anywhere. New Zealand is the model for this thinking. Because they can meet all standards, they can compete anywhere.”

“Create affordable housing and support agriculture using land trusts. You don’t own the land, but as long as you stay in agriculture, you have cheap housing.”

“The mac farms are keeping us alive.”

“Have development in Pahala and Na`alehu, focus on agriculture.”

“Kids don’t want to go into farm work. It’s not what they want. Many are not fast enough to harvest it.”

“Agriculture is the roots of this area. I wonder how we could tie agriculture into economic growth. Maybe biofuels could work here.”

“There are many part-time farmers who live here. Many travel to Hilo and Kona for work during the week, long, tiresome trips. After work and on weekends, they have to tend to the plants.”

“A huge labor deficit situation affects the ag industry. People were working last year seven days a week just to get the harvest in.”

“The agricultural sector is suffering. Labor shortages are the worst but also water is lacking. These are the best soils and productivity anywhere, the potential is enormous.”

“I like rural agriculture and the lifestyle. You can raise families, own your own homes.”

“We should develop the agricultural economy, not tourism. The plantations screwed the land for 100 years. New crops recently include the kava and grapes. Mac nuts are in decline. Coffee production is up. It’s an emerging niche. The Four Seasons [Resort] is buying Pahala coffee. Ocean View is growing more Protea flowers.”

Jobs

“Kids need to learn a trade so they can stay here and work close to home, but then there are no jobs. We need development.”

“The area is economically depressed. Young people need somewhere to work and something to do. Without work they turn to drugs and hang out. There is no work for young people even when they want to work.”

“Families want to work where they live and be home in the evenings. We will lose a segment of the age group if we lose families with kids.”

“Right now adults and parents do not have much of a choice in where they work. They are stuck. Choices to live and work here is less important for us than our young people.”

“I’m in a union carpenter and I go to work in Kona, and I come home to this beauty. I don’t want that to change. I can ask the union boss to work here if there is work.”

“The wages are low here in Ka`ū. People think they go work Kona or Hilo, they make more money but that’s not true. They don’t equate the time they’re on the road with lost wages. Four hours of drive time means their \$13 an hour is less. So when they work Ka`ū, they don’t realize they can make less money and still be ahead. They need be educated to understand it. Finally my employees realize \$10/hour is better than \$13 in Kona.”

“We can’t find anyone for the labor we need—plumbing, cleaning, mac nut picker. You just can’t find skilled workers.”

“The mac nut farms are unable to find enough workers, requiring them to import foreign workers from Thailand and other places.”

Services

“We need ‘things’—a store that has enough of the things that we need.”

Alternative Economic Futures in Ka`ū

Residents of Ka`ū freely discussed the economic structure of their communities. The economic sectors that were doing well or less well were frequent topic of everyday conversation. People understand that economic diversity is important for sustaining their area so that downturns in any one sector can be absorbed in the other sectors.

The alternatives discussed below that citizens talked about were:

1. Doing nothing
2. Fostering a strong agricultural base
3. Support Medical Services as Economic Base with Retirement
4. Decide that some level of economic activity is acceptable at Punalu`u and determine what it is

While our mission did not permit an assessment of the viability of these options, the perceptions and opportunities residents described are included below.

1. Doing Nothing

In the doing nothing alternative, existing trends continue. Residents report these to be:

- The expected continued decline of the macadamia nut industry in the face of global competition
- Modest growth of residential and retirement living, with some attendant economic benefits of construction and medical services. Many residents point to the number of unpurchased house lots as evidence of modest demand for housing from outsiders.
- The gradual expansion of coffee and perhaps other specialty crops
- An increased reliance on commuting to the urban labor markets of Hilo, Kona and the Kohala coast
- Continued stress on family life from commuting and attendant other social problems
- The loss of youth from the area due to lack of opportunities
- A graying of the population as existing residents get older and newcomers are retired people
- Escalating land and living costs fostering a concern that lower income individuals and families could be displaced from the area
- Continued modest subsistence fishing and hunting
- Diminished opportunities

Residents commented:

“Without development: only the old will be left, the young people will be gone.”

“Our culture is of fishing and farming. Both are hard work. It’s not an 8 to 5 job.”

“If the young families begin moving out of the area, the schools will suffer as funding is directly linked to student population. In the secondary schools, the ability to offer upper-level math and science will be diminished, and the fine arts programs will suffer.”

“Without economic activity, the area will be a pocket of poverty.”

2. Fostering a Strong Agricultural Sector

Many residents believe that fostering a stronger agricultural base is feasible and should be supported by policy makers. Although many are aware that agricultural labor is hard to find, some are optimistic because of the success of coffee growing in recent years and because many newcomers get involved at some scale in agriculture. In addition there are some ideas being talked about where larger tracts of land could be subdivided and developed to not only support agriculture, but housing needs as well. One scenario has a nonprofit land trust holding title of land, while lessees are permitted to build and live in homes as long as agricultural activity is maintained.

“Ka`ū coffee now has a name. It can be a crop that will create a few more jobs. But coffee is hard work and not everyone can do coffee farming. I don't know about other crops, maybe, *noni* (a fruit), some other farming may work. But look at the mac nut farms. They are having a hard time. They can't find workers. They may be going under.”

“Ka`ū has the largest cattle count in the state. We could have a slaughterhouse here where everything is done and the package is shipped out to the world. A first class operation.”

“We need agricultural business. We have fertile land from Waiohinu to Pahala, but then there is no water makai of the highway, Waiohinu to Na`alehu. So then farming is not reliable if you have to buy water. Perhaps catchment systems.”

“This area is cattle, farming, and fishing. We like open space.”

“On this island, coffee is marketed to the mainland They could handle more coffee growers. There are jobs available for coffee pickers, but people don't want to work picking. It is intense, rough work.”

“The best coffee from Hawaii is from Ka`ū. In the Kona area, growers are very coordinated. They have been in the business. We are trying to expand marketing, Internet sales to mainland.”

“The County should promote diversified agriculture. Agriculture is more stable as a community force. The government should push and support it. It's hard work but many affiliated tasks are not, so it can support many people. It could be a choice besides a resort. There is a history of agriculture here, of government and landowners working together to bring up economic productivity.”

“The type of economic development in Ka`ū should be agriculture. We have great soil here and can grow a lot. Agricultural tourism is big in other countries and we could focus on that.”

“Build up tourism that is agriculturally-based.”

A couple thoughtful observers noted that agriculture in concert with conservation employment can offer a viable economic base for the Ka`ū District. They pointed to the appreciable employment of local people by the National Park Service and the potential of the Ka`ū Preservation vision of development as evidence that this approach could work. Section Four discusses this idea more fully.

3. Support Medical Services as Economic Base with Retirement

Some residents suggested building upon existing medical services and the trend of modest retirement influx into this area. Local medical staff were less optimistic about such a scenario being feasible because of Ka`ū's geographic isolation. With specialists and the urban populations at least 60 miles away, the local population would not be great enough to support such a scenario in their view. However, the retirement/medical services sector could be an important component of a diverse economy.

“Retirement is happening naturally anyway and is at a pace that is better for the community. This is a form of development.”

“Hawaii could have an in-house drug treatment facility, where people from the mainland could come and receive services and heal and enjoy the Hawaiian air and beach. What a great way to make money and help those who need it.”

“We need an assisted-living center and doctors. Growth is going to come, but what size. We can determine the size.”

“I want to get into the medical field and then come back here after college.”

“The Ka`ū health care industry created \$5 — 7 million in one year, from hospitals and the services to other health care professionals. It all ripples out to create other revenue from the spin off.”

“When we saved the hospital, it impacted the entire state, as 7 other hospitals followed format and have gotten funding.”

“Distance learning for health care will help partnering with hospitals, doctors, with practices in the local health care settings.”

“Retirement and health as economic sector does not pencil out here, so you would be talking a luxury spa.”

“If it’s all retirees, then get medical here as part of the economy.”

4. Decide that some level of economic activity is acceptable at Punalu`u and determine what that is

Residents are aware that Punalu`u is the only place in the Ka`ū District that is zoned for resort development. While there is substantial opposition to the concept of any resort development at that site, most people instead asked for modest development of a modest size that can be absorbed by the communities.

The various development alternatives that residents talked about for Punalu`u is discussed in the next section.

Section Four

Sea Mountain Five: Issues, Opportunities and Alternatives

Introduction

As the Mayor stated in his September 4 address to the Ka`ū Chamber of Commerce, “There is no Sea Mountain project yet, just a vision. Is it the right vision for us?”

This section discusses the issues described by local residents and their ideas for improving the proposed project. It will explore the ways in which citizens said the Community Benefits Package could be improved, as well as other ways to strengthen the proposal and foster a greater good for the community.

The level of information people have about the Sea Mountain Five proposal is low. People generally are not very informed about the details of the proposal or the status of negotiations about the “community benefits package.” Many myths and rumors about the project are part of local conversation. The most often cited, and mistaken, belief is that the proposed development will shut off beach access, for example. The communication gap has been worsened by the polarization and conflict expressed about this issue, to the point that the Community Benefits Package was not completed, as described more fully below.

When residents talked about Sea Mountain Five and the question about whether development should occur or not, **JKA estimates that about 15-20% of the people said, “No way, under any circumstances,” another 15-20% said, “Yes,” without the need for further discussion, and about 60-70% said, “It depends.”** The section on Issues below will explain the various concerns people would like to see addressed before deciding on the development.

The main headings in this section are:

1. Community Themes Related to Sea Mountain Five
2. Community Issues Related to Sea Mountain Five
3. The Current Status of the Community Benefits Package
4. Alternative Futures at Punalu`u

Community Themes Related to Sea Mountain Five

The two major themes reported by residents reflect opposing positions:

1. “No development at Punalu`u, period.”

“With the housing as it is (in the proposal) it will be housing for rich people. It will be like Kona, not for the workers.”

“I don’t want to see any development down there. There are many other lands. What about the mountains, build there. Use that for development, not the beach. Keep away from the beach area. It is run down and should be built back up to the way it used to be. Update what is there.”

“Once it starts, you can’t go back.” [Common]

“The aquifer in Punalu`u is unequalled anywhere and must be protected. Two thousand feet is the minimum setback for protection.”

“I’m leaving because everyone at this meeting is pro development. I’m not comfortable here, so I’m going.”

“Don’t let them developers come in here. They promise us things but don’t keep their promise. People here care and are fighting for the wilderness that is here. No one is held accountable in our current administration.”

“I watched Kailua-Kona go from a one-stop-light ‘fishing village’ to what it has become now the Orange County of Hawaii. Believe it or not, it could happen in Ka`ū also.”

“If you use Hawaii laws, we are an occupied country. International law, too. The people still feel like the land is occupied.”

“I am tired of catering to the rich and the rich keeping us poor. The bottom line is invaders come here and take my land.”

“All our lives, this has been our land. There is a certain pride in land and this is our home. We are the host. Developers buy the place then the developer is host, and now people are tourists in their own land.”

“The rich will get stronger control and everything. We will be in their total power.”

“I say no. Ka`ū is very native. Keep it native.”

“No one wants development here because their taxes will go up.”

“In the end the developers get their money and the community gets the traffic, the noise, the commercial interest. The entire character of the community is forever changed.”

“Once the land is lost there will be no going back. Development will spread like a cancer.”

2. “Development at Punalu`u can be positive if it is done with balance.”

“We can save the turtles and what about the children’s future?”

“Everyone wants to save the coast line. We all want to see it preserved and not built upon. Save the turtles. So how do you manage that with growth, with needed infrastructure, jobs, better hospital services, better police, more affordable homes?”

“When I look at the redevelopment at Punalu`u, I ask myself these 4 questions:

1. Is it the truth?
2. Is it fair to all concerned?
3. Will it build good will and better friendships?
4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

I say Yes to all these things for the project.”

“We are for development. We need the jobs, sugar is out. We represent families from way back. Some kids want to stay, too many kids have had to go away. Make sure you save the right of way to the water, for fishing, for throwing our nets.” [7 Japanese men at their lunch]

“I built the homes and the golf courses at Kukio. They did a great job at the beach. They gave to charitable organizations and take good care of the beach park. They paid for all the infrastructure.” [Construction worker at Black Sand Beach]

“We will get better health care and infrastructure.”

“We are in support of the development plans. It will benefit the residents of Ka`ū for generations to come. This area has been depressed for years and needs economic development. This community is in dire need of the jobs that will be created if the development is allowed to go forward.” [Punalu`u condo owner]

“This area is already developed, so let’s redevelop and make it better, bring back the beach where there used to be a nice wide beach.”

“We don’t want WalMart. Tourism is the only way to create an economy. Attract a developer that will take care of the land and be responsible to the people and will benefit the local culture and history. Will there be a learning center? We think Punulu`u is a good plan.”

“A small minority of people killed every venture that could have brought this area job, careers, and an economic base. Riviera, prison, space port, Hawaiians say no to it all.”

“The minority oppose all economic growth from an emotional stance. Chideak, Riviera, the prison, the space port—all stopped and it would have brought tremendous economic growth for our children.”

“I love the rural live and beauty of the country side. When you look up from the store, the mountains are beautiful. I don’t want that to change, but on the other hand, we need some type of growth or there will be no future. All the kids will grow up and leave.”

“I am for development if we have a say in it. Right now, only one group is speaking for us without our permission.”

“If we see developers as opportunities and work with them, we get further, get more resources. Resources are scarce here, developers pay taxes and that helps us.”

“I want Ka`ū to stay Ka`ū. Keep it rural. That’s why I live here, and I don’t think the development will change the quality of life.”

“I think the development will improve the quality of life. It will bring new jobs, new careers, and new opportunities.”

“I’m the oldest fisherman here. Here the longest. I see a need for jobs. I’m for the development.”

Other themes, often heard, were these:

“Ka`ū people are the only people that know what is good for Punalu`u.”

“Sea Mountain Five has gone out of their way to listen to us. They have added acres to park land, there will be jobs created. Fifty-six acres is going to be given to the county for public space.”

“People have kept their imagination in and let their anger out.”

“The first rule is, don’t destroy.”

“Any plan will need a lot of care. I call it Natural Development. It includes preservation of the biological world, and takes care of the people. Any planner and developer needs to know this.”

“Right now my children are safe, we can leave the doors open. Development can bring outsiders. We need to keep a watch.”

Community Issues Related to Sea Mountain Five

The many community issues that residents shared about the current Sea Mountain Five proposal are reported here, starting with the issues on which there was full agreement in the community, and including a list of other concerns.

Consensus Issues

There was agreement among most people about key features of Punalu`u that need protection, no matter what choice was made about development. Almost all people talked about the importance of ...

- Full protection of sea life, shoreline resources, and environmental quality
- Keeping the Punalu`u Beach the way it is now for future generations
- Assuring that the beach area keeps a local feel, without gates or hours of operation, with beer drinking and camping
- Protection and respect for cultural sites
- Forever

When people were asked about the current Sea Mountain Five proposal, there was a pattern in their responses. The first thing they said was protection of the beach, having a local feel for the beach, with protection

of turtles and shoreline resources. The second thing they said was “Jobs” and not just entry-level jobs and linked to a meaningful job training program.

Most people were not familiar with the details of the proposal. When informed about the number of hotel and residential units and the cost of the homes, typically there would be a pause, and then, “That’s pretty big.” And then they would say, “That’s not housing for us.”

It appears from our fieldwork that there is an instinctive reaction to Sea Mountain Five—that it is somehow out of scale with the rest of the community in this geographic area. There was lots of fear, as well, connected with the resort failing. Also, there was a desire to have “controlled development.” However that term is defined, it is not Waikiki, Honolulu, or Kailua-Kona. Also, people did not want gates, either to the beach area or to the homes, because of the exclusivity it implies.

The following pages describe in more detail what people had to say about these design elements.

Information, Rumors and Communication

“I don’t know that much about it, I hear different stories from different people and don’t really know what to believe.” [Very common]

“I hear they will put up gates and we won’t be able to use the beach.” [Common]

“People don’t have enough information on the issues.”

“I want more information about what is on the table with the developers.”

“People here have the opportunity to direct the change, but need help to do it.”

“Developers state-wide have opportunities to be inclusive, but they seem to split communities. It’s not fair to blame them entirely but it is common.”

Assuring Commitments

“Get commitments to be legal on the part of SM5 and the county.”

“Hokulia had an unfortunate history. It was the first in which the county used a development contract. That mechanism had promise for addressing inadequacies of development process.”

“They’ve made contributions or commitments to the hospital, fire station, and other things. Make sure you get it locked in.”

“We don’t trust developers. You can’t believe that they will do what they say they will.” [Common]

“I fear development will not be built right so people say no to all development.”

“Assure things are done the way it’s supposed to.”

“The developer says this and that. If the development goes through, it will not be built as they say it will be. They won’t do what they say they’ll do.”

“Once they start building, there will be no stopping development. They chose to live by us. We didn’t move to them--they moved to us, so they better not try to change us.” [Hospital worker]

“So much talk, nothing in writing, makes people more distrustful.”

“We support Sea Mountain Five and they should be made to sign in blood what they say they will give to the community and how they will preserve the archeological sites and culture. I would like to see controlled smart planning.”

“There is no way to do development with good controls—they always change the rules.”

“Developers are willing to give 57 acres to community and maintain it free of charge. Plus 1million to hospital and 1 million to community delve. They must be held accountable and feet held to the fire.”

“Don’t let them developers come in here. They promise us things but don’t keep their promise. People here care and are fighting for the wilderness that is here.”

“There are always loopholes that must be protected against.”

“If you can guarantee controlled growth, then maybe I would support it, but I have little trust for developers. Once you let one in, another one gets in.”

“Will it work? There is a history of failed enterprises here. The golf course and the restaurant have gone down. Where is the return on investment? If times get hard, what promises are there?”

The Park, Access, the Beach, and Shoreline Resources

Support for protection of turtles and other shoreline resources is virtually universal.

“We want development, but don’t do anything to the coast line.”

“Preserve the beach and turtles and develop good so there will be job support. I wish we could have more field trips to learn things, like turtles, science.”

“White people say, ‘No access, it’s mine.’ You have to park far away and walk in.”

“If the land reverts to a county park, the county would have to put up gates with locks. Parks close at 10 pm. The access for evening night activities would be lost.” [A local golf club group, all nodding in agreement]

“Better access and rest rooms. The porta-potties were a good idea.”

“All locals go to the pavilion and the beach. Once that goes, their life is gone.”

“Camping is a way of life here. Keep it just the way it is.”

“We don’t want to have to walk through the hotel to get to the beach. We want our beach just the way it is. We don’t want to see all those umbrellas on the beach the way Hapuna Prince is now. Keep it local. We don’t want to park far away and walk in. No hotel close on the beach.”

“The beach is not big enough for new tourists. With new people coming now, there is not enough room for all of us. It is not a nice beach to swim in—the rip tides make it dangerous and you don’t go in there unless you really know.”

“It won’t be our beach. We won’t be able to drink beer, won’t be able to do ohana camping. The hotel won’t want liability.”

“The Ali`i trail along the shoreline is very special. You can look up and see an unrestricted view of the mountains.”

“I don’t want to see life styles change, keep access open. If this were a park, it would close at night and open in the morning.”
[Uncle, 60 years old]

“We are afraid we will be pushed off the beach by outsiders, and some that live right now on the beach [pointing to a nearby house]. We want some development. We want the work. We want to be near our kids.”

“They can say the beach is open but later it will be closed. We will lose our swimming.”

“Yes to development but don’t outlaw the cookhouses (the *pulehu*). The smell of the BBQs sometimes is protested. It’s the beach, for goodness sakes. That is what it’s for.”

“On O`ahu, you pack early and fight for parking. I used to walk to Punalu`u as kid. There is just one beach here. We would be giving up our beach for jobs.”

Jobs

The descriptions from people are filled with the need to create jobs locally. Besides beach access and protection of shoreline resources, this issue was the most widespread in the community. Almost everybody mentioned this in some form or another. For most, it was an issue connected to young people. For many, this issue is closely linked to another—commuting.

“What is needed is an expansion of this concept to include jobs that create a multiplier effect, that is, jobs that create other opportunities. A manager job held by a local puts the local hiring of others closer to control by the community as opposed to a job held by a grounds keeper. All are important but we need to think through a “value added”, “multiplier effect.”

“Reasonable development in Punalu`u will result in jobs in other towns. If there is not development at Punalu`u, there will be not economic growth.”

“We need development at Punalu`u. It’s not pristine, it’s already developed. We need jobs. Our children have no place to go and no job opportunities for their future. Where will they go? What will they do?”

“Development will bring in younger families and then the schools would grow and the DOE [Department of Education] would have to give more money to the schools. There would be more people in church, there would be more service jobs and then there will be more sustainable jobs to serve the workers.”

“One of my sons and daughter-in-law live in a Waikoloa Village condo and work in the resort. They like the resort and would come back to Ka`ū tomorrow if there were resort jobs.”

“I have training in ____ [culinary arts, hotel management], and I could stop driving to Kona and the resorts if I got a local job.”
[Several people]

“In Ka`ū, there is never anywhere for us kids to get a summer or part-time job.” [Frequent]

“Sure save the turtles, keep the beach sacred, but we need jobs. We need more things to have happen for the district.”

“Resort hotels can’t survive without houses. The houses will generate jobs. People are good with hands. We don’t want a hand out, people want to work.”

“We’re going to have jobs for you, clean, cook, sweep. We’re tired of these jobs.”

“I am in favor of development at Punulu`u for the jobs and for future of my children. It will provide some security to the area.”

“If business is coming here, we don’t want low-end jobs. We can acquire skills to enter at higher level. Classes on beauty and hair salons, management, cooks, security guards. Train guides that are professional. I mean, no outsiders to manage us. Always outsiders are flown in from LA to boss us without a knowledge of our culture and lifestyles.”

“I would like to see the development at Sea Mountain. I liked it when the restaurant was there. Now, there are too many kids without anything to do. I think that the developer will provide jobs and beautify the area. I think ____ ____ is on the up and up.”

“Development will provide jobs, but will it provide jobs for locals? If people are already driving to work on Kohala Coast in resorts why wouldn’t they want to stay home and work, make a better life?”

“I want development because then my children would be able to stay in Ka`ū and work. Now they drive back and forth to Kona. There is nothing for the young people to do here, no jobs no future, no way to keep the family here.”

“What kind of jobs and who will benefit? Kids gotta work, but kids gotta want to get ahead. They can’t get a hand out.”

“If we can have them hire locals in the construction of the project, there will be pride in the project after, because we were part of the building. Then after, we can fit into the completed project, trained as managers, landscapers, restaurant workers, and hospitality which includes maid service, greeters, security. Through security, find a way to move up to police and state police and beyond with sequenced training.”

Then her husband says,

“If development ever happens, there will be money and we will be left out of employment.” [They laugh at their differences.]

“I have training as a chef.”

“The good jobs will be created by the building of the proposed development and will only last the length of the project. After that, only minimum wage service industry jobs will be available.”

“Transient element [from temporary workers] means bars, singles and trouble. Don’t import workers.” [3 comments]

“Jobs would bring choices so you can negotiate with your bosses. Negotiation is easier when they know you have choices.”

“We can’t get employees now. We are short 50 trades people, all full time employees. If the resort goes in, I know our employees will want to leave here and go to work down there.” [Mac nut supervisor]

“Jobs yes, but often they will go to mainlanders. What are the guarantees, especially good paying jobs?”

A group of 7 young people had their trucks backed up to the beach one day, talking and smoking. When they were approached to talk story, they all said they did not want the development, that they did not want to risk losing what they have now, today, at the beach. Then one of the young men quietly said, “But I’d sure like a job so I don’t have to drive so far,” stimulating a debate among them. If development would not risk the beach experience they have now—no restrictions, a local feel, perhaps they would consider it.

There are many people who reside in Ka`ū who already trained in hotel and resort management. They either work in Kona or Kohala or they are doing other work in Ka`ū. They reported training and experience in hotel management, chefs, housekeeping, landscaping, accounting, and personnel.

The Filipino community expressed the strongest interest in the jobs represented by the development proposal. They also offered the most unqualified support for job development, not attaching it to other interests or conditions.

“We want more jobs. My son works in Kona at Waikoloa. If there was a resort here he could be here.”

“I want jobs for my children. If there needs to be a hotel, with no college degrees, that’s OK. We need hotel jobs.”

Job Training

For many, a meaningful job training program is seen as an effective way of assuring that local residents can compete for jobs. Many residents pointed to their own skills or the skills of people they knew in saying that there was a trained workforce in resort services now in Ka`ū and that local employment could save them long commutes.

“We were negotiating to complete a job training package before it got all controversial. Then everybody backed away.” [Member of O Ka`ū Kakou]

“People are already trained because of driving to Kona. These people are trained. There is a whole bunch of people who live here who could qualify for those jobs.”

“Train the human relations people, the people doing the hiring, to look for locals who can be successful. These developers seem to want to do it right.”

“Start training ahead of time. Get people ready now.”

”The developer must help get locals beyond entry level jobs. If the resort could really help the community, I’ll be there.”

“We could compete for jobs OK. You have to want the job to get it. Not everyone would want to work. Training should be put in place to help those that want it.”

“Create scholarship for kids to go to a school of their choice.”

“Get local apprentices, give young people a start.”

“There are chefs, managers, local guys who are chefs in Kona, cooks that go to Kona. They should get the jobs.”

“I am experienced in restaurant work, pastries, and housekeeping. I’d like to take on part time work.”

Scale of Development

People informed about the project often say that the scale of the project should be reduced, and even that the scale of development should match and not exceed the scale of the nearby towns, about 500 units. They say things like, “We’d like jobs, but we want controlled growth,” or “scaled down.” “Controlled growth” was a very common term in the area. When residents said that the development was too big, they were asked, “What would be your magic number if you could decide?” The number of housing units preferred ranged from 400 to 800 with about 600 the average.

“Look at the beach. The resort is not the right kind for that beach. It’s not a stereotype Hawaii beach, white sands and huge like Waikiki. It’s small, local and rural. It should be a rural resort, for a different type of traveler.”

“We’ve been talking to developers for a year and half now. All of us want to save Punalu`u. There has to be changes made to the plan, scale it down.”

“A resort is size appropriate with controlled growth to moderate growth. Jobs are gone for young kids. They have to go Hilo or Kona. A hotel can support the economy here and then other businesses will come as a result.”

“The development has to come down in size. They have already come down from 850 hotel rooms to 350 hotel rooms. This development has done everything they can to listen to the community and I think they will follow through on their promises.”

“Punalu`u needs redevelopment. It’s already zoned and ready to go, but it should be a small resort.”

“Scale down the development at Punalu`u, set back the development to 450 feet. You can save the turtles and the coast line, too.”

“Bottom line—they can either have a larger hotel and less homes, or a smaller hotel and more homes. We are only going to have one resort on this side of the island so make it a great one. Let the jets come in with the rich and famous, let them build an airstrip right here, that would be a great economic boom.”

“Keep it natural, not so overpopulated like Waikiki, keep the natural beauty. We couldn’t handle a large hotel.”

“I’d like to see development for the jobs, but I’m concerned that tourists would take over.”

“I am in favor of the development ever since I found out that they have scaled down the housing proposal.”

“I am for development if it is smart development.”

“That’s a lot. It would be more houses than are in Na`alehu. It sounds like Waikoloa. There should be housing for locals.”

“I’m for it. Develop what is there. Don’t go overboard, Make sure there are jobs.”

“I want controlled development with preservation and public access. I have 4 kids, 3 on the mainland. Don’t make it so big as being planned. The hotel is a plus, houses less than 500.”

“If it gets too big, you can’t handle it.”

“I don’t want a large resort. It should be small scale, where we can control the development. Keep the beach the same. We don’t want to see large structures, we want to camp, have easy access to the beach.”

“We need more amenities, small hotel, small scale, keep the beach accessible and move everything back off the beach.”

“Don’t build it so big, build a small hotel. We need change but not so big.” [Hospital worker]

“The hotel will bring jobs and I hope they will hire our own boys. Build a hotel but don’t build 1000 homes. That’s too many.”

“We want development at Punalu`u and Pahala, not big, not too much, scaled down with jobs and business to support business, like coffee for the tourists.

“The number of homes is too much. There should be fewer units. Taxes will go up and prices will go up.” [Hospital workers]

“The developer’s plan has parts in it that make money available to the hospital, and for children and education. If the developers are forced to consider a way scaled down plan, they probably will not do anything. Only a reasonable development of a hotel/housing with support services can make it profitable.”

“They are not keeping the golf course off the shoreline. Their prime hole is by church—their signature hole. They need to scale back.”

“Pahala has about 500 homes and Na`alehu about 450 and people want the resort at similar size.”

“The projections would double the population of Na`alehu. They don’t have the infrastructure.”

For many people the question of scale, of how much development, relates to the rural character of the Ka`ū area, an idea developed further in a later section.

“Tourist love rural Hawaii, and this is the only place left that is rural.”

“Keep it characteristically rural and real, where people from the outside would be more willing to spend time and money.”

“Volcano house is a model of how the hotel should be, small, quaint, Hawaiian in style.”

Local Housing

Many people reacted with alarm to the price information about the housing component of the Sea Mountain Five proposal by saying, “That’s not housing for people who live here.” If a resort development will increase the cost of living, and the wages are relatively low, then affordable housing is a necessary requirement for a balanced community, they reasoned. People emphasized that monthly mortgages and rents for local people had to be affordable, within a range of \$600-\$1000/month. Several thoughtful residents also had the notion that local housing contributed by Sea Mountain Five should be located in the existing communities of Na`alehu and Pahala.

“So many can’t afford a house. Now what I’d like to say is the affordable housing SM5 is talking about is too high. None of our people can afford \$350,000. It is too much. If they can build the affordable homes here in Na’alehu or Pahala, then the people would still be a part of the community and that is important.”

“The real question is, how can there be low cost infrastructure to keep housing really low?”

“Have the local affordable housing in Pahala or Na`alehu so people can have their culture, separate them from the people with money. If something doesn’t happen it will be a ghost town.”

“Affordable housing can be built in Na`alehu or Pahala.”

“The houses are too much money for us.”

“There is no housing for us. We are closed out of this.”

“Affordable housing of \$300,000 is not for Hawaiian families. That is not affordable, but there should be a way to create affordable homes and make them available.”

“They should do housing for local people. Locate the subdivision here in Pahala.”

“We were looking at housing for \$200,000 by working with local landowners in existing communities. They would give up land to make this happen.” [O Ka`ū Kakou negotiating effort]

“You can’t find housing you can afford. The most I can pay for housing is \$6-800.”

“Development in Punalu`u will not solve the housing problem, if mortgage rate remains high. Even \$1000 monthly mortgages are not affordable. I like the OHA way [Office of Hawaiian Affairs]—you don’t own the land but you put your own house on it.

“Developers need to provide to the community affordable housing that is truly affordable.”

“New community should blend in with existing community. There needs to be lots and lots of open space in new developments with trails and walking and biking paths.”

“These homes will be 2nd homes like Discovery Harbor. They will make no contribution.”

“The housing at SM5 starts at \$390,000. What local can afford that? Plantation houses in Pahala are now selling for \$200,000. What local can afford that?”

“If the house is not primary residence, there should be a heavy tax on it.”

“Housing: who is it for? If it’s all vacation homes, there won’t be a benefit.”

Environmental Quality

“Don’t develop, because of the hawkbill. They nest at night. A couple years ago, two pregnant females at another beach were killed. They got disoriented by lights at night.” [National Park volunteer]

“This resort could be self sustaining. When I was a girl, I swam with turtles and boulders. It can still work.” [Tutu]

“Where will they put the sewage plant? How will it not affect the ocean waters?”

“The EIS [draft Environmental Impact Statement] said that percolation in the ground would be a sufficient means to handle wastewater pollution. That is not the case. It bothers me when they say development will have no impact. You have to step back and say, ‘What is it like now.’” [Marine science professor]

“The environment currently is not too degraded at Punalu`u. The coastal zone is OK. The pond next to the concession stand is a

problem. The area is packed with turtles and their health is a good indicator for health of the environment. Basking turtles were relatively rare until 25 years ago, and may be linked to the decline of hunting. It's a great place to study them and to educate about them." [Marine science professor]

"I am concerned about the water down in Punalu`u. The drinking water, waste water, bath water. It concerns me that there will be no safeguards. The coast could be poisoned. The sea life will die. People can also die. Please express this to the mayor."

"Many species are adapted for dark nights, turtles of course but also two seabirds that gather offshore at dusk, and fly low to the uplands at night. They are endangered by an invasive predator. The birds are distracted by light; the young crash into the light and into the sea. Dark coasts are good and they are rare."

"*Pahoehoe* deltas are where coastal vegetation survives the best. These life forms are at risk from development."

"There should be no fear of environmental damage if SM5 proceeds, since there are federal agencies such as EPA that will provide safeguards." [Common]

"Two tour buses mean 180 people. You think they don't touch turtles? With 300 more rooms, you have 900 more visitors. How can it take it?"

"There are signs on the beach but that is not enough. The resort will have to have a full-time ranger whose only job is to educate watch, instruct. Can an education center be part of the resort?"

"Where development is planned, there is an underground bench up to the coast. It can break off into the sea with any seismic activity"

Incrementalize

Many people suggested that Sea Mountain Five phase in their development over a period of time, to make sure it would work, and to minimize risk for the developers and for the communities.

"Punalu`u is not pristine. It's developed, so redevelop on a small scale to start with and let it gradually grow to capacity over 15 years. Then work towards saving the pristine areas like Honu`apo, Start with affordable housing, small hotel condos."

“Build only a few houses at first and some condos. Then the hotel. See how it’s gonna go. They have a 15 year plan. Who knows what the needs are in 15 years?”

”No development. There could be gradual growth, not a boom like the Kohala coast. How will the amount of people be handled?

“Yes we need some growth, but I don’t want it to grow like the Kohala coast. I want it gradual and small, so the community can sustain the growth.”

“I firmly believe the best development for Punalu`u would be to grow in small increments. Small lodges, small businesses and restaurants. Revive the golf course but keep it affordable for local use. Do not, I repeat, do not encourage "luxury" development.”

“Make it phased, revisit the progress with the community, phase in review and comment before going on.”

Restaurant

Residents were very interested in having a restaurant return to Punalu`u. Many were uncertain whether the existing site could be renovated or whether it would require starting over. But so many people had pleasant memories of family or work times that a return of a restaurant would have great cultural continuity.

“Yes build a restaurant down there, like it used to be. We all came there, locals and tourists. It was a good place to come relax. Fix what is there before building other things.”

“I would love to see a restaurant again at Sea Mountain. Something for the new generation.”

Hotels

The hotels received more support from residents than the housing did. The hotels are associated with employment while the housing numbers seemed high to most people. People wondered if the number of hotel rooms (350 is proposed) is feasible and point to low occupancy rates of other resorts. As a later section will show, people asked the developer to consider a more rural-oriented hotel, with fewer rooms, more dispersed, and more oriented to eco-tourism amenities like cultural, historical and ecological education, outdoor education and so on.

“The hotel would be to left side of the Pro Shop, near the highway not up to the chapel. The chapel and cemetery would be protected. The hotel would not hide the ocean or mountain views. I am an activist when it comes to preservation. People too must be protected from those outsiders who might turn this area like Kona and Honolulu.”

“Get a tight hotel like Molokai, small, can fill and staff, keep it tight, off the ocean with integrated housing [mix of affordable and market units].”

“350 rooms are insane.”

“ Three hundred rooms are too much. There are always loopholes that must be protected against.”

Economic Viability

Many residents discussed the number of empty lots in the area and asked whether there was sufficient demand to warrant development at the scale currently proposed. In addition, people asked about hotel occupancy rates, with many having the general sense that occupancy rates have been declining in Hawaii. Because of the lack of investment at Punalu`u over the last several years, residents are concerned that this development could overbuild and not also succeed, creating significant impact in the community and the environment.

“Where is the market study?”

“I’m just afraid that the hotel will not be filled. It’s too much. Have they done an analysis?”

“Some resorts don’t do well. Would it be successful?”

“Find a way to maintain it even if the development goes down, so it’s not a mess.”

“There is no [typical] beach at Punalu`u, no ocean sports. All that tourists like. So why would a tourist want to stay here?”

“I’m against development unless it is proved it can work.”

“It’s way too big for the community and for feasibility. Will it be an economic failure? Abandoned structures? If it is too ambitious, it wouldn’t be a success.”

“A big resort won’t be nice enough.”

In addition, several thoughtful observers were concerned about the feasibility of 1000 new house lots in this area. They point to house lots in Ocean View, Discovery Harbor and other places that have not sold even after many years.

Density, Setback, and Visual Impact

The uncluttered view plain is one of the most cherished qualities of Ka`ū. People want Sea Mountain Five to reduce the visual impact of its design. In addition, additional setbacks would let residents relax that the development would not intrude on traditional activities at the beach.

“There could be building mauka of the highway and a moratorium on all building makai of the highway. With the exception of grandfathered rights.”

“Build 500 meters back. Don’t let them build where the old restaurant is.”

“There should be a no-build setback of 500 meters for all development.”

“The development is a good idea, it would improve the county, but there should be 1000’ setback.”

“Put the restaurant at back of pond; move parking lot shown on side of pond to the back. If those two things were done, you could say that whole shoreline was pretty protected.

“If you couldn’t see it because it blended in as much as possible, there were no lights at night, then it could work.”

“In the Park Service report that Congressman Case got going, they said the key to the area is the hillside—avoid homes and lights on the hillside.”

“The proposed ecological hotel in the Black Sand Beach area, shops, restaurant, and any other proposed structures should be built behind the pond where the old restaurant and cultural center were located.”

“No housing or structures should be allowed in the shoreline area. It is especially important that the area near Ninole Pond be untouched. Any structures should be behind the existing golf/pro

shop. This might require a change in the zoning.”

“My bias is to build off the water, put some of the development mauka of the highway.”

“Say the number of homes was 600, only 125 units would be year round. There would be little impact if you blended it in to reduce the visual impact.”

“Keep it away from heiau and water. Push it in back.”

“There better be no high rise around the chapel, it is so sacred. It should be more like Kona Village.”

“I want to preserve the ocean front, so the development will fit into the environment and I won’t see any building from the sea or land. The homes could be built into the trees for a canopy.”

“The real value here is the space, the undiminished views. It’s not the beaches or the greenery. So consequently there is value for hidden homes, hidden density, stuff you don’t see.”

Existing Facility

Many residents had personal history connected with Sea Mountain, either because they were or are employees, or because of family occasions held at the site. Most decried the deterioration of the facility and expressed frustration at the owners for not keeping the place up.

For example, when the golf club house began experiencing sewage problems, the owners reportedly instructed portable bathrooms to be installed. When the Liquor Commission told them that portable bathrooms were not permissible in a liquor establishment, they closed the shop, put a sign on the building saying “Closed for repairs,” and moved the golf pro shop to the snack shop elsewhere in the complex.

“It’s a shame it [the current facility] was neglected so long.”
(Widespread)

“The water tank is rusty and leaking. It is only able to be half-filled because of the large leakage occurring.”

“Punalu`u beach needs to be rebuilt. No one is taking care of the place, its not welcoming.”

“The working conditions are almost intolerable, things are barely running, broken equipment and everything.”

“I’d like to talk with the owners, ‘Why did you let this place go down hill?’”

“C. Brewer built the berm in front of the pond. It should be taken out to let the ocean have an inflow and outflow.”

“Fix Punalu`u. It’s an eyesore. Respect the graves and *heiau*.”

“People used to take care of it.”

“The concession owners will not put money into it. Like new golf carts. Golfers are complaining about this. The carts are hard to start. They moan and complain.”

The concession owners don’t upgrade the equipment or facilities. There are problems with sprinklers too often. This business is for sale, so they don’t care. The right company should buy this and upgrade it, need new turf. I was promised 6 new carts 6 years ago and every year we still have nothing. I am really stressed out. My crew is doing the best it can.”

Amenities and Services

“We need redevelopment in Punalu`u. We need jobs. It’s not just for tourism. We locals will use it too. We are having a reunion this weekend and there are not enough places for everyone to stay. People would stay at the hotel if they could.”

“A lifeguard is needed. It is too unsafe. They are always pulling someone out. It’s a very dangerous beach. When water looks calm, it is the worst. You get past the boat ramp and it will suck you around the corner and smash you on the rocks.”

If the resort goes, the needs of police department will increase. They will need more staff.”

“If the development came we would have to get more police patrols, our infrastructure would have to get better.”

“We play tennis and enjoy the courts. Now of course they are falling apart and only one court is really functional. We just play and put up with the other three courts. But wouldn’t it be nice to have some real courts?”

Commercial Services and Opportunities

“There is nothing at this end of the island that will draw people and make them stay. If there is a resort, at least there would be a few stores, shops and that kind to give people a place to visit.”

“Would there be opportunities for local businesses on site?”

“How can farmers and growers make it with vegetables and coffee, market to the development, the hotel and restaurant?”

“Would there be places to locate kiosks and small shops at the Cultural Center for local items?”

“If you have a major economic development project, you’ll have over flow of other types of business sprouting up. Crafters can’t buy supplies here. They all have to mail order it or go to Hilo. If the resort comes, you’ll get tourists who want to stay and buy locally-made products.”

“We need more B&B’s [Bed and Breakfast establishments] here. The few we have are nice.”

“There should be low interest loans so the business owners could get on site, maybe fix up these buildings.”

“Agriculture can be supported by development at Punalu`u through purchase agreements to buy the products.”

The Current Status of the Community Benefits Package

Sea Mountain has agreed with the local community to provide a Community Benefits Package aimed at addressing many community concerns and optimizing benefits to the community. Many of these provisions were negotiated through the community group, `O Ka`ū Kakou. The process of completing the benefits package was aborted because of the level of controversy.

“The community never had a chance to debate/discuss the ‘nuances’ involved in this development.”

“We never got to finish the Community Benefits Package. It got so hot, everybody just backed off.”

Elements of the Community Benefits Package Included in the Draft EIS

The specific provisions listed below were included by Sea Mountain Five in its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The “unresolved issues” listed in the DEIS were: Affordable and Workforce Housing, Police and Fire, Schools, Medical Services, Electrical Services, and Beach Crowding.

Income Revenue to Community

Sea Mountain Five has proposed the creation of a community fund managed by a board of respected community members.

During construction, the following funds will be contributed to the Community Fund:

1. \$1,000,000 will be contributed to the Community Fund upon final approval of the Special Management Area (SMA) including any court actions.
2. \$1,000,000 will be contributed prior to obtaining a grading permit for the start of construction.
3. Sea Mountain will contribute 0.3% of the gross sales price from the initial sale of each residence or lot sold.

After the initial sales, the Community Fund will receive funding from the following sources:

1. 1% of the gross sales price of the resale of any house or lot.
2. \$3.00 for every night any hotel room is rented.
3. \$1.00 for each round of golf played
4. \$3.00 per month per unit from every homeowners’ association fee charged.

Over the first 15 years of construction and operations, it is estimated in the Draft EIS that Sea Mountain will contribute approximately \$12 million into the Community Fund.

Economic Opportunities

The development of Sea Mountain will provide short-terms jobs during the construction of the project as well as permanent jobs that will last the life of the community. It is estimated to provide 3,800 jobs during

construction as well as 517 permanent jobs in Ka`ū. In addition, it is expected to provide 7,200 total jobs through multiplier effects.

The project is expected to create \$735 million in economic input and \$342 million in new household income.

The new households and visitors also will provide opportunities for people to start their own businesses like landscaping firms, property management companies, maintenance companies, home repair and remodeling firms to name a few. It will also provide additional buyers for products from local farmers and fisherman.

Sea Mountain has also agreed to fund a program to provide small business loans to local people that want to start their own businesses.

Job Training Program

To prepare the local community for these jobs, Sea Mountain Five has agreed to provide job training programs. These will prepare people for resort and construction jobs as well as helping the entrepreneurs in the community to start and operate businesses to serve the existing community as well as Sea Mountain's population.

Local Hire First Policy

Sea Mountain has agreed to a policy of hiring local people first and will require businesses such as the hotels to also have a hire local first policy.

Additional Elements of the Community Benefits Package under Negotiation after Submission of the Draft EIS

The following community benefits have been included in the discussions between Sea Mountain Five and the community organization, O' Ka`ū Kakou (OKK). These elements were not included in the Sea Mountain Draft EIS, and there have been no written agreements on these elements concluded with Sea Mountain Five. OKK and many residents considered these negotiations to be incomplete as of this writing. The current perceptions of residents about these elements were told to the field team and are included here.

Affordable Housing

Sea Mountain Five agreed to work with OKK, the community at large, and the County of Hawaii to create affordable housing programs and financing programs that will foster affordable housing and workforce housing as required by the county ordinance.

As indicated under Community Issues, a majority of residents reacted to pricing information about proposed housing with, “Oh, that’s not housing for us,” or some similar comment. The recognition was clear that some of the housing must be for local residents to create a true community benefit. Moreover, people would often include statements like, “Don’t think that \$350,000 is affordable,” alluding to the reported cost of housing under the affordable program of the County. Part of the negotiations on housing between OKK and SM5 included the idea that the number of required workforce housing and affordable housing could be reduced in exchange for mortgages which are truly affordable for local residents.

Discussions included the idea that housing for local people could be located in the existing communities of Na`alehu and Pahala. Many local residents liked this idea, partly because it would reduce impacts at Punalu`u and partly because it would offer workers a real community instead of a resort-oriented, part-time community. On the other hand, some residents also said the housing should be located at the resort in order to make it a real community.

Cultural and Educational Center

Discussions were undertaken to build and support a living educational village setting with replication of Hawaiian Ahupua`a lifestyle and diverse ethnic groups that settled in the Ka`ū District. Oceanography and other appropriate educational information relevant to the area would be included.

Kamehameha Schools (KS), Sea Mountain Five and OKK had meetings to discuss the opportunities to develop 90 acres of KS land next to the development site as a site for the cultural and educational center. Talks centered on protection and respect for important cultural sites, and the creation of cultural events on the site. Sea Mountain Five had agreed to consider their provision of needed infrastructure. As the controversy deepened over the development proposals, these talks did not go forward.

For the negotiators, the resort hotels and the cultural center go hand in hand, as it is the attraction of the cultural center that would draw the

hotel visitors and encourage them to stay longer than they otherwise would.

Residents are drawn to the notion that development could bring a learning or cultural center. For them, it would be a way to maintain the history and culture of Ka`ū.

“Build a cultural center where the old building is.”

“The Learning Center is a plus. Package it smart to include National Park Service type jobs, jobs in marine science, etc.”

County Park

Sea Mountain Five agreed to donate to the County of Hawaii the land currently being leased to the county for a park. In addition, Sea Mountain Five will donate an additional acreage to the county to enlarge the park. The total amount of land has not been finalized but the last negotiations called for a 56 acre park. Because of the recognition that the County would be unable to maintain it, Sea Mountain Five had agreed to operate and maintain the park.

Golf

Sea Mountain will initiate and support a year round junior golf program at the golf course. Golf fees for local residence will be offered at a discounted fee. SM5 also agreed to an environmental standard of golf course construction using the Audubon Society rating and approval system to guarantee environmental controls.

Alternative Futures at Punalu`u

Four alternatives were discussed among residents regarding possible alternative futures for Punalu`u. They are:

1. Federal ownership
2. The Ka`ū Preservation development alternative
3. A rural, eco-tourism approach
4. A scaled-back version of Sea Mountain Five proposal with completed Community Benefits Package

Each will be discussed in turn.

1. Federal Ownership

A few people suggested that federal ownership would be the best way to protect valued shoreline resources and to provide community benefits. Several people mentioned a “reconnaissance study” performed by the National Park Service recently. Apparently that study rated the shoreline and cultural resources of sufficient quality to warrant further study and a bill has been introduced in Congress to authorize and fund the study. One of the possible designations is a National Seashore.

“It would probably be better if the federal government acquired the land, then the regulation on use would be for our benefits, with no fees, use the area anytime, right?”

“A National Seashore designation would like limit fishing rights. It’s not as good a cultural fit as the Ka`ū Preservation proposal.”

“I want it to be a National Seashore. It would offer something positive, some jobs, and protection. Separate the park to assure access.”

“It’s so nice here. People are down to earth. A national park would be the worst thing that could happen.”

“It will get too congested like Kona. I want it to be a national park.”

2. The Ka`ū Preservation Development Alternative

Ka`ū Preservation has developed a site plan showing their vision of how the land could be managed to offer the level of protection it thinks is important and offering positive benefits for the community. It calls for acquisition of the shoreline back to 2000 feet. Ideally, the group would like the whole ahupua`a protected through additional land purchases. The shoreline area would contain camping areas, a living classroom, and a visitors/cultural center. The group’s website had this description:

“To protect Punalu`u forever as an essential gathering place for local families, a nesting site for the endangered Hawksbill Sea Turtle, a habitat for the rare and endangered Hawaiian Monk Seal, the Hawaiian Hoary Bat and other endangered plant and animals.

To create Ka`ū as a Living Classroom that can become an ‘Eco-Campus’ for students and educators from around the world. We believe Ka`ū can become a model for sustainable Earth friendly development for the rest of the world. With public input and

community involvement we can create a vision that comes from people of Ka`ū who have protected its resources for nearly two thousand years.”

A flyer from the organization called their vision the Punalu`u Cultural Preserve which

“will create better jobs through educational careers and a stronger economy for Ka`ū and the island of Hawai`i by building partnerships with leading educational institutions around the world. The Living Classroom Outdoor Campus will offer ‘hands on learning’” ...in a variety of natural sciences and Hawaiian studies.

On June 6, 2007, Ka`ū Preservation posted a site plan on their website that showed the distribution of various facilities on the development site, including an eco-hotel, numbers of employees and salaries per employee. Residents said the site plan even had a tram shown at one point. Upon last review of the website on September 14, this information was removed.

Clearly, the features of this development vision are changing and it appears as if there is not yet a real development plan.

If Resolution 169-07 passes, residents were unclear whether the County would manage the property, Ka`ū Preservation, or another community group. Concern was expressed about the possibility of County or Ka`ū Preservation management.

“This is a no-take-care-of County. If the County gets the land and the park, it will be terrible.”

“There is no money to buy the land and no ability to maintain the new park. You just have to look at the other parks the County owns. They can’t keep toilet paper in the restrooms. Other County parks are substandard. Punalu`u will be come a dump if the County buys it.”

“The 150 acre park proposal can’t work. It’s a government taking. I wouldn’t like it if they did that to me. The government is overreaching.”

“If we get a County park then there will be beach access problems, a gate and certain times you can come and go. We don’t want that, we want it to stay just like it is. Whatever, we must preserve the beach and turtles.”

“The County can’t let [KPI] manage the property. They will not make it over the long haul. Look at Magic Sands—a small group took over the management of beach for the county and it fizzled within 6 months. The toilets were broken, plugged, inoperable, trash around. [KPI] is not in the business of park management. [KPI] is in the business of self serving.”

“There is growing resistance to the resolution [169-07] because no one wants [KPI] to run it.”

It is a short sighted idea, especially [KPI] proposing its own management.”

“If you give it to them they will destroy it. ____ is mainland influenced now.”

“If the Ka`ū Preservation board is so for preservation, let them sign an agreement that they will never personally receive money as a result of Resolution 169-07.”

“Who’s going to maintain the park if [KPI] gets it?”

“We are worried if the County or KPI gets this land they will gate it.”

“The County does not take care of the park. The sand needs to be pushed back, we can’t do it. It’s a heavy job. The road is blocked.”

“____ is so vocal and he grandstands the whole thing in public, but [KPI] doesn’t have the money.”

3. A Rural-Oriented, Eco-Tourism Proposal

Some people criticized Sea Mountain Five for its development proposal by saying it was not creative enough or in tune enough with the rural Ka`ū landscape.

“The SM5 plan is following a model.”

“SM5 has a traditional approach. They only did a few meetings, and with key people. They did not sell it.”

“It’s a proposal driven by lot sales.”

Many people talked about the value of “eco-tourism” as an alternative way to approach development of the Punalu`u area.

- Birth it freshly
- A Living Village, throwing nets, learning a Hawaiian way of life
- Living with the land, low impacts
- Oriented to the rural character of Ka`ū, that is smaller and dispersed
- No golf course
- Dark at night
- Minimize visual impact, blend it in
- Optimize links to agriculture, perhaps agreements to purchase local agricultural products by resort businesses and creating value-added agriculture by having retail outlets for agricultural products
- A rural experience
- Use of environmentally-friendly (“green”) building design and materials. Use of recycling and solar. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification.
- Create agricultural hui, with shared spaces, supported by housing.
- At a scale like Volcano, small and rural in flavor

“It will bring new jobs and economic growth that will prosper and create other jobs. And careers we haven’t even thought of.”

“Do eco tourism, like Cousteu is already doing. They are very specialized resorts with low impacts, with hiking trails, cultural events and education. A resort like that would bring a special person.”

“It would help the resort sell better if alternative forms of energy were emphasized, if the building materials were green. It would send a message to other developers. A low rise and dispersed resort is more profitable. Sea Mountain Five is an old model.”

“Build for uniqueness that the different cultures represented in Ka`ū. The Filipinos have their beautiful heritage and pride in their culture.”

“The hotel or lodge could be dispersed away from the beach. Commerce could be created around development.”

“Maybe an eco-hotel, up the mountain but not on the beach. Why not take state land up the mountain, and build the hotel, a lodge that would represent the uniqueness of this area?”

“Build a lodge like Volcano up Kahuku Mountain. An upscale lodge would be low impact, away from beach, that costs a lot of money to stay so only certain tourists can come in.”

“Look at the beach. The resort is not the right kind for that beach. It’s not a stereotype Hawaii beach, white sands and huge like Waikiki. It’s small, very special for local people, and not a swimming beach. This means it should be a rural resort for a different type of traveler.”

“Ka`ū would probably best be served by eco-tourism, with homestays, farmstays, B&B’s [Bed and breakfast establishments], and nature tours types of businesses that are low impact and provide a decent income to residents. Large-scale resort development does not belong there...the beaches are not good for swimming, there are no restaurants or services, not even a decent grocery store.”

“Don’t ‘Konafy’ Punalu`u. No to all condos. Keep it quaint, country.”

“Bed and breakfasts, like Volcano.”

“We should, as a state, mandate buildings to have solar. The Big Island on the Kona side has so much sun. Why is a developer allowed to build without putting in solar? Hawaii is so far behind in recycling. We are a tiny island and it’s a shame that we don’t recycle.”

“Consider alternative building designs for Punalu`u – an ‘eco-development,’ similar to Kona Village near the Kona Airport. I don’t like the concept of ‘scale-down,’ but prefers building from the bottom up.”

“I would like to see some development, but small scale and to encompass agricultural aspects of the area, with use of what is grown here.”

4. A scaled-back version of Sea Mountain Five proposal with completed Community Benefits Package

The section above on Community Issues described the range of concerns that people expressed with the current Sea Mountain Five proposal. The

fourth and final development alternative discussed by local residents was a scaled back version of the current proposal.

The scaled-back version included these recommendations and ideas from citizens:

- A further setback from the shoreline to 1000 to 1500 feet.
- Housing units reduced in number ranging from 400 to 800.
- Current agreements remain in place such as the park proposal, affordable housing, cultural center, and local hiring policy.
- A completed community-benefits package.
- Retail footage for affordable businesses.
- No gates or exclusivity.
- Insertion of the agreed upon commitments as a “Social Impact Mitigation” inserted into the final EIS, for inclusion in the Special Management Area (SMA) permit.

JKA estimates that a complete community benefits package would take three to six months to complete. Such a process would have to be more systematic and broad-based in its citizen contact and would truly represent “community based design.” It would be important to structure the process to create safety for people to participate. Section Six addresses this topic.

Figure Four is a proposal for a win/win answer to Punalu`u offered by a local resident.

Figure Four
A Citizen's Proposal for a Win/Win Solution for Punalu`u

Why can't we have conservation and job creation?

The basic assumption is that compromise is possible-that a plan *acceptable* to all shades of opinion can be worked out. In compromising, everyone gets something and gives up something.

PHASE I: AGREE ON CORE COMPONENTS

What can we all agree on before getting into the hard negotiations?

1. There has to be broad agreement that some redevelopment of Punalu`u is acceptable. If hard-liners in KP prevail, further consideration is pointless.
2. Conservation is a key element: protection of turtles, perhaps with regular volunteer patrols.
3. Conservation of the black sand beach- perhaps a new plan agreed by experts on how best to reduce the loss of sand.
4. Conservation of historical sites and respect for known burial sites.
5. No charge for admission to the beach.
6. Relatively easy access for local residents driving cars.
7. "Locals first" hiring policy, maybe with ILWU input on priorities.
8. Water quality is a key issue; SM5 firm up on Audubon standards for golf course and high standards for sewage treatment.
9. SM5 agrees to make fixing up the infrastructure a priority.
10. Boat ramp access maintained.

PHASE II: NEGOTIATIONS

11. County agrees to accept 56 acres or something close as a donation and establishes a new, larger beach park.
12. SM5 agrees to downsize to perhaps 800-1000 units including hotel(s).
13. County agrees to rezone mauka land to allow fewer units makai of highway.
14. KP gets teaching center with partial funding from SM5.
15. KP agrees to no litigation to delay the resort or line someone's pockets.
16. OKK agrees to share a Hawaiian Culture Center with KP. (restored Aspen?)
17. County agrees to use some of the funds it has saved on a major renovation of the pavilions, including bigger and better bathroom facilities.
18. County and SM5 agree on a joint maintenance agreement for the shoreline area.
19. Bob Jacobson agrees to withdraw his resolution; the new #1 pavilion is named the Jacobson Pavilion in recognition of his conservation efforts.
20. Tour buses are allocated parking away from the beach, perhaps restoration of the scenic walkway by the lagoon.
21. Everyone agrees on a walkway from the black sand beach to Ninole with shelters along the way, as a means of reducing pressure on the beach.
22. OKK and KP agree on priorities for the Public Benefit package; maybe both nominate members of a Board of Trustees that selects projects to be funded.
23. SM5, OKK, and KP agree on a management plan for the Cultural/Teaching Center.

Section Five: An Assessment of Conflict

Residents' comments described communities deeply divided over the future of the Ka`ū area--and over the Sea Mountain Five proposal specifically. This chapter describes three major cultural themes in Ka`ū related to this conflict that were in the stories of citizens. It further describes how the citizens view the role played by Ka`ū Preservation, Inc. [KPI] in fostering conflict.

Major Cultural Themes about Conflict

There are three major themes that emerged from the stories of the people regarding this conflict. Each one is addressed in turn.

1. “Talk Story until there is a balance.”

This theme is the most widespread of the comments received from residents. Citizens showed that talking story is a part of their cultural mechanism for getting things done. When an action is contemplated that involves other people, the respectful thing to do in Ka`ū is to talk story. Over time, it begins to be clear the course of action that is appropriate. That is what residents have asked for related to this conflict—that they be given a chance to do what they always do—talk story until there is a balance.

“It’s like a see-saw or a teeter-totter. You have to keep talking story until there is a balance.”

“People need to take a look at what is best for the whole community.”

“Balance is possible. It’ll require give and take on both sides. ‘Keep Ka`ū Ka`ū’ also means the people who live here.”

“Preservation is good to a point. I’m concerned about the turtles and access to the beach. I want development but not too big. I’m afraid that if they open it for one development, too many more will come.”

“A balance is possible if the beach is protected for quality and access.”

“All or none is the wrong frame.”

“Change will happen regardless. Make the change how you want it. That’s what we are doing in Ocean View.”

Many of the activists do not necessarily represent the silent majority who want to stay in Ka`ū and raise their children within the rural community.”

“There are too many rules if you preserve. There are too many rules if you develop.”

2. “Conservation of the Resources and the People”

The second major theme is that people want a balance applied to development and conservation questions. They want to conserve the resources but the people too, for the long term health of the whole system. “Preservation” for many implies locking up a resource. It is a static term that suggests things will always stay the same, when everyone knows that things change. “Conservation” means “taking care of,” in this case both the people and the resources.

“I’m for development and for preservation.”

“When you don’t develop, you don’t protect. This area is not pristine. It has been developed for a hundred years.”

“Ka`ū Preservation talks about protecting turtles. Of course, save the turtles. It is ridiculous that that is their stance. We also need an economic base for our community.” [Kupuna]

“Why preserve if you are not going to take care of it?”

“The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Ka`ū Preservation—they are all tree huggers. What about the balance with the needed economic growth?”

“They say, ‘Save the turtles.’ Our ancestors used to eat the turtles. I don’t understand what they are talking about.”

“Sure the rocks and turtles will still be here, but where is the children’s laughter?”

“I want the beach and the turtles to be taken care of and jobs for the people.”

“We’re trying to do our best to say no, no no, but how do you say yes to the benefits of the community?”

“I am in favor of growth. Without growth, we’ll live in a ghost town and that doesn’t benefit anyone. The Punalu`u development is a good one. I’ve followed the SM5’s proposal of community benefits and how they have scaled back and I think they seem like good people. The development will bring huge benefits to the whole of Ka`ū and if it’s done right, the turtles will be saved, the beach will be preserved, and the people will flourish.”

“We need controlled growth that will give us jobs. Make the development smaller scale.”

“Aunty says we need jobs. We can’t just look at saving the turtles. Sure I want the turtles saved too, but they’ll be okay. What about the children and the future of Ka`ū?”

“Save the people also. Our people end up in California and other places. We lose some of them to crime and drugs. Some have disappeared never to be heard from. That’s very sad.”

“The people who are for preservation only, with no regard for economics, are elitists.”

“We have concerns about protecting the beach, the shoreline area, Ninole Pond, the sacred Hawaiian sites, burial grounds, and the endangered species along with everyone else. However, we believe that the development can occur without destroying the habitat, significant cultural sites, and the beauty of the area.”

“People say. ‘Keep Ka`ū Ka`ū,’ but what about the young families that can’t get jobs? We need an industrial park. No growth will shut down the schools.”

“People have to have a place to go. Someone at one time made room for us.”

“Yes, we need to focus on kids, education and the turtle, but the land is not pristine. Work with the mayor hand in hand to get a balance. People are suffering while we are saving the turtle.”

With controlled growth, Punalu`u is an appropriate place for there to be development. I feel you can preserve the area the history and the culture and still create jobs.”

“I don’t want any encroachment on the black sands beach area and sea turtles but I think there could be a compromise somewhere.”

“Are they going to sacrifice people for the turtles? People are dying on the highways, people have to commute so far and so long, they are committing suicide. Family life is hard.”

“They say preservation but what about the people?”

3. People Don’t Want To Take “Sides”

The opposite of talking story is “taking sides.” This theme is also widespread and speaks to the frustration residents shared in the tactics of Ka`ū Preservation. The notion of talking story is that discussion of public issues is the only way to go forward in a way that includes everybody. By contrast, the “taking sides” approach forces public issues into a win/lose situation, with insufficient debate to understand the merits of any one direction. In addition, if one or both of the “sides” spreads rumors or misinformation, it is even more difficult to know what is going on, a situation that describes the present time in Ka`ū Ka`ū.

“I don’t like the dichotomy, not either for or against.”

“How come you are talking to pro-development people?” [A question directed to a JKA team member]

“We knew we needed community support. People have to get to know you here but with Ka`ū Preservation being so loud, it was hard for people to get to know us.” [Sea Mountain Five owner]

“Maybe it’s time for people to write the Mayor, call him, visit him, voicing our concerns and what we want. Enough fighting each other.”

“We don’t always agree, but we always agree to talk civil to one another.”

“There is no that side and this side, just God’s side.”

“I teach the kids to listen to all sides of stories. Kids have been torn on this issue because other kids have different opinions. One school teacher was telling students that development is really bad.”

“I don’t take sides. Each side should step back and figure out if one or more of the group is stopping dialogue. Both sides have real concerns. Those that want power while we are losing. Losing is having to move to California, ride the hele-on bus.”

“They do have parts of their argument correct, but are flying high with intimidation power. They will fall down one day, so who is hurt? The native Hawaiians will be, not us. We can always move away. If politics are too hot, Hawaiians still have to stay. Damage is already done and being close to separating families. That causes them to choose sides.”

“Yes it is a tragedy what is happening in our community. One group is hard headed. They are concerned about setting a precedent of larger scale building on coast of hotels and other tourist type business. Can be like Kona, very cluttered. We for the most part do not oppose development, but hope any development will be thought out, using the people’s desire.” [3 men after church]

“I am very concerned for the people and the sides they are taking, dividing the community. It is very tragic when friends and families are divided. What is worse is that there are some violent people or person scaring the residents. People tire and strike violently back and things will explode. I pray to God this will not happen.”

“We don’t want fight and had friends that now will not even talk to us. Other families are facing the same. They are trying to intimidate people.”

“If ___ was worth his salt, he should not be taking sides and backing one faction. He should try to facilitate the balance and a plan.”

“We gotta help each other instead of fighting. Haoles fight each other and bring that attitude to us. We have to learn to get together and shut out the trouble makers.”

“We are not against or for.”

“In the eyes of some, it’s about, ‘I have to be the one that came up with that.’ Some people have to get the credit.”

“I was on [KPI] board, I didn’t want sides.”

“There is a small minority of people here that have shut down so many good opportunities, the space port, and other things. There were many lies put out about the space port. There was only going to be one shuttle per month and would have created many jobs. The prison would have brought jobs and security hot heads came and disrupted the meetings. Ka`ū needs jobs badly.”

“I live here because it is country and I like the open space. I want the land preserved. We also need jobs that are non-polluting, where developers keep the trees and land intact.”

“I was surprised by some of the kupuna making fun of ____ and putting her down, I have never heard kupuna talk about one another like that, and I guess I was disappointed in them even though what they said was true.”

“I’d like to see both sides win.”

“You have the loud mouthed haoles versus the modest Hawaiians.”

“I am after balance. I can see both sides.”

“I can see both sides of the issue. I have heard about the tactics of Ka`ū Preservation group and I do not agree with how they do things.”

What People Said About Ka`ū Preservation, Inc. **(KPI)**

The organization, Ka`ū Preservation, came up repeatedly in the stories of residents. There were two main areas of concern related to this group: Support for the values and the mission, and frustration with the methods. Each is addressed in turn.

1. Support for the Values and Mission

Many residents are fearful of resort development, believing that the impacts cannot be managed and the benefits cannot be guaranteed. These concerns seem to be amplified by looking at other places on the Big Island and other parts of Hawaii of development without controls and the negative effects that resulted.

Moreover, the value for taking care of the earth, and the sense that ecosystems are in imminent danger of collapse, lends an urgency to the debate. Many people feel strongly about this issue.

“We don’t want this place destroyed. I will fight to the end to protect this place, all the sewage dumping into the ocean. The people get to change the beds. It’s not our future.”

“What are owners of the land going to do to support agriculture, local jobs that are not menial, cultural education?”

“We will create a world class cultural school to educate the children of the world.”

“Development should go in Na`alehu and Pahala.”

“We need to preserve the entire coast line from any development. The development will cause impact to the ocean and the fragile ecosystem there. I have a degree in biology/marine certified, and I see what can happen and what is happening. The coastline should be for public use with public access. People want access to the beaches. I’m not against development in general just development on the coast, including Punalu`u.”

“Some places should be left alone and this is one of them. Anything can happen as long as it is not at Punalu`u.”

“The plan that Ka`ū Preservation has is a pretty good one. They have a cultural center planned, along with school, and science education, but nothing right down on the beach. They have a nice ecological park with composting toilets planned. They will include the history of the whole area with all the cultures. Fishing, ranching, hunting, sugar cane, Filipino, Japanese, and Hawaiian.”

“In Hawaii, passion is respected, even if people get a little out of line.”

“I support preservation and living classroom. _____ is purchasing a living classroom, bringing kids to study ocean works, beaches, the outdoors, really sacred. No hotel.”

I firmly believe the County of Hawai'i should purchase as much land as is possible in Punalu`u to keep it from resort and urban development. Give the local community a chance to follow through on their plans to create an eco-campus, a live learning lab for our children and grandchildren.”

“I believe in saving the environment.”

“I believe that we must save this incredibly precious resource, especially for the children of today and tomorrow. As a local-born islander and now an elementary teacher, I see the invaluable opportunity that Punalu`u serves as a Hawaiian resource in its ‘outdoor classroom’ setting.”

“[KPI] stands its ground, supports rural character.”

“I read the EIS [Environmental Impact Statement]. The coast will be destroyed. I spearfish at Punalu`u. I see tourists touch turtles. It’s too pristine.”

“Activists go too far, but somehow they speak to something that hurts, a loss, fairness.”

“It’s not fair to us. We’re giving up our area and what do we get?”

“I am not with Ka`ū Preservation but I am concerned about preserving Punalu`u. I noticed that it is a ‘gathering place’ for locals, and that there is no other beach access for them.”

2. Frustration with Methods

The concerns of residents with the methods of Ka`ū Preservation were widespread and strongly held. This group came up time and time again in negative ways, related to their style of operating in the community. The categories of complaint are listed below.

“I don’t like the tactics of the Ka`ū Preservation group nor their rhetoric. I don’t think they have such hot ideas, either. I’m here because I like the rural life.”

“They don’t want to talk story.”

“They have some good ideas, but their strong exclusionary stand does more harm than good.”

“[KPI] has taken over the preservation talk but that issue does not belong to them. It belongs to everyone. Other people have gone underground with this issue.”

“You’d think they’d want to talk and share their viewpoint.”

“[KPI] makes us all mad. They refuse to hear my opinion. The only thing they want to talk about is the party line. They think they know what is best for me. They are not open to negotiation. It is their way or the highway.”

“[KPI] is not willing to dialogue. They are unwilling to find middle ground. We hear so many comments that it will be over ____’s dead body.”

“I finally learned that if I wasn’t going to be with them, they were going to be against me.”

“He needlessly alienates so many people. He attacks them and demonizes them, for what?”

“I’m tempted to email ____ ____ and tell him to lighten up. They’ve got to be more open and get some dialogue going.”

“They are not willing to negotiate. If you talk up at meetings you are ridiculed, booed, and looked at strangely.”

“If people want to work in hotels, let them go to where the hotels are. If you have to drive to Kona to work, you should live there.”
[KPI officer]

“That attorney comes in and wants me to be against everything, but he is so negative. I’m sick of it.”

The officers of KPI announced in a letter to the Mayor and in a letter to the editor stating that they refused to participate in this JKA research project. KPI officers did not return team phone calls through the course of this project. Late in the research period, two of the officers agreed to talk with us, each of them prefacing their remarks with, “We are not speaking for the organization, just for ourselves.”

“I have no interest in talking about this with you.” [KPI officer]

I heard someone called somebody from your group a snake. That’s awful. We all know who. The people from your team handled the incident good, that was awesome.”

“We hear that the mediators were told to stay away from the festival at Naalehu. Go, it’s open to the public.”

“You are not from here, you don’t know the facts. You have messed it up. The mayor is coming in too late.” [KPI board member, shouting]

“They lie and distort information.”

“[KPI] was not involved in the protection of the Honu`apo area, except that they testified at the end, and then claimed credit for the accomplishment.”

“I know the lies and the truths.”

“You are not the majority, where do you get that idea?”

According to several community members, the “South Kona-Ka`ū Coastal Task Force” was dominated by members of KPI. At a general meeting, KPI members were said to have driven out eight other task force members, including a developer and planner for Sea Mountain Five who had a right to be present as land owners. Official representatives of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) did not protest the act of exclusion. Residents complained that there was shouting, stating that it was impossible to have discussion about options because only KPI positions were tolerated.

“Some people on the Task Force wanted 1.5 mile setbacks and a local committee to control. I told them they were nuts if they thought the government would give locals control like that.”

“_____ and _____ [Ka`ū Preservation officers] ran the Task Force.”

“They manipulated the process. When an important vote came up, they would change the date to one which detractors could not attend. A [KPI officer] came in with recommendations developed outside the Task Force meetings and got them adopted.”

“They are a loud and angry group.”

“[KPI] is so loud and I don’t like their tactics but I do believe in their mission. I am a KP member.”

“They will not budge, not talking things out, only loud bursts. It’s a very angry group.”

“But the biggest strongest toughest wins. So if they shout loud enough they’ll win.”

“[KPI] people get really loud and raise their voices and get angry and won’t listen to reason.”

“___ is so passionate he is right up in your face screaming and pointing his finger and shaking his fist and shouting. You can’t do that, that scares me.”

“People are afraid.”

“People are afraid.”

“I don’t want to make enemies.”

“The blood will flow in the streets [if the resolution does not pass]. I can’t wait to see that day.”

“People are afraid to speak out. They have been intimidated and they are timid people to start with.”

“I feel so overwhelmed by this that is going on. Don’t tell anyone. I do not want to show fear about this in public. Have fun. You’ll find people who will talk story.”

“People are insulting each other, friend against friend. It is a shame. Cars are being defaced.”

“We are appalled at the behavior and bias of the Ka`ū Preservation Group and the manner in which this group has been allowed to dominate meetings and disrupt proceedings with their loud, ignorant, obnoxious and sometimes, profane and frightening ways. Attending meetings when able, we found too many KPG leaders and followers come from outside the Ka`ū District yet are allowed to testify, loud and long, often without any facts or true figures, or regard for the truth. This is not right or fair.”

“We need some sort of development, I’ve got lots of friends that said I’m not going to get up and testify but they want development.”

“I was talking to my friends about Sea Mountain when ___ walked in. My friend tells me, ‘That is a ___ person.’ The room went quiet. My friends got scared.”

“We didn’t show up [at the hearings] because we don’t want to be seen testifying. We take a chance to voice our opinion.”

“When people find out that [KPI] is coming to meetings, people don’t come out. No one will stand up to them.”

“Blood might be in the streets and it won’t be my fault.”[KPI board member]

“I’ve been here and raised my kids on that beach all my life. Every weekend we go down there and play and visit with others. Thirty years now, I watched those coconut trees grow. Today, they’re all grown up. Those people are violent and so the community is scared.”

“Because people are so violent, we don’t bring up subjects like the prison, hotel, or any jobs. We are afraid to speak.”

“They single you out. They know you go to the meetings or speak up then you have to watch out for your children. I can’t speak up because I have to think of my grandchildren.”

“They have an outsider agenda.”

“I am half Hawaiian. I feel what the people are feeling. I’ve been here over 30 years. I know what is going on. The other side will not give in, it’s terrible. All of this started with the haoles. They came a long time ago and started to impose their ways on the people. People did not know what to do or how to really resist them.”

We are getting tired of this. Haoles are getting native people to fight/argue with ourselves. What is going on with Black Sand Beach is an example.”

“You know [KPI] is now all outsiders. We look around, that group isn’t even of locals anymore. I’m a local girl, born and raised, I know.”

They [KPI] are mostly haoles. Some lived here for a short time. They say they love our ways, then use native people to have people think it is from the Hawaiians. They love money, use turtles and the beach to gain power. Yes, development could be good, but let us have a say, not their say.”

“We know about the mediation team visit. It is good that your team is hired by the mayor. Things are not looking good. The other side is really throwing obstacles. They are so set on destroying anyone who opposes them. They use intimidation, a lot of fears. Most are

haoles. A few Hawaiians with them. It's an outsider agenda, not Hawaiian."

"They want power and control."

"If ____ can't gain from it, she'll make trouble."

"It will take a settlement for them, as it has in other developments around the state, before it is put to rest."

"Access to the beach will be denied, especially to locals, if [KPI] gets control of the beach. They do not even want to talk to us, anyone."

"The principal got flack from teachers for referring kids to the Cousteau summer youth program because it was made into a controversial issue."

"We're against them. They wanna do things for them not all of us. They have changed their name so many times, you gotta wonder why?"

"There were other names prior to Ka`ū Preservation: Ka`ū Ohana O Kalae; Pele defense fund; Punulu`u Preservation; then Ka`ū Preservation."

"I've been coming here for years with my husband to the beach and to Pahala. One family try keep everyone off beach, for themselves. They use violence to get people to do things they want. Used to be everyone worked together."

"I suspect there is money to be made by KPI. They have received money from the government before. They can use the land to get leverage, get more money. They are greedy, they will never budge."

"Ka`ū Preservation teaches separatism and racism."

"These guys are too aggressive. There plenty local boys want this thing [development]."

"We used to be aligned with [KPI]. We realized what they were up to and disassociated ourselves with them."

"They are not Hawaiian in spirit."

"I am Hawaiian and I don't agree with Ka`ū Preservation."

“The traditional Hawaiian way is to make things right—*Ho o pono pono*. That is not happening.”

“They are founded on an old view of how Hawaii was stolen and it does not serve our future.”

“[KPI] professes to have the traditional spirituality and reverence for the land, water, fish, turtles, all things. Yet they are responsible for allowing the removal of *pohakou* (sacred rock) to be removed and sent to Smithsonian.”

“My biggest fear is that land will go to an organization that has no aloha and is closed with no aloha. I may be *haole* but I have aloha. I know some Hawaiians that don’t have aloha.”

Stories of Intimidation in Ka`ū

Most disheartening of all the stories from citizens were stories of intimidation. To intimidate is defined in the dictionary as “to make timid or fearful,” and “to inspire and affect with fear.” There were over 15 stories of physical and mental intimidation and violence that were related to the field team. These stories have been sent to the proper authorities.

Section Six

Toward Healthy Community Process

This community assessment has shown that residents in the Ka`ū area can, by and large, agree on many challenges facing their communities. They want:

- Natural resources and shoreline resources conserved for themselves and future generations.
- To maintain Punalu`u beach as a local beach for future generations to enjoy with their families.
- More economic activity of a type and size that fits the community, protects the rural lifestyle, and creates opportunities for young people to stay in the community and raise their own families if they so desire.
- Agriculture to be supported and encouraged.
- To address current community concerns of education, drug and alcohol addiction, job training, and housing.

There is much that the residents do not agree on. Many people simply do not want resort development in Ka`ū under any circumstances. While most people support a scaled-down version of the Sea Mountain Five proposal, where exactly the balance is between conservation and development is actively debated.

In the coming weeks and months, it is likely that community discussions will continue about Ka`ū's future. The forum for these discussions could be:

1. Hawaii County may find the means to expedite the Community Development Plan (CDP), as we recommended in Section 1.
2. Completion of the design of, and the community benefits package for, the Sea Mountain Five proposal.
3. If Hawaii County Council passes Resolution 169-07, it will then have to be converted into a Bill or Ordinance form in order that formal action can be taken to secure the land if Sea Mountain Five is interested in selling. If that happens the forum could be on the creation of a community plan for the purchase and management of a new 150 acre park.

The preferred choice would be to complete the Ka`ū CDP. This would allow the Ka`ū communities to avoid its current situation of reacting to each development proposal. Instead it would allow the community to set the “standards of development” for all to know—citizens, proponents, and

government. Moreover, CDPs allow each District to create a plan that reflects the social and geographic uniqueness of each community. Such a proactive, geographically-sensitive plan can provide all parties interested in living, working, recreating and investing in Ka`ū—a greater sense of predictability and reliability that would foster better policy choices in the long run.

“There should be guidelines for building.”

“Let the developers know what we want. We often say what we don’t want, but it’s time to tell them what we do want.”

“We need balance. We need to unite all of Ka`ū. We need a long term plan that dictates where we want to develop and where we want parks etc. The people need to participate in shaping and controlling growth and development. Need more of the Costeau programs and get kids interested in this kind of stuff. We need a vision for the future. Someone could water color paintings of how it could be; what it could look like. The Mayor needs to hear ideas about a long term plan before special interests or developers take charge.”

“Controlled, planned and well-funded development is best for the economic future of Ka`ū.”

As community discussions continue, whatever their forum, it will be important to create a process that builds safety and confidence on the part of citizenry to participate in their future. A number of reasons have been discussed that makes sustained participation by residents difficult:

- Many residents do not have a “culture of involvement” in civic affairs—they just do not go to meetings. Many local people commented that, “People will not go to meetings. You have to go into their homes.”
- Many Ka`ū residents are working people whose schedules preclude regular attendance at public meetings. This is especially true in recent years as people take more than one job to survive and the commuting lifestyle has become more common.
- The polarized nature of community discussion in the last several months has led to a lessening of communication among people of differing views, making it easier to project negative characteristics onto the “other” group.

- The tactics of shouting, threats, and intimidation have led many people to avoid public settings. With the moderate ground harder to find, more extreme rhetoric has become the norm.

“Meetings don’t work, people commute and they’re tired.”

“There is no time for meetings. All that fighting, people don’t go to meetings.”

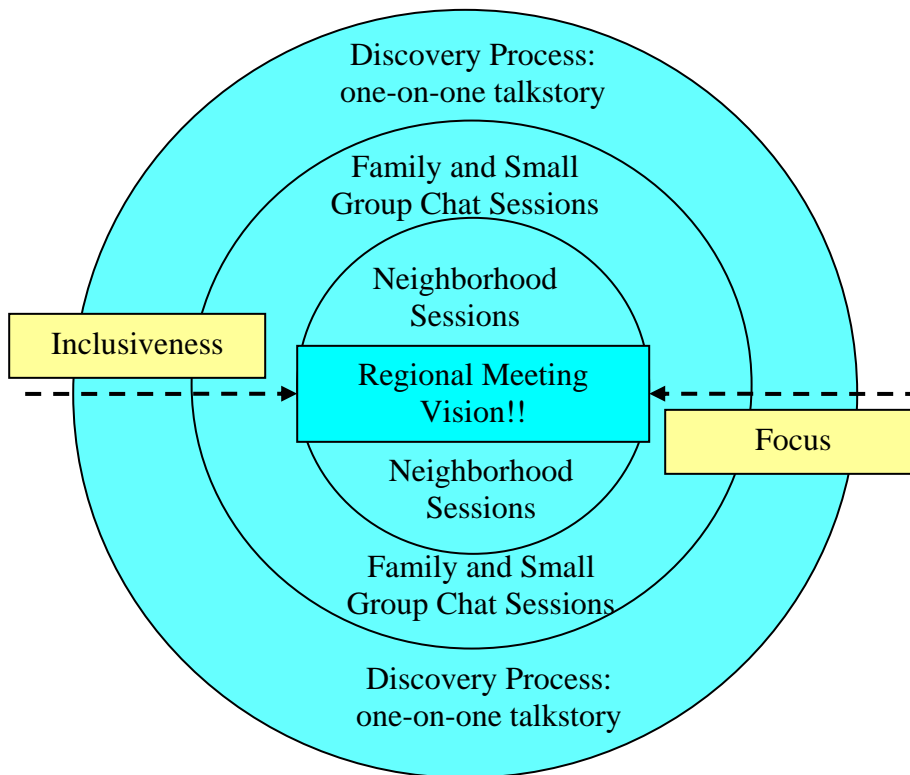
“Churches are good. In Na`alehu, go to the parish hall. Sundays are best after church.”

“People are working and they can’t come to the meetings. The people against can come to meetings.”

Figure Five below shows a process that emerged from the stories of residents which offers a way forward to healthier community communication and decision-making. It shows that one-on-one talk story is a productive beginning—that people love to talk in settings that are comfortable and natural for them, they are active observers of their community, and they have a sense of the future born of their experience of living in Ka`ū.

1. One-on-One. The Discovery Process at the individual level reveals patterns in citizen issues (as exemplified by this report) that can be used to build future communication and dialogue.
2. Chat Sessions. As the patterns emerge, the second phase, that of family and small group chat sessions, can begin. Discussions and differences of opinions at this stage are comfortable, and an initial round of agreements is possible at this stage.
3. Neighborhoods. After chat session are concluded, the process will take place in neighborhoods—in homes, cafes, churches, schools, or other acceptable locations. In neighborhood sessions, residents can present their initial findings or work that describes their key issues and the opportunities residents see to address them. Neighborhood sessions, by bringing in more diverse informal networks that have already participated in chat sessions, can begin the more arduous task of making choices between options.

Figure Five
Building Participation and Confidence in Public Policy



At this level, people begin to think “outside the box,” as their perspective widens from focus on a single issue, which may have compelled them to get involved in the first place, to a broader focus on the whole of the community. The natural leaders are obvious by this point as well.

By this point, there are large areas of agreement in which people have a common understanding of the issues at hand, and the policy choices which would address them.

4. District-Wide Meetings. The process culminates in one or two district-wide meetings. The areas of disagreement, with the attendant action alternatives for consideration by the community, are presented as well. Then, a means is created by which individuals indicate their preferences. The “means” could possibly be electronic privacy voting pads, which anonymously record the votes of citizens.

This process, The Discovery Process, of drawing ever-larger circles is one that creates inclusiveness and focus over time. It draws in greater and greater numbers of people at the same time it focuses ever more intently on the choices before the community.

It must be stressed that this process is designed to create safety for participants so that final choices represent the best possible course of action for the greatest number of people. From the chat sessions, to the neighborhood sessions, and particularly at the regional meetings, facilitators must protect against the domination by the few. Facilitators can be trained about how to respectfully listen and take input from all and not allow any one individual to monopolize the group or pressure its members to act in a certain way.

In this way, the democratic process is strengthened.