

THE  
FUTURE OF  
MAUI COUNTY  
RESTS  
WITH  
US

FOCUS OUR  
MAUI ISLANDS  
NUI OUR FUTURE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
*December 2003*



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MAUI ISLANDS  
NUI OUR FUTURE

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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We are grateful for these partnerships.

If you are interested in investing in the vision of Focus Maui Nui, please contact the Maui Economic Development Board, Inc. at 808.875.2336.

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From May through August, 2003, the people of Maui County engaged in a groundbreaking process to begin to define a vision for Maui County. In just three months, Focus Maui Nui brought approximately 1,700 participants into an intensive, participatory process to plan for the future of the county as a whole. Focus Maui Nui emphasized the importance of local needs and the priorities of everyday residents. Representative of all planning districts and a range of demographic groups as broad as the population of the islands, these participants carefully articulated what they viewed as the core values to guide Maui Nui, the key challenges the islands face, the suggested strategies for addressing these challenges, and the parties responsible for carrying out the recommended actions. This report summarizes the results of this process.

## **BACKGROUND**

Focus Maui Nui was the response to a community-wide concern, expressed frequently at public meetings and gatherings in Maui County: that the islands lacked a vision and sense of clear direction for the future. Frustrated with the often contentious results of development and planning processes, residents repeatedly voiced a consensus that the county needed a plan that would provide a vision for all communities and a creative set of actions to tackle over the coming years.

In summer 2002, MEDB and Maui County hosted the conference on Maui's Economic Future which brought together about 175 participants for two days to discuss economic issues and to understand economic development in the context of social issues. Despite the fact that many of the participants at the summit were active and vocal in community and countywide initiatives, they emphasized a frustration about a lack of a clear and shared vision for the future of Maui. Over an again they expressed concern that one could not plan and could not make viable decisions without a consensus about the future. Participants at these sessions challenged themselves and the greater community to work to define a vision for the islands, and to conceive a process that would both engage a broad cross section of residents (including those not traditionally engaged in civic discussions) and have a plan for accountability and succession.

With the impetus of both a new General Plan and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy before the county, the time was ripe for such a vision. Responding to this demand, the Maui Economic Development Board joined with the county to lead such an effort. A diverse advisory committee of 23 community-based leaders representing a range of geographic, ethnic, and interest communities as well as the specific concerns of Moloka'i and Lāna'i was convened to guide the development, design and implementation of a visioning process.

Advisory committee members determined that, while efforts to plan for the future of Maui County had been attempted many times before, opportunities existed for a new process that would build on the findings of prior efforts and would address areas overlooked in the past. And due to the historically low rates of voting and civic participation on the islands, committee members also believed it was essential to reach beyond the typical outreach efforts to truly engage residents, particularly those who rarely participated in public dialogues, in ways more meaningful than a cursory survey or poll.

Thus emerged Focus Maui Nui: a unique, participatory process built on a small-group model, involving everyday community members in discussions of issues raised in the past, as well as those lying ahead in the future. Within these Focus Maui Nui groups, residents would tackle the distinct challenge of articulating a guiding vision, identifying strategies for action and prioritized needs, and formulating thoughtful solutions to the challenges facing residents and the community as a whole.

To ensure a representative group of residents would participate in the process, Focus Maui Nui led a concerted outreach effort. More than 50 volunteers, including elected state and local leaders, conducted a *countywide door-to-door canvassing campaign*, disseminating information about the project. Fliers were inserted in 30,000 water bills, and extensive news media coverage in print and broadcast outlets helped to position the process in the public eye.

Focus Maui Nui trained 15 *community-based volunteer facilitators* to lead the group sessions around the county. Additionally, 64 leaders of churches, schools, youth groups, clinics, and other nonprofit agencies were trained as co-facilitators to help run sessions with their constituents.

A total of 167 *participatory small group sessions* were held countywide, involving at least 1,639 participants (each of whom filled out a survey at the end of the session enabling us to gather demographic data about participants). Within Focus Maui Nui sessions, residents participated in discussions and activities related to Maui Nui’s priorities, challenges, and shared values – all within an engaging visual and verbal format. Meetings occurred on beaches, in backyards, at residents’ homes, at workplaces, in fire stations and in many other venues in each planning district and on each of our county’s three populated islands. The process successfully engaged *populations representative of all of Maui Nui*, with 17% of the total number of sessions being held in Lāna’i, Moloka’i and Hāna.

To give voice to those who are rarely heard from in public formats, the process recruited the *participation of under-represented groups and those not traditionally engaged in civic decisionmaking*. This active outreach ensured the participation and engagement of the homeless, at-risk youth, seniors, Head Start parents, and ethnic and language minorities such as Tongans and Hispanics.

Because of the focus on the future, Focus Maui Nui ensured the involvement of more than 120 youth in 16 youth-focused sessions (or 10% of the total sessions). The *opinions of young people* were gathered from all communities, including Lāna’i, Moloka’i and Hāna.

Group sessions and the individual surveys yielded tens of thousands of data points, which were compiled and sent to an outside research consultant for analysis. The final results have been prepared for dissemination to the community as a collective documentation of the community’s values, priorities, and recommendations for a “vision” of Maui Nui. These findings are intended to be shared with the larger community, including the media, government, businesses, and residents and to be incorporated into the county’s General Plan and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

## OVERVIEW OF DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Survey data reveals a cross-section of demographic groups participated in Focus Maui Nui. Participants spanned a range of ages from teenagers to senior citizens. More than half of participants were female (56% female and 44% male).

In self-reporting their ethnicity, 11.5% of participants described themselves with more than one racial or ethnic group. About 40% of participants said they were Caucasian or part Caucasian, 29.7% identified themselves as at least part Asian and almost a quarter (23.4%) identified themselves as at least part Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. [This appears to be roughly proportionate to U.S. Census findings, which show racial identification as “alone or in combination”: 48.9% of county residents are Caucasian, 47.7% are Asian, and 25.7% are Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.]

About 87% of participants lived on the island of Maui, and nearly 8% were from Molokai and 6% from Lanai. [This reflects a higher percentage from Moloka’i and Lāna’i than the U.S. Census 2000 shows. Census data: 92% of county residents live on Maui; 6% on Moloka’i; 2% on Lāna’i.] Almost one quarter of Focus Maui Nui participants (24%) were residents of Wailuku-Kahului, compared to 18% from Makawao-Pukalani-Kula and 18% from Kīhei-Wailea-Mākena. Ten percent of participants were from Ha’iku-Pā’ia, 9% were from Nāpili- Ka’anapali-Lahaina, 8% from Moloka’i, 7% from Hāna, and 6% from Lāna’i. More than half of all participants had lived in Maui County for more than 20 years, including 16% of all participants who identified themselves as lifetime residents.

Focus Maui Nui participation included a significant portion of residents (36%) who do not regularly participate in public forums or attend public meetings and nearly a third (30%) who admitted to not voting in recent elections.

Nine out of 10 participants said they believed that participation in Focus Maui Nui and its results could make a difference for the future of the county.

## IDENTIFICATION OF COUNTY ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

When asked in the survey, which concluded each session, what makes Maui County unique, participants identified a number of local assets. Among the most popular answers were *Maui's natural beauty, Aloha spirit, great people, cultural and ethnic diversity, climate (quality and mix), community (friendly, safe), small town rural feel, and love of 'āina*. Other assets mentioned by participants included *Maui's relaxed pace and lifestyle, worldwide appeal, unique biological diversity, and Maui Nō Ka 'Oī*.

Some participants were more detailed in their comments:

- *"Advantage of hindsight in observing other Hawaiian counties' and islands' development as we chart and navigate the best course for Maui's growth."*
- *"Maui County is so innovative in some areas but archaic in others."*
- *"We have a lot of 'transplants' that adopt the aloha spirit & want to keep Hawai'i the Aloha State"*
- *"Great potential for being the renewable energy capital of the world."*

When asked to note the greatest challenges facing Maui County, the most frequently identified issues revolved around growth: *over population, over development and rampant growth*. Many described in detail problems related to growth pressures: *infrastructure problems (water, energy, traffic, transit), social services, health services, education and political will* necessary to control growth. Over and over again participants described the challenge and also the need to address these issues with a sense of *balance*, specifically the need to find balance between permitted growth and the preservation of natural environment, culture, local identity and quality of life.

Other challenges identified by participants were *recycling* (the need to develop and support it), *taxes* (the need to increase and the desire to decrease), *providing services for seniors* and *protecting native species*. Some detailed specific challenges included:

- *"Political voices are often loud, which is not the Hawaiian way. The Hawaiian voice is softer and speaks for the good and fairness for all, not for only some."*
- *"Imbalance... we swing from extremes rather than pursuing a steady consistent path."*

- *“Parents are forced to work three jobs just to survive. The disparity between the wealthy and the poor is greater now than ever.”*
- *“Honoring the past and preserving the past while facing the dynamics of the future.”*

There was no recognizable pattern of differences between what participants on Lānaʻi and Molokaʻi identified as Maui’s unique qualities and what participants on Maui identified. But the challenges described by participants on Lānaʻi and Molokaʻi that contrasted the most from those articulated on Maui focused on a sense of not having a *political voice*. These participants displayed a strong notion of living on the periphery from the decisionmakers and not having their unique needs taken into consideration in county decisionmaking.

## **PRIORITIES**

Participants were provided with a series of 21 issues identified in past planning efforts as areas of need in Maui County. To arrive at this list, Focus Maui Nui presented the issues that surfaced during six prior efforts over the past decade including:

- *Decisions Maui* (and *Decisions Lānaʻi* and *Decisions Molokaʻi*), a community-wide planning effort embarked upon in 1990, which arrived at seven core community values and ten priorities for action;
- *Maui County’s 1990 General Plan*, which arrived at five major themes to guide the county;
- *County of Maui Benchmark Study* in 2002, a household survey of residents countywide which arrived at seven top concerns for the county and local families;
- *Maui County Vision for Smart Growth*, conducted by the Smart Growth Advisory Committee in 2001, which arrived at twelve guiding principles to help achieve the smart growth vision;
- *Maui Tomorrow’s 2020 Vision*, formulated by members of Maui Tomorrow for input from Maui residents in 2003; it included four bullet points with multiple strategies for action;
- *Youth Vision*, a future plan by young people countywide in 2001, which presented the four most important issues facing each community in Maui County.

Asked to prioritize these 21 needs that had been identified in earlier processes or to identify additional issues to be addressed, Focus Maui Nui participants validated that many of the themes

mentioned in the past as needing improvement continue to be of concern to local residents. Some areas – such as water security – had grown more pressing since the planning processes of the past (such as 1990's Decisions Maui) and some – such as education – had not been included in more specific processes (such as the smart growth vision).

On all three islands, the issue identified, during this first Focus Maui Nui exercise, by the largest number of participants as a top priority to be addressed in the county was the need to *strengthen and improve education, kindergarten through college, for all students.*

The second priority countywide and on Molokai (though not on Lānaʻi) was to *preserve the islands' natural environment – open space, coastal reefs, parks, and other resources by managing growth and planning effectively.*

After these top two priorities, significant numbers of residents countywide also mentioned the following issues as priorities for the county (listed in order of frequency):

- *Make housing accessible by providing affordable alternatives to all families.*
- *Take action to assure an adequate water supply to provide quality fresh water for our population today and in the future.*
- *Improve transportation by working to reduce traffic, improve roads, and/or adopt public transportation.*
- *Strengthen the economy by diversifying the economic base and taking steps to address the high cost of living.*
- *Preserve and promote local cultures, traditions, and the arts to share Maui County's history and innovations.*

In Molokaʻi, the top priorities, after improving education and preserving the environment, were:

- *Create jobs to provide more and better career options for local residents.*
- *Address substance abuse and ensure safety through programs that reduce drug use and alcoholism and promote strong communities.*
- *Preserve and promote local cultures, traditions, and the arts to share Maui County's history and innovations.*
- *Strengthen the economy by diversifying our economic base and taking steps to address the high cost of living.*

In Lānaʻi, the top priorities, after improving education, were:

- *Provide better services for youth and children, such as after-school programs, early education, and teen pregnancy prevention.*
- *Address substance abuse and ensure safety through programs that reduce drug use and alcoholism and promote strong communities.*
- *Promote residents' health and take steps to ensure all have access to healthcare.*
- *Preserve the islands' natural environment – open space, coastal reefs, parks, and other resources by managing growth and planning effectively.*
- *Take action to assure an adequate water supply to provide quality fresh water for our population today and in the future.*

On all islands participants wrote in additional suggestions for countywide priorities. Among the most commonly identified write-in issues were *adopting recycling programs* and *making Maui a "model" of sustainable living*.

While Focus Maui Nui began its sessions with an exercise that asked participants to prioritize concerns and issues, the purpose of the sessions was to get beyond priorities into both values and tradeoffs – to understand what the community thought about what was possible and to encourage the sharing and development of new and innovative thoughts about how to proceed to accomplish the goals being conceived.

## **BALANCING COMPETING NEEDS**

Recognizing areas of overlap between some of the priorities they identified, participants were asked to note areas of need that could be grouped together. In general six distinct categories emerged: *economic, environmental, human service-related, educational, cultural, political, and infrastructure-related*. All islands found these to be broad categories of need in their communities.

While validating each of these categories as important, participants also noted that some of these areas of need competed with others for resources and attention. In such cases, the participants recommended planning and decisionmaking with a balanced approach that takes as many categories as possible into consideration without forsaking other needs. Participants also were able to identify what they saw as the boundaries not to be crossed in pursuit of a solitary goal in any one area.

For example, participants said that if they must choose between areas of need or make “tradeoffs,” the majority believed that preservation of natural resources, the islands’ local identity, and cultural assets must be considered before improvements to the infrastructure or even steps to strengthen the economy. (There was some limited dissent among some groups that efforts to protect the environment should not stall the reverse: economic development and improvements to infrastructure.)

Most participants expressed a sense that the local quality of life and Maui Nui’s cultural traditions and identity are more closely tied to the islands’ environmental assets than to their economic conditions. Many affirmed a belief that there are not necessarily conflicts between preserving local quality of life and identity and preserving the environment or addressing other human needs. Among many participants there was the perception that there could be potential conflicts between building the economy and these goals, however, participants also acknowledged that economic development could be a priority that supported both environmental preservation and the local culture.

While a handful of participants felt that education and preserving the environment were worth improving “at any cost,” the vast majority continued to state that despite the paramount importance of these two goals, these needs must be balanced with other competing needs. They

articulated a hope that more balance could exist in decisionmaking, and they supported the notion that many issues could be addressed simultaneously by developing strategies that take into consideration competing needs.

Residents' feelings about taxation to address any of their identified concerns is unclear from the data, though some expressed reluctance to see taxes increased as a trade-off for having any specific needs addressed.

In general, the priorities identified as "essential" were the same among residents of Maui, Moloka'i and Lāna'i, but differences emerged with regard to perceived needs on each island. Moloka'i and Lāna'i participants felt that preserving the environment as well as local quality of life, rural identity and culture should not be sacrificed for efforts to strengthen the economy. However, both Moloka'i and Lāna'i displayed less openness toward potential tax increases than Maui Nui in the aggregate in their action to meeting their goals. More frequently than not, sessions on Moloka'i and Lāna'i indicated that though improving education was essential, it should not require raising taxes. Needs in the area of health and social services were highlighted more frequently in Molokai sessions than in those on Lāna'i or Maui. Lāna'i sessions voiced greater need for infrastructure improvement, specifically inter-island transportation, than Focus Maui Nui sessions elsewhere.

## **RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR ACTION**

### 1. Improving Education

Most participants recommended that Maui Nui take immediate steps to ensure its schools are performing well and that young people are being prepared for the challenges ahead. Some groups suggested that these changes may best be facilitated by local control over the schools. Concrete suggestions for improving education included building more schools, increasing teachers' pay, and improving school facilities. Many sessions encouraged more community involvement in the schools from families and businesses. The suggestion was made many times that there should be more opportunities for youth to do internships and apprenticeships with local businesses. Some sessions specified needed curriculum: local culture and traditions, fine arts, environmental science. In a variety of ways, some sessions addressed the issue of funding education: increasing property tax, creating a lottery, and legalizing gambling. Some sessions recommended ways of encouraging local residents to become teachers by offering scholarships and by providing the opportunity to earn university degrees in the county. While K-12 reform was of utmost importance when discussing education, participants noted it is also essential to have a public university with strong academic programs, particularly in areas logical for research and job creation in Maui Nui. Many sessions advocated areas of specialized research that would align with targeted economic development strategies, such as: alternative energy, organic farming, oceanic studies, health sciences.

### 2. Protecting the Natural Environment

An overwhelming majority of Focus Maui Nui participants expressed their concern for preserving what they see as Maui's greatest asset: its natural beauty. Many participants believed that residents, industry, and visitors need to be educated about their specific role in preserving resources and, as necessary, provided with laws and incentives that will help conserve water, the land, and other natural resources. Many participants felt environmentally conscious practices by businesses and individuals should be rewarded to encourage the use of alternative energy resources; the expansion and diversification of agriculture to allow for more locally grown food; the protection of native species; and responsible transportation alternatives.

### 3. Addressing Infrastructure Challenges, especially Transportation and Housing

Nearly all participants felt the need for new roads and other transportation infrastructure efforts should be sensitive to the natural environment. In lieu of the construction of large highways or sprawl, participants recommended that the county adhere to community planning principles that are forward-thinking and aligned with the reality of how local people live. Many sessions suggested development of public transportation modes that encompassed the needs of both visitors and locals. Several groups expressed interest in neighborhood planning to enable people to live near work places. Establishing a recycling program was cited by many sessions as an urgent need and some proposed it be considered a possible economic stimulus for the county. While a small number of groups wanted to halt all development and growth on the islands, and a distinct few wanted to eliminate all regulation of development, the vast majority of participants saw a need to work with developers to ensure that what is being built is both sensitive to environmental needs and well aligned with the unmet needs of people living on the islands. There was a widely held opinion that greater compromise was possible between government and developers, so that development processes could be simplified for projects that construct affordable housing, schools, clinics, and parks on sites identified by local communities as appropriate. Many sessions recommended new building regulations, such as requiring solar power, that reduce the environmental impact of new development. There was strong support for development incentives for projects that meet the needs of local people and disincentives for planning projects focused on attracting wealthy (part-time) newcomers to the islands. There was a sense of frustration among many sessions participants that existing laws pertaining to responsible development were not being adhered to by developers or enforced by government authorities.

### 4. Strengthening the Economy

Many groups felt Maui Nui should position itself as a model for “sustainable” living, in terms of both economic development and environmental decisionmaking. Several groups recommended opportunities to invite “clean” businesses to make a historic mark by helping to create jobs and build the economy in ways that limit harm to Maui’s delicate ecosystem and align with local values. Such a move would capitalize on local natural assets and on the world’s growing interest in ecology and native cultures. Most suggestions focused on cultural and ecological tourism; health tourism; research and development around alternative energy; support for small and locally owned businesses; oceanic research; agriculture (particularly

diversified and organic agriculture); aquaculture; high tech; and other environmentally clean areas of focus as areas for both economic and academic focus.

5. Preserving Local Culture and Traditions; Addressing Human Needs

Focus Maui Nui participants displayed a strongly felt value for community and cultural heritage. Sessions offered a wide array of actions aimed at nurturing the quality of community stressing inclusivity, community involvement, fairness (equality under law, share of tax burden), accountability (among leaders, residents, developers) and family support. A great number of participants made recommendations that local culture and traditions be infused into the society, from schools to workplaces. Communities were advised to adhere to native traditions of respect, community, and aloha, as doing so was perceived to be a factor in helping the county meet the needs of residents. Education about traditional values was widely recommended. Many participants recommended the continuation and expansion of programs for substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation, job creation, youth development, law enforcement, population control, and health care – all seen as factors related to the local quality of life. Several groups acknowledged the role of groups (nonprofit organizations, churches, and community-based organizations) in meeting social service programming needs. Some sessions voiced the need to ensure recreational opportunities for both locals and visitors by providing public access to beaches, annual sports and recreation attractions and others suggested making Maui a “recreation destination.” A great many sessions called for increased community involvement to address local issues, believing that local involvement and a close look at the existing tax structure, schools, healthcare, and human services could be improved without significantly increasing the tax burden of local residents.

6. Recommended Actions specifically related to Moloka’i and Lāna’i

Both Moloka’i and Lāna’i participants proposed more vocational training opportunities for youth and greater support for local teachers. Regarding economic development, Lāna’i residents wanted to encourage small business while Moloka’i sessions more frequently stressed the need to connect economic development with environmental preservation. Lāna’i stressed need for youth services and inter-island transportation while Moloka’i stressed the need for better health and substance abuse services. Moloka’i sessions repeatedly expressed concern for maintaining cultural values. Lāna’i and Moloka’i participants suggested action on the part of individuals to be kinder and more tolerant with one another in order to better their communities.

## **DELINEATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

Participants overwhelmingly recommended that everyone – residents, government, businesses, educators, the media, etc. – needed to play a role in building a better future for Maui Nui. The importance of ongoing dialogue, civic engagement, and shared commitment to Maui’s future were mentioned repeatedly by participants.

Participants identified that *government (and public officials)* should enact a vision that would respond to the needs of the whole community (rather than to special interests). Also government should communicate openly and continually with residents and strive for immediate action in a balanced, logical way to advance the Focus Maui Nui vision.

The *role of residents* themselves, as identified by participants, would be to become educated about local needs and involved in the community. Residents were urged to vote; to conserve natural resources; to look out for the interest of children and young people; and to be part of local solutions by volunteering time and resources to help advance this vision.

Participants noted that *businesses* should engage with the community, communicating with residents and working to create mutually agreeable, sustainable economic development.

Participants identified the *media* as playing a critical part in disseminating messages about the community’s hopes for the future and then monitoring emerging needs and the progress on the Focus Maui Nui vision on an ongoing basis.

*Educators* were seen as playing a critical role because of their ability to articulate what local schools and students need. They also could help the larger community reach young people with key messages about what is needed in the future, teaching civics, promoting cultural values and passing on core messages to youth. Positive examples and role models in schools were seen as contributing to alternatives to substance abuse for youth.

The *role of nonprofit organizations* was described as finding opportunities to collaborate to ensure a streamlined and concerted effort to meet community needs.

*Developers* were seen as playing a critical role in conceiving projects that match local needs (better than some projects in the past have) and asked to bring balance to their projects: to work to build what's needed most: affordable housing. In addition to housing, developers could help the community address challenges in schools, hospitals, parks, and other community needs.

Participants felt that *visitors* needed to be made aware of local goals in order to respect precious resources and traditions, ensuring that future visitors can continue to enjoy the islands.

Finally, participants passionately stated that *children and youth* are the future of the county, responsible for carrying forward local traditions, protecting and honoring natural assets, taking action to help their communities, and passing core values on to future generations.

Both Lānaʻi and Molokaʻi asked decisionmakers to hear their unique needs. Messages from Lānaʻi called for government, business and community members to support school sports. Molokaʻi's messages stressed commitment to environmental and cultural preservation and called for concerted effort by all to form common ground in addressing community needs.

## **DECISIONS MAUI AND FOCUS MAUI NUI: AN OVERVIEW OF SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

In 1988, a group of residents convened to lead a countywide visioning process called Decisions Maui. The process involved a series of grassroots community meetings throughout the county over several years to develop a set of prioritized issues and key strategies for dealing with them. The effort also came up with a set of guiding principles – “core community values” – that every “good” Maui citizen should care about. Complementary processes were carried out on Lānaʻi and Molokaʻi. The parallels between this process and Focus Maui Nui are evident.

In the more than decade since Decisions Maui, many of the core community values remain relevant to modern residents. Focus Maui Nui participants repeatedly expressed sentiments closely parallel to the following Decisions Maui core community values (indicated in italics):

- *Preserving, enhancing, and maintaining the physical and natural environment of these islands as an open place, a place of spirituality, beauty, sustenance, and nurturance.* This value is closely aligned with much of the language participants in Focus Maui Nui used to describe their interest in protecting the environment, however Focus Maui Nui groups were more likely to add specific concerns about conserving water and energy.
- *Fostering and expressing a common concern for each other and a shared respect for the different cultural values that are present here.* This idea was closely mirrored in the Focus Maui Nui discussions of the importance of meeting human needs and maintaining local traditions, culture, and *aloha*. Focus Maui Nui groups specified the importance especially of helping and guiding children and youth.
- *Establishing and maintaining broad and equal opportunities for meaningful political participation, so that Maui citizens can effectively control the future through a trustworthy political process.* This value was mentioned repeatedly by Focus Maui Nui participants who specified that better communication was needed between government and residents and frequently added that Maui Nui residents themselves should rise to the challenge of participating in their communities more fully than in the past.

- *Properly balancing future development, population, and infrastructure (roads, social services, schools, recreational facilities, sewage treatment facilities, healthcare resources, etc.)* “Balance” was another key value emphasized by Focus Maui Nui participants, who pointed to the importance of trying to do as much as possible to reach reasoned compromises between needs.
- *Promoting stable, enduring economic development, providing a diversity of satisfying jobs, and a quality standard of living.* These issues remained central to participants in Focus Maui Nui, who provided a number of tangible suggestions for how this may be achieved while balancing competing demands.
- *Strengthening our families and providing a safe and rich environment for our children.* Focus Maui Nui participants talked not only about strong families but about the importance of strong communities. They specified the importance of educational opportunities, in particular, for children and, in terms of safety, most frequently pointed to the need to address what they perceive to be a growing substance abuse epidemic.
- *Maintaining a connection to the rest of the world through education, cultural activities, and openness.* This value appears to be less obviously reflected in the data from Focus Maui Nui than were the prior values, though many participants noted the importance of celebrating local cultural differences and embracing diversity as an asset of the community.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Overwhelmingly, participants in Focus Maui Nui expressed a sense of optimism that the islands could become a model for clean, sustainable living and a place where every child could grow to lead a successful and productive life amongst family on the islands.

By bringing into balance the needs of the land and its people and involving the entire community in the achievement of a shared vision, participants believed the opportunity exists to protect treasured natural and cultural assets, while also investing in the best potential of Maui Nui.

Participants felt these goals would require a countywide commitment to strong communities where people help one another; to being good stewards of the environment; to continued respect for diversity; to empowering local people; to honoring cultural traditions; to working toward local self-sufficiency; to making wise and balanced decisions; to attempting thoughtful, island-appropriate innovation; and to being consistently conscious of future generations.

# A VISION FOR MAUI NUI

Maui Nui will be an innovative model of sustainable island living and a place where every child can grow to reach his or her potential.

The needs of each individual, the needs of our natural and cultural assets, and the needs of the whole community will be brought into balance to reflect the extremely high value we place on both the land and its people.

The education and well-being of young people will be fostered to ensure that those born on these islands can, if they choose, spend their whole lives here – raising children, owning homes, enjoying rewarding jobs, and taking advantage of opportunities to contribute to this community and to be good stewards of our local treasures.

Maui Nui will be a leader in the creation of responsible, self-sufficient communities and environmentally sound economic development.

That which makes Maui Nui unique in the world will be preserved, celebrated, and protected for generations to come.

## CORE VALUES

To accomplish our vision our islands must foster and respect the spirit of *aloha*, consider the generations of Maui Nui, yet-to-be, and be true to our core values:

- Stewardship of natural and cultural resources
- Compassion and understanding
- Respect for diversity
- Engagement and empowerment of local people
- Honoring cultural traditions and history
- Consideration of the needs of future generations
- Commitment to local self-sufficiency
- Wisdom and balance in decisionmaking
- Thoughtful, island-appropriate innovation

## KEY STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

Focus Maui Nui participants were thoughtful and innovative in how they formulated **strategies for action...** resulting in a series of integrated strategies that can shape the future we envision.

- 1** To foster the development of young people, to create more economic options down the road, and to strengthen the ability of local residents to take control over the islands' future, the first priority is to **improve education**. Maui Nui must ensure its schools are performing and that young people are being well prepared for the challenges ahead. While the creation of the infrastructure and innovation to bring about K-12 reform is of the utmost importance, it is also essential to have a public university with strong academic programs, particularly in areas logical for research and job creation in Maui Nui.
- 2** To ensure that precious resources exist for future generations, to preserve the beauty that brings visitors to our islands, and to maintain the distinct rural identity and traditions of Maui Nui, the second priority is to **protect the natural environment** through carefully managed, thoughtful development and other means, including special attention to **addressing water needs**. Residents, industry, and visitors – all of us – must be educated about their role in preserving resources and, as necessary, provided with laws and incentives that will help them conserve water and the land, as well as other natural resources. By rewarding environmentally conscious practices by businesses and individuals, Maui Nui can support efforts to move toward a sustainable water supply, as well as efforts to adopt alternative energy resources, to expand and diversify locally grown food, to protect native species, and to promote responsible transportation alternatives.
- 3** To maintain the quality of life on our islands and to ensure local residents have the chance to own their own homes and to travel safely, the next priority is to **address infrastructure challenges, particularly housing and transportation**. Efforts to tackle these challenges should take into account the realities of local people's needs and should maintain a sensitivity to the natural environment. Maui Nui should adhere to community planning principles that are forward-thinking and that put the needs of residents first.
- 4** To supply rewarding and quality jobs for local people, to broaden the tax base, and to provide Maui Nui with financial resources to accomplish its other goals, a fourth priority is to **adopt targeted economic development strategies**. We believe Maui Nui can create jobs and strengthen the economy in ways that limit harm to our delicate ecosystem and that capitalize on our local assets and the world's growing interest in ecology and sustainability. Cultural and ecological tourism; research and development around alternative energy; support for small and locally-owned businesses; oceanic research; agriculture (particularly diversified and organic agriculture); aquaculture; high tech; and other environmentally clean areas of focus are recommended, as is the creation of learning and research institutes that can support the community's interest in sustainability and cultural traditions.
- 5** To pass on our history and culture to future generations and to ensure a healthy community in years ahead, Maui Nui must take steps to **preserve local culture and traditions** and to **address human needs**, particularly the epidemic of substance abuse that threatens too many of our young people. Our communities must adhere to native traditions of respect, community, and *aloha* and must care for their people, working to ensure all residents have opportunities to succeed and to recognize alternatives to drugs and alcohol. Substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation, job creation, youth development, law enforcement, population control, and health care are all factors in the quality of life in local communities and in whether we will be able to maintain our distinctive identity as residents of Maui Nui. All residents will play a role in addressing these issues and in protecting our culture and people from harm.

## MESSAGES AND EXPECTATIONS

Recognizing the challenges that lie ahead, we affirm the roles of all parties in our community in helping realize our vision, in upholding our core values, and in implementing the identified strategies for action. Embracing our unique cultural and natural assets, everyone in Maui Nui must be empowered to be stewards of our precious islands – to create neighborhoods, jobs, laws, and services in the local tradition of shared responsibility to those now living and to those yet to be.

All sessions chose to create messages to government and public officials; almost all sessions developed messages for residents (the community) and business. A large number of sessions drafted messages for the media and educators. Frequently, sessions sent messages to nonprofit organizations, developers, land owners, and visitors, and finally, numerous groups wrote messages to upcoming generations.

Messages to **government and public officials** focus on responding to the needs of the whole community (rather than a select vocal few); communicating openly and continually with the people; and taking action in a balanced, logical way to advance this vision without delay.

Messages for **residents** concentrate on becoming educated about and involved in the community; voting; conserving natural resources; looking out for the interest of children; and being part of the solution – volunteering time and resources to help advance this vision.

Messages for **businesses** centered on being involved in the future of the community and communicating and being engaged with the community and seeking opportunities to contribute to the islands' sustainable economic development.

Messages for **the media** focused on disseminating messages about the community's vision and monitoring continually emerging needs and the efforts of the community to create positive change.



Messages for **educators** revolve around making known the needs of local schools; helping to pass core values on to the next generation; continually seeking solutions to help young people achieve their full potential; and creating opportunities for youth to see options for their future and alternatives to substance abuse.



Messages for **nonprofit organizations** included being able to work with one another to ensure a streamlined and concerted effort to meet needs in the community.



Messages for **developers** focused on recognizing and respecting local limits and working to make projects better match local needs for housing, schools, health facilities, and open space.



Messages for **landowners** expressed appreciation for responsible stewardship of the land, giving back to the community, and concern about converting large parcels of land for non-agricultural use.



Messages for **visitors** emphasized respecting precious local resources and cultural values, so they may be there for future visitors.



It is expected that **young people** will carry forward local traditions, protect and honor their land, become involved, and pass on this sense of responsibility to the next generation.



**FOCUS MAUI NUI** | December 2003

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