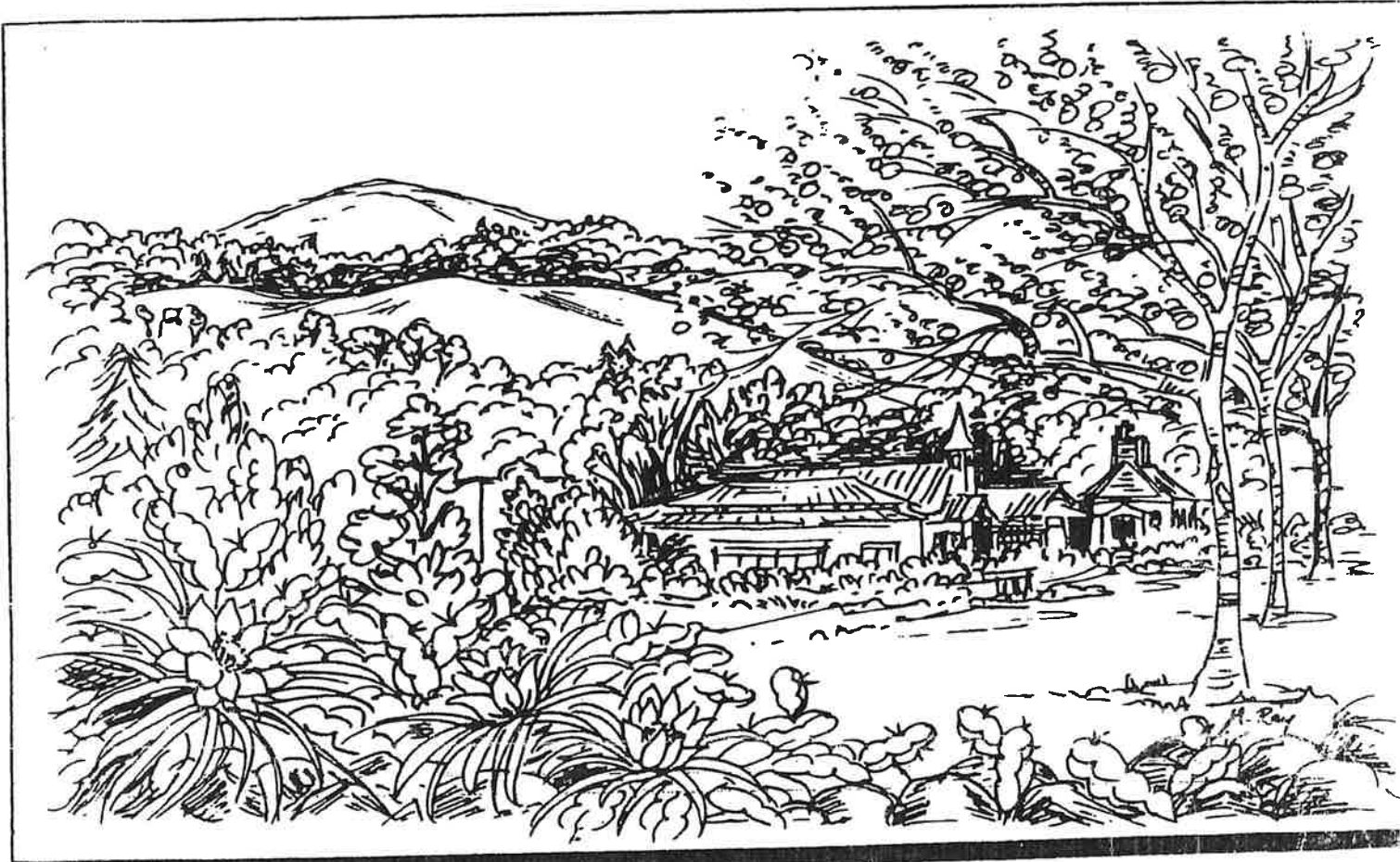


# WAIMEA

## AT THE CROSSROADS: A Community-based Strategic Town Plan



Prepared by Tom Hudson, Town & Regional Planning  
For Waimea Main Street  
July, 1993

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## Visions of Waimea in 2003

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### “My Home Town...(2003)”

When I finished high school in 1985, I thought maybe Waimea was o.k. for retired folks but it had nothing for me. Our favorite thing to do as teens in Waimea was to go to Kona. I also didn't see any future here. Growth was happening so fast, I couldn't recognize the place or most of the people anymore. I felt like a visitor in my own town. And the town was getting uglier every year with strip development, traffic congestion and all those power lines. It wasn't even safe to walk by the road anymore. Then there was the problem of jobs and cost of housing. My folks were lucky. They lived here all their lives and owned a place. But there was no way I thought I could afford to live here, after about 1990.

Things have changed in Waimea. While life isn't perfect, I'm glad I'm here now. People have gotten together and fixed a lot of our problems. There is a home town feeling again.

One of the things I like most about recent changes is that they respect our local values. The new Waimea Cultural Center has regular programs for and about our

people. It's great to see hula and Hawaiian music on weekends. There are lots of local-style things to do in town now, too. Both my kids are in hula, and are learning to swim at the public pool. We go bowling on family night at the new alley. Sometimes we go to the micro-movie together to watch recent films. People seem to go as much to see each other as to watch the show. Especially teenagers.

The summer theatre plays at HPA, Parker School and Kahilu Theatre have added a lot to the community. My wife and daughter are both rehearsing for a play about plantation life in the old days. We get a lot of visitors to town for the plays, and they're good for business. We've developed quite a reputation for these summer stock performances.

Thanks to the junior rodeo program, my whole family rides horses. It's nice to see the Parker Ranch paniolo tradition being continued. Speaking of traditions, my mom works with the school as a visiting tutu, talking story to all the children each week. Our kapuna are respected and involved in all kinds of community programs, including collecting the history of Waimea's families.

There have been a lot of physical improvements to town, too. It's fun and safe to walk around now. Walkways are local style, not big white concrete strips, and they fit with our new Hawaiian-oriented landscaping. The pathway along Waikoloa stream is great and has helped local businesses. A lot more people come downtown for the day because they can walk around, do shopping and enjoy our park system. Whenever I go jogging on the trail, I bump into a lot of people I know. I've met many of them at Main Street Socials or at our community improvement projects like Anuenue playground. Waimea is beautiful again.



New buildings have gone up in a way that gives our three commercial districts a better look. No more strip development and sprawl into the countryside. It's fun to go shopping now because we can go to one place, park the car, get out and walk to all the stores.

The paniolo-style architecture, buildings close up to the street and attractive walkways have made Waimea seem like a real town, not a Kona-type strip center. I like it and so do my kids. My daughter especially likes to come downtown now that she's a teenager. She goes to the youth center most days during the summer.

The mini-bypass around Parker Ranch Center was expanded to include new internal circulation roads that circle the town. It's easier getting around for us local folks. The new traffic signal by McDonalds has made it safe to cross the highway, too. Improvements to Saddle Road have reduced some of the cross-island traffic through Waimea. Meanwhile, people are still discussing the possibility of a Bypass Road. Some things don't change.

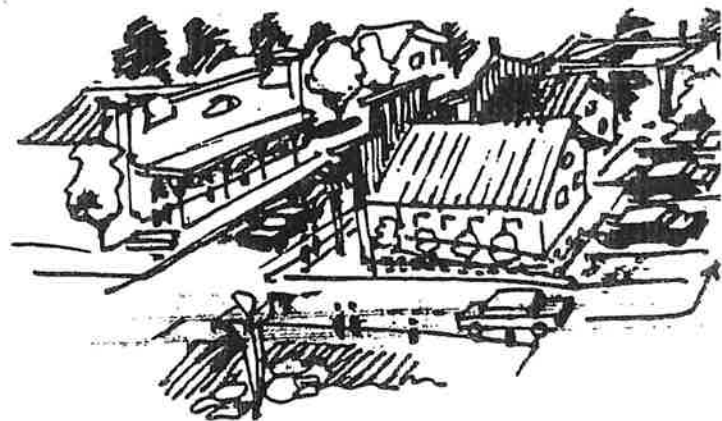
My wife is a volunteer at the hospital in their Wellness Center. So many people have been helped, and sometimes saved, by Lucy's. There is great pride in town for this hospital. Everyone feels like they've played a part in getting it built. And there are so many social activities there that it's as much a community

center as it is a hospital. The new YMCA has set up the same style of programs. It's a facility for everyone, although our teens seem to like it most. With the Y and so many other things going on downtown, we never hear complaints about 'nothing to do.' Evening or daytime you can always find people at some community function talking story and having a good time.

Waimea School has improved with the new construction and expansion. What I like most though is that people have really come together to support education. Kids are excited about learning because it's been made fun and respectable. My kids work hard to get their classroom projects ready for the annual education festival. What a change from my day.

We have finally gotten enough support for a local high school that the Department of Education is considering building one. We've been told for years that we don't have the population for a high school. But our kids need one and it would be a great help to improve our sense of community. Now that citizens are working together and gathering resources, it looks like we may have one soon. Meanwhile, the Waimea Scholarship Program is helping our teens. Since it focuses on building skills that Waimea needs, we're seeing more of our children returning to their home town after college.

I started my own specialty retail business three years ago. I built and remodeled a small space near Hayashi Store with help from a low interest Main Street loan. Main Street also helped me with market research and I've improved my bookkeeping procedure through one of their seminars. I participate in their 'Shop Waimea' promotion program, which has helped my sales. Our (I'm a member of the promotion committee) Waimea brochure has been a hit all over the Big Island. More and more people are coming here to shop and enjoy. That makes me proud of my town.



I didn't think about utilities when I was growing here, but I see now that they were a mess. We've started cleaning up the sewage problem with the new biomass conversion systems being put in each

neighborhood. The stream isn't getting sewage runoff anymore and kids are actually playing in it at the Nature Park by CFH. Our power lines are buried, at least in most parts of town. Seeing old photographs of what they used to be like makes me amazed we ever lived that way.

Another thing I didn't think much about as a kid was open space. At least until we started getting locked out of places we always used to go. The strip development that went on for a while also made me concerned about open space, and especially farming and ranching. These days there are access trails to our special places in the countryside. The Open Space plan was approved by the County, too, so developers aren't gobbling up huge pieces of surrounding land any more. We feel like we're finally in control over growth. While we're definitely still growing, new development respects our local values and way of life.

Parker Ranch 2020 and other affordable housing projects have made it possible for me to find a home here. I like the fact that it's mixed in with other

housing types. I don't feel segregated or like a second class citizen. After the Open Space plan and Design Guidelines were passed, some of the outside speculation on housing dropped off. Housing costs have gotten more sane, although it's still pretty expensive. At least local people can afford to live here now.

One of the main things that has made these changes for the better possible has been citizens acting together. Main Street helped us start talking and acting as a team through the Town Meetings. Now, Town Meetings have become a tradition we really support and enjoy. It's great seeing all our ethnic groups working so closely together. We see things similarly now. We have agreed on what's important to us and that is our heritage, local values and our sense of community. Once we started acting collectively, government and business listened and supported our priorities.

With all these changes, I feel like we've returned to a way of life that my grandmother would enjoy. Waimea style has returned and I feel like I'm finally in my own hometown.



# Visions of Waimea in 2003

## "The Town I 'll Always Visit When I Come to Hawaii..."

There is something magical about Waimea on the Big Island. I discovered it last summer while I was vacationing in Kona. I saw a Destination Waimea brochure at the hotel that talked about a 'paniolo' town with rich traditions, beautiful open spaces, interesting architecture and a community that breathed *aloha*. The brochure wasn't exaggerating and I've found I've redefined my sense of Hawaii. I can't wait 'til next June to get back - only this time I'll fly into the Waimea airport and stay at a Bed & Breakfast there.

The first thing you notice as a visitor is the beautiful, even extraordinary surrounding landscapes of Waimea. This is a region that didn't neglect its open space, farming and ranching. While the town is very active, its urban and rural boundaries are clearly set and the two types of land use feel in balance. Where I'm from on the mainland, strip development and sprawl have really harmed our sense of place. We're just another generic strip town with no respect for the land.

When I arrived in Waimea, I found the town in the midst of two big activities. Three different theatres were running coordinated plays on Big Island history and its people. We saw two during the day on Saturday. Then we attended the Main Street Social that evening. It was for local people, but was the best fun we've had in years. Local music, hula, exotic (to us)

foods called 'pu'pu,' dancing and all the conversation you can handle. One old retired cowboy called it 'tall story.' The event was at a beautiful, old stable building next to the Waimea Cultural Center. We visited the Center twice that week to see local art and artists creating new work. I bought a lauhala hat.

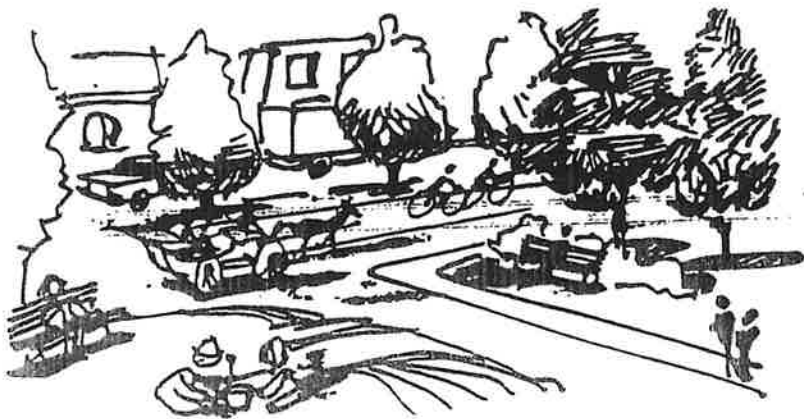
One of the things we enjoyed most about Waimea was that it was fun to walk around. We found a river walk that connects parks, shopping and restaurants together. We were amazed to see such a beautiful, serene pathway in the middle of this thriving town. I wish my own city had planned for the future this way.

Shopping was made comfortable by the tasteful street furniture, landscaping, pathways and covered sidewalks. We found a very interesting mix of specialty stores focused around Opelo Road. I was surprised to learn from one of the retailers there that she lives above her shop. Imagine being able to walk to work to a range of parks and other activities in your own town. Why doesn't every community plan like this?

My oldest son dropped into the local teen center while I was shopping. He found out about a dance that night, so we stayed and had dinner while he was to it. He must have enjoyed himself as he's writing regularly to two local kids, one of whom is coming to visit soon. We appreciated Waimea's concern for its teens.

We missed a Parker Ranch rodeo by two weeks, but were able to go horseback riding by the rodeo grounds. My youngest son wanted to watch the junior rodeo competition. We're planning next year's visit better thanks to some help on tourist information from Waimea Main Street. We were very impressed by the presence of Parker Ranch activities all around the community. Obviously, it is a true working ranch and a great asset to the community.

One of the other tourists we met in Waimea was there for a meeting on health and wellness. Waimea has apparently become a gathering place for such things. With Waimea's paniolo style architecture, focused low scale commercial centers, and sense of community, I think it would be a great place to hold small conferences.

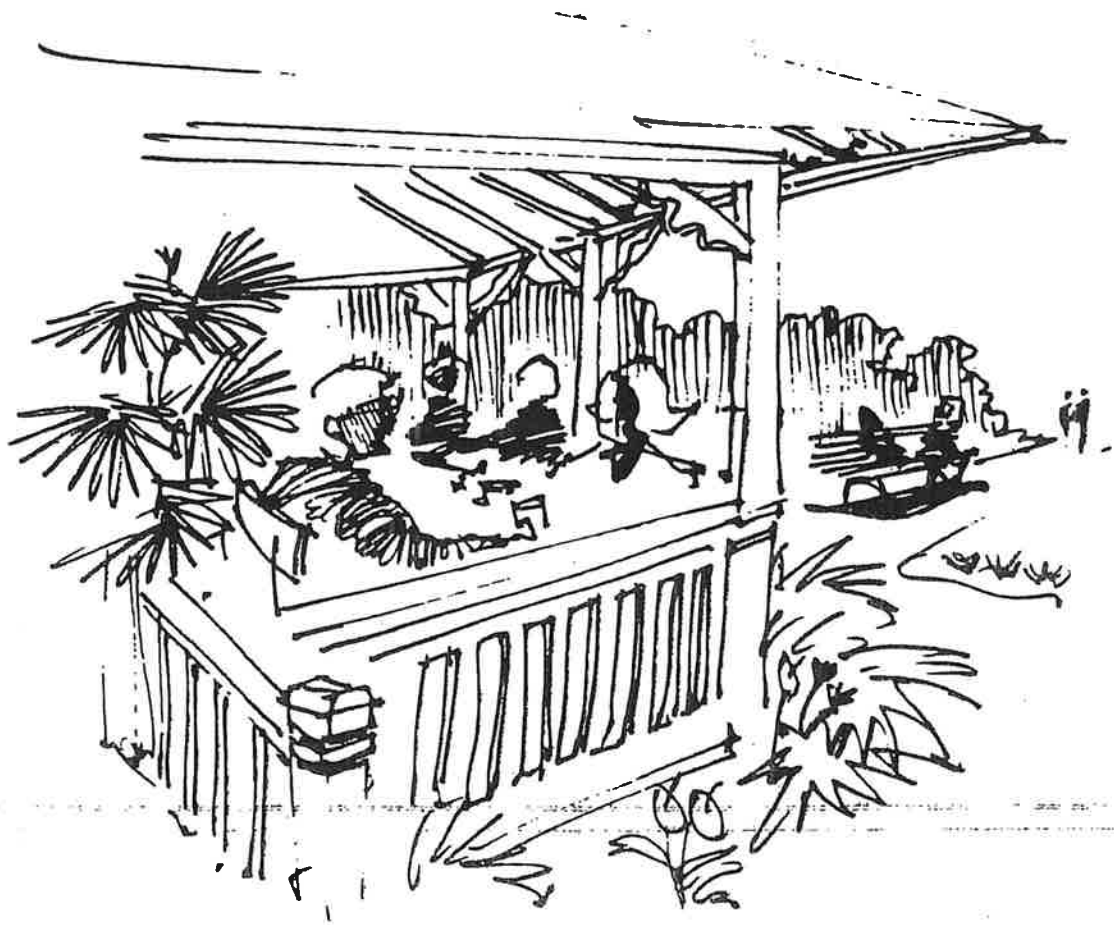


While traffic seemed fairly heavy on the upper highway through town, we were very comfortable as pedestrians. We could also get around by car easily thanks to the smaller roads that cut around the highway. It was great to be able to find convenient places to park and walk, and nice to get away from Kona's "sea of parking" commercial development. *Waimea is a real town.*

We were also impressed by Waimea's range of public services. We heard good things about the schools except for the absence of a public high school. We went for a swim at the great new community pool. My husband, who is a history nut, really appreciated the library's selection on local culture and history. That's where we learned what 'paniolo' means. My son loved the children's playground. The truth is, I even had fun there. And that is where we learned about the series of plays going on at the theatres.

While I was very impressed by the town of Waimea, I was more impressed by its people. As a fairly regular visitor to the state, I had come to believe that *aloha* was an empty word. In Waimea, I found that it was alive and well but in a better way than I had thought possible.

I always considered *aloha* something you share with visitors. But what I saw in Waimea was *aloha* between its own people. I saw respect for seniors, care for children and genuine goodwill among all the ethnic groups that live there. This is a town that lives *aloha* in a vibrant, fun way. Families, the land and traditions are all bound together in a way that creates such a strong sense of community that I find myself somewhat empty when I come home. We could learn a lot from a town called Waimea. I'm looking forward to my next visit.



## Chapter 1

# Introduction to the Purpose and Process of the Plan

### BACKGROUND, MISSION AND GOALS

The community of Waimea, with a population of 6000 people, is located in one of the most idyllic environmental settings in the world. For nearly two centuries visitors have been drawn to settle in this area to share with Hawaiians in its extraordinary sense of place. In particular, Waimea's temperate climate, expansive nearby open spaces and attractive geographic setting easily attracted ranchers. This small rural village has been host for over a century to one of the world's most renowned cattle operations, Parker Ranch.

Recent problems related to extreme growth rates, absence of municipal government, declines in cattle ranching and uncoordinated development have compelled citizens to respond by forming a community-based central management organization. This is Waimea Main Street (WMS), an alliance of diverse cultures and interests committed to re-establishing and maintaining the socio-economic health of this community transition.

After a series of seven public meetings during 1992, citizens determined to organize the new private nonprofit corporation to facilitate positive change. In January, 1993, Waimea Main Street opened its office with professional staff, entirely through the efforts and resources of members of this community. (Please see Map 1 of Waimea, which defines the geographic scope of the program.) In its first six months of operation, it attracted over 150 members, including most of the community's recognized leaders. Other community organizations now commonly hold meetings at the WMS office, which has become a clearinghouse for community information.

Waimea Main Street participants and organizers emphasize that this new organization is committed to four primary principals. First, it is community-based in all of its planning and actions. Second, it adheres to strategic planning principals and will be guided by a community-created strategic town plan. Third, it emphasizes facilitation as its primary tool for accomplishing assigned tasks. That is, it engages citizens and other community organizations as team members in all its programs. Finally, Waimea Main Street is apolitical. It is committed to working with any administration to accomplish local improvement priorities.

### CHALLENGES FACING WAIMEA

Waimea's extraordinary sense of place, its local economy and lifestyle have all become seriously threatened over the past decade. Without a systematic, strategic response to problems facing the community, the town will almost certainly lose its vitality in the near future. Among major problems facing Waimea today are:

#### Economic Vitality

- High turnover rates in small businesses;
- A local economy struggling to diversify after being focused for a century on a single business;
- Lack of means for coordination and cooperation among local businesses and property owners;

#### Quality of Life

- Extreme disparity between per capita wages and local cost of housing;
- Absence of a municipal government to represent the public interests of this third largest community on the Big Island;



- Extremely limited youth services<sup>1</sup>;
- ✓ Absence of a forum for cooperation among Waimea's community organizations;
- Dangerous and continually degrading pedestrian environment;

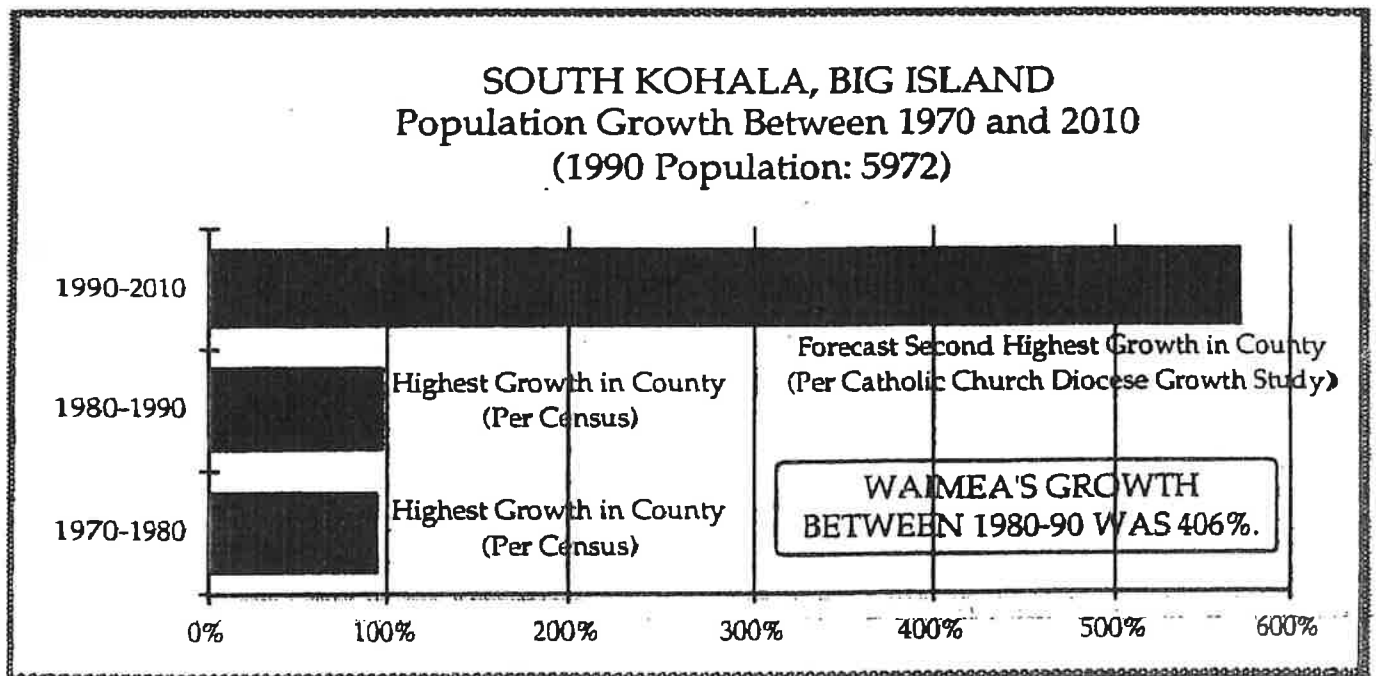
1994  
ITEMS  
AT  
RISK

cultural resources, through lack of management or planning.

**Infrastructure, Physical Design & Planning**

- The highest growth rate on the Big Island for each of the past two decades (being 406% in the last census), with at least one forecast showing higher rates to come;
- An over-burdened, heavily congested circulation system;
- ✓ Lack of a community-oriented town center;
- Severe parking problems, both in design and number, all over the Village;
- Absence of locally sensitive zoning, planning or enforceable design guidelines;
- Very limited infrastructure, including total absence of central sewage treatment;
- ✓ Danger to outstanding historic and

Waimea's sense of place, its village character, job opportunities, housing costs, general cost of living, natural environment, youth and senior services, and economic stability (i.e., the traits which have made Waimea attractive in the past) are all worsening under the pressure of uncoordinated growth. Without management and direction, these problems will ultimately overwhelm the community. [The sense of place which once made Waimea an attractive, successful commercial and community center will be lost.]



<sup>1</sup>In a recent survey, high school students overwhelmingly indicated that their favorite thing to do in Waimea is, "Go to Kona."

## WAIMEA MAIN STREET: ORGANIZATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

Waimea Main Street (WMS) is a private nonprofit 501 (c) 6 Hawaii corporation. Its charitable, historic preservation, town design and educational activities are conducted by its subsidiary 501 (c) 3 corporation, Waimea Preservation Association. WMS adheres to the community development principles of the National Main Street Center, which is housed in the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Main Street approach, adopted by over 750 communities nationwide, is described at the end of this chapter.

Public Market needs a constituent  
Waimea Main Street is open to membership from all people who support its mission. Its Board of Directors, currently ten in number, includes leaders from other community organizations. Board members must be members of the organization. Officers are elected by the Board, while the Board is elected to three-year terms by the general membership.

The Board directly reports to voting and advisory members. On principle and in practice, the Board also works closely with other community organizations and systematically incorporates the views of the general public into its programming. A Board of Advisors, composed of community leaders and major WMS supporters, advises the Board of Directors on strategic issues.

WMS administration is directed by a full-time Project Manager, John Ray, who is assisted by a half-time administrative assistant and volunteer office staff. Their strategic planning effort has been coordinated by Tom Hudson, a highly trained and experienced community development professional.

The organization has four standing committees focused on the major facets of its work: economic development; town design;

WPA - goals

organizational partnerships, planning and development; promotion of the town, its businesses and socio-cultural activities.

These committees are chaired and staffed by citizen volunteers who need not be members of Waimea Main Street. While committees are open to all interested people, efforts are made to recruit specialists and representatives of a broad range of ethnic backgrounds and perspectives.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Waimea Main Street program was created entirely through the efforts of local citizens. Initial funding for its incorporation, office, staff and projects has all been donated by members of the community and local businesses. These rapid accomplishments in a town of just 6000 people demonstrate both Waimea's commitment to addressing its problems and its willingness to help itself before seeking assistance elsewhere.

The organization has already begun training citizens in community leadership and strategic planning. A series of Town Meetings began in February, 1993, to build a community-based strategic town plan. Strong partnerships are being forged with all other community organizations. Outreach efforts are under way to engage citizens and unorganized groups who may not be comfortable or able to participate in Town Meetings. This open format is engaging many citizen-specialists from a range of field important to the program's development. WMS has over 40 active volunteers from a range of professions working on its four standing committees and in administrative support services.

During the past year of program development, the organization has demonstrated a strong capacity to organize, plan, fund-raise, and implement a professional, community-based process to improve socio-economic conditions in Waimea. It has established itself as a major

- ✓ partner in community development in North Hawaii. The State of Hawaii's Community-Based Economic Development (CBED) program has strongly endorsed
- ✓ WMS's community-based strategic town planning approach. County departments, other nonprofit organizations, local businesses, property owners and the tourism establishment are all pro-actively working
- ✓ with WMS to build a better balance between quality of life and economic vitality.

Waimea Main Street's efforts are already showing tangible positive results. Soon, they are likely to become a model for community-based development throughout the State. The timing of this program's initiation is both right and critical as this community faces numerous severe challenges which until now had overcome Waimea's capacity to address them.

#### WAIMEA MAIN STREET OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

Waimea's community history may be characterized by two distinct traits. First, its economy has been dominated by one industry and specifically one business for over a century: cattle raising by Parker Ranch. Second, the town has never had its own municipal government, having its community planning done in remote Hilo by County officials. Parker Ranch filled much of the municipal void over the years. It built schools, businesses, office space, infrastructure and provided other public goods and services as it saw necessary. The community was extremely fortunate to have such a benevolent corporate citizen.

In each of the past two decades, Waimea's population has doubled. In 1990, the town had reached 6000 residents. During the same period, ranching operations have declined dramatically. In 1993, Parker Ranch employs just slightly over 100 people. Town growth and economic decline combine to make it impossible for the Ranch to act any longer as

the equivalent of local government. At the same time a new community ethic is emerging (in Waimea and elsewhere).

Citizen participation in community development has become a high priority. Because there was no other forum to support this need (and for other reasons already noted), Waimea Main Street was formed.

The new organization's mandate is clear. Its primary role is to facilitate community development through a community-based strategic planning process. As a result, WMS's early objectives were process-oriented. Its first objective was to coordinate development of a strategic town plan. Specific target issues and projects arose out of this planning process, which is defined in the chart below. The intent of the plan is to improve Waimea in three different subject areas:

1. Strengthen local economic vitality;
2. Improve town design;
3. Enhance Waimea's quality of life.

Waimea Main Street's (WMS) strategic town planning methodology is illustrated in Appendix 1. Making community values explicit was the foundation of the entire process. Through Town Meetings and outreach sessions, citizens clarified what values are most important to them in addressing Waimea's future. These values have become evaluation criteria for setting mission, goals, objectives and projects. As a second step existing conditions in the community were evaluated to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the town. Again, Town Meetings and outreach sessions were conducted to make explicit citizen views. (Appendix 2 provides an outline of WMS' Strategic Town Planning process and timeline.) Together, values and understanding of current conditions have established priorities, capacities and constraints.

The third step of the process was to refine the program's mission. From the mission came goals to address it. Goals guided development of project alternatives. These alternatives were measured against both values and quantifiable criteria to select those which are most effective and efficient. Finally, after community refinements and approval, projects were set into a step-by-step management plan which identifies timelines, responsibility, costs, potential resources and monitoring systems.

This process reflects sound strategic planning and community-based development principles and has been successfully implemented in numerous other communities and regions. Key objectives include:

- Complete a community-based strategic town plan by August, 1993;
- Expand citizens' affiliation and sense of ownership of both the community and the Strategic Town Plan;
- Formally begin Strategic Town Plan implementation in the fourth quarter of 1993;
- Build a strong, stable and balanced financial foundation for WMS.

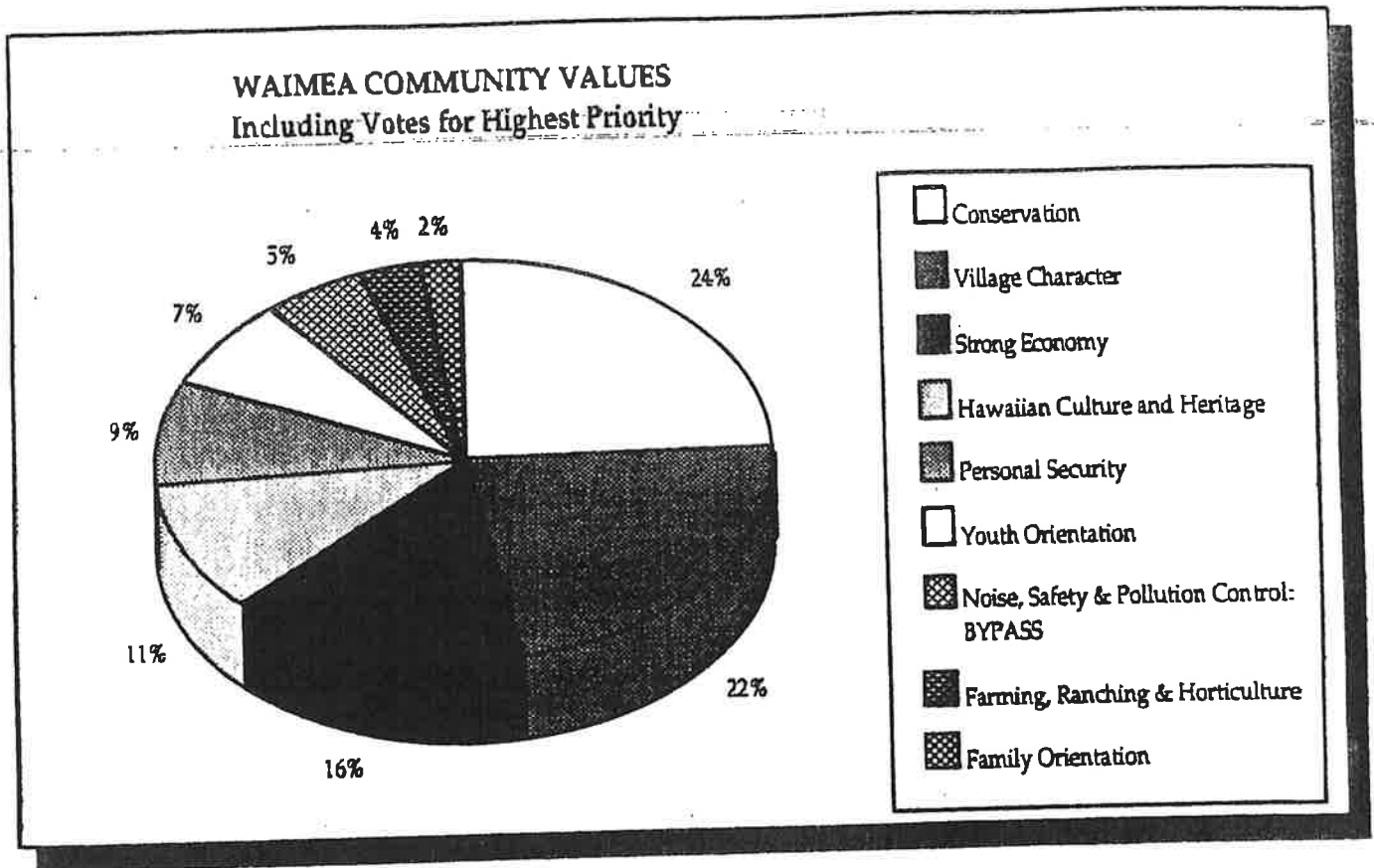
## PROGRAM EVALUATION: MONITORING SYSTEM

There are two levels of program evaluation being set into place by WMS. The first measures community satisfaction with overall program performance. The second tracks project accomplishments against initial projections. Most projects have yet to be implemented, but as previously noted, will be linked to quantifiable landmarks against which they can be measured.

Community satisfaction will be measured in four ways. The first will be through direct feedback. Citizens will be polled annually in direct mail questionnaires. They will be asked to comment on WMS's progress and performance. Second, members will be similarly contacted and will further engage more detailed focus group sessions. Third, Town Meetings will be held at least annually to seek citizens' collective participation in evaluating WMS, its various projects and Waimea's changing conditions. Finally, the organization will be constantly seeking input from all available sources on both its performance and its plan. As conditions change or as problem are identified, adjustments will be made as appropriate.

*measure community  
perception*

## Chapter 2 Community Values



At the first major Town Meeting, on April 1, 1993, discussion focused on understanding the planning process and on defining community values. Participants listed and discussed a series of what became seventeen complementary priorities. They were then asked to vote on what values they thought were most critical (see Table 1). While all seventeen values received at least two votes, emphasis was most strong on seven issues. These were:

- Conservation (including the environment, scenic beauty, view corridors and access to nature);
- Village Character;
- Control Over Noise, Public Safety and Pollution (with emphasis on the need for a Bypass road);
- Youth Orientation;

- Strong Economy;
- Personal Security;
- Hawaiian Culture and Heritage

There was clear consensus that these values are not being adequately addressed or protected. In over 25 subsequent Town and outreach meetings, no dissent was expressed by any citizen on the specified values. While there was some divergence on rank-ordering, the majority appeared to agree that the top seven were appropriate.

Throughout the Values meeting, participants expressed concern about two fundamental issues. First, future actions in Waimea should respect, promote and complement what is here already. Second, and related to the first, is the importance of the

community's Hawaiian culture and heritage. These two themes reflect a consensus that

building partnerships and improving inter-group communication are top priorities.

**TABLE 1**  
**COMMUNITY VALUES**  
 Prioritized by Level of Importance,  
 As Expressed and Voted Upon by Town Meeting Participants

*Categories*

COMMUNITY VALUE	Sorted by Highest Priority	
	Regular Votes	Highest Priority
Conservation	25	14
Village Character	24	13
Strong Economy	14	9
Hawaiian Culture and Heritage	7	6
Personal Security	13	5
Youth Orientation	18	4
Noise, Safety & Pollution Control: BYPASS	24	3
Farming, Ranching & Horticulture	7	2
Family Orientation	6	1
Balance of Community Services	5	0
Waimea Identity	5	0
Gathering Place	4	0
Intra-Community Cooperation: Partnerships	4	0
Public Transportation	3	0
Coordinate Plans with Parker Ranch	3	0
Astronomy Complex	3	0
Availability of Affordable Land for Housing	2	0

**Notes:**

Two Final Value Categories were the Combination of Several Other Original Proposed Values. The Combinations Reflect All of Their Components and are Listed Below:

Conservation

- Environment, Eco-systems
- Scenic Beauty/Waterways
- Respect, Promote & Complement What is Here
- Viewpoints and View Corridors
- Access to Nature

Village Character

- Small Town
- Pedestrian Environment
- Friendliness
- Internal Circulation
- Horse Trails
- Fun Mobility In and Around Waimea
- Church Row

*all programs criteria*

*geographic region*

# Current Conditions in Waimea

## STUDY AREA

Waimea Main Street's primary planning area is illustrated in Map 1. The district is somewhat triangular, bounded at its endpoints by Kuhio Hale, Waimea Airport and Waiaka bridge by HPA. Within this area there are a broad range of land uses, running from agriculture to commercial to light industrial to single family housing.

While Waimea has a population of over 6000, it is unincorporated. County of Hawaii is responsible for municipal services and land use planning.

## COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT CONDITIONS

*How was this done?*

A questionnaire-type survey was conducted by Waimea Main Street to learn about community perceptions of current conditions in Waimea. In one question, citizens were asked to rate seven Waimea traits, then indicate relative importance of these traits. Over two hundred forty people responded, giving the survey a margin of error of less than 5%. The sidebar on the next page summarizes their views. It is important to note that they gave highest priority to addressing Waimea's traffic problems, improving public education and establishing development controls to guide future growth. Construction of the hospital and improvements in medical services were also emphasized.

In rating relative quality of seven Waimea traits, public schools and cost of living were most remarkable in the discrepancy between their relatively low ratings and high priority. The response is a mandate to address these two issues. It is also notable that citizens on average rated Waimea's progress as a place to

live in recent years as declining somewhat. This finding is consistent with public opinion expressed during the series of four WMS Town Meetings during 1993.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Population

The 1990 census showed that Waimea had grown by over 400% to 5972 people. For the second census in a row it had the highest growth rate of any community in the state. South Kohala, the district in which Waimea is located, also grew at a rate higher than any other in the state during the decade. Its 98.4 growth rate was over double that of the next highest district, North Kona (at 62.1%). By comparison the state's population grew only 14.9%. These figures demonstrate that Waimea is facing extraordinary growth conditions. Unfortunately, there are no locally sensitive plans in place to help the town address this major challenge.

Waimea's mix of people is broad, including an estimated 25% of Hawaiian ancestry. Other ethnic groups represented in significant numbers are Caucasian, Japanese, Filipino, Chinese, Portuguese. Specific population totals (in 1990), available only for South Kohala, are as follows:

	Total	%
Population	9140	100
Caucasian	4778	52
Hawaiian	2215	24
Japanese	950	10
Filipino	667	7
Chinese	152	2

**TABLE 2**  
**COMMUNITY CONDITIONS SURVEY RESULTS,**  
 JUNE, 1993

RESPONDENTS: 243

**Greatest Issue Needing Attention in Waimea: (Open-ended Question)**

TRAFFIC	31% of total respondents.
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	19%
PUBLIC EDUCATION	12%
BYPASS (Specifically)	12%
MEDICAL SERVICES (including hospital)	12%

**Citizen Rating and Prioritizing of Key Waimea Traits:**

The next two tables summarize responses, first sorted by average score, then sorted by relative importance.

**Sorted by Average Score**

Waimea Traits	Excellent 5	----- 4	--Fair-- 3	----- 2	---Poor 1	Average Score	Most Important
Physical Attractiveness	25%	28%	29%	14%	4%	3.57	14%
Quality of Life	17%	26%	34%	15%	8%	3.29	21%
Social-Cultural Activities	12%	26%	36%	9%	16%	3.07	7%
Retail Goods	15%	16%	42%	14%	14%	3.05	6%
Public Schools	24%	15%	15%	26%	20%	2.98	24%
Cost of Living	8%	12%	49%	18%	13%	2.84	23%
Recent Development	4%	21%	39%	21%	13%	2.82	5%
							100%

**Sorted By Relative Importance**

Waimea Traits	Excellent 5	----- 4	--Fair-- 3	----- 2	---Poor 1	Average Score	Most Important
Public Schools	24%	15%	15%	26%	20%	2.98	24%
Cost of Living	8%	12%	49%	18%	13%	2.84	23%
Quality of Life	17%	26%	34%	15%	8%	3.29	21%
Physical Attractiveness	25%	28%	29%	14%	4%	3.57	14%
Social-Cultural Activities	12%	26%	36%	9%	16%	3.07	7%
Retail Goods	15%	16%	42%	14%	14%	3.05	6%
Recent Development	4%	21%	39%	21%	13%	2.82	5%
							100%

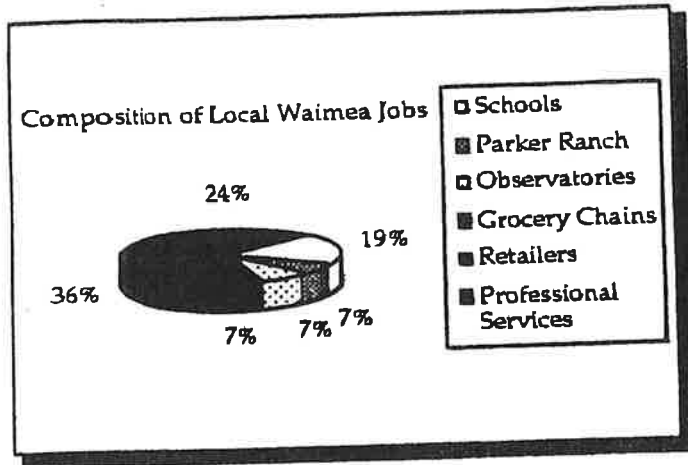
**Waimea's Progress as a place to live in recent years (5 being highest and 1 being lowest):**

5 9%      4 22%      3 32%      2 25%      1 12%      Avg 2.91: Declining



## EMPLOYMENT

Employment figures are only available for South Kohala district as a whole. The district employed 3068 people in 1990. Unemployment held at 3.4%, slightly under the County average of 3.8%. This low figure hides the areas high rate of 'underemployment,' where



may be related to the economic pressures being experienced by local families.

The largest local employers in Waimea include:

Primary/Secondary Schools:	322
• HPA:	141
Parker School:	60
Waimea School:	121

Parker Ranch (Estimated):	110
Observatories:	108
CFH:	50
Keck:	58

Grocery Chain Stores:	115
KTA (Estimated):	50
Sure Save:	65

Retail Stores:	600
(Estimated)	
Professional Services:	400
(Estimated)	

Other major employers include County government, State government, the resorts along the Kohala coast, farming, ranching and local utilities. Among these leading employers, there is no indication that any a likely to grow substantially in the near term. Schools appear stable, although Waimea Elementary and Middle School may increase somewhat in size over the next two years.

Parker Ranch is involved in legal disputes; combined with recent modifications to its cattle raising operations, it is difficult to predict future growth for this important employer.

Retailing, which accounts for the largest group of jobs in Waimea, also appears stable. Local experts, including leasing agents and banks, have indicated that recent business turnover rates (slightly up) have been affected more by inadequate business expertise than a weak market. There are opportunities for

adults are engaged in jobs at or near minimum wage. No statistics are available on local incomes. County averages are not applicable due to the wider range of incomes in Waimea, which is known as one of the wealthiest communities in the state. Unfortunately, this generalization hides the fact that a large proportion of citizens in Waimea are not well off and suffer from the area's very high cost of living (including high cost of housing).

University of Hawaii at Hilo recently announced (in 1992) that the cost of living on the Big Island is about 33% higher than the national average. Again, while statistics are not available, it is common knowledge in Waimea that many locals are working at two jobs to keep afloat. The cost of living, the recent loss of higher paying sugar-related jobs, and high percentage of tourism-related positions help to explain this apparent trend. Very poor regional social welfare statistics

minor growth in some segments, as will be noted in the Business Environment section below.

Professional services are a major portion of local jobs, with real estate sales being the single largest component. Local firms employ slightly less than 100 people, though most are independent contractors. With the current market stabilizing after a long weak period, this figure is likely to rise once the insurance crisis (see next section) is addressed.

## BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

### Financing and Insurance

Bank financing has been difficult to obtain for business development for several years in Hawaii. Nationwide problems, particularly linked to real estate investment, have created a very conservative lending climate. Locally, the three major banks, including Bank of Hawaii, First Hawaiian and American Savings Bank, appear to be consistent with the overall trend. Financing is available but potential borrowers need to be able to present a particularly strong case for business loans. Unfortunately, there are a remarkably high number of applications without business merit, according to one local expert. There is a real need for business planning assistance and basic business education in Waimea.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Iniki, the residential and commercial insurance industry has entered a crisis period. Many underwriters have pulled out of the Hawaiian market; the very few who offer insurance have increased rates as much as four-fold. Currently State government is investigating means of addressing this extraordinary problem. Meanwhile, real estate sales are being heavily constrained.

The cost of renewing insurance on existing buildings and businesses is increasing for the same reason. Small businesses are feeling the

pinch. With a flat economy and tourism still low, it is very difficult to pass insurance cost on to the customer.

### Retailing

There are currently just under 100 retail businesses in Waimea. They serve the trade area of about 3100 households, or 9140 individuals in the Waimea-Waikoloa-Kawaihae-Puako region. Retailing businesses include:

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>FIRM</u>
Building Materials	4
General Merchandise	2
Food Stores	4
Automotive	3
Gasoline/Service Stations	4
Apparel & Accessories	15
Furnishings	8
Eating & Drinking Places	18
Drug Stores	1
Miscellaneous Retail	39

Two of the food stores are linked to island-wide chains. They have very large sales relative to the Big Island average and dominate the local market.

According to regional standards, about 59% household incomes are spent on retail trade. Total buying power for the trade area then is \$72.8 million. A 1993 retail sales study<sup>2</sup> of Waimea indicates that about 27% of local retail dollars are being spent outside the community. Since tourism income was not reflected, the actual leakage from Waimea may be substantially higher. In fact, if calculated on the basis of a recent survey which probed local buying habits, leakage may be as high as 41% (see Table 4). Generally, this loss may represent some opportunity for new or expanded retail

<sup>2</sup>Winters, Rebecca A. *Sales Leakage Analysis for the Town of Waimea, South Kohala, Island of Hawaii*. 1993.

business. The study noted limitations in interpreting the findings for most retail segments. Further research is required before recommendations can be made on business recruitment.

Relatively high turnover rates have been experienced recently among local retailers. This turnover has been attributed more to lack of expertise, under-capitalization or focus on inappropriate market than to the actual market for retail goods.

In a June, 1993 survey of Waimea area citizens, respondents rated local retailing as

slightly better than fair (3.05 average on a scale from 1 to 5). When asked where they buy specific retail goods (see Table 4), people varied in their habits dramatically according to the product or service. Two thirds of the respondents acquire their pharmaceutical needs locally, despite the existence of just one store outside the hospital. At the other end of the scale, only 39% and 33% purchase clothing and furnishings (respectively) in Waimea. The low apparel rate is remarkable given the existence of 15 different clothing stores in town.

**Table 3**  
**Retail Purchasing Patterns Among Waimea-Area Residents**

Retail Product	Primary Source of Purchases			Waimea Stores
	Waimea	Kona	Hilo	
Drugs	67%	12%	21%	1
Gas	61%	18%	21%	4
Food	59%	25%	16%	4
General Merchandise	58%	22%	20%	2
Building Materials	58%	12%	30%	4
Restaurants	58%	19%	23%	18
Auto Supplies	57%	21%	22%	3
Clothing	39%	22%	39%	15
Furnishings	33%	33%	34%	8
Average	54%	20%	25%	

**RETAIL LEAKAGE BASED ON SURVEY RESULTS**

(Based on Survey Data and Sales Potential Estimated in *Sales Leakage Analysis for ... Waimea, 1993*)

Retail Product	Bought in Waimea	Total Sales Potential	Total Actual Sales	Leakage
Drugs	67%	\$6,556,991	\$4,371,327	\$2,185,664
Gas	61%	\$5,516,862	\$3,348,384	\$2,168,478
Food	59%	\$22,212,042	\$13,065,907	\$9,146,135
General Merchandise	58%	\$4,745,391	\$2,774,229	\$1,971,162
Building Materials	58%	\$2,124,748	\$1,240,853	\$883,895
Restaurants	58%	\$8,291,477	\$4,814,406	\$3,477,071
Auto Supplies	57%	\$13,278,664	\$7,604,021	\$5,674,643
Clothing	39%	\$4,050,149	\$1,562,656	\$2,487,493
Furnishings	33%	\$3,025,386	\$999,458	\$2,025,928
Average	54%	\$69,801,710	\$39,781,241	\$30,020,469
				Average Leakage 43%

## Business Services

There are over 100 local professional service firms in Waimea. Accounting, finance, legal, printing, graphic design, real estate, architecture, engineering and other major service sectors are represented.

Among segments that appear under-represented, only one photocopying firm currently exists and there are no formal office supply businesses. Most local firms purchase supplies by catalog sales through suppliers in Kona or Hilo.

## Tourism

Interviews with local merchants indicate that tourism is a substantial source of revenue in Waimea. Leading restaurants, specialty stores, gas stations and general merchandise firms appear to benefit greatly from this sector. While no formal data is available, most of these businesses attract visitors actually coming to Waimea as opposed to those passing through who stop simply for convenience goods. This is an issue which needs to be better understood due to the potential bypass road around Waimea. Plans to address business loss due to the bypass will need to reflect awareness of actual tourist local purchasing trends.

The WMS Economic Restructuring Committee recently proposed to create a Destination Waimea program, in part to increase Waimea's tourism business. Initial project discussions have focused on activities which will equally support local socio-economic interests. Heritage tourism and eco-tourism would be highlighted, given Waimea's strengths in both these top tourism attractions. Among possible projects are:

- Business Directory to be distributed regionally;
- Waimea brochure, describing the town's visitor attractions and services, to be

distributed throughout the state in hotels, travel agencies and tourist destinations;

- Creation or expansion of local festivals and events which emphasize Waimea's unique historic, economic and cultural assets. Among festivals being considered are:

*Cabbage Festival*, focused on Waimea pre-eminent position statewide in cabbage production. This event would emphasize Waimea's strengths in agriculture generally, while focusing on locally appropriate entertainment and other activities;

*Education Celebration*, focused on creating visibility and support for Waimea's educational strengths and of its school children;

*Aloha Week Festival*, Waimea Ho'olaulea, in partnership with other community organizations;

- Creation of a Waimea Cultural Center, a facility which would celebrate and preserve (through regular programming) the multi-ethnic fine arts of the community. While emphasis would be on Hawaiian heritage, other ethnic programming would be encouraged. This facility, in concept, would be open daily, would include visitor displays, be available for artisans to produce and sell their goods, and would have some form of theatre area for regular performances;
- Local historic tours, possibly organized to pick up Kohala resort guests at their hotels and bring them to Waimea for the day and/or evening;
- Editorial promotion of Waimea through articles in travel-oriented magazines and newspapers;
- Promotion of Waimea through the 850 other Main Street towns in the U.S. Conceivably, special tour packages for Main Street (or even National Trust for Historic Preservation) members nationwide, including local Bed & Breakfast accommodations, could be

prepared through a partnership of local businesses.

Destination Waimea would initially be a Waimea Main Street program. As it grows it may become independent, as appropriate.

Early funding would come from WMS and locally interested partners. At this time, Destination Waimea would not be focused on business recruitment, as are some other 'Destination' programs in the state. Over time, this option may be taken if desired.

### THE ECONOMIC ATTRACTIVENESS OF HERITAGE TOURISM

As the third largest retail industry in the United States, travel and tourism "contributed \$344 billion to the U.S. economy in 1991 and supplied \$43.6 billion in total taxes to federal, state and local coffers. Americans spent \$893 million a day on travel in 1990. In the past 10 years, travel receipts have doubled."<sup>9</sup> A 1988 survey conducted by the National Tour Association of 'travelers over 50' found that "52.3% favor trips to historical sites, and 62.6% traveling on group tours favor visits to America's heritage."<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, a "1978 survey conducted by the State Historic Preservation Center of South Dakota revealed that tourists visiting historic sites stayed an average of one day longer than the general tourist."<sup>11</sup>

Other demonstrations of the impact of heritage tourism on local economies include:

- *The Alamo in Texas attracts 2.2 million visitors annually.*
- *59% of all visitors to Arizona each year tour historic sites.*
- *52% of travelers over 50 favor trips to historic sites.*
- *63% of group tours for 50+ age people focus on heritage.*
- *More tourists come to Virginia -91%- for its historic atmosphere than for any other reason.*

(Source: National Trust for Historic Preservation)

With these statistics in mind, the National Trust for Historic Preservation reports that:

*"Too often a community or region only addresses short-term tourism objectives without considering the long-term effect on resources, quality of life and infrastructure. Sustainable tourism is developed by understanding capacity to service visitors and then capturing the economic impact from outside markets while not endangering the very resources which attract visitors. Heritage Tourism is the sensitive balance of short-term economic gain and longer-term well being, including preservation, protection and promotion of historic and cultural resources."* [Emphasis added.]<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation Overview Packet. "Heritage Tourism: Economic Impact."

<sup>10</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation. "Heritage Tourism Initiative Fact Sheet," p.1.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, p.1.

<sup>12</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation Overview Packet. "Heritage Tourism: Philosophy for Long-Term Success."

## Farming

Waimea area farming is substantial, with markets throughout the state (and in rare cases, abroad). More products are grown in quantity around Waimea than anywhere else in Hawaii. Among products grown here are:

- Cabbage
- Chinese Cabbage
- Tomatoes
- Eggplant
- Celery
- Peas
- Daikon
- Carrots
- Flowers, particularly Roses & Carnations
- Lettuce
- Cucumbers
- Broccoli
- Peppers
- Squash
- Beans
- Gubo
- Strawberries

Waimea produce satisfies only a relatively small portion of statewide demand. Our products are generally too high in price to compete with mainland and foreign produce. Reasons for high prices include locally high cost of labor, real estate, housing and cost of living. The latter two problems make it very difficult to recruit workers.

Among Waimea's other agricultural development problems are:

Benlate fungicide. This chemical is apparently responsible for considerable damage to crops recently. Local farmers are suing the manufacturer.

Unreliability of production of many items. Since there is not a lot of acreage devoted to many products, potential buyers (such as the resorts) face irregular supply and the need to buy from a multitude of small producers. Customers have the alternative of buying from major mainland wholesalers who can reliably provide constant supply of mixed orders. Creation of a network of formal farmers markets in the state could help local farmers justify expanding acreage of the range of crops. Ideally, a cooperative sales organization would help make local purchasing more attractive, too.

Water. Water needs to be a reliable resource. Given Waimea's periodic draught a reservoir system has been needed for some time. Improvements to the Lakeland reservoir are expected to help. However, informal accounts indicate that the lake is currently leaking water worse than when work began.

Real estate prices. Prices for land are very high in this region. If agriculture land could be permanently zoned, with production requirements attached, its cost might be reduced. This is a problem linked to the whole issue of open space planning and the current lack of a formal plan adopted by the County.

Five year boundary review by Office of State Planning. The state has proposed to restrict some land from production and put into conservation status for watershed reasons.

Jones Act. This federal act makes it impossible for local shippers to use foreign vessels. American flag vessels cost more, making Hawaii (and Big Island) products more expensive (or less profitable).

Several positive conditions also exist locally:

Year-round, temperate climate. It is well-suited for production of the items mentioned above on a year-round basis.

Vacuum cooling facility. Organized as a cooperative, it serves local growers well.

Available land. Much of the acreage in Hawaiian Home Lands has not yet been leased or put into agriculture-related production. As these properties are planted, supply and range of produce will improve.

## Ranching

Extensive range land makes some form of ranching a continued long-term proposition for North and South Kohala. However, various issues affect both the degree and form of cattle-raising operations in this area.

With the closure of slaughterhouses in Honolulu and Hamakua, Big Island ranchers have no significant slaughtering option left in the state. The latter facility may re-open but timing remains an unknown. Further, the cost of grain for 'finishing' cattle to slaughter-size is currently two to three times higher in Hawaii than on the mainland. Finally, ranchers are able to get a better price on the mainland than they can now get here. As a result, the current trend is to ship cattle to the mainland as soon as they are one-year old.

Grain and slaughterhouses are not the only problems facing cattle ranchers. The Yellow Sugar Cane Aphid is harming grass on which cattle feed. Land going into conservation may also constrain total cattle acreage for some time. The Jones Act has more of a negative impact on the economics of cattle sales than on produce. (County of Hawaii notes that there are efforts being made to amend the Act to provide exceptions which would benefit Hawaii cattle.) Mexican and other Latin American cattle may also become more competition for Hawaii.

On the positive side, the Big Island offers year-round grazing for cattle. Current national concerns about health make leaner, grass-fed meat more competitive than usual with grain-fed product, which tends to taste better. There are Pacific Rim markets, including Japan, which have been relatively untapped by Hawaii. Finally, the Big Island does not have some of the mainland's major cattle diseases, including Blue Tongue. As a result, there may be markets for breeding stock from here.

In short, Kohala ranching appears to have as many constraints as it does opportunities. While it may grow, there are no current indications of significant change in the near future.

## Education

There are three major schools in Waiimea with a combined employment of about 320. These schools have a range of community-oriented resources, some of which could be tapped more heavily.

Hawaii Preparatory Academy is well known in the Pacific as a high quality boarding school. It has both high school and middle school programs. There are at least informal plans to consolidate both segments onto the high school campus, leaving the future of the middle school site, formerly a hotel, open. The HPA complex includes sports playing fields, pool, indoor and outdoor tennis, gymnasium, and an auditorium/theatre.

Parker School is also respected as a fine private school, though its students tend to come from the Big Island. It offers no boarding service. The school has an auditorium but no gym. It has recently arranged to use Thelma Parker Gymnasium for sporting events. It is likely that Parker School will be moved from its current facility to a new location as part of the Parker Ranch 2020 plan. (The Ranch owns the Parker School property.)

Waimea Elementary and Intermediate School, with a student enrollment of 1200, is the third major school in town. The institution is over-crowded and there are common complaints that it is under-funded. Thelma Parker Gymnasium is a part of the complex, as are the County Library and a large play ground. The Department of Education has plans to construct additional facilities for the school. However, there are also discussions about the possibility of moving to a campus location near Lalamilo industrial area.

It is noteworthy that all three schools may possibly relocate outside of the downtown area. With Waimea's long history linked to education, this would have an effect on its

character. For example, children walking to school are part of the lifestyle of this rural community. A new campus location for Waimea Elementary would force practically all students to take the bus or be driven to school. The civic and cultural elements of downtown's centerness would be negatively impacted. Future planning should take into account alternatives for maintaining an educational presence in the downtown.

These schools' facilities may also serve the community more if coordinated programs could be organized. For example, a summer theatre program could be initiated to entertain both locals and visitors. Jobs would be created, citizens would have more opportunity to engage in cultural activities (e.g., acting, music, etc.), and spill-over effects from patrons onto other businesses would be welcome.

### **Astronomy**

Two observatory organizations have their headquarters in Waimea: W.M. Keck Observatory and Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope Corporation. These offices employ about 108 people, somewhat over half of whom are astronomy-oriented professionals. Keck is building a second observatory on Mauna Kea, which may mean some small increase in local jobs.

Hilo, particularly University of Hawaii at Hilo (UHH), is working to expand its astronomy complex. It recently opened a high technology office park specifically focused on astronomy. This facility, combined with Hilo's lower housing costs, lower cost of commercial land, proximity to a major airport, and access to UHH make Hilo highly competitive in attracting additional astronomy development. For these reasons, major increases in astronomy-oriented employment or investment in Waimea are unlikely for the foreseeable future.

### **Support for Business Development**

Waimea has had several disadvantages in supporting further business development. Among these are:

- High cost of land;
- High cost of living, including housing, food and gas;
- Lack of local cooperation in promoting Waimea business and tourism opportunities;
- Absence of local business training facility such as a community college or university;
- Remote location from UHH and the Sm. Business Development Center in Hilo;
- Absence of a local public high school (a disincentive to potential employees with families);
- Unusually high lease rates, particularly given the current high vacancy rates.

With these problems, there is a need for an organized business advocacy program in Waimea. Waimea Main Street has proposed to focus on improving business conditions for local firms. Its programs, which address most existing problems, are listed in Chapter 5.

### **HOUSING**

Cost of housing is one of the most common complaints about living in Waimea. Many people who work here cannot afford to live here. The problem has become so bad that Waimea has come to have the image of a town populated primarily by rich haoles from off-island. Long-time residents resent limited housing opportunities, their de facto relegation (and segregation) to the wet side of town, and the growing discrepancy between the 'haves' and 'have nots.'

Three bedroom, two bath homes in the area range from a (very) low of \$130,000 to a mid-range of \$400,000. The upper end is well into the millions. Recently, for example, a 47,000



square foot home with 17 fireplaces was begun at Kohala ranch. Within the area, there are three housing subdistricts, each with its own pricing. They are:

Wet Side (toward Hilo)	
Low mid:	\$140,000-300,000
In-Town	
Low mid:	\$190,000-500,000
Dry Side	
Low-mid:	\$200,000-400,000

Pricing trends are down slightly over the past year. Experts do not anticipate an upturn in the near future. Waimea is, however, more stable than nearby Waikoloa, with its closer linkages to the unstable Kohala resort industry.

Local financing is readily available, with the average mortgage currently running at a fixed rate of 7%-7.25%. Insurance has been more difficult, but not impossible, to acquire. A few agencies in the state are still offering policies, though they often limit the number they write in any one month. Cost has risen by double or more over the past year since Hurricane Iniki.

Rental housing is available, generally at rates between \$750 and \$1100 per month for a three bedroom, two bath home. On the wet side, rents start at the low end of this range. On the dry side, they start about \$100 higher.

To further emphasize the impact of housing affordability, currently 75% of Waimea's police and firefighters do not live in the area. Some of them come from as far away as Puna each day to work. This problem is dramatic enough to have a heavily constraining effect on rebuilding any sense of community in the town.

To address demand, there are a large number of dwelling units planned for the region.

According to a March, 1992, study<sup>3</sup>, there were 4250 dwelling units in Waimea and Waikoloa Village at that time. An additional 9820 had been approved by government for construction. 7400 more had been applied for and were at various stages of consideration in the land use/permit process. Practically none of these homes have been constructed yet.

## COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

In a recent survey of local businesses, one of the strongest complaints voiced was high lease rates. Running between \$1.40-\$1.75, triple net, these rates are 25%-40% higher than in Hilo which has a substantially larger market area. Local experts compare the Waimea rates favorably to Kona and Waikoloa Village, however, which have rents substantially higher.

Whatever theoretical justification there might be, vacancy rates are fairly high (about 20%) in Waimea. Lessors are said to be very flexible and are striking creative deals that offer short-term discounts with mid-term options to re-negotiate. Leases in the \$1.00/square foot area are not uncommon.

So few property sales have been made (or even offered) recently that it is not possible to generalize about values. As a reflection of rental income potential, properties have been declining slightly for the past 1-2 years.

Most properties are locally owned. Parker Ranch holds about sixty percent of commercial space. Once Parker Ranch 2020 commercial development is completed, this figure will be significantly higher. Parker's large holdings may help explain why rental rates have not dropped much despite high vacancy rates.

<sup>3</sup>Hannah, Betty. Community Assessment: Waimea, South Kohala, 'A Town in Transition.' 1992.

## LAND USE

Land use within Waimea Main Street's primary planning area is limited primarily to single family residential, retail-oriented commercial, and agriculture. Light industrial zoning is needed but currently absent.

Multi-family housing is limited to commercially zoned areas in Waimea. Given the substantial need for affordable housing, this lack of focus on multi-family is a major local weakness.

County of Hawaii has been consistently willing to rezone around Waimea to support development. The result has been implicit encouragement of sprawl. In 1993, the County Council approved rezoning of ag land to commercial near Don's Pake Kitchen on Mamalahoa Highway heading toward Honoka'a, despite requests by Waimea Community Association and Waimea Main Street not to. County Planning Department noted that the action was justified because the site was within an urban boundary specified in the County General Plan. When asked for the rationale for this line, County responded that its line comes from one specified in a State planning document. County did not know why the boundary was chosen unless it was because the isolated Fukushima store (Don's Pake) was there. This kind of locally insensitive zoning is in large part to blame for the sprawling strip development which is bleeding the community of its sense of place and potential for a cohesive, focused community center. Both local zoning and Special Design District status would greatly improve Waimea's capacity to support ~~business and direct growth in a manner~~ consistent with rational community development.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

### Open Space

For a community with a population of over 6000, Waimea's open space system is quite limited. Open space planning is greatly needed in Waimea. Sites for active recreation, passive enjoyment of nature and trail systems need to be researched to begin developing a cohesive, adequate open space network.

Nearly all of the town's organized outdoor recreation occur at Waimea Park (between Lindsey and Kawaihae Roads). Local youth sports directors note that it is difficult for the park to absorb all of the various programs and leagues in town.

Currently, the only passive park in Waimea is at Church Row. Proposals have recently been presented by the County to make this location into soccer fields and/or a farmers market. Either would eliminate the passive and historic character of the park. The sidebar letter to the community which follows clarifies other reasons why this park is not well suited for these proposed alternatives.

Waimea Outdoor Circle has been working with other community organizations to seek designation of 11+ acres of state land behind the Canada-France-Hawaii complex as a Waimea Nature Park. This site is extraordinary with a fully mature stand of trees (dominated by eucalyptus) and Waikoloa Stream running through it. If the designation is successful, future management will focus on Hawaiian plants. Endemic and indigenous plants will eventually succeed introduced flora. A trail system will make the area more accessible. Waimea Main Street has proposed linking the site with Church Row via a pedestrian trail along Waikoloa Stream. This trail would greatly enhance and link the system of open spaces in town. It would also act as a foundation for a future regional trail system, such as that

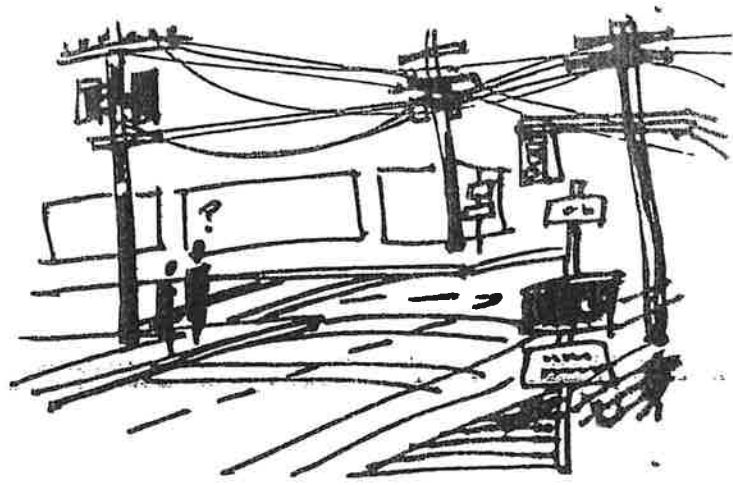
proposed by the Outdoor Circle. With increasing traffic along Waimea's two major roads, pedestrians need alternative pathways that are safe and attractive to get around inside the community.

## Utilities

Waimea faces the same problems as other Big Island communities in the areas of power and telephone service. HELCO has found it difficult for the past two years to provide constant power to the County. Rolling blackouts have occurred fairly regularly for short periods of time. At least two activities may reduce this problem, while a third may increase it. Improvements may come from geothermal power cells in Puna coming on line during 1993. Second, at least two different organizations are considering putting in power plants at Kawaihae within the next two-three years. On the other hand, closure of Hamakua coast sugar mills is likely to end the power production they have contributed to the Big Island network for decades. While the future of power in the County is not certain, it is unlikely to be a major issue for Waimea area businesses.

What is a major issue for Waimea is the extraordinary proliferation of above-ground utility wires. Nearly everywhere in town, there are dozens of wires clouding the air in one of the clearest displays of engineering-gone-crazy in the County. For example, at the intersection of Lindsey Road and Mamalahoa Highway there are 66 different wires overhead.

In a recent town meeting, citizens voted that this issue was the highest priority for improving Waimea's character. There is a need to pass legislation that all future wiring be buried and that existing wires be buried as soon as possible. Waimea Main Street is prepared to assist with seeking resources for the work.



Telephone service is adequate to the area. However, it is difficult to get single party line in some districts around Waimea. So far, commercial lines have not been a problem. Connections are generally clean enough that telecommunications are not hampered.

The biggest problem Waimea has with its infrastructure is the absence of a sewage treatment system. Literally all of the community's sewage goes into septic tanks or cesspools. At least some of these are leaching into Waikoloa Stream which runs through the center of town. With Waimea's 400+% growth over the past decade, and continued development, this problem is getting serious. Parker Ranch 2020 development will include a sewage treatment plant. However, this facility is not intended for community-wide use.

There are three sewage treatment alternatives facing the town, if it is to be able to adequately absorb almost certain major growth over the next decade. The first is to work with Parker Ranch to expand its facility so as to serve the rest of town. This is a complicated option, given that it would require a public-private partnership and a major County investment to hook up local buildings. The second option would be for the County to develop a separate facility, with even larger capital improvement costs.

The third option is to consider installation of modular biomass conversion systems throughout the community. These systems consist of digesters (metal tanks) which use bacteria to break down sewage and other biodegradable solid waste into usable byproducts, including soil enhancements and a gas similar to propane. Both could be sold to subsidize operating costs. According to an expert in the field, these systems typically cover all of their operating costs.

A biomass system for a neighborhood of 50 homes would require about 5 tanks, seven feet high by 3 feet wide, plus support equipment. Totally installed with paid labor, cost for the system would be \$180,000 plus hookups to individual homes and installation of high-efficiency toilets. For the central Waimea area, such modular systems may be more cost-effective for both homes and commercial buildings than a central sewage system. Additional research is necessary; Waimea Main Street is investigating installation of a demonstration system at the new Nature Park.

Water may become a problem for Waimea. Periodic draught conditions limit the current system's capacity to sustain growth. No formal study is available to estimate excess capacity at this time. However, as more Hawaiian Home Lands are put into agricultural production, demand from the existing population is likely to get much heavier. With Kona's water problems, the County is going to be pressed to seek creative solutions. Kohala Mountain and Hamakua Coast water supplies may need to be exploited more heavily. These are challenges not yet well understood. Without evidence to the contrary, it is currently assumed that water will not be a significant problem for Waimea so long as growth is low to moderate over the next ten years. Weak economic conditions and the locally high cost of real estate make this assumption fairly reliable.

## Design Guidelines

Waimea's disjointed, sprawling strip development over the past five years has greatly detracted from Waimea's sense of place, its single most attractive economic asset. In a series of four town meetings and twenty six outreach meetings conducted by Waimea Main Street, citizens consistently said they have stayed or come to Waimea because of its extraordinary sense of place. Specifically, its (originally) focused town center and pedestrian character surrounded by attractive rural scenery have been its major features. Today, Waimea's commercial development is so unfocused and unlinked that people have to drive to practically every retailer or service. The auto orientation is being exacerbated by the County's willingness to rezone ag land for further commercial sprawl around Waimea's edges.

In the face of this sprawl, individual firms find it more difficult to benefit from any collective strength which would occur from a focused town center. Each new building has no linkage to the ones beside it. Design varies greatly, thus further taking away from the very character which traditionally drew people to shop and live here. It is no wonder that small business is fairly unstable in Waimea (although there are clearly other factors contributing to the problem).

Ideally, Waimea needs the following design elements to improve both its economic and social well being:

- Neighborhoods and circulation network should support each other as a cohesive system;
- Buildings should work together to sustain and build a stronger sense of place for each neighborhood; (residential and commercial)
- Pedestrian pathways should be safe and attractive to encourage people to walk inside town.

To accomplish these priorities, seven steps need to be taken:

1. Development which avoids further sprawl, improves existing districts and respects Waimea's paniolo character should be encouraged;
2. A safe, attractive network of pedestrian walkways should be re-established;
3. Internal road circulation and utilities need to be improved soon to respond both to existing needs and to future growth;
4. Programs for creation and integration of affordable housing in Waimea should be encouraged;
5. Town design improvements and Parker Ranch 2020 development should be consistent and support each other;
6. Locally-defined zoning is needed to empower a planning process that responds to local needs;
7. Streetscapes throughout Waimea should be planned, improved and integrated with each other.

These program requirements are further discussed and illustrated in an insert to this plan, entitled Waimea Town Design Improvement Strategy. The defined strategy is that proposed by Waimea Main Street (WMS) for the community. WMS will work with citizens and other town organizations to

refine the ideas and then submit them to County in the form of Design Guidelines for passage as an ordinance. With that status, the strategy can begin to assist businesses and residents in encouraging development that makes economic and social sense.

#### **SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS**

In a series of Waimea Town Meetings during 1993, participants discussed existing conditions in the community at great length. Citizens identified, then prioritized a series of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities that need to be addressed in future town planning. Their findings are consistent with follow-up research by Waimea Main Street staff, as presented here. Table 2 summarizes Waimea's strengths and weaknesses; Table 3 identifies perceived opportunities. In combination with community values (see Chapter 2), these findings have been used to guide all community actions proposed in Chapter 5.

**TABLE 4**  
**WAIMEA'S STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES**  
 Prioritized by Level of Importance,  
 As Expressed and Voted Upon by Town Meeting Participants

STRENGTHS	Regular Votes	Notes
Beautiful, Natural, Rural Surroundings; Climate	40	
Hawaiian-ness: Heritage, Activities, History	19	
Cosmopolitan Cultural Diversity	19	
Open areas, View planes and Accessibility	18	
Community Facilities - Schools, Science, Theatres	10	
Parker Ranch Economic Draw and Paniolo Traditions	6	
Sense of Community Spirit	6	
Agriculture	6	
Crossroads	5	
Affluence	1	

WEAKNESSES	Regular Votes	Notes
Poor Infrastructure	25	1
Unplanned Development	21	
Traffic Congestion & Circulation	14	
Low Cultural Accommodation, Recognition, Respect	14	
Overcrowded Schools; No Public High School	10	
No Focal Point/Town Center	9	
Lack of Youth Activities	8	
Gap Between Income/Cost of Living	7	
Not Enough Jobs	6	
Strip Development	5	
Lack of Community Control Over Development	4	
Lack of Public Transportation	4	
Powerlessness	3	
Narrow Participation: Poor Communica'n Betw/ Groups	2	
Economic Imbalance	0	
Absence of Town Entry Signs	0	
Infrastructure...Sewage Treatment, Power Lines	0	

Notes:

1. For example: lack of sewage treatment, circulation system, pedestrian environment, power lines.

**TABLE 5**  
**OPPORTUNITIES FOR WAIMEA**  
 Prioritized by Level of Importance,  
 As Expressed and Voted Upon by Town Meeting Participants

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES	Votes
Underground electrical/telephone lines	31
Second road through Waimea (Improve local circulation)	31
Holistic systems for providing food, water, energy, sewer	18
Link to & support existing Waimea-related plans	16
Bike paths/horse trails/foot paths	14
Make Waimea a gathering place; more festivals & events	12
Support & input to Parker Ranch on 2020 plan	11
Tree Conservation/planting	10
Provide postal delivery in village	9
Controlled/coordinated development	9
Foot trail Between Nature Park to Church Row	8
Development of schools	7
Theatrical park	6
Active Partnership with Long's Drug & Parker Ranch	5
Hawaiian Cultural Center	5
Community building projects	5
Affordable childcare and eldercare	4
Main Street as advocate - not giving orders	3
Access to Parking/Improved Parking management	3
Sidewalks or protected pedestrian walkways	2
Biomass conversion: modular/local sewage treatment	2
Signage enforcement	1
Spread out services to avoid congestion	0
New concept in signage	0
More police regulation	0
More park space	0
Community calendar	0
Better regulated speed	0

Note: Some opportunities expressed during the meeting did not receive votes in subsequent priority-setting by participants.

Note: Threats to the community were expressed in terms of opportunity.

## Chapter 4

# Mission, Goals and Objectives

### REVIEW

Current conditions have been analyzed to identify local strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats. This information, when considered in the context of local values and other priorities, can lead to locally appropriate goals and objectives. Goals, however, should be linked to some primary purpose, or mission, which they are to address. This chapter defines the primary mission of Waimea Main Street, then establishes goals and objectives to accomplish it.

### WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

In any long-term planning process, certain assumptions need to be made to address uncertainty about the future. Goals and objectives defined in this chapter reflect a series of specific assumptions based on WMS' best estimates. These include:

- Waimea will continue to grow at the rate of 100% per decade or more over the next ten years. (It grew over 400% during the last decade.)
- The long-discussed Bypass Road around Waimea will not be completed within at least the next five years.

- County of Hawaii will not implement any major improvements to Waimea infrastructure over the next five years. In particular, no public program to address sewage treatment will occur during this time frame.
- Hawaiian Home Lands development will continue.
- Water will not become a significant problem for development in Waimea.
- Parker Ranch 2020 commercial development will occur within the next five years.
- The community of Waimea will have to rely on its own resources for much of the needed and recommended improvements to the Town.
- The community prefers to limit local tourism to a level where it would not interfere with the town's character and public/private services. In short, tourism should be a lower priority than serving Waimea's own citizens.

### MISSION

The following box highlights Waimea Main Street's program mission statement and primary goals for community service.



## MISSION AND GOALS OF WAIMEA MAIN STREET

### *Program Mission Statement*

Build and maintain a community-based town management program focused on improving Waimea's economic vitality, its quality of life and the balance between the two through actions consistent with community values.

### *Program Goals*

- Establish and maintain effective community development partnerships among Waimea's many ethnic and socio-economic groups;
- Develop and implement a community-based strategic town plan to guide community improvements and programs;
- Facilitate community development projects;
- Respect, promote and help preserve the community's Hawaiian heritage;
- Foster the strengthening of Waimea's small business community;
- Support and enhance Waimea's distinctive sense of place through preservation of its village character and conservation of its natural environment.

### STRATEGY FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Waimea Main Street seeks to build a community-based partnership with citizens and other local organizations to undertake improvements and strategic management in the town. Its priorities will be guided by local values and an understanding of Waimea's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Fundamentally, WMS will be a facilitator rather than a leader. The community-based approach emphasizes that citizens, i.e., the collective voice of the community, be the leaders in community development. WMS will work to provide tools, staff and expertise to undertake desirable actions.

Specifically, the actions outlined in the next chapter will emphasize the need for improvements in both local quality of life and economic vitality. Creating social opportunities will be balanced with increased support for business. In social areas, programs will be developed to establish a stronger sense of pride, participation and

ownership in Waimea. Activities will be created or re-energized to bring people together for fun and community service. Emphasis will be on respecting our senior citizens and on providing for the needs of our youths. At the heart of these activities will be support for families. Programs which reduce local cost of living (particularly in the areas of housing and food) will be heavily encouraged. Job training and job opportunities will also be a priority. Finally, the character of both the town and of the rural environment will be protected to assure that Waimea's sense of place (that which keeps or has brought people here) is restored and maintained.

In business areas, projects to help stabilize and enhance local firms will be given primary attention. Access to financing, business education, trained staff, and the benefits of collective action in business development will be emphasized. Business recruitment will focus on firms which support and improve the existing mix of goods and services. Physical improvements

will target improved local circulation and creation of more focused, attractive commercial activity centers. The pedestrian environment will be enhanced to encourage customers to come downtown and stay longer. Capturing a larger share of regional trade will be a higher priority than bringing in additional tourism. Tourism programs will be established but will respect and complement Waimea's way of life.

on a shelf, but rather to be a dynamic part of community development. Waimea Main Street, with open participation from the community, will regularly review its programs to assure that they continue to serve local needs. Refinements will occur regularly so that as values or existing conditions change, improvement programs respond appropriately. In short, the planning process will always be open and ongoing.

The Strategic Town Plan is not intended to sit



## Chapter 5

# Action Plan: Getting There

### Eight Steps Toward Creating a Better Future for Waimea

The vision of a more desirable Waimea described and justified in this plan is attainable. There are steps, actions and resources available to the community to undertake change. The process is long-term, however, and requires a true citizen partnership to succeed. There is no quick fix for the challenges facing this town.

There are many ways to destroy these elements of a successful community. Waimea has experienced more than its share. On the other hand, in today's world, there is only one sure way to make progress. That is through citizens acting together with mutual respect and with devotion to specific values. For Waimea and Waimea Main Street, these values start with respect for the aina, ohana and aloha.

An eight step program is recommended for attaining the vision which was shared at the

beginning of this report. In a highly organized systematic program, the eight steps, which follow, seek to:

- Rebuild our economic vitality;
- Establish pride and sense of ownership for the Downtown;
- Improve the quality of life of our citizens, with emphasis on affordable living;
- Restore a strong sense of community and place in Waimea.

Each step calls for a series of specific actions to assure its success. Citizen participants and staff will determine exactly how these actions are undertaken. However, in the next section, a proposed timeline, available resources and partners appropriate for undertaking each action are defined for reference.

# Step 1

## Get Organized

### Purpose:

Establish the leadership and resources necessary to facilitate and sustain community improvements.

### Action

- 1.1 Establish the WMS organization necessary to facilitate strategic community development.
  - Expand Fund-raising Committee & appoint trained chairperson.
  - Refine Public Relations Committee.
  - Refine Promotion Committee.
  - Expand Design Committee.
- 1.2 Expand partnerships with business community, banks, community groups and government to attain strategic goals.
- 1.3 Develop business plans and funding proposals for key community development activities.
- 1.4 Create a central information center to monitor, track and support local economic development.
- 1.5 Establish a Waimea Main Street loan pool to support desirable development in Waimea.
- 1.6 Organize a Destination Waimea committee to initiate this business development program.
- 1.7 Promote heritage and ecology-oriented ("eco-") tourism concept among area businesses and property owners.
- 1.8 Develop brochure which describes WMS vision of desirable community development and how it can help in the process. Seek to focus development, constrain sprawl, encourage cohesive commercial neighborhoods and restore a pedestrian-oriented community environment.
- 1.9 Assure that all local citizens have the opportunity to guide community development; make this principle a Waimea tradition.
- 1.10 Create a Waimea citizen volunteer workforce to undertake periodic community physical improvements, including improvements to needy citizens' homes.

# Step 2

## Stabilize Key Businesses; Respond to Emergencies

### Purpose:

Address most critical issues and emergencies as soon as organization is capable.

### Action

- 2.1 Initiate business retention program:
  - Business education seminars;
  - Targeted loan pool aimed at projects which create sustain local businesses;
  - Market research collection and sharing.
- 2.2 Initiate design improvements to local identity and sense of place.
- 2.3 Publish annual business directory
- 2.4 List local businesses in statewide business directory database.
- 2.5 Initiate a "Shop Waimea" campaign.
- 2.6 Support Friends of the Future's efforts to promote Waimea as a 'Health and Wellness Center.'

## Step 3

### Expand Social and Cultural Activities

#### Purpose:

Get people involved, interested and committed to the community; make Waimea a gathering place.

#### Action

- 3.1 Create and expand local festivals and events, emphasizing Waimea's cultural heritage. Include at least:
  - Cabbage festival, honoring Waimea's farmers and major crop.
  - Education festival, honoring teachers, all students and learning.
  - Aloha Week festival
  - Summer stock theatre program, in cooperation with Kahilu Theatre, Parker School and HPA.
- 3.2 Develop sites for special events.
- 3.3 Promote concept of Waimea Cultural Center to share and preserve Waimea's rich cultural heritage.
- 3.4 Organize a monthly community 'social,' focused on Waimea-style entertainment and talk-story.
- 3.5 Facilitate planning for a permanent Waimea Farmers Market.
- 3.6 Initiate a Keep Elderly Young (KEY) program, similar to Wailuku Main Street's ongoing program.
- 3.7 Initiate a program to bring local senior citizens to classrooms weekly to talk story with children.
- 3.8 Facilitate creation of a youth center for Waimea teens.
- 3.9 Recruit recreation-oriented businesses, such as a bowling alley or micro-movie theatre.
- 3.10 Establish historic preservation program, with access to WMS loan pool funds. Engage citizens in collecting & sharing community history, e.g., through socials or special events.
- 3.11 Build community traditions.
- 3.12 Work with County to build local public pool.

## Step 4

### Refine Regulatory Environment

#### Purpose:

Establish locally appropriate development standards to sustain Waimea's sense of community.

#### Action

- 4.1 Refine Waimea Design Guidelines to reflect Strategic Plan findings and recommendations.
- 4.2 Initiate community discussion and refinement of final Waimea Design Guidelines draft.
- 4.8 Network with other County Main Street programs and Hawaii Main Street Council to use our collective strength to achieve zoning goals.
- 4.3 In partnership with other community organizations, submit Waimea Design Guidelines to County for ordinance status; seek Special Design District status.
- 4.4 Work with County to complete and implement a Northwest Hawaii Open Space Plan, so as to preserve farming, ranching and open space.
- 4.5 Modify local traffic regulations to assure that automobiles are secondary to pedestrians.
- 4.6 Get County to mandate that all future utility lines are buried.
- 4.7 Support efforts to expand light industrial zoning near the airport; assist local businesses to relocate there.

## Step 5

### Expand Business Development Programs

#### Purpose:

Assist local business start-ups, business expansion, and worker training to expand opportunities.

#### Action

- 5.1 Assist area businesses in research to expand markets and develop new products.
- 5.2 Assist local businesses in expanding on-the-job training.
- 5.3 Encourage Hawaii Small Business Development Center Network to open satellite training office in area.
- 5.4 Help expand vocational training program in area schools.
- 5.5 Establish a college scholarship program for area youths, aimed at degree programs related to locate industries.
- 5.6 Through Destination Waimea, create a Waimea promotional campaign aimed at Big Island visitors, desirable business recruits, and hosting meetings.
- 5.7 Address Heritage Tourism and Eco-tourism markets through joint promotions with Big Island Group and DBED&T.
- 5.8 Promote Waimea as a center for environmental awareness and health.
- 5.9 Promote Waimea-based agriculture.

## Step 6

### Improve Infrastructure, Public Amenities and Physical Environment

#### Purpose:

Establish a framework of community services that support better quality of life & desirable growth.

#### Action

- 6.1 Work with other community organizations to facilitate creation of the Nature Park behind CFH
- 6.2 Facilitate creation of a walkway along Waikoloa Stream between the Nature Park and Church Row.
- 6.3 Improve pedestrian walkways in commercial areas and near schools.
- 6.4 Improve Waimea's internal circulation system with non-highway roads that connect subdistricts.
- 6.5 Develop plan for modular secondary sewage treatment systems, based on biomass conversion principles, throughout Waimea.
- 6.6 Seek resources and partnerships to place local utilities underground.
- 6.7 Expand local recycling program.
- 6.8 Build a system of pocket parks, recreation areas and other open spaces that creates a green belt around Waimea.
- 6.9 Improve pedestrian safety through better crosswalk system and other means in partnership with County
- 6.10 At least annually, facilitate a community-based public improvement project such as the Anuenue Playground. Make this an important tradition.
- 6.11 Work with County to create left-hand turn lane at Opelo Road intersection, HPA Middle School and Lindsay Road at Anuenue Playground.

# Step 7

## Seek to Expand Affordable Housing Opportunities

### Purpose:

Assure availability of quality housing affordable by all Waimea workers and local residents.

### Action

- 7.1 Work with County to provide infrastructure and amenities to areas suitable for multi-family housing.
- 7.2 Promote development of high density housing.
- 7.3 Seek to make more land available for residential development.
- 7.4 Lobby for low-income home loans and other related programs.
- 7.5 Encourage County and State to locate affordable housing projects in Waimea.
- 7.6 Establish a rental housing rehabilitation program, including a loan pool exclusively for it.

# Step 8

## Monitor Steps and Adjust Activities to Respond to Change and Experience

### Purpose:

Regularly refine plans to reflect changing values and conditions. Be entrepreneurial.

### Action

- 8.1 Using data developed through tracking system identified in Action 1.4, monitor strategic plan progress.
- 8.2 Conduct Town Meetings every six months to discuss progress and changing conditions with community; seek ideas for improvements.
- 8.3 At annual retreats review the strategic plan for tracking progress and for refinement as necessary.