

Kaua`i Planning & Action Alliance, Inc.

Bringing people together to create a better future for Kaua`i

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KPAA BEGINS COMMUNITY INDICATORS PROJECT

Kaua`i Planning & Action Alliance (KPAA) has formed a broad-based Advisory Committee to begin to draft community indicators for Kaua`i. Community indicators measure and track information important to a community in a variety of areas that, when considered as a whole, will reflect the community's quality of life and sustainability.

Generally, indicators projects look at three inter-related areas – economic efficiency, environmental integrity, and social/cultural well-being. Change in one area may have positive or negative impacts on another area. Therefore all three areas need to be considered together to determine overall impacts.

Indicators provide a snapshot of how the community is doing. They can be tracked over time to identify trends as an area develops, grows, and changes. For Kaua`i, they can be helpful in determining if the island is moving in a desired direction. And if not, the indicators may help to suggest where changes in policies or strategies are needed to correct the course.

Over 200 communities across the country have initiated community indicators projects to assess their progress and help them make better decisions. National research shows that well-chosen indicators are those that provide a spectrum of information in which everyone has an interest or a stake. They can provide insight into the overall direction of a community in relation to its values and priorities – whether it is improving, declining, or staying the same -- or a mix of all three.

“Community indicators offer a unique opportunity to present a multi-dimensional picture of our island’s sustainability and quality of life,” states KPAA President and CEO Diane Zachary. “As our Advisory Committee develops draft indicators, they will consider what data is already being gathered that can be used to help paint that picture.”

David Swain, an early leader in the community indicators movement from Jacksonville, Florida, noted in a recent article that “The impetus toward community improvement originates with how a community values itself and what vision it has for its future.”

According to Gilbert Peter Kea, Chair of the Kaua`i Planning & Action Alliance Board of Directors, “Kaua`i is fortunate that the process to develop our County’s *General Plan 2000* included defining our community’s values and our 20-year vision for the island. That vision is forming the foundation of the indicators project and will help us determine progress in achieving that vision.”

KPAA’s community indicators project is designed to: 1) track areas determined to be important to the community to determine Kaua`i’s progress in drawing on the values and fulfilling the vision of the *Kaua`i General Plan 2000* and 2) provide tracked information to government, businesses and nonprofit organizations to assist in planning, policy-setting, and budget decisions.

Representatives from agriculture, business, economic development, planning, transportation, housing, parks, environment, visitor industry, water, public safety, public utilities, health, education, workforce, marine issues, and culture have been invited to participate on the KPAA Community Indicators Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee has begun to identify key economic, environmental and social/cultural issues on the island that can be measured and tracked over time. Over the next two months they will develop 20 or more draft indicators and then ask for feedback through community meetings to be sure the indicators will offer the most important and useful information. Once the indicators are finalized, data will be gathered and the first report on the indicators will be issued in Summer 2006. Subsequent reports will be issued approximately annually to track trends.

The origins for this project date back several years. In 2001, Garden Island Resource Conservation & Development, Inc. (GIRC&D) hired two consultants – Nadine Nakamura and Roxanne MacDougall – to research community indicators projects

across the country, determine the feasibility of such a program for Kaua`i, and suggest a possible organizational structure to support a project. Their report - *Shaping Kaua`i's Future Together* - resulted from that work. In 2003, Kaua`i Planning & Action Alliance (KPAA) was formed and began work on other goals and in late 2005 launched the community indicators project.

KPAA is also working on other goals selected by its members, including working to improve State and County parks; providing community support to public education; and assisting the County with implementation of the Community Drug Response Plan. To accomplish its goals, KPAA brings together diverse individuals and groups for collaborative planning and action. It also hosts bi-monthly "Talk Story" sessions for its members and maintains the online site www.kauainetwork.org, which includes a directory of nonprofit and grassroots groups and resource information for the nonprofit community. It is a membership organization of non-profit and community-based groups, government agencies, business associations, businesses and individuals working together to achieve effective, long-lasting solutions to issues confronting our island. For more information, contact KPAA at 632-2005, email kpa@kauainetwork.org or visit the website at www.kauainetwork.org.

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