MEETING SUMMARY  

Date: December 4, 2012   Project Name: O‘ahu 2035: General Plan Update
Time: 6:00 to 8:00 pm   Recorded by: Corlyn Orr
Location: McKinley High School, Hirata Hall
Subject: Community Briefing #2
Attendees: See attached
Reference: Community Briefing #2 PowerPoint Presentation

Introductions

The purpose of the second community meeting for the O‘ahu 2035 General Plan Update was to present the Public Review Draft, and solicit comments and questions. This was the first briefing in a series of three (the second would be in Mililani, December 6, 2012 and the third in Kāne‘ohe, January 14, 2013).

Jiro Sumada, Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) Acting Director, convened the meeting at about 6:05 pm. He began with opening remarks, thanked the group for their attendance and participation, and then introduced Scott Ezer.

Presentation

Scott Ezer, principal with Helber Hastert & Fee, Planners (HHF), provided a presentation that included: an overview of the project status and information gathering efforts to date; a summary of the community survey and written comments received; highlights of the major revisions proposed in the Public Review Draft; and instructions for submitting written comments on the Public Review Draft.

As part of the presentation, a third community briefing tentatively scheduled for January 14, 2013 at Castle High School. A final notice would be emailed/published once the meeting venue is confirmed.

Comments and Discussion

The presentation was completed at about 7:30, at which time comments and questions were taken. Comments and questions were also allowed during the course of the presentation. The following summarizes the main points of the discussion:

- The six topics that DPP felt would be critical issues for this update included tourism, agriculture, affordable housing, economic health, sustainability, and growth and development. DPP indicated that their agency was responsible for selecting the topics for the five trend reports and the three focus groups.

- Concerned that the topics addressed by the trend reports and focus group meetings are receiving more attention than other topics which were not studied in-depth. For example, it seems that DPP is putting more emphasis on agriculture than natural resources, because a trend report was prepared for agriculture. The population section is critical, and should receive more in-depth consideration than given.

- DPP is charged with updating the General Plan, per the City Charter, and is ultimately responsible and accountable for the Plan that is presented to the City Council. DPP clarified
that HHF is the City’s consultant, and is working directly with DPP staff to review the current
language and identify recommended revisions. Limited staffing resources and other
departmental duties (such as the DP/SCP 5-year reviews, preparing TOD plans, processing
permit applications, etc.) make it necessary for DPP to hire consultants that can assist with
the workload.

- The timing of the General Plan review – overlapping with the SCP 5-year reviews – is causing
confusion for some community members. Individuals involved with the on-going East Honolulu
SCP review would prefer to wait for the East Honolulu SCP to be finalized before the General
Plan Update is conducted. From DPP’s perspective, updating the General Plan and the SCPs are
a continual process. Although the SCPs are required to be consistent with the General Plan,
each of the various plans is a stand-alone document that can be reviewed concurrently. The
process being followed for the General Plan Update is purposeful, with the intent of providing
for community dialogue.

- The format of the Part II report with the rationale for change documented next to the General
Plan language is difficult to follow. A ramseyered format that only showed the proposed
revisions, without the additional rationale next to it, is preferred.

- Proposed revisions presented in the Public Review Draft are the result of information gathered
through DPP’s research efforts (e.g., trend reports, focus group meetings, survey, written
comments, key planning issues). All sources of information were considered equally in DPP’s
review process. DPP has an obligation to remain objective and serve the good of all people.

- Survey results are evidence that vacation rental proponents encouraged their constituency to
complete the survey. DPP acknowledged that the survey was non-scientific and self-selecting,
and is not a representative sample, as certain groups influenced the survey results. DPP also
acknowledged a deliberate attempt to review all written comments, and read through every
word of the current General Plan. All of the open-ended comments received through the
survey, and a summary of all written comments, are posted on the project website.

- It was insinuated that HHF’s motive in facilitating the survey was to validate the outcomes of
other City planning projects that HHF is involved with. DPP affirmed no outside political
pressure influencing the content of the Public Review Draft.

- Need more opportunities for public testimony in the update process. Would like to see more
grassroots efforts at the local level to gather input.

- In response, it was clarified that the General Plan is intentionally broad, and provides high-level
guidance for decision-makers who are responsible for implementing the concepts in the
General Plan. The Plan is not structured to include provisions that specify how the objectives
and policies should be implemented.

Concerned that the new language added to Chapter IV, Objective C, Policy 4 that distinguishes
between suburban and urban areas is a reference to smart growth (“Encourage residential
development in suburban areas where existing roads, utilities, and other community facilities
are not being used to capacity, and in urban areas where higher densities can be readily
accommodated”). In response, it was stated that the smart growth concepts added to the
Public Review Draft are discussed in the Sustainability trend report.
• According to DPP, the population distribution guidelines are conceptual targets that are used in planning for infrastructure systems and services, to ensure that the region can accommodate the planned future growth. Since the guidelines are not limits or statutory requirements, there are no changes being proposed to the population distribution policy.

• Who is responsible for adding in the new policy about alternative lodging? The interests of one small group cannot monopolize the Plan. DPP should follow the City Council’s decision to prohibit vacation rentals. Vacation rentals in residential areas conflicts with other policies to protect neighborhoods, and threatens residents’ quality of life. Disagree with the rationale that visitor accommodations are needed to serve visiting family and friends. There is too much flexibility with the proposed language. Visitor accommodations should only be allowed in areas zoned for resort uses.

DPP responded that their decision to include the alternative lodging policy in the General Plan Update is an effort to re-open the policy discussion about vacation rentals. The last City Council discussion, which was originally intended to address the need for increased enforcement, became a public debate focused on allowing more vacation units. This is another attempt by the Department to address the need for enforcement. In addition, the proposed policy supports recent proposals for new community hotels, and reflects consistency with the City Council’s policy decision to allow one small inn in Haleiwa (approved as part of the North Shore Sustainable Communities Plan).

• Want to add references to fuel cell technology as an alternative energy resource.

• Disagree with proposed changes to remove policies that call for limiting population growth. These statements have been in the General Plan since 1977, and are important principles for an island society with limited resources and a carrying capacity. Only way to be sustainable is reduce immigration and limit population growth.

• Section on agriculture should distinguish between locally-produced food crops and seed crops to encourage food self-sufficiency. Seed is not an edible crop.

• Important to incorporate climate change and sea level rise into the Plan, and address the impacts of such changes (e.g., inundation areas at high tide, contamination to fresh water supply, effects to existing utility and transportation systems in low-lying areas).

• Tourism is not sustainable because it is dependent on transplanted workers that contribute to population growth.

• Need better guidance to direct development in the ‘Ewa region. ‘Ewa Development Plan has not been revised since 1997.

• Chapter IV, Objective A, Policy 2 ("Streamline approval and permit procedures for housing and other development projects") could lead to exemptions for environmental review requirements, similar to the Public Land Development Corporation.

Before closing the meeting, Scott thanked everyone for attending, and provided instructions for submitting written comments.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:05 pm.
LIST OF ATTENDEES

Department of Planning and Permitting: Jiro Sumada, Acting Director
   Kathy Sokugawa
   Randy Hara
   Mike Watkins

Helber Hastert & Fee Planners: Scott Ezer
   Corlyn Orr
   Tara DePonte
   Regina McClintock

Community Attendees (23 individuals): Larry Bartley
   Charles Carole, Makiki Neighborhood Board #10,
      League of Women Voters
   Brandon Elefante, Office of Councilmember Harimoto
   Nicole Ferguson
   Wes Frysztacki
   Brian Gibson, OMPO
   Matthew Gonser, UH SeaGrant Program
   Kauna Kihikihi
   Michelle Matson
   Larry McElheny
   Pauline MacNeil, Lanikai-Kailua Outdoor Circle
   James Macey
   Art Mori
   Maurice Morita
   Glenn Oamilda
   Leah Retherford
   Ursula Retherford
   Elizabeth Reilly, Liveable Hawai‘i Kai Hui
   Wendell Lum
   Vincent Shigekuni
   Stu Simmons
   Tom Smyth, Downtown Neighborhood Board #13
   Donna Wong, Hawai‘i’s 1000 Friends