

VOLCANO LONG-RANGE PLAN

(Revision 2007).

Prepared by:



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INTRODUCTION

The most recent changes to the VCA Long-Range Plan, previously known as Volcano Vision 2020, are based on the series of small community meetings facilitated by the County of Hawaii for the ongoing “Puna Community Development Plan.” The 2007 update incorporates the ideas generated from 16 small group meetings held in the Volcano area (Golf Course to Akatsuka) in March through May of 2006. There was clear consensus on several issues.

1st ranked ideas included strong support for preserving village character and regulation of forest clearing. In addition to invasive species control, the continued support of school facilities and infrastructural improvements at Cooper Center top the list of number one priorities.

2nd rank ideas from Volcano residents, suggesting formal recognition and support for the Biosphere Reserve around the National Park. There was emphasis on alternative transportation, a County fire station, senior services, health services, supporting local farming, rethinking commercial zoning and consolidation of business zones.

3rd ranked ideas included concerns over flooding, local economic development, dissatisfaction with current enforcement of existing law, and a desire not to convert more agricultural land to residential functions.

These ideas are taken into consideration as we crafted the wording of the update. The changes are conservative and specific and include one case of a fulfilled goal being removed from the list.

However, the content of the VCA plan has a long history of community involvement and input. The following timeline illustrates this point:

1985: VCA Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) formed.

1988: Monthly meetings of LRPC commence.

1989: Community charges the LRPC with formulating a Special Design District (SDD) in the “commercial core.”

1992: VCA LRPC charged with surveying public opinion.

1993: Boone Morrison (Lic. Architect) contracted by the Hawaii State DLNR to inventory historic homes of the Volcano area.

May, 1993: LRPC survey mailed out (203 respondents).

Dec. 4, 1993: Public planning workshop, "Where do we go from here?" (over 150 attend).

Feb. 5, 1994: Planning Forum II, decision to create a formal planning document.

March 13, 1994: Oregon Visioning Process chosen as model upon which to proceed with community planning.

May 14, 1994: Steering committee and Working groups form under categories established in the Hawaii County General Plan.

March 4, 1995: Community meeting held to discuss results, Working groups reformulated to address amendments.

July 8, 1995: Community meeting to consider zoning and land-use issues.

Sept. 1995: Mass mailing of five group reports (Natural Resources, Recreation, Public Safety, Medical Assisted Living, Economic Interests).

Sept. 23, 1995: Community meeting to discuss mailout and Vision Statement.

Nov. 29, 1995: Community meeting to discuss Transportation, Design Guidelines, and Historical and Cultural Resources.

Jan. 13, 1996: Community meeting to discuss Final Design Guidelines and Cultural/Historical Report.

Feb. 17 1996: Community meeting, presentation of planning document to community for review and acceptance.

March 3, 2006: Mayor Harry Kim, County Planning, and Research and Development introduce the Puna Community Development Plan.

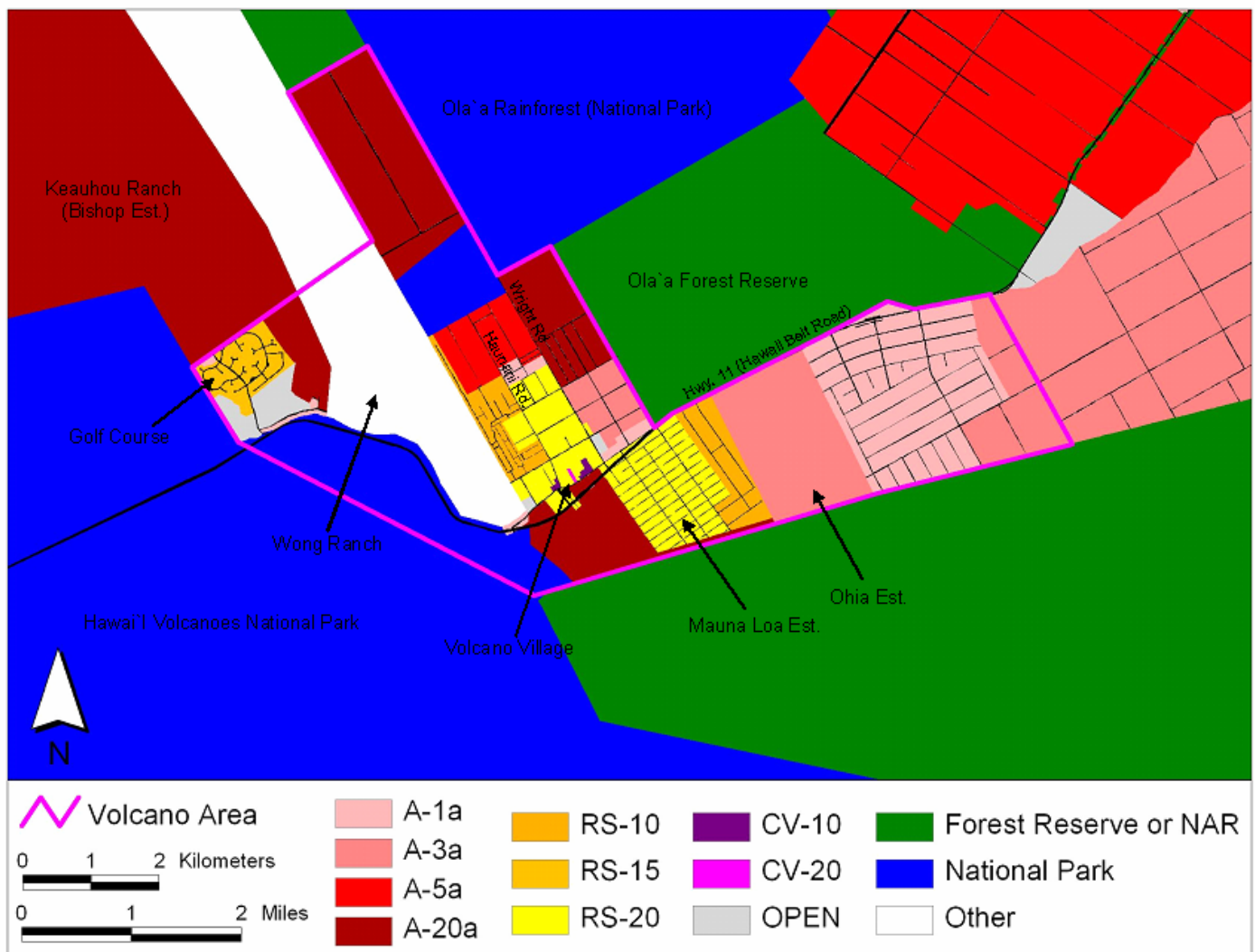
March – May 2006: 16 independent Small Group meetings, continuation of Visioning process.

Jan. 2007: VCA Annual meeting, revised VCA LRP presented to community for review and acceptance.

The potential result of existing zoning is disastrous. Currently (October 2006), there are 1,218 houses or permits on 5,303 buildable lots. This means we now have a 23% build-out. By implication without any changes in allowable growth, 4.3 times more houses can be built than exist now. However, 493 of these lots can be legally subdivided into an additional 2,903 real estate units. This brings the total number of residences that could be built to nearly 8,700, or 7 times as many houses as exist now. Furthermore, if potential (and totally legal) ‘ohana dwellings are added, the multiple becomes over 10 times as many houses as now could be built with existing zoning and regulations.

If Volcano is developed to its currently zoned potential, then the community will be deforested over a large area, severing the national park from its source forests in Ola’a. Even before that degree of development is reached, the quality of life in Volcano will be seriously degraded.

VOLCANO REGION ZONING MAP



HISTORICAL/CULTURAL RESOURCES

Goal 1: Create an inventory of features and items of historical and cultural importance to include but not be limited to sites, archaeological remains, homes and homesteads, trails, plants, interiors, photographs, letters, books, etc.:

1. Begin the process of photographing and cataloging objects, sites, etc. of historical importance, respecting the wishes and property rights of individuals.
2. Collect the history, identify and work to preserve any pre-European contact archaeological sites in the Volcano area.
3. Continue to record oral histories of Volcano residents and make transcriptions and/or cassettes available.
4. Sponsor seminars in recording oral histories, applying for historic landmark status, etc. and create a database of relevant information and forms.
5. Expand and maintain Volcano's historic building inventory.

Goal 2: Educate the public about the items and features identified as being of historical and cultural importance, to perpetuate an appreciation of the special character of Volcano:

1. Consider publishing a survey of Volcano and its historical sites and structures.
2. Provide information booths at Community fairs and gatherings.

Goal 3: Establish a community repository or museum to preserve the knowledge and artifacts of the area's human and natural history:

1. Establish a non-profit Volcano Historical Society to serve as the primary institution for the collection of historical artifacts and the creation of a museum.
2. Identify possible sites for a museum/repository.
3. Encourage donations of artifacts etc. to the Historical Society for recording, preservation, and display.

ECONOMIC INTERESTS

Goal: Support economic activities that are well planned and that maintain the rural forested atmosphere that currently exists in the Volcano area:

1. Plan for the development of small-scale enterprises that are consistent with our goal of seeing economic activities while preserving the current rural atmosphere and can be supported by appropriate infrastructure. Well-planned enterprises such as small cottage/home business which would have minimum impact upon the appearance of the Volcano area, agricultural operations, bed and breakfast businesses and eco-tourism, should be encouraged.
2. Develop and implement special Design Guidelines for all commercial buildings in Volcano Village. The guidelines should establish a consistent theme in keeping with the traditional character of the Village.
3. Guidelines should be for site preparation and access, landscaping, setbacks, parking areas, building design and height, materials, lighting, etc.
4. A Design Review Committee should be established to help implement these guidelines including at least one person with a design background.
5. Identify a preliminary commercial zone between Wright Road and the Post Office on the mauka side of Old Volcano Road, approximately five-hundred (500) feet deep.
6. Reinforce the state buffer on Highway 11 by restricting any new access onto this road in order to preserve a green belt.
7. Protect historic homes that remain in private residential use in the commercial zone from development pressures including increased assessments.
9. Consider the planning of commercial/pedestrian cores in any of the Volcano area subdivisions as needed.

NATURAL RESOURCES/NATURAL BEAUTY/ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Goal 1: Protect and conserve our natural resources and natural beauty from undue exploitation, encroachment and damage:

1. Develop methods to encourage the saving of the forest ecosystem including native trees and the native understory.
2. Preserve green spaces and wildlife corridors in future developments.
3. Encourage and streamline the process for the consolidation of lots. Discourage the subdivision of lots and ohana dwellings built on speculation.
4. Identify the major lava tube systems under the Volcano area and discourage the use of any of the tube system for disposing of wastewater including septic systems.

5. Educate property owners, renters, realtors, heavy equipment operators, business owners and others about alternatives to practices that may be destructive to the natural resources, beauty or environmental quality of the Volcano area.

Goal 2: Promote the prudent use and management of the Volcano area's unique, fragile and significant environmental and natural resources:

1. Support the increase in tax incentives to protect natural resources and native ecosystems.
2. Support equal tax assessments for all agriculturally-zoned parcels whether they are cleared for farming or forested.
3. Discourage the subdivision or inappropriate commercial use of public lands.
4. Identify and protect exceptional native trees and/or plant and animal communities.
5. Develop programs, guided walks, and written materials to increase knowledge and appreciation of native ecosystems and features as well as threats to them such as mosquitoes, invading alien species, etc.
6. Reproduce "Building in the Forest," "Controlling Noxious Weeds" and similar pamphlets on identifying and growing native plants, and disseminate to community.
7. Inform lot owners about environmentally sensitive waste disposal systems that do not require large clearings.

Goal 3: Maintain and improve the existing "Environmental Quality" of the Volcano area:

1. Encourage the consolidation and reduction of signage on roadways in the Volcano area, without compromising public safety.
2. Increase the availability and use of public transportation and develop community hiking/biking trails and lanes to curb unnecessary vehicle pollution.
3. Provide education about methods for reducing air pollution.
4. Encourage energy efficient building methods appropriate to the Volcano area climate.
5. Support the strengthening and enforcement of noise ordinances that would preserve the tranquility of the Volcano area including: disallowing the establishment or expansion of heliports; setting decibel standards and operational guidelines for existing helicopter services and other heavy equipment operators; encouraging control of loud animals, stereos and other nuisances; and developing an altitude and flight path system for aircraft which is consistent with designated land uses in the Volcano area.
6. Encourage the enforcement and, if necessary, the amendment of the current County lighting ordinance, which would include the shielding of light fixtures, would set responsible standards for maximum brightness, aiming, and hours of operation, and would discourage the proliferation of unnecessary and obtrusive light sources.

Goal 4: Encourage partnerships among community stakeholders:

1. Develop community dialogue on issues that may affect Volcano's unique environment.
2. Encourage cooperative land-use development and management to protect native ecosystems.

RECREATION

Goal 1: Provide for the recreational needs of people of all ages in the Volcano area:

1. Identify and support individuals, parents, teachers, coaches, and counselors to work with young people in the community.
2. Develop a multi-use Volcano-based transportation system that includes servicing the recreational needs of the community consistent with our Transportation Plan that calls for a reduction in automobile use and an increase in non-motorized means of transport.
3. Enhance recreational activities that integrate the Volcano community.
4. Monitor and address the recreational needs of all subdivisions in the Volcano community.
5. Develop readily available and accessible recreational activities for the Volcano community.
6. Encourage more discussion, further study, and consensus-building regarding the Cooper Center Master Plan.

Goal 2: Coordinate the efforts of various resident-groups in Volcano with existing public and private providers of recreational activities:

1. Work with the County Parks and Recreation Department to develop a consistent program of appropriate recreational activities, including those at Cooper Center, to complement existing classes, activities, etc.
2. Develop greater cooperation with Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Kilauea Military Camp, Keakealani Outdoor Education Center, and Volcano Art Center to increase access to existing facilities and to maximize the use of them.
3. Develop a DOE-VCA agreement which accommodates regular community use of Keakealani field. Agreement and schedule should be publicized.

4. Support educational programs in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, the Pu'u Maka'ala Natural Area Reserve, and the Kahauale'a Natural Area Reserve to increase public awareness and appreciation for native ecosystems and their appropriate management.
5. Work with County, State, and Federal government agencies and private landowners to establish, maintain, and manage a system of hiking and biking trails.
6. Support the maintenance and management of specific areas for recreational hunting purposes.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Goal: Encourage a responsible community where people of all ages feel safe:

1. Encourage all Volcano subdivisions to form Neighborhood Watch Programs with a Chairperson for each area who will supervise, pass out messages and keep records; recruit Watch Coordinators for each road or section depending on the number of houses in the area; recruit Watch Captains for approximately every ten homes depending on the configuration of the area; develop a telephone tree so the police can get word out to the community rapidly, encourage the cooperation of "shut-ins".
2. Encourage 24 hour coverage of the police substation possibly with a bike detail.
3. Develop and implement a prevention program for youth at risk.
4. Provide conflict resolution through community mediation services.
5. Develop a comprehensive disaster awareness program that will benefit all Volcano residents regardless of the disaster.

TRANSPORTATION

Goal 1: Decrease automobile use by encouraging people to move within the Volcano community by walking or bicycling, while providing accessibility for the disabled whenever possible:

1. Design main thoroughfares, including Old Volcano Road, for shared use by bicyclists and pedestrians using appropriate traffic calming techniques including, but not limited to, speed limit reduction, and also by controlling plant overgrowth, and loose animals.
2. Encourage bicycle and pedestrian safety through public education.
3. Plan, when appropriate, for the creation of future neighborhood commercial zones, allowing for the building of consensus in the neighborhoods involved.

Goal 2: Establish a system of non-motorized multi-use trails that would connect Volcano neighborhoods, other communities, and provide access to the National Park:

1. Expand cooperative efforts between Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and Volcano itself to develop a joint plan for multi-use trails.
2. Improve the existing trail into the National Park from the mauka end of Old Volcano Road.
3. Explore creation of a trail from Old Volcano Road to the Golf Course subdivision to Mauna Loa Road and to Kipuka Puauulu.
4. Support development of the Volcano trail (originating in Volcano and potentially going to Hilo).

Goal 3: Reduce the number of car trips within Volcano neighborhoods and between Volcano and other communities:

1. Expand Hele-On bus service.
2. Encourage bicycle carriers on bus.
3. Support jitney/taxi service within all Volcano neighborhoods and between all Volcano neighborhoods and other communities.
4. Support a "park and ride" program and networking service for carpooling.
5. Support home delivery services: postal, grocery, etc.
6. Support the development of jobs and services within Volcano neighborhoods.

MEDICAL / ASSISTED LIVING

Goal 1: Provide locally based medical care for the Volcano area:

1. Attract a family-practice physician and/or advanced nurse practitioner/mid-wife to serve residents of the Volcano area, based either at KMC and/or in the Community.

2. Establish an Emergency Care Unit with an on-site ambulance as the population warrants. Support helicopter service for medical emergencies.
3. Provide home care and personal care services, including custodial caregiver programs, to community residents either through resources available in the Volcano area, or through information about and referral to other agencies for assistance.

Goal 2: Establish a facility, financially accessible to all, which would enable Volcano's senior population to live with dignity and independence:

1. Support the creation of an Assisted Living Facility that will provide: a safe place for our frail elderly or those who no longer feel comfortable living alone; first response care, 24 hours a day with three meals a day; laundry and grooming shop; guidance on obtaining health equipment and appropriate personal and health care services; activities to meet socialization needs and wellness programs; and transportation.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal 1: Support the establishment of a permanent recycling facility at the solid waste transfer station.

BIOSPHERE RESERVE BUFFER GUIDELINES

Goal: Keep undisturbed as much intact `ohia canopy forest as possible and reduce the potential housing density allowable by the current zoning designations.

- 1) Establish a geographic area in upper Puna that offers a scientifically based biological conservation buffer to the National Park (the Biosphere Reserve).
- 2) Encourage the establishment of a new zoning category, "RC- Residential Conservation", or overlaid classification on to current zoning, to include an amended set of permissible uses, grubbing and grading regulations, setbacks, minimum lot sizes, etc.
- 3) Encourage the preparation of a Forest Conservation Workbook for Residential Conservation zoning based on sound biological principles, to act as a guide for landscaping, site planning, designing and building. These would serve as the basis for review by a review committee, which would be available for consultations about the guidelines.
- 4) Guidelines suggested for inclusion in the Forest Conservation Workbook include:
 - Serious consideration of new "Ohana" dwellings, future subdivisions and any "upzoning" of land.
 - Establish significant owner initiated mechanisms such as "conservation easements" to give incentive to not clear forested land.
 - Review dimensions of setbacks, building footprints on lots, as well as suggest less impacting wastewater disposal alternatives.
 - Lobby the County and/or other Government entities to purchase forested lots on the basis of floodwater control dangers.
 - Lobby the Department of Land and Natural Resources to reclassify land-use designations of holdings, some of which though designated "Ag-3" still include native forest (such as Cooper Center acreage) to ensure permanent protection of these lands.
 - Facilitate the implementation of a system of the Transferal of Development Rights (TDR's) to target commercial growth elsewhere

VILLAGE CORE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Goal 1: Preserve the forested environment by reducing, or mitigating the amount of forest which would have to be removed for any development:

1. Encourage the sharing of access roads and parking especially for contiguous commercial development.
2. Explore ideas such as a transfer of parking requirements, which would allow businesses to avoid removing forest for parking by the establishment of a village parking lot on already cleared lots, appropriately located and designed.
3. Continue to lobby the County to defer enforcement of the requirements for curbs, gutters, and sidewalks.
4. Encourage the preservation of the native landscape and the replanting of unused or vacant cleared lands with native species.
5. Strongly encourage the utility companies to share the same poles to prevent the proliferation of overlapping pole lines; and encourage underground utilities wherever possible.
6. Encourage the installation of underground utilities in commercial corridors.
7. Work to enforce litter laws in the Volcano Community.

Goal 2: Preserve the historic structures and, in future construction, the flavor and feel of the core area of the Village:

1. Encourage the establishment of a new zoning category, "CR - Rural Commercial," to include an amended set of permissible uses, setbacks, minimum lot size, etc.
2. Encourage the establishment of a set of design guidelines for Rural Commercial, which would contain: restrictions on use, and stipulations for buffers, setbacks, lighting and building height; considerations of landscape elements, roof line, building materials, issues of compatibility with surrounding uses and structures, appearance, colors, etc.
3. Encourage the preparation of a design workbook for Rural Commercial zoning based on the existing structures in the Village to act as a guide for landscaping, site planning, designing and building commercial structures that would merely be suggestions of how structures could look in order to be well-integrated into the community; and the creation of a community design review committee, which would be available for consultations about the design guidelines.
4. Explore the creation of a Special Design District, which would set new standards in the commercial corridor.