

## GUEST VIEWPOINT

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# Seeking solutions

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In an effort to summarize information related to Kaua'i County Council actions over the last three years during my term on the council, I thought I would offer this summary of activities so that the general public had a factual document reflecting the council's methodical approach and systematic review of project-by-project density that already was given zoning as far back as 1968.

This current council has in fact recognized growing community concern with the pace and cost of our island's growth. But we must recognize that there are two distinct parts to this issue: there is "existing" zoning; and there is "new" zoning.

"Existing" zoning that was already in place was not approved by the current council.

There is often public misperception about these details, as witnessed by a May 8 letter to the editor in *The Garden Island* from a Koloa resident:

"...Recent statements from council members talking about potential traffic problems in Po'ipu and Koloa seem self-serving and hollow. What about Kapa'a and what council was it that approved all of these multi-family developments that created this problem? Seems to me it was the current council."

But if the public misunderstands this critical difference, it is the responsibility of county officials to explain why these differences are important in order to understand what is happening today.

For the most part, what we are seeing today are the end results of existing zoning that was put in place many years ago.

For example, the zoning for the two development proposals in the Waipouli Coconut Plantation area have been in place for over 25 years.

In Koloa town, existing zoning for commercial development was granted as far back as 1982. Today, we need to focus our energies on advancing the transportation plans. As recently as this week, groundbreaking for the Western Bypass started with a 30-month completion date. The Planning Department recently was funded for the updates on Koloa-Po'ipu and Wailua-Kapa'a.

But only now are developers finding it economically feasible to actually build these projects. No further "zoning" by the council is necessary for these projects to proceed. However, the Planning Commission is responsible for making certain that these development proposals are constructed according to county standards by approving "zoning permits," in most cases after a public hearing.

In fact, for the Koloa-Po'ipu area, overall zoning and allowable units were decreased by the "current council." This must now be our mission. We need to negotiate areas with past approved zoning downward, R-20 to R-10, freeze commercial and industrial, and focus on the State Act 183 for the mapping and preservation of quality agricultural lands.

"Existing" zoning approved by the council in 1995 allowed 3,400 units for the Kukui'ula project.

In the council's 2004 review of this project's existing zoning, the "current council" reduced this total from 3,400 units to a maximum of 1,500 units, which is a 56 percent decrease in allowable units. The visitor destination zoning was also reduced by 50 percent of the minimizing vacation rentals.

In addition to the 56 percent reduction in allowable units, the 2004 council also required the developer to provide other

"community benefits" such as: Construction of the "Western Bypass Road" and its associated traffic intersection improvements; Commitment of \$600,000 towards the cost of constructing improvements to roadways in the Koloa-Po'ipu area; Development of a 20-acre regional/community park with multi-purpose sports fields, as well as pavilions, which will be dedicated to the county but maintained by the developer; Commitment of \$500,000 to improve shoreline recreation resources; Dedication of 4 acres of land to the county for the expansion of the Pa'anau affordable housing project; and development of a minimum of 75 units of employee housing in the Koloa-Po'ipu area.

In dealing with new zoning amendments and recognizing community concerns, the council has also searched for ways to ensure that development impacts are lessened.

In the Koloa-Po'ipu area, one "multi-family development" that was approved by this current council as a result of the 2004 council review of the Kukui'ula zoning amendment was the Kukui'ula workforce housing project. And while this new zoning did add more units in the area, it was done to lessen the impact of the Kukui'ula development.

This new rezoning of approximately 8.4 acres along Po'ipu Road to the R-20 district will accommodate approximately 90 new affordable housing units specifically for first-time home buyers who are either employees of the Kukui'ula project or first-time Kaua'i home buyers. In order to assure that these new homes remain affordable, a 90-year anti-speculation (or "buy-back") provision was required. Since the "normal" county anti-speculation period was 10 years, the much longer "buy-back" period is a major step towards this council's goal of long-term affordable housing.

In the case of the 2002 Kaua'i Lagoons zoning amendment, the "current" council was also dealing with "existing" zoning.

The existing zoning allowed for approximately 1,196 total units. Through its 2002 review, the council reduced this total number to 750 units, which is a 37 percent decrease.

As a condition of the 2002 zoning amendment, the "current" council in 2005 also approved a new "housing agreement" requiring Kaua'i Lagoons to provide an additional 106 units of affordable housing.

In 2004, this "current" council also passed a new law that allows for the designation of "permanent" open space within developments.

In August 2005, the "current" council also approved Resolution No. 2005-45, which states the policy of this council to oppose any further rezoning which would allow for resort units.

This "current" council recognizes and has worked to lessen the impact of "existing" zoning whenever possible.

There is a difficult balance which must be kept by all of your elected officials between growth and "quality of life" issues.

A Honolulu newspaper yesterday included a timely reminder of what it takes to live on Kaua'i today, with our median home price in April 2006 at \$740,000.

Wherever possible, this "current" council has worked to provide more opportunity for home ownership to those who would otherwise be unable to have that opportunity. These efforts are the sign and signal of our obligation to each other, and to our best selves.

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