

# A new paradigm for paradise Sustainable Communities



Images courtesy of the Committee on Sustainable Communities  
Common areas are part of the open space in a sustainable community ▼

## What is a sustainable community?

A sustainable community, in harmony with nature, meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The

sustainable community:

- Is more compact with housing, jobs, services and daily needs within walking distance from one another, stimulating the spirit of life and decreasing the consumption of fossil fuels.
- Defines growth boundaries such that significant open space is preserved between each community, with pedestrian ways and mass transit as the major transportation linkages.
- Incorporates a design process that empowers all citizens of a community who recognize interdependence requiring equity

and balance among all parties.

## Why do we need them?

Sustainable communities are needed in Hawaii to accommodate a growing population on a finite piece of land while preserving for future generations Hawaii's unique environment and spirit. The preamble to the city and county of Honolulu's General Plan states: "The natural environment of our island, next to our people, is our greatest asset." However, current planning practices are leading to a contiguous built environment of rooftops, driveways and asphalt highways, with little interconnectedness between each other or the natural environment.

## Sustainable communities are needed because:

- World population has now outpaced nature's ability to replenish itself, and <sup>Developed countries</sup> America consumes 75 percent of the world's raw materials although it has less than 25 percent of the world's population.

- About 90 percent of travel in Hawaii is by private automobiles. The automobile is the world's leading source of air pollution—the major contributor to global warming.

- Suburban sprawl and its planning that caters to the automobile have created communities where people are becoming more indifferent to one another, rarely escaping the private realm, contributing to the demise of the healthy role of the public realm.



## Ingredients of sustainability

Many ingredients make up a sustainable community, none of which can stand alone. It is the interdependence between ingredients that creates the synergy which nourishes the spirit and defines a place as alive, whole and unique.



Taken separately, most of these ingredients are not new. What is different, however, is the inclusion of all the ingredients that make up *community* and placing them in proximity to each other.

### Pedestrian as a catalyst

Present day suburbia creates a society in which people rarely escape the private realm. From the home garage to the office parking structure, people live in private bubbles. In a sustainable community, where all ingredients are close, the pedestrian is the catalyst that nourishes the spirit and life of a community through daily chance encounters.

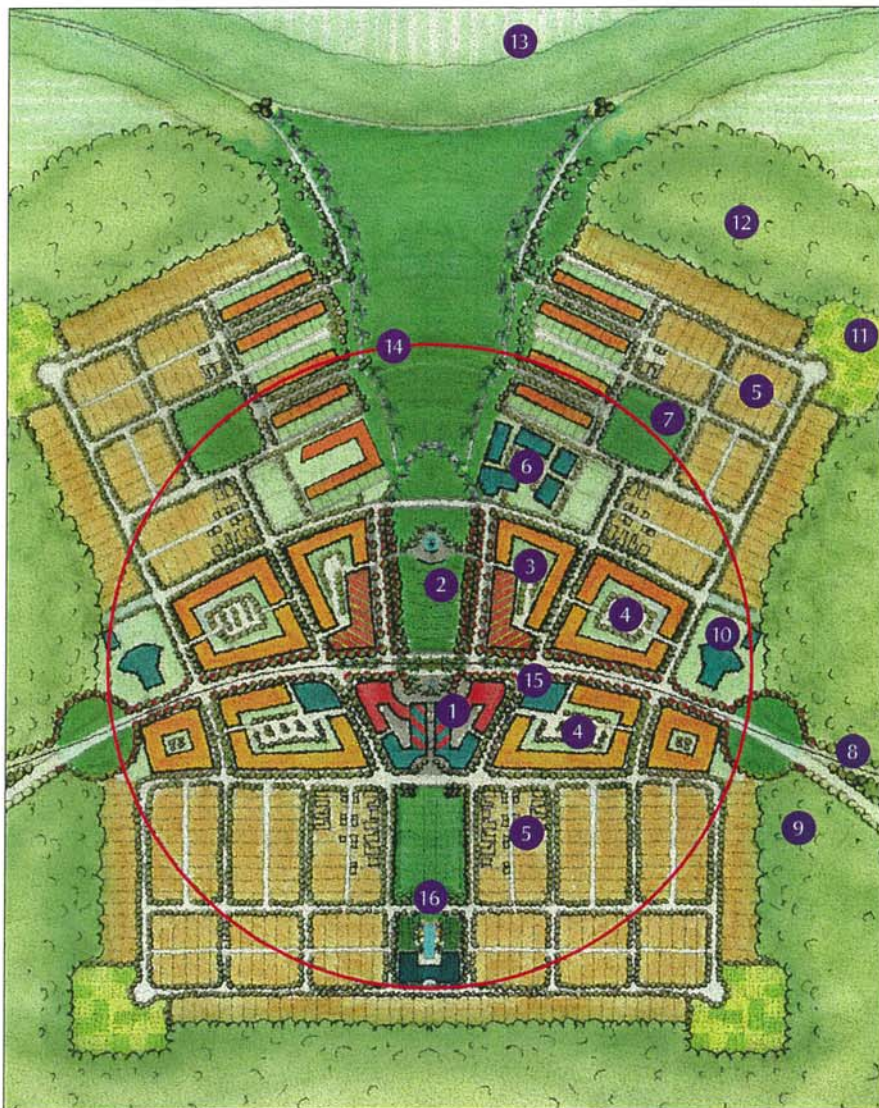
### Community core and vision center

Sustainable communities call for new zoning and development patterns that are influenced by planning which existed before the automobile. The community's core would be zoned mixed-use at a density that resembles a traditional small town with buildings three to four stories tall along a main street. This density would be sufficient to support mass transit. Mixed-use zoning would also help provide affordable housing as in multifamily units above ground floor retail.

Located at the center of the core would be the transit station. On the way home from the station, residents would begin a pleasant five-minute walk past the vision center, day care, retail, village green, elementary school and neighborhood parks. Surrounding the core would be apartment and condominium blocks, row houses and townhouses...a multitude of

types to serve the growing market for smaller families, single parent families and the elderly. Furthest from the core and only five minutes away by foot would be the single family houses. Some single family residences would have ohana units at the back of the site where the vehicular access is provided.

The vision center (town hall) would be the community anchor where citizens would have a place that was theirs to help them achieve their goals. The vision center would also be a meeting place where people learn from kupunas, listen to storytelling or plan the future with elected officials. Through video



#### LEGEND

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Community Vision Center/Cultural Arts Center/Wellness Center/Extended Education Center/Rapid Transit Station</li> <li>2 Village Green/Community Special Events</li> <li>3 Commercial 3-4 Story/Shops/Restaurants/Offices/Townhouses/Country Inn</li> <li>4 Apartments and Townhouses</li> <li>5 Single-Family Housing/Mass Transit Line/Solar/Pedestrian Street Emphasis/Ohana Housing/Service Alleys</li> <li>6 Village School/Super Learning Curriculum/Clares on Self-Empowerment &amp; Self Esteem</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 Neighborhood Parks</li> <li>8 Rapid Transit Line</li> <li>9 Community Edge defined by Harvestable Hardwood Forest/Pedestrian &amp; Bike Trails</li> <li>10 Recycle/Energy Reclamation Center</li> <li>11 Community Gardens</li> <li>12 Permaculture/Farming/Eco-Tech Farming Center/Wind Turbines</li> <li>13 Dedicated Open Space/Nature Trails/Taro/Hawaiian Cultural Learning</li> <li>14 Quarter Mile Pedestrian Radius</li> <li>15 Police/Fire Station</li> <li>16 Recreation Center</li> </ul> |
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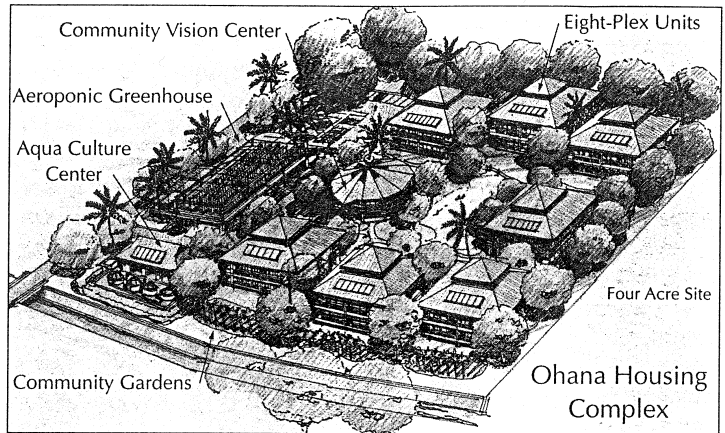
conferencing these meetings could be simultaneously broadcast throughout the world. The vision center would incorporate the qualities of the traditional town hall and the technology required for tomorrow.

### Regional planning and transportation

Growth would be concentrated in existing suburban neighborhoods and urban infill with new land development as a second priority. With a more compact community, much of the land would be open space primarily used for regional parks, sustainable forestry and agriculture unique to Hawaii.

Mass transit would connect communities of varying sizes depending whether a community is located on the trunk line, serves as regional center or is a smaller community feeding into the trunk line.

The automobile would still be accommodated, but pedestrian, bikeway and mass transit alternatives would drastically reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and provide opportunities for spending more time with family and friends. Land, infrastructure and cars are no longer inexpensive. Beyond the maintenance and insurance cost of the automobile, the real cost must



consider road infrastructure, environmental degradation and the loss of human and economic resources when engaging in war for crude oil. Perhaps the love affair with the car and its symbol of American freedom and independence is now a myth as people realize its dependence for survival exposes a tragic irony that is killing people and squandering natural resources.

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