

✓ Playing roles in planning growth

THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



Discussion on the Maui Island Plan, which provides a guide for the future growth

of the island to the year 2030, continues at General Plan Advisory Committee meetings. Public participation is being sought, but we are hearing that people are struggling with how to give meaningful input into the plan.

We are looking at ways to help and are offering suggestions because this plan will impact our economy, our environment and our social well-being tremendously; so business and community engagement is crucial.

To include our members in discussions on the plan, we sent them the Chris Hart & Partners preliminary draft Maui Island Plan, a 460-page report; the pared-down Planning Department version, designed to be a more useable working document of 167 pages; and a link to the county Web site, where more information could be obtained, including various technical reports and background data. We asked our members to review

one or more of these sources and offer their comments on the plan.

As you might imagine, the task was daunting. Just reviewing all of the material was viewed as extremely time-consuming by many businesses focused on sustaining their operations during these challenging economic times. However, they are interested in contributing to the plan and want to see broad participation by all residents.

In reviewing the materials, questions about assumptions and methodologies arose. Members are grappling with the impacts of the proposed population projections, densities, and urban growth boundaries. As this plan is designed to project out to the year 2030, members are asking that information be presented in a more comprehensive and graphic way to help illustrate what the future could look like.

Many also find it challenging to join in the plan review through the lengthy General Plan Advisory Committee process.

Therefore, to help residents, including business owners and their employees, effectively review the plan and related materials, understand the assumptions and methodologies, ask logical questions, and provide valuable insight and meaningful

input, we are suggesting that:

- The Planning Department expand promotion on the plan and process through a public media campaign to help residents understand how this plan affects them now and in the future, why it is important to get involved, and how they can get involved.

- We take the show on the road. A process currently exists for the Planning Department to take the Maui Island Plan to the public and some presentations have been made to various community groups. We feel the process that Focus Maui Nui began of engaging residents at home, school, place of worship, etc. is an excellent model and should be used to bring more residents to the table to share their thoughts. Therefore, we want to encourage residents, groups and membership organizations to host meetings.

- The assumptions and methodologies for developing the plan are published in one cohesive place, without having to wade through a multitude of documents and source materials, so that the public can ask appropriate questions.

- A process whereby a broad series of open-ended questions is generated and asked, instead of asking limited and leading questions like "Would you like a lot of growth or would you

prefer to keep Maui as it is now?" It is important to help residents understand trade-offs and make informed decisions.

- Graphic materials be produced to help residents relate to the plan. Visuals can help us see what the projected population growth and densities would look like. For example, it is hard to imagine what 15 housing units per acre looks like. A picture depicting this is worth a thousand words. GIS (geographic information system) plans can also help people see the difference between actual versus planned development. A comparison of the former General Plan with what was actually built would help the public understand that not everything planned is built.

- We promote expansive thinking and planning to create solutions that will help keep us from being "boxed in" down the road.

In conclusion, let's work with the Planning Department to obtain other models and additional visual materials, hold community meetings, heighten the discussion and actively seek widespread resident participation because a better plan benefits us all.

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