

# Downtown Hilo - Hawai'i

AIA SDAT - May 5 - 7, 2009

Strategic Implementation for Long-term Sustainability  
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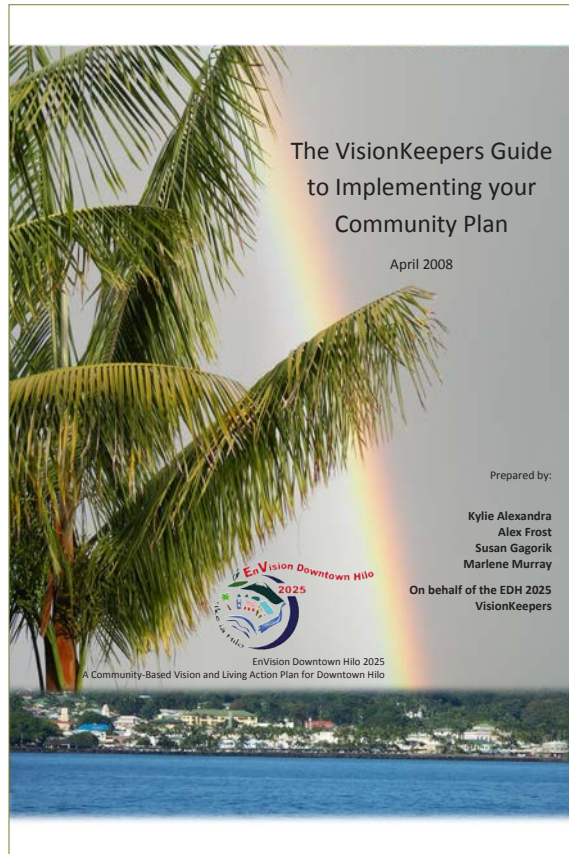


## A COMMUNITY-BASED VISION AND LIVING ACTION PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN HILO

December 2005

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For The Friends of Downtown Hilo Steering Committee

Prepared for  
Hawai'i Community Foundation  
Hawai'i County Planning Department  
Hawaii County Council  
Hawai'i County Department of Research and Development  
Big Island Resource Conservation and Development Council



## 2009 Sustainable Design Assessment Team Application (SDAT)

The American Institute of  
Architects  
Center for Communities by  
Design



**ENVISION DOWNTOWN HILO 2025**  
Strategic Implementation for Long-term Sustainability  
Hilo, Hawaii - November, 2008







## BACKGROUND

In November 2008, the EnVision Downtown Hilo 2025 (EDH 2025) VisionKeepers and the County of Hawai'i Planning Department submitted a proposal to the AIA for an SDAT on behalf of Downtown Hilo to assist the town, the citizens, and the burgeoning EDH 2025 community organization in addressing key issues facing the town. The EDH 2025 VisionKeepers are a volunteer committee who oversee implementation of EnVision Downtown Hilo 2025: A Community-Based Vision and Living Action Plan, which was adopted by the Hawai'i County Council in November, 2005. The issues addressed included prioritizing Downtown Hilo's existing goals regarding sustainability, continuing to educate and strengthen the community implementation process, and stimulating future growth in a manner that is appropriate and true to the character of the community. Their application, titled "Strategic Implementation for Long-term Sustainability," received additional support from the State of Hawai'i Department of Health, Healthy Hawai'i Initiative.

The AIA accepted the proposal and identified a volunteer team leader to begin working with the town. After a short scoping visit in March 2009, the full SDAT team was assembled and arrived in Hilo on May 4, 2009. For three days the team met with property owners, county officials, long-time residents, youth, and other concerned citizens. After completing these forums and charrettes the team made a final presentation to the public where they outlined some broad brush recommendations for the sustainable development of the community. This document expands on those principles and recommendations and intends to serve as a guide for continued political and public action.

## What is the SDAT Program?

The SDAT program is an interdisciplinary community assistance program that focuses on principles of sustainability. Launched in 2005, the program represents an exciting new chapter in the AIA's history of supporting communities with volunteer design expertise.

The SDAT Program is modeled on the AIA's Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) program. Started in 1967, the R/UDAT program is one of the AIA's longest running success stories, providing communities with specific design solutions. The SDAT maintains the basic principles and values of the R/UDAT program, but focuses on providing more broad assessments to frame future policies with a special emphasis on sustainability. Both of these programs are based on an understanding of design as a process that:

- Is integrative, holistic, and visual
- Is central to achieving a sustainable relationship between humans, the natural environment, and the place
- Gives three-dimensional form to a culture and place
- Achieves balance among culture, environment, and economic systems.

Both of these programs are also grounded in the AIA design assistance team values, which call for a multidisciplinary approach, objectivity of the participating team members, and encouragement of public participation. The SDAT process includes not only the expert team but also government agencies and officials, private businesses, schools, community members, and other parties that may be appropriate to consult while the team is visiting the community.

## Why is the SDAT Program Valuable for Downtown Hilo?

Many communities are immobilized by conflicting agendas, politics, personalities, "paralysis through analysis" or even an overabundance of opportunity. By involving outside experts who have no vested financial interest in their analysis and recommendations and bringing multiple stakeholders to the table in a short period of time, the SDAT process can build bridges between groups that had previously misunderstood one another and set short and long-term priorities. The intensive nature of the visit and the emphasis on community outreach





## About AIA and the Hilo, Hawai'i SDAT

can also provide a renewed sense of focus. The SDAT approach allows each team, each report, and each recommendation to be customized to the needs of the community being served. This adaptability is one of the most valuable features of the process.

In the case of Downtown Hilo, the VisionKeepers and the County of Hawai'i Planning Department had also identified key stakeholders and Lead Solution Partners – government and community organizations who had agreed to take part in the implementation of specific action items identified in the EDH2025 Plan. These groups, as well as the traditional culture of Hawai'i and the town of Hilo, had already provided much of the education and outreach necessary to build consensus that sustainability was an important value to uphold.

The Visioning process, begun in 2004, had also built a sound foundation of action items the citizen groups had identified. However, after four years of meeting, brainstorming, and educating, many had grown frustrated with a perceived lack of progress and others seemed to be burning out after dedicating so much time and energy to the process.

It was clear to the team that Downtown Hilo needed an assessment that was focused on tools and courses of action. As a small community, they were not plagued by bureaucratic anonymity or governmental inefficiency that can stall such efforts in larger communities. After hearing the concerns of the citizens and even the government officials it became clear that the existing zoning regulations fail to define the character of the downtown they loved and hoped to preserve. The cost of new construction and rules regarding renovation had led many to believe that charming, small-town development would give way to more moneyed interests from outside the community. In short, they lacked the policy tools to preserve and nurture the Vision that had been so clearly articulated by the people the team spoke with.

On behalf of the Hilo SDAT team, the Center for Communities by Design, and the American Institute of Architects, it is hoped that this report will provide the appropriate tools and policy recommendations to be a useful guide to the Hilo community and the whole County of Hawai'i as they chart their future for the coming years and coming generations.



## The Heart of Hilo

There was a time when the mountains of Hilo were banned from reaching Hilo's seas.

The streams that once nourished Hilo's heart had nowhere to go and after many years - they dried up.

The fish were not able to reach the seas, so the sea birds left Hilo for the other islands in search of food.

Over the years Hilo's heart (piko) hardened.

Where there was once Aloha, there was fire (ahi) and smoke (uahi)

then one day, the makani ahe ahe ( the good winds) blew into Hilo.

The makani brought along with it the flowers of the OHIA-lehua tree that held the 'ano' (seeds) of change.

These seeds filled the cracks that covered Hilo's heart the makani also blew in the ao panopano (rain clouds) and it rained for many many days.

it rained so much that the seeds grew into beautiful trees; the rivers kahawai overflowed and tore up Hilo's hard armor the hard cover flowed towards the ocean and breached the barriers

as the mountains reached towards the seas Fish ponds dotted the island once again the seabirds returned and flocked the many trees that now adorned Hilo's heart and once again Hilo's heart was filled with aloha and gratitude.

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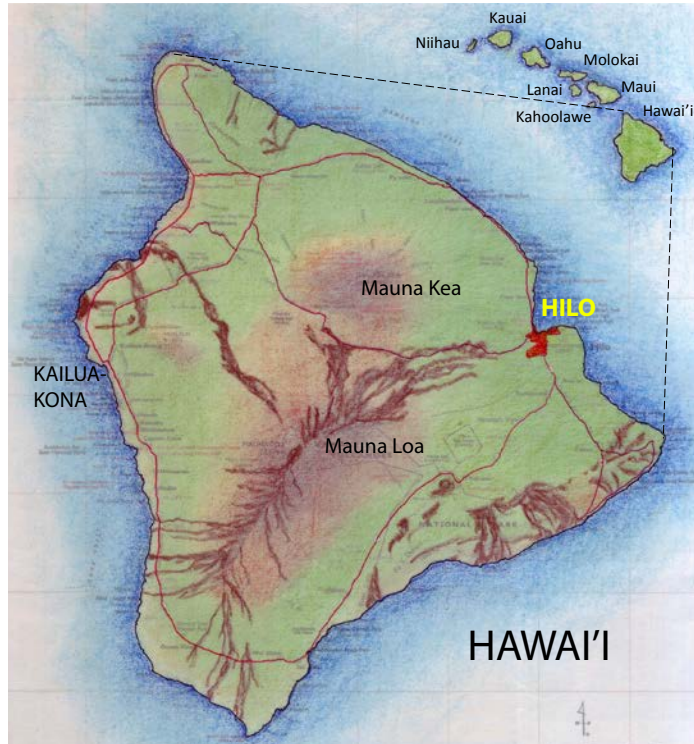


# Context



### *Hilo's Legendary Sites*

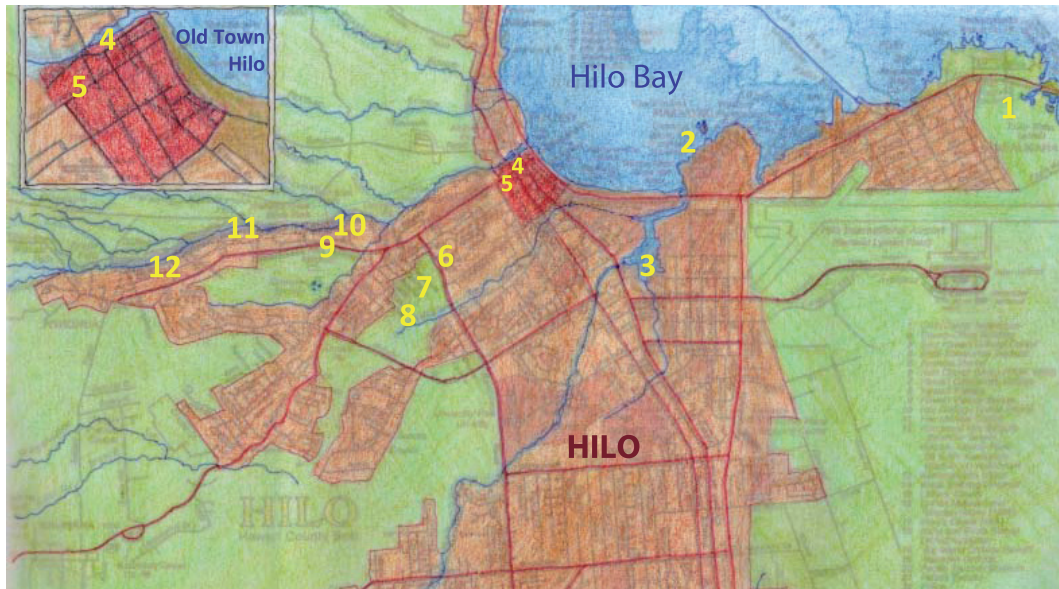
- 1 Loko Waka Fish Pond
- 2 Mokuola
- 3 Waiākea Fish Pond
- 4 Maui's Canoe
- 5 Naha + Pinao Stone
- 6 Halai Hill
- 7 Pu'uhonu Hill
- 8 Ōpeapea Hill
- 9 Rainbow Falls
- 10 Mo'ō Kuna
- 11 Kaimulakanaka Falls
- 12 Boling Pots



### CONTEXT

Downtown Hilo is located on the northeastern windward side of the island of Hawai'i and experiences about 140-200 inches of rainfall annually. The town is situated at the foot of the Mauna Kea volcano on a crescent shaped bay which collects rainfall from a vast watershed fed by the slopes of both Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa volcanoes. Rainwater runoff from the mountainside ultimately collects in the Wailuku and Waiākea Rivers which frame downtown to the west and east respectively. Other streams in this watershed have been redirected to the sea via manmade channels and storm water drainage via-ducts. Flooding in downtown, especially on Bay Front Highway, is a common occurrence. The lush tropical setting is a blessing for many, especially the Hilo Farmers Market which fills its stalls with local island produce daily to the delight of residents and visitors alike.

The sea level waterfront makes Downtown Hilo vulnerable to tsunamis and many residents still remember the last two devastating tsunamis of 1946 and 1960. Open fields and parks facing the water commemorate victims where several buildings once stood. Destructive earthquakes and eruptions also represent ongoing threats to the island. As recently as 1984, lava flows from the northeastern rift zone of Mauna Loa came within a few miles of Hilo. Localized earthquakes and land slides can also generate tsunamis with little time for escape.



### HISTORY

Many sites in Hilo play important roles in the history of the Hawaiian people. The islands' beloved and powerful King Kamehameha fulfilled a prophecy with his own desire for unification of the islands when he successfully moved the famous Naha Stone. Today the stone sits near its original location adjacent to the Pinao Stone in front of the Hilo Public Library.

Traditionally Hilo was always considered "wawai" watery and therefore rich. The Wailuku River, which means "destructive waters" in Hawaiian, is the site of many mythical legends as well as historic events in the life of King Kamehameha. The goddess Hina and her son Maui make their home in a cave below Rainbow Falls and King Kamehameha first landed in Hilo at



the mouth of this significant river. With renewed and growing interest and respect for the host Hawaiian culture and heritage, these historical and sacred sites are a significant part of the downtown landscape.

Hilo's rich cultural history is visible everywhere you look. From early 19c whalers and missionaries to early 20c sugar cane workers from China, Japan, Portugal, the Philippines and elsewhere, the cultural influences of this worldly influx has left its mark in the food, architecture and social customs of the island. The grand structures that survived repeated tsunamis tell only part of the story. Built during the "heyday" of the sugar cane plantations, when the railroad running along Bay Front Highway brought in cane products from along the coast for warehousing and later shipment to the mainland, it is the people who built them and their descendants that are the real story. The last cane truck left the Big Island Sugar Plantation in 1995 setting the stage for a new diversified economy that is more reflective of the diversity of its people and its history.

Today, Hilo plays an important role as the government center for the County of Hawai'i, the largest island in the state. Population density is 36 per square mile, the lowest in the state. A Mayor/Council form of government represents the island's residents.

As Harry Kim, former Mayor for the County of Hawai'i, recalling his Hilo childhood described; "The essence of Hilo remains largely unchanged from times past. Our neighborhoods and business areas are still quiet and friendly. People in Hilo still greet each other on the street with a smile, bring to work avocados and mangos from their overflowing trees, and dress comfortably and casually. Returning from a visit to the bustle of Honolulu reminds us that our traffic is still light, our downtown buildings low, our people relaxed and the pace wonderfully easy." It is this, and the nostalgia embodied within, that makes Hilo so cherished as the unique "Old Hawai'i" town.

### DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY

There are several definitions for sustainability that are applicable and adaptable to the EnVision Downtown Hilo 2025 goals. A globally recognized and accepted definition was simply stated in 1984 by the UN commission on the Environment as "the ability of a community to meet the needs of the present without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This sums up the basic premise of sustainability. That goal can be further broken down into the three pillars of sustainability: Environmental, Economic, and Socio-Cultural.

Planning and growing sustainably will require a complete shift in thinking, new partnerships and an inter-disciplinary approach to problem solving. When the downtown, as it stands today, was built, sustainable thinking was unheard of from a development point of view in an era of seemingly limitless resources and the boundless sense that man could conquer all. We have the opportunity to learn from Native Hawaiians who lived with respect for nature, the land and the environment. Sustainability was a way of life. Although they were intimately connected to the land, their lifestyle was nearly destroyed by the expansion of the sugar cane industry. With that, the accrued knowledge of generations of experience stayed behind with the Kua'āina in rural settlements. With a new focus on sustainability, the opportunity is ripe to transform the downtown by incorporating the best of all worlds, ancient Hawaiian, pre and post industrial, for a truly sustainable future. This approach will only strengthen Hilo as it plans for the future.

### CHALLENGES

Today, Downtown Hilo's biggest challenge is stimulating the economy. Keeping youth in Hilo, addressing homelessness, and making the downtown appealing to a broad range of people are all impacted in some way by the current economy which merely compounds the burden of increasingly stringent federal guidelines for coastal communities. Investment has been all but halted by new code requirements and FIRM regulations that make the downtown area far from affordable.

*"Today's problems cannot be solved if we still think the way we thought when we created them"*

*Albert Einstein*

**Sustainability:  
More than just  
being "Green"**

*"Sustainable communities are cities and towns that prosper because people work together to produce a high quality of life that they want to sustain and constantly improve. They are communities that flourish because they build a mutually supportive, dynamic balance between social well-being, economic opportunity, and environmental quality."*





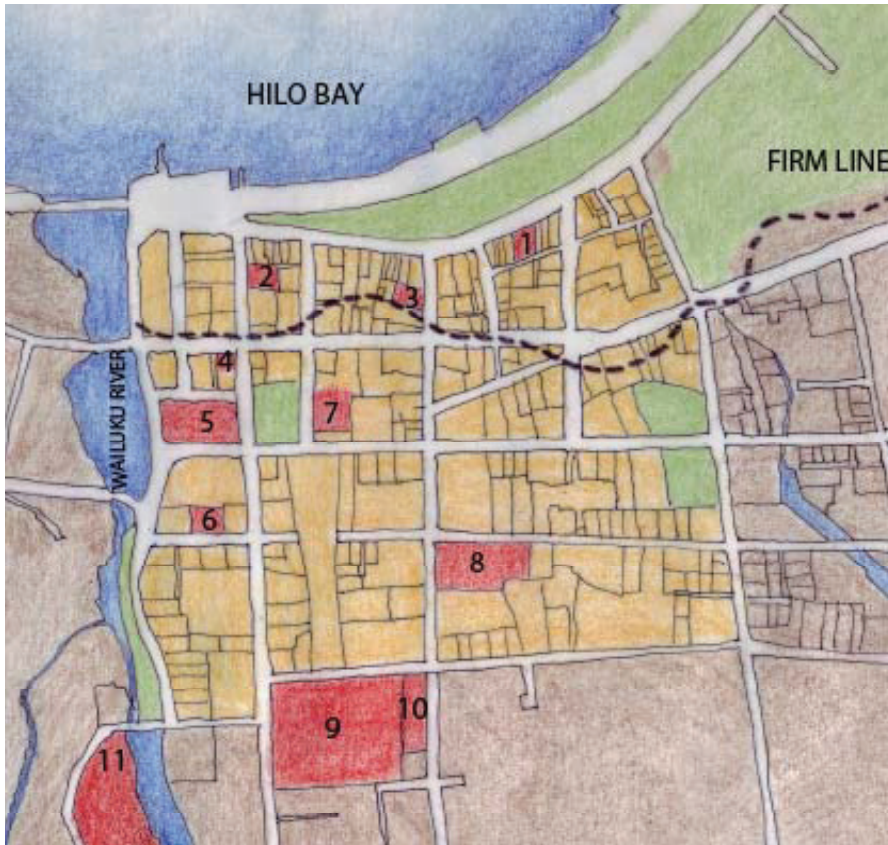
**Facing Future**

Facing backwards I see the past  
Our nation gained, our nation lost  
Our lands gone  
All traded for the promise of progress  
What would they say...  
What can we say?  
Facing future I see hope  
Hope that we will survive  
Hope that we will prosper  
Hope that once again we will reap the  
blessings of this magical  
land  
For without hope I cannot live  
Remember the past but do not dwell  
there  
Face the future where all our hopes  
stand

- Israel Kamakawiwo'ole

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## Registered State Historic Sites



### HISTORIC STRUCTURES

1. S. Hata Building
2. Volcano Block
3. Palace Theater
4. Hilo Masonic Lodge
5. US Post Office
6. Michael Victor House
7. District Courthouse (Currently East Hawai'i Cultural Center)
8. Hilo Christian Church
9. Hilo Union High School
10. Lyman House
11. Shipman House

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Hilo enjoys an intact historic downtown that still preserves many notable buildings from a variety of styles and construction eras. Within the downtown boundaries there are eight historic buildings listed on the National Historic Register and two additional properties located just adjacent to the town center. In addition, there remain many simple buildings from the turn of the century that contribute to the historic understanding of the downtown. These buildings are in varying states of repair and while some have been restored, others are in very poor condition.

### Passive Design in Response to Climate

Historic buildings in Hilo tell a story of how one can live in this exceptional place, with its unique climate, in a time when we used less energy and resources. Most of these buildings were constructed with tall first floors and large windows that let natural light deep into the buildings. Some buildings have ventilation grills in the place of transom windows to allow for natural air movement. The tall first story creates large volumes where convection currents helped mix the air and keep interiors cooler.

Canopies over the sidewalks provide shade and protection from rain. The canopies in Hilo are unusual since they extended the full depth of the sidewalks (a necessity where there is over 140 inches of rain a year).

The combination of canopies and storefronts creates an active and interesting pedestrian experience that supported retail and contributed to the economic vitality of downtown. These downtown structures are predominantly mixed use, with people living above the retail or workshops below. Only important civic and cultural buildings were not mixed use. While there were cars, many people walked or used sanpans to commute.

There are other built elements of this history that show a more sustainable approach to water management. Fish ponds and drainage/irrigation infrastructure were part of the traditional Hawaiian settlements. This stores water at all levels of the watershed and allows it to disperse and percolate into the aquifer over time. Even the early European settlement of Hilo with its small streets, and drainage ditches with natural plantings, and the integration of water gardens in some neighborhoods compare favorably to current practices of wide paved streets and subsurface stormwater drainage.

### Embodied Energy

Historic buildings represent embodied energy. This concept recognizes that the energy needed to take raw materials to create new buildings has already been expended. Reusing or repurposing buildings requires much less energy and resources than demolition and new construction. Building debris is also a major source



of the waste stream and preserving historic buildings reduces this large volume component of landfills. This is of particular importance for Hawai'i, with its current land fill challenges.

Farmers Markets are often associated with Historic Preservation and often recommended as part of Main Street Programs around the country. The Hilo Farmer's Market is very successful and unusual in that it is a private, rather than a public, venture. Downtown zoning ordinances should continue to support the Farmer's Market and integrate it within the form based codes.

The Sustainable City Market

Farmer's Markets play an important role in sustainable development by selling local agricultural products which reduces energy consumption tied to the importation of foods from other places. On a regional scale, open space and agricultural lands are more likely to be preserved and supported by a community that understands where its major food source lies. In turn, the health of the natural ecosystem of the region is healthier and continually renewed by family farms; in Hilo's case, uphill farmland also reduces stormwater runoff and flooding in the downtown. A local market also promotes the regional economy by supporting the local farmers. Offering unique agricultural based products such as jams and salad dressings at a downtown market creates exposure for small scale ventures to visitors to the island. Tasting something unique and delicious only embellishes one's experience.

**BUILDING CODES, REINVESTMENT AND REVITALIZATION**

Currently, the various codes at county, state and federal level are often confusing and contradictory in their requirements. This can make the renovation of downtown buildings quite challenging for the property owner and codes are seen as a major hurdle for reinvestment and revitalization. The codes include the Zoning code, building codes, Rule 6 Downtown Hilo Urban Design Rules and Chapter 27 Storm Water Management.

Zoning Ordinances

The zoning ordinances for Downtown Hilo (Division 2. CDH) are fairly simple, listing a wide variety of uses including mixed use, prescribed setbacks and a maximum building height of 120 feet. However, they don't address historic buildings and don't offer

effective means to maintain the historic character of Downtown Hilo.

Building Codes

The current building code is based on the 1991 Uniform Building Code (UBC). The County is in the process of adopting the 2006 International Building Code (IBC) and the future 2009 International Residential Code (IRC). This presents specific code compliance challenges to Hilo's historic downtown.

Often, structures are renovated in phases as funds become available for reinvestment. When renovations exceed 50% of the building's appraised value, the entire structure, not just the new work, needs to be brought into full compliance. The previous edition of the code set the clock at 50% of the value in a three year period. The current code has extended that time frame to 10 years. With the cost of construction in Hilo, this presents a major challenge to any property owner downtown.

The current required canopy setback of 30 inches from the street is another challenge to property owners in the downtown district. With the current infrastructure, this impractical requirement effectively reduces all protection from the rain essentially defeating the purpose of the canopy and creating slippery sidewalks. Aesthetically, this requirement will create a jigsaw appearance of canopies as individual property owners renovate their properties at different times.

Rule 6 Downtown Hilo Urban Design Rules

The Downtown Hilo Urban Design rules were part of the Hilo Redevelopment Plan and covered the northern half of the current CDH district, encouraging historic preservation and the creation of new buildings that were compatible with the historic buildings. When the Hilo Redevelopment Authority (HRA) was dissolved, the Planning Department assumed responsibility for enforcing Rule 6, but it has not been consistently enforced. This has reduced the protection of historic buildings. Overall, there was substantial community support of these design rules. The measures were more supportive in preserving the character of downtown such as keeping canopies the full depth of the sidewalks.

Chapter 27 Code

Chapter 27, the Storm Water Management Code, governs build-





ing in the velocity flood zone, which was based on previous tsunami inundations. The FIRM line sets the edge of the velocity zone. Its greatest impact is on the beachfront side of downtown, the most intact and economically viable section of historic buildings. The goal of FEMA, which develops the FIRM maps, is to protect the public from tsunamis and to reduce the burden for taxpayers from the costs of tsunami damage to buildings. The standard in the velocity zone for new construction and major renovation requires raising the first habitable floor up a story and leaving the ground floor open for the tsunami flood waters to pass through. As in the building code, major renovation is defined as work exceeding 50% of a structure's value.

This effectively puts the building owners in a dilemma. The major economic function of these buildings is ground floor retail. However, new construction is too expensive to be economically viable and major renovation would require raising the first floor. This leads to the current situation where most of the downtown is in a process of slow decay.

Island wide guidelines have been proposed that would move the FIRM line further inland with an additional 50 foot buffer. Affected buildings would also be subject to the aforementioned ten year time frame for renovation, rather than three. The stated reason for this change was to get improvements in the flood insurance rates for the County. The economic as well as environmental conditions vary tremendously between the Kona side of the island and the Hilo side. Island wide guidelines cover extreme variation in climate conditions, topography and economy. There will always be compromises in what they ultimately are trying to achieve since they can't address each particular condition. In the case of the 50 foot buffer zone, this clearly becomes a hardship for Downtown Hilo and presents a challenge despite its potential safety improvements and reduced insurance rates. There was a consensus developing during the workshop that Downtown Hilo should seek to have an exception to the new velocity zone rules because of the potential economic impacts and the negative impacts on the historic buildings.

The safety issues were discussed regarding the change. The previous FIRM line and the 3 year time frame do meet FEMA guidelines. In addition, George Curtis, a tsunami research specialist who developed the modeling and mapping of the tsunami

inundation zone, indicated that a safety margin had already been taken into account in setting the FIRM line, and felt that an additional 50 foot buffer did not have a scientific basis. It should be noted that the major tsunami hazard is from distant tsunamis (7% probability as opposed to a 2% probability for a local tsunami). The mitigation for continued use of these buildings would be tsunami education efforts (on which the County of Hawai'i has done major work).

The existing buildings in the velocity zone have survived inundations from previous tsunamis, including some of the wood framed buildings. While other buildings had previously shielded these structures and this does not imply survivability from future tsunamis, it does point out that some flexibility can be used when considering the bigger picture of other societal or cultural goals.

Interestingly, Chapter 27 does allow a variance to the velocity zone rules for historic buildings that were individually registered or were contributing buildings in a recognized historic district and this presents an opportunity to avoid raising the buildings. It should be noted that such districts have to follow Secretary of Interior Historic Preservation Guidelines.

### AN APPROACH TO CODES

A consensus was reached during the community workshops that Downtown Hilo should have its own codes with provisions for zoning, urban design, building, and storm water management. These new codes would all work together to preserve Downtown Hilo and promote the type of development and buildings citizens actually want. The zoning and urban design codes should become part of the form based code.

The building code changes can be handled in several different ways, depending on the situation.

The County can either adopt or allow the International Existing Building Code (IEBC) as an accepted alternate code. This allows several different code paths from prescriptive to performance based that provide flexibility when dealing with existing buildings.

If the code issues arising from the existing buildings downtown were found to be similar, a set of approved alternate



methods could be worked out by the Building Official and Fire Marshall. These could be available to property owners and design professionals in designated areas or where specific conditions are met.

The County may adopt revisions to the building code that allow restoration or rehabilitation of historic buildings without following all the requirements of the code. A similar strategy was used in the Oregon Structural Specialty Code. See: Oregon Specialty Code in Resources

For Chapter 27 Storm Water Management, the code already provides for exemptions in the case of historic buildings. The creation of a historic landmark district for downtown Hilo would not require modifications to the code.

The basis for the Downtown Hilo district prioritized the Downtown as a historic landmark district. Consideration was given to the option of a local designated district following locally developed guidelines or whether it should follow Secretary of the Interior Guidelines. There was some fear that the additional Federal rules for historic preservation would restrict property owner's development of their property. However, there are clear advantages to following Federal guidelines:

- It makes property owners eligible for the 25% Historic Preservation Tax Credit program.

- It allows contributing buildings in the Historic Landmark district to claim a variance for the FIRM line.

- If the chapter for historic buildings is adopted, having it tied into the State Historic Preservation Department provides an advocate for the historic building and gives the County Building Official a stronger basis for making the code decisions.

### Historic Preservation and Economic Development.

Historic preservation often is viewed as a "good thing to do", rather than an economic motor. However, there is strong evidence that historic preservation is also good business. Preservation of historic buildings and the creation of a historic landmark district can protect the identity and character of Hilo providing "branding" opportunities for the town and individual businesses.

The actual preservation work can also provide family wage jobs ranging from professional design services to the actual construction jobs. Studies have shown that historic preservation work leaves more money in the local communities than either road construction or new residential construction. See: Place Economics in Resources.

Economic stimulus financial incentives that have been used in other locations (in

addition to the Federal Tax credits) included low interest loans for facade improvements, and capping property taxes at the pre-renovation assessment for a period of time (15 years).

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND EDUCATION

The sustainable way to restore the existing historic buildings is to train and hire local builders to do the work. Historic preservation knowledge could be taught in all construction classes. Traditional construction skills can be taught by extending the existing construction skills classes at Hawai'i Community College to create an Associates degree of Historic Preservation. This program would provide a higher skill set that can be used for both restoration and new construction.

To provide real work experience the College could identify buildings in the community (low income housing, public projects) where students can learn skills and restore buildings whose property owners may not otherwise have the resources to do it.

As a result of this program the historic preservation knowledge base in the building community will enlarge. This helps preserve the fabric of old buildings which can often disappear if the builder doesn't know how to repair it. Another advantage of learning traditional building skills is that they can be done without the need for power tools.

The College can also develop continuing education classes for property owners who want to learn how to do the work themselves.

There have been efforts to inventory and tell the stories of the historic buildings downtown and this effort should be encouraged to continue. These local resources include Bob Steamy Chow, Kaholo Daguman, Ian Bernie, local architects, and others. These efforts and knowledge help tie people the historic buildings and the downtown and gives the community the knowledge to be advocates and help protect it.

The youth of Hilo should also be taught about architecture and the historic buildings in their community. There are good examples of "Architecture in the Schools" that can be adopted that teaches elementary students the fundamentals of architecture and ties into the local buildings. The local AIA and architects as well as other community members could be a resource for this program. This helps preserve the history and historic buildings of Downtown Hilo, but also raises the level of knowledge and expectations on new buildings. (See AIA Youth Programs in Resources)

# Tsunami Mitigation and Resiliency

“Resiliency means accepting that this is going to happen at some point in the future, and planning for it today.”



## TSUNAMI MITIGATION AND RESILIENCY

Tsunamis have had a profound effect on the shape of Hilo. The existing waterfront park was created following the destruction of tsunamis in 1946 and 1960 and these events killed more people in Hawai'i than all other natural disasters combined. As the waterfront continues to be developed, all designs need to include tsunami mitigation measures such as the creation of low walls and the planting of appropriate trees and vegetation that will help dissipate the force of the tsunami. These type of features were seen to be effective and were noted by the engineering damage survey teams looking at the damage caused by the Sumatra tsunami.

FEMA has developed new guidelines for Tsunami Evacuation Structures that may be useful for protection of waterfront users in the case of a locally generated tsunami. These structures will also be included in the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program so that Federal funding can become available for communities considering such measures. (See FEMA in Resources)

It should be noted that the “market” building type, with open space below and office or living spaces above, is a viable model for buildings in the velocity zone. With further structural upgrades, they also make an ideal choice for tsunami evacuation building designation in the case of locally generated tsunamis.

While there are compelling reasons to protect the existing historic buildings in the tsunami inundation zone, it should be recognized that even though many of these buildings have survived previous tsunamis they may not survive a future tsunami. If Hilo adopts the strategy to create a special historic landmark district to protect these structures, it behooves all residents to plan ahead and consider how the downtown will work without these buildings. A consensus that is reflective of community values needs to be thoughtfully developed now. AIA's work with communities in the aftermath of a disaster shows how difficult it is to plan reflectively in a crisis; un-necessary delays are incurred and regulations are eschewed when rapid recovery is critical. Hilo already has an excellent start on multi-hazard mitigation. A strategic plan incorporating future relocation of critical edifices and functions should be considered in a “form based code” that recognizes that the increasing forces of nature will continue to alter the shape of Hilo and its waterfront properties despite any

FEMA regulated mitigation measures.

**Recommendation 1:** The SDAT team believes there is not sufficient risk to warrant adding a 50 foot buffer to the FIRM line. However, as a matter of public policy, preservation resources and new development should be focused above the FIRM line, wherever it may be set. This is not to say development or reinvestment under the line should not occur, but that the policies concerning the downtown district and recommendations made in this report should be calibrated to prefer development above the line to development below it.

**Recommendation 2:** As a long range strategy, the SDAT also recommends establishing an open space fund for community preservation. Set up like a land bank, the fund would support the acquisition of at-risk parcels for conversion to playing fields and parks. For Hilo, we would recommend a strategy for acquisition of parcels on blocks between Kamehameha and Keawe. Over time, these at risk parcels could be purchased at market rate to allow current owners to reinvest elsewhere in Hilo, instead of developing them. This fund could also be used to relocate historic properties to safer parcels. We recommend setting up the Land Bank as a county wide program. Revenue would be generated through a 1-2% property transfer tax. Management of these funds would be overseen by the county.

Land Banks have proven quite successful in island communities such as Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, allowing the preservation of open space on these over developed islands. For the Island of Hawai'i funds can be used for the gradual acquisition of land in the inundation zone.





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# The Brand of Hilo



## THE BRAND OF DOWNTOWN HILO

Everyone Wants to Keep Hilo, Hilo.

What does this mean?

- People who are fortunate to live in places that are special—by reason of geography, culture or both—echo such sentiments. The problem is, breaking down this emotional connection to a place into its constituent parts. It is like using words to define the particular smell and tactile sensations of a very special flower. Regardless of the language, words are poor substitutes. And yet, it is important for communities to attempt to codify why they love their place—be it countryside or a town—in order to have a dialogue about nurturing and protecting the place for the future generations.

Many in Hilo did identify a number of things that they thought were characteristics of Downtown Hilo that were notable. They included:

- For residents, and not for tourists

In this sense Hilo—both the downtown and the surrounding area— can be defined as what it is not. That is, it is not focused upon overt commercialization, but upon the ordinary needs of those who are long time residents or those who have chosen to make Hilo their home.

- Hilo is the last of the “Old Hawai’i” towns.

Because Hilo is the place where “real” Hawaiians live, the architecture of the downtown reflects a time when plantation life was the sustaining economic model. Its modest architecture, punctuated by the few buildings of institutional quality, reflects a casual and unhurried manner of living. (NOTE: we use the term “real” Hawaiians very advisedly, with full recognition that Downtown Hilo is not the prime dwelling place of many Native Hawaiians.)

- A living place, for many people and many activities.

In many ways, Downtown Hilo retains its status as the center of many activities central to the life of Hilo residents. As a result, it stands in stark contrast to the commercial strips on the outskirts. Downtown Hilo is not about the chain store, but the local merchant.

- History—in place and memory—and Nature is all around.

Many of the defining moments in the life of both Hawai’i—the monarchy, the state and the county—occurred within the walking area of Downtown Hilo. Some of the moments in time are hidden from view, but few have disappeared from memory or from the stories of the place. The same can be said for nature, in the rhythms of the rainfall, and the lush landscape it delivers, and to the fire of the volcanoes. No place on earth has the combination of history and nature such as Hilo.

Many of you do not want to change.....anything.

This is a common reaction among people—let’s call them the Traditionalists—who are either fiercely protective of history and its artifacts or the natural areas where history was written. Others are less concerned about the march of time, and simply want to cling to those places, things and rhythms of life that they find useful or comforting.

But others are very much into Change. They understand and appreciate the emotional connections of those who value history and culture. And they acknowledge that existing patterns of commerce and living are useful things. And yet, they cast themselves very much in the mold of a Progressive, as in “Progress must march on.” They exist in every community. Their view of the world is grounded in the belief that if you do not accept the “new” things that the world wants to bring to you—whether it be new ways of building, new commercial enterprises and the formats they demand, or the radical changes in the landscape and infrastructure—then you cannot accommodate all of this progress.

Both the Traditionalist and the Progressive are right. If you do not cling to the lessons and stories of history and of your ancestors you will not have an understanding of where you need to go in the future—either as an individual or as a community. On the other hand, if you do not open your eyes to both the opportunities and the challenges of the modern world, you—the individual and the community—risk losing much of that which you cherish.



Ho'omoe Wai Kāhi Ke Kāo'ō

(Let's all travel together like water flowing in one direction.)

The challenge to Hilo, as the ancient Hawaiian proverb illustrates, is to find the right balance between these two positions, and to chart a course to fulfill it. The reality, of course, is that you can either get the change you plan for, or the change others give you. Fortunately, there are a number of techniques and tools you can use to travel together into a sustainable future.

### A Few Guiding Suggestions

#### Build Hilo into a Great Brand

Special places abound the world over. Many of these are islands, as is Hawai'i. And yet, all of them are so different and all are revered the world over for their unique combinations of geography and culture. Martha's Vineyard, off of the Massachusetts coast is internationally famous, as is St. Georges in Bermuda. Both are incredibly desirable places to both live and to visit, and yet they are completely different because of the bargains the people who settled there made with the natural environment in order to live. You can see the differences in the:

- texture of the buildings, and the materials from which they were built;
- scale and the height of the buildings created;
- “special” moments—particular views to the horizon, or places for gathering together as a couple or an entire community;
- family of architectural styles, often selected over centuries, that seem to comfortably blend together like the ingredients within a fine soup; and
- culture and attitude, often brought from different places and spanning generations, shapes the life of the inhabitants.

Tourists do indeed seek these places out, and locals are fiercely protective of their way of life. In fact, it is because the local populations live life on their (and nature's) terms that people seek them out. These places are genuine, one of a kind, responses that cannot be duplicated by real estate developers somewhere else, or even by Disney.

These unique places are Brands. Some people recoil from this term, thinking that crass commercialization is just around the corner. Is Hilo like Nike, Apple or Ford? Yes, it is. The strong, successful companies of our time that seek to sell us the things of everyday life seek desperately to make emotional connections with you so that they can earn you trust, your respect, your loyalty. In other words, they want to be seen as unique and special in a very genuine way that cannot be copied. Sounds like Hilo, doesn't it?

Hilo has all the makings of being one of the world's great Place Brands. Becoming



*When asked to describe Hilo, many have commented, “one word says it all, Sampans” The intimate, no frills, economical “Hilo scale” urban transportation!*

a great Place Brand may not only bring you increased economic success, it may also be a key ingredient to keeping Hilo, Hilo.

In maintaining and building this Place Brand for Hilo, there are a few principles to consider:

- First principle: A healthy downtown is like a healthy ecosystem

Consider a fish tank. If you have kept one—a beautiful one—you know how much joy can be derived from observing the interplay of the various creatures and plants that comprise it. You also know how much work is involved in getting your complex, underwater world to that point and in keeping it that way. It does you no good to place a fish in the tank that will eat the other fish: you will then only have one fish. The environment also suffers if you allow fish and plants to get sick or die. A fish tank, of course, is a poor substitute for a healthy reef, but you get the point.

If the “ecosystem” of Downtown Hilo is to thrive and prosper, many things must be encouraged and tended to. There must be many reasons for people to be there—to visit, shop, live or work. They must feel welcomed, safe and comfortable.

Tending to the health and vitality of the urban ecosystem of Downtown Hilo is arguably the first and most important act of sustainability that this region should undertake. However, it is only the first act.

- Second principle: Downtowns live (or die) as a result of the health of its retail & restaurants.

This is a very simple and important point: if retail is not thriving and healthy, all of the other uses die, are diminished in value, or simply fail to materialize in the first place. This point is made abundantly clear in the Urban Land Institute's



## The Brand of Hilo



10 Principles for Developing Town Centers. (See Urban Land Institute in Resources)

- Third principle: Strong local retail is inherently more sustainable than chain stores.

It is true that strong local merchants can provide a higher level of identity to a downtown. If they are indeed in tune with their local customer, they may not pull out of downtown as chain stores may. But, this is often easier said than done. The biggest nemesis of the local merchant can be the large discount department stores. All over small town America, people profess their hatred of these discount department stores. We hate them, and yet we allow them to flourish. Why? Because they offer the cheapest prices, they are open long hours (often 24 hours, seven days per week), they have unbelievable merchandise selection, and they will take anything back, no questions asked.

If the local merchant is to compete effectively with the chains, they have to adopt different strategies based upon emotional connections with their local customers. They have to come across as being experts, as people you can trust, and in projecting pride in their operation. This means that your storefront has to sell your business (and not promote the local boxing match, or the bake sale at the local school, and the fifteen other things that clutter many of Hilo's storefronts), and be clean and presentable. This is true whether you are selling expensive items or hot dogs. Consider the analogy of the ecosystem: if too many merchants do not follow these rules, the other merchants who do may lose business, become discouraged, and leave.

This principle also relates to the sidewalks and street system, or what we refer to as the public realm. (The elements of a strong public realm are discussed elsewhere in this report.)

- Fourth principle: Strong local brands can be sold to the world

Special places in the world occupy unique niches in the mind of the world-conscious traveler—and, as importantly, in the minds of those who wish to travel, but are unable to do so. For many, these special places, such as the Hawaiian Islands, exist as aspirational goals for a future peak experience, and even a better life. Reaching out to such places, to acquire their products, is akin to acquiring talismans. They maintain hope—

for those who have not visited that they may at some point in their lives, and secure the promise for those that have that they will, someday, return.

Hawai'i, more than any other destination, represents the concept of Paradise in the mind of the ordinary citizen of the World. Even though there are many places within the South Pacific, the Caribbean and the Mediterranean that can hold their own in an analytic contest for the title of Paradise, Hawai'i holds this distinction. Why is this true? Because the organ of popular culture, from the 1930's to today, make it so. You can extend "thanks" for this to Elvis—he made three movies in the state, as well as the first world-released satellite concert. There have been countless other movies and television shows that have also brought Paradise—Hawaiian style—into homes around the world.

The effect of this "virtual tourism" can deliver economic benefit. In fact, you have proof of the concept in Hilo. The wonderful store of Sig Zane is a testament to the ability of a powerful, place-based brand to have both a wonderful store and a robust Internet business. But, success in this arena does not have to be limited to couture island wear. Sharks Coffee is another great example, with its Kona coffee beans and cacao. Both Sig Zane and Sharks have real stories grounded in the place of Hilo, and Hawai'i. (There may be others that we missed in our limited visit.)

The message here is that the environment that "is" Hilo—its merchants and the place they inhabit—can create sustaining economic value. Income from the Internet is "found income" that goes straight to the bottom line, helps local merchants compete with chains, and weather economic storms. If Hilo can work together in this area, and preserve and enhance its history and natural environment (as discussed elsewhere in this report), it can become known globally as the "True Hawai'i", The Place Where Paradise is Lived Everyday.

### Recommendations

Pulling all of these elements together, within an environment that is tailored to your needs, and not directly for the tourist, will create the most desirable of destinations for the discriminating tourist. And as importantly, this spirit of Paradise is something, again, that is aspirational. There will be those who may not visit,



or may have visited and wish to, once again, “touch” in a very special way, products from Hilo merchants.

As pointed out above, Hilo has some fine merchants that are tending to both the real and virtual merchandising channels. Others are not so developed. Others still could use assistance in the fundamentals of merchandising.

It is also fundamental that the prime website for Downtown Hilo be one that delivers the brand message of the True Hawai’i, The Place Where Paradise is Lived Everyday in unambiguous terms. This message must be honed and vetted, and a web portal created that allows potential visitors to find places to stay, and places to visit that reflect this spirit.

Just as communities have to be very conscious of protecting culture and building a unique economic model, they have to have in place tools and techniques to protect the defining buildings, streets and parks by which people also experience the brand. However, it is equally important to guide future development in such a manner that the character of Hilo—and upon which the Hilo brand depends—is extended into the future.

Most everyone loves the quirky, comfortable and casual feel of Hilo. Some would not have a tenant change, or a building removed. Truth is that many chain retail formats have and will continue to express an interest in locating in Downtown Hilo. This is not, altogether, a bad thing, and in fact can add value to the local merchant.

What is detrimental is the tendency of chain operations to seek to force their suburban formats into the fabric of a town. In most places the argument goes that it is “OK” to allow this chain or that chain to come in with their suburban store, surrounded with parking lots and drive thrus, and that the town can absorb this one indiscretion. The problem is that this practice usually continues to the point that the town itself disappears into a sea of mediocrity and pavement.

It is not only the suburban formats that do the damage, but also the misdirected modifications to existing buildings, or inappropriate new buildings that sit out of scale or out of style with their neighbors despite being perfectly legal.

**Recommendation 1:** Protect history, guide development and support your brand with a form based zoning code.

Downtown Hilo has a big issue to confront: will you consciously protect your environment, or allow entropy to take its course? Here are the principles that drive this decision:

- First principle: That which you do not legally protect, you will likely lose AND
- Second principle: That which you do not legally define as future development, you will likely not get.

An island-wide form based code is perhaps the one most important event that can occur to establish an achievable agenda for sustainability. Zoning laws and ordinances are the primary control mechanisms used by towns to determine what can and cannot be built. Most of the codes in use today date from the 1950’s, and are noted for their emphasis upon separating various uses from one another—housing, retail, office and manufacturing along with others that make up the built environment. Most ordinances over the years have had many changes added and modifications made to them, often resulting in contradictory and incomplete information that frustrates and baffles developers, ordinary citizens and code officials alike.

More importantly, such use-based or Euclidean codes (named after a famous court case in the early 20th century) in many cases do not support the pattern of development that typifies our historical downtowns such as Hilo. Such codes very often allow a land development pattern and building configurations that are completely out of character with the old town, and with sustainable urbanism.

Fortunately, a new type of zoning code has been developed that supports urban patterns of development, that is friendly to historical precedents in building form and type, and that fosters a sustainable pattern of development. These codes are known as Form Based Codes.

Form based codes differs principally from Euclidean codes in the following manner:

- Form based codes are focused upon a vision (at both the macro—or “big picture”—scale and at the level of specific building detail) that a community has developed for itself. As a result, form based codes are very specific to the place in





# Form Based Codes

which they are to be used. They recognize both historical precedent in building and land development, as well as community goals regarding the intensity of development.

- Form based codes are based upon model codes that are essentially “freeware” and they must be tailored, or “calibrated”, to the specific conditions and aspirations of a community. One cannot merely get a form based code from somewhere else and effectively use it in Hilo without careful and thoughtful calibration.
- Form based codes are inclusive. They not only consider individual buildings on individual lots, they also address how public space is considered, including road frontages, sidewalks, streets and parks. To use an old cliché, form based codes are more concerned with regulating the whole, than merely a bunch of seemingly unrelated parts.

Form based codes have matured, and are being used all across the US for villages smaller than Downtown Hilo, to cities the size of Miami. Form Based Codes: A Guide for Planners, Urban Designers, Municipalities, and Developers, is a fantastic resource on this emerging practice. The authors assert that such codes:

“.....have the potential to change human habitat substantially by providing communities with a tool that can help reinforce their local character and culture; revitalize and encourage investment in urban, historic neighborhoods and town centers; and promote the creation of compact, walkable neighborhoods.”

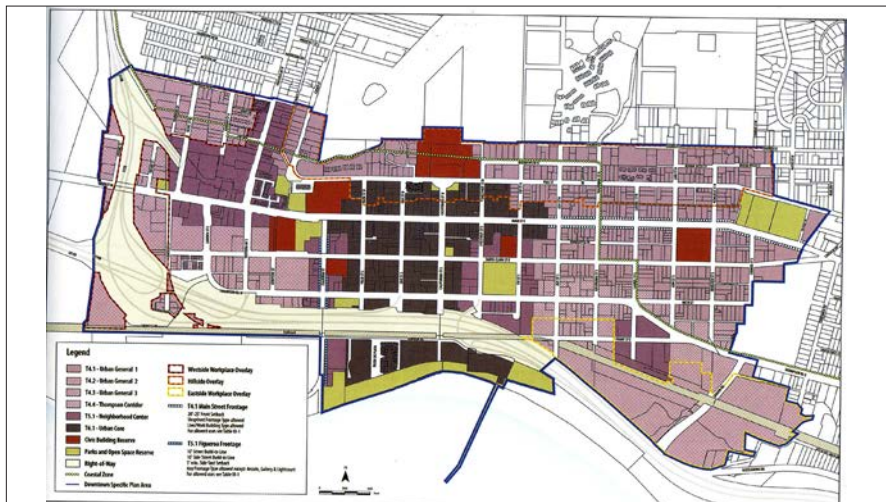
There are a number of good resources for form based codes, including the book quoted above. The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) is a clearinghouse

for information and for firms that have the expertise to provide the level of calibration many cities require. See Resources for website link.

### Recommendation 2: Create a Business Improvement District

To accomplish these and related needs we recommend that Downtown Hilo establish a Business Improvement District, or BID. BIDs are wonderful tools for bringing together merchants, property owners and local government to address such issues. BIDs are supported through modest property taxes that are usually additional to the existing ad valorem taxes, and the revenue is dedicated to the area in which they are raised. The BID can be set up as a quasi-public authority or as a non-profit with a Board of Directors. It can also allocate funds to be used for maintaining the public space that affects all merchants, or a competitive grant process can be established to dedicate the money to the most worthy projects being pursued by individual business owners.

One of the best resources for information regarding BIDs can be obtained through the International Downtown Association (IDA). This will be discussed in greater detail below. See Resources for website link.



Framework Plan Downtown Benicia, CA

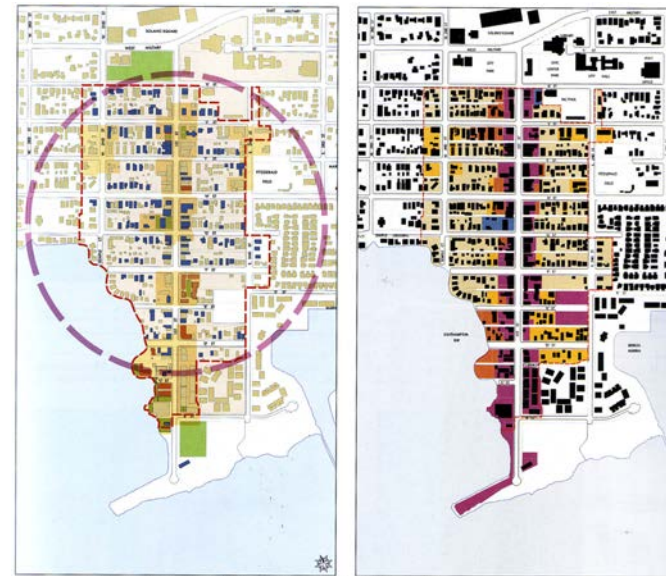


Fig. C.3 Downtown Benicia Illustrative Framework Plan (left) and Regulating Plan (right)



Regulating Plan Downtown Ventura, CA



**Recommendation 3:** In conjunction with the calibrating adoption of the form based code, conduct an urban design study to create a 3-dimension regulating plan.

Much was said about the current and indiscriminate height limit of 120 feet within the general area of Downtown Hilo. The form based process that we propose would consider height anew, and determine the proper height in specific areas.

All form based codes have as a companion tool a plan called a Regulating Plan. Regulating plans are quite specific in delineating the application of provisions of the code based upon specific local conditions, and expressed opportunities that the town wishes to encourage or control. Typically, these plans are expressed in 2-dimensions. In the case of Downtown Hilo, we recommend that this plan include a 3-dimensional component in order to accomplish three specific objectives:

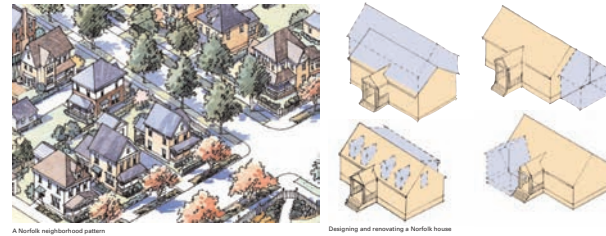
- a) To protect views to both Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea from specific geographic points that have historical value or are frequented and/or enjoyed by the public;
- b) To protect views to Hilo Bay from specific geographic points that have historical value or that are frequented and/or enjoyed by the public; and
- c) To recommend locations where architecturally specific elements of some height can be established for economic value and as future public icons that actually have the power to add to, rather than detract from, the experience of Hilo within the town and as viewed from afar.

**Recommendation 4:** Facilitate neighborhood infill through the provision of pattern books.

Downtown Hilo is surrounded by both underdeveloped blocks that contain commercial and residential elements, as well as residential neighborhoods that have infill potential. Many of these neighborhoods contain residential types and individual structures of appropriate and even remarkable architecture. Other structures are not so remarkable.

The potential to remake these neighborhoods into denser, walkable neighborhoods connected to Downtown Hilo, and therefore in support of our “ecosystem”, is very real. The problem in realizing this opportunity is one of vision and of example.

A Pattern Book for Norfolk Neighborhoods



A Norfolk neighborhood pattern

Designing and renovating a Norfolk house

How To Use the Norfolk Pattern Book

The following step-by-step procedure describes how to use the Pattern Book for homeowners who are interested in renovating or adding on to their house and for individuals who are interested in constructing a new house.

**STEP 1: Identify Your Neighborhood**  
Whether you own an existing house or are building a new house, refer to the Neighborhood Patterns section of the Pattern Book (pages B-4 through B-13) and review the three eras of neighborhood building described.

If you already own a house, select the era which your neighborhood most closely resembles. Read about the individual components—such as the typical front yard depth, streetcar character, house spacing, landscape treatments (both public and private)—that define your neighborhood.

If you are searching for a lot on which to build your new house, the Pattern Book can also be helpful. The Neighborhood Patterns section provides an overview of the unique characteristics of each era of neighborhood building and a listing of many Norfolk neighborhoods that fall within each era. This introduction can direct you to the neighborhoods that have characteristics that interest you. If you are building a new house, refer to Step 4. Otherwise, continue to Step 2.

**STEP 2: Identify the Architectural Style of Your House**  
Once you've familiarized yourself with the era of your neighborhood, identify the architectural style that most closely resembles your house.

The Overview in the beginning of the Architectural Patterns section (pages C-14 and C-15) describes in visual form the predominant architectural styles found in Norfolk. The Table of Roof Profiles on page C-18 in the Renovations section might also be helpful in identifying the style of your house.

If your house does not have an identifiable style or is a mix of two styles, select one for that would work best with its massing and height.

**STEP 3: For Additions & Renovations**  
For information on appropriate means of modifying your house (whether historic or post-war) refer to the Renovations section (pages C-18 and C-19) and the Additions section (pages C-20 through C-22). These sections describe strategies for adding on extra rooms or garages as well as changing or replacing exterior components such as windows, doors and materials. The Transformations section (pages C-23 through C-25) explains how to achieve an architectural style for your house through both renovations and additions.

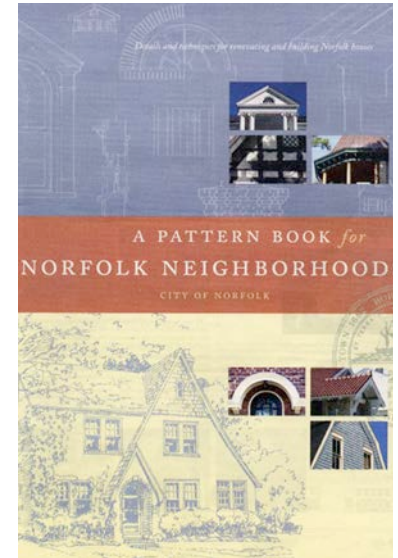
For ways of placing your house on a lot, refer to the typical house lot drawing which is shown for each era of neighborhood in the Neighborhood Patterns section. The diagram describes the typical “bones” of a house lot, such as front yard, front facade, side yard, and private zone, all of which vary depending on the era. The accompanying text describes appropriate placement of the house on the lot. Also review the Garages & Other Ancillary Structures section (C-26 and C-27) which explains how to locate your garage and ancillary structures on your lot.

**STEP 5: Review the Architectural Style Sections**  
Six architectural styles found in Norfolk are documented in the Pattern Book: Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, European Romantic, Arts & Crafts, Victorian, and Coastal Cottage.

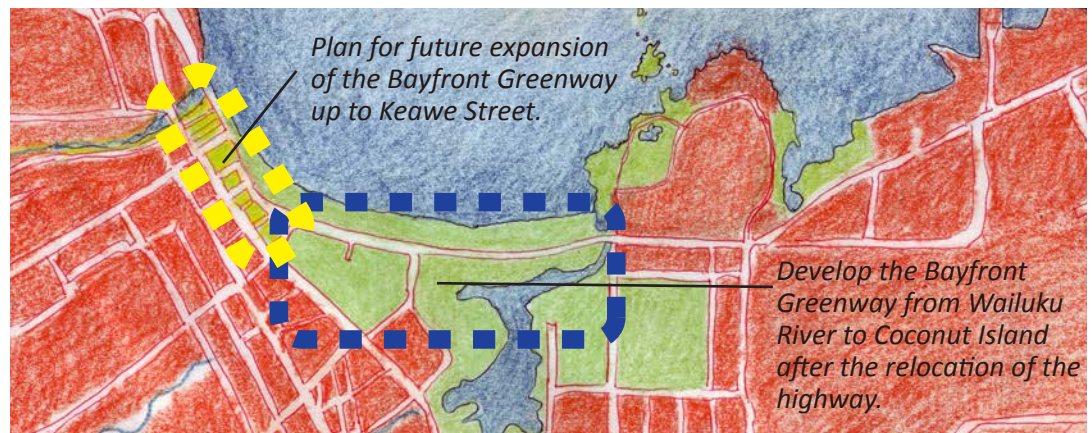
**STEP 4: For New Construction**  
If you are planning on constructing a new house, refer to the Building a Norfolk House section (pages C-16 and C-17) which outlines the step-by-step process of composing a Norfolk House and relates the individual elements, such as windows, doors and porches, to the architectural styles (described in Step 5).



Assembling the elements of a Norfolk house



*Pattern Books can include specifics about building massing, style, heights evident in these examples above produced by Urban Design Associates for Norfolk, VA. The examples below from Ventura, and Benecia, CA, provide design guidelines on a block by block basis.*



## Form Based Codes



The City of Norfolk, Virginia had a similar opportunity a few years ago. In response, they conducted an inventory of certain neighborhoods, noting their potential for infill, the type of housing currently in place, and documenting the best of the housing types, styles and model in place. Through the work of the firm of Urban Design Associates, they prepared a wonderful book—a Pattern Book—of a variety of housing designs that someone wishing to buy a lot and build could utilize. All of the work included within the Pattern Book is based upon a form based code.



Utilizing this process, Hilo can both encourage the infill of these lots, and also insure that “the change” Hilo gets in these neighborhoods is indeed “the change” one desires. See Resources for information about this effort.

### **Recommendation 5:** Relocate the Bay Front Highway

Currently, Downtown Hilo is separated from the Bay by 6 lanes of traffic and a chain-link fence. This is an unacceptable barrier between the downtown and its most valuable asset. Additionally, the highway routinely floods. This combination of aesthetic and economic reasons should be enough to convince anyone of the need to move the highway. The State Department of Transportation has developed a series of alternatives and this would seem to be a perfect opportunity for federal stimulus funds.



### **Recommendation 6:** Conceive, Promote and Manage Downtown Hilo as a Collection of Districts

Great urbanism is full of pleasant surprises. Whether it is a town or a city, the joy in navigating and discovering an urban place can be found in the complexity of what is offered and in the manner in which the place reveals itself, and all within a relatively small area. There is nothing like walking down a small, compact alley or street, and popping out into a park or plaza. Or turning the corner from a shopping street to find a series of cafes. Or wandering into a quiet residential lane that is just off of a bustling market area.

Downtown Hilo is, by its very nature, a place of different character and architecture, and various relationships with natural settings and infrastructure development. This is an inherent strength that can be enhanced through specific urban design initiatives expressed within the Hilo form based code;



used to frame specific development initiatives—or catalytic projects; and to support specific public sector initiatives. We perceive four logical districts at this time:

### *The Market District*

The Hilo Farmer’s Market is a rare gem among markets, and one that towns across the US would love to have. Supporting the ultimate evolution of this enterprise should be a top priority for Hilo. Its development should potentially be viewed as a public-private enterprise, one where municipal parking along with mixed use rental housing is provided as well. Due to the nature of the market, the street details and conditions will differ from those of other districts. Properly executed, one can expect a variety of companion uses to develop in this area that will feed off of the energy of the market.

### *Restaurant Row*

We use this term despite the fact that few within the stakeholder group did so, simply because those within the general public did. We do so to illustrate the point that oftentimes consumers adopt their own names for places based upon their genuine experiences of place. There is wisdom here that can be used.

Clearly, there is more along this strip of Kamehameha Avenue than restaurants, even though they do predominate. It is likely that this trend may continue, and in fact should be encouraged. Just as the Market District will have unique needs and identifying characteristics, so too will this area. It is an ideal location to have the sidewalks expanded (there is plenty of room) to accommodate café seating, and the use of folding French doors would allow nature and the restaurant to become one as, with interior seating blends into the sidewalk. Special facade lighting that enhances mood while not introducing glare would tailor this environment for a specific retail mission.

### *The Heart of Hilo*

Every downtown should have a place that is acclaimed by the public as the towns “living room”. This is the public space where people where can gather as citizens, not necessarily as consumers. Ideally, the place will have achieved this status over time, and have both historical and cultural value. Even though the public space—the beach, the square, the green and, in this



case, the Mo’oheau County Park— is neutral, the space is ideally surrounded with a host of a very specific uses. In addition to retail and restaurants, this is the district where notable governmental and institutional uses will be placed, as well as both housing and office uses on the upper levels. All citizens should feel that they are welcomed here, that this is the place where community “Aloha” can be found.

*Historic District*

One can see the tenants that are currently in this area as the seeds of what can become the “anchor” at the opposite end of Restaurant Row from the Market District. The Lyman museum, the Pacific Tsunami Museum, the Palace Theatre, East Hawai’i Cultural Center, and the Armory all have potential to be utilized in this manner and designating these few blocks as an Arts District will impact future development decisions, potentially encouraging other quirky restaurants and retailers. Development within this area, in conjunction with sensitive treatment of the natural edge, can deliver a more sensitive neighbor to the Wailuku River.

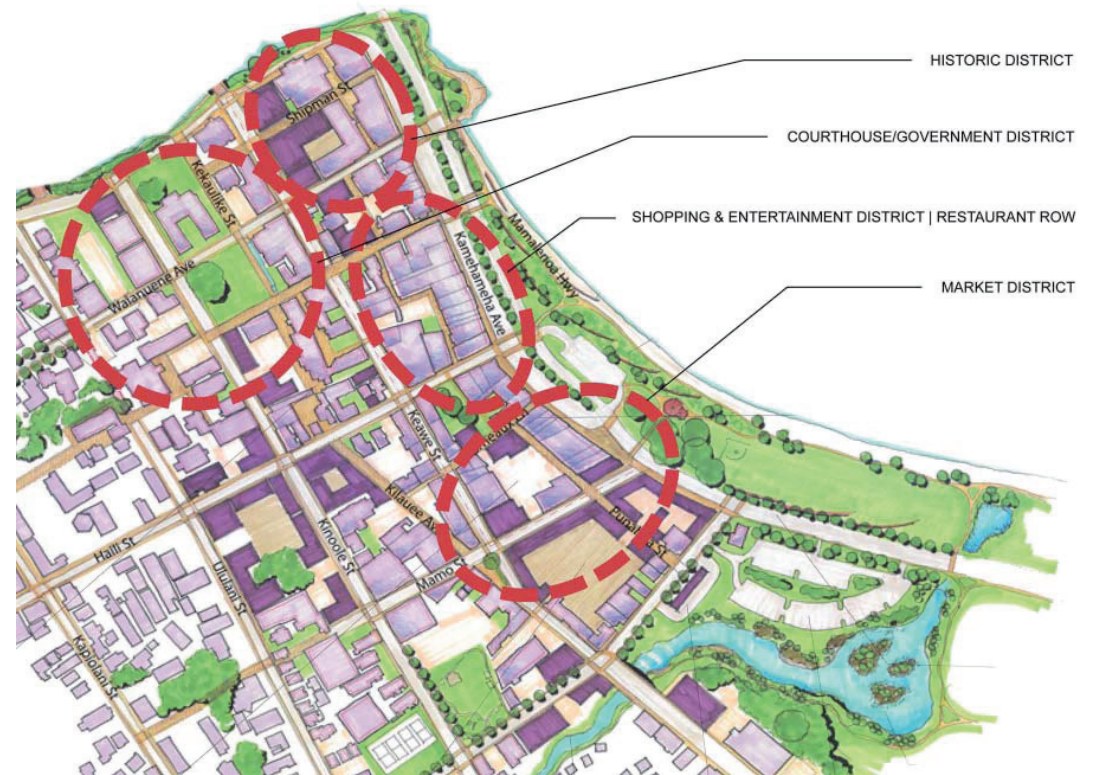
Guiding the Future for Sustainability

William McDonough, FAIA, arguably one of the world’s leaders in sustainable design asserts: “Design is the first sign of human intention”.

With this in mind, it is useful as Hilo embarks upon this process to recognize that the change embodied within the recommendations here and elsewhere in this report will not occur quickly or without some controversy. However, many can have an impact beyond Downtown Hilo, for the good of all citizens on the island of Hawai’i. Alternatively, many of these recommendations should be applied outside of Downtown Hilo in order to secure the future value and sustainability of Downtown Hilo.

First principle: Sustainability is a process based upon anticipatory design.

Anticipatory design is essentially a belief and a commitment to the possible, and an acceptance that getting to a better place is a process. Many of the recommendations will take some time to implement and will ultimately be implemented only if the community sets in motion initiatives that will deliver an ultimate



*Five and ten minute walking radius based on the quarter mile and half mile measure. Downtown Hilo is fully accessible and within comfortable walking distance from any point.*





**“The greenest car is the one that is not needed for every trip to get from one place to another. Well planned compact development that reduces auto dependency is as critical to protecting the environment as cars that use less fuel.” Richard Rosean  
CEO Urban Land Institute**



Santa Monica, CA Pedestrian Zone

result.

Second principle: Sustainable development and transit go hand in hand. Modern society may, indeed, see the day when automobiles are fully powered by renewable sources. However, cars powered in such a manner are not, in and of itself, prima facie evidence of a sustainable society. In fact, some would argue that the end result of society powered by affordable renewable sources may even increase Western society sprawl tendencies.

On the other hand, it is a clear and accepted principle of urban design that fixed-route transit (preferably rail, but also bus rapid transit, or BRT) directly leads to dense, mixed-use development patterns. By extension this dynamic also tends to save the countryside, preserving future farmland that will be necessary to deliver a sustainable society.

An interesting point was made during the tour of the island’s recycling center: “You cannot take the garbage away. On an island, there is no away.” This same principle should be embraced regarding the direction of development upon the entire Island of Hawai’i. On the mainland, many progressive communities who seek to implement form based or other codes that control development quality are threatened by developers who attest that users—such as fast food establishments, retailers, office buildings—will simply move to a jurisdiction that allows them to do what they want to do. On Hawai’i, there is only one county. You have the potential to implement an island-wide code that controls development to achieve the type of sustainable place that you want to achieve. On Hawai’i, there would be no adjacent jurisdiction where they could locate.

## URBAN DESIGN

As you begin to develop your code consider the following:

Downtown Hilo is a Destination

Restoring Downtown Hilo to its historic role as a major economic engine on the islands must start with the value that the downtown is a place to “go to” and not “pass through.” It is exceptional in comparison to the other retail options on the island; a place that revives all our senses; a place where life slows down and allows a Community to thrive.

Therefore, connections to Downtown Hilo must flow into the area not rush by. Slow traffic is safe, good for business and uses less energy. Slow traffic also allows for many modes of travel – on foot, in strollers, wheelchairs, bicycles. This slow pace would be invaluable to allowing the natural evolution and growth of Downtown Hilo.

## Height and Density

New development must “fill-in-the-gaps.” This involves not only redeveloping parking lots but also building vertically, such that the visual environment appears more cohesive and the use of downtown land and infrastructure is maximized. In developing its own identity, Downtown Hilo must stay away from “importing” standards from other environments, particularly for its height and bulk. Downtown Hilo has the opportunity to fortify the environment in “Old Hilo.” New buildings should respect and reflect the height and quality of the current buildings. They must also be sensitive to their impact on the pedestrian environment and quality of the street, such that streets don’t become “canyons” with excessively tall buildings on either side that shade the street the whole day. Beyond Old Hilo, the height limits could be raised, with the appropriate building setbacks or build-to-lines in place. While the height limits should be responsive to market economics, they could also be set so as to not overwhelm the natural environment and tower over the mature trees in the landscape (3-4 stories?). The limit does not have to be uniform throughout Downtown Hilo, but should be calibrated to maintain viewsheds of Hilo Bay and the volcano.

## Celebrate Downtown Gateways

Currently, the downtown entries are modest. Gateways present an exciting opportunity to celebrate local art and traditions while also announcing the presence of Downtown Hilo. The three bridges (Pu’ueo and others) on the western edge of downtown present natural gateways into downtown. The appropriate renovation of these bridges, including paint, lights and signage could transform these structures into obvious entryways into downtown. Along the eastern and southern sides of downtown, a regional gateway on the waterfront could be complimented with more subtle gateways and signage at the intersections of Kīlauea Avenue and Kapi’olani Street with Ponahawai.

## Strengthen the Pedestrian Environment

Infill development (hotel?) can help activate edge

Carefully trim vegetation to open upviews of river

Connecting Ululani to Wailuku Avenue will complete the grid

A wide generous multi-purpose regional trail connection to downtown will reduce dependence on cars

Reclaiming the mid-block pedestrian environment will create a network of safe walking routes

Consolidate parking through shared parking

New development should reinforce street edges and hide parking

Interpretive markers

Interpretive historic site

Low walls to reduce force of tidal surges

Restore the ecological health of the water's edge

Converting narrow streets to woonerfs will improve the pedestrian experience

Simplify highway access

Recreate traditional wetlands

Relocate longterm (free) parking

Relocate the transit center to higher ground

Daylight creeks



*Successful pedestrian streets can be found all over the US. Water sculptures are often incorporated as a design element.*



Church Street, Burlington, VT



Church Street, Burlington, VT



Santa Monica, CA





Downtown Hilo’s rich pedestrian quality, easily discerned through old historic photographs, has gradually eroded over the years. This presents an opportunity to review the building codes, design guidelines, zoning and street standards for inherent barriers to pedestrianization of streets in Downtown Hilo. These should be revised to ensure a continuous ground level façade with ample visual interest and transparency, frequent mid-block pedestrian crossings, minimal vehicular and pedestrian conflicts, fewer dark alcoves at shop entryways, appropriate street lighting, and safe pedestrian crossings at street corners and over stormwater drain inlets. New standards could also be introduced for placement of street benches at 200-foot intervals, landscaping, lighting, directional signage, and so on. Downtown blocks are also fairly long. Encouraging developments to improve and better maintain their mid-block environments through appropriate design standards will create a much-needed level of pedestrian connectivity and flow.



## Sidewalks

The condition of most sidewalks leaves a lot to be desired and improvements would significantly transform the downtown. Seize the opportunity to realign parking and roadways when repaving. Consider unifying different districts with unique patterns and detailing. A complete re-paving of the sidewalks would give a predictable surface for seniors and those with disabilities. Predictable sidewalk conditions and treatments for corners and intersections are also good for people without disabilities. Who among us has not been surprised by a sudden change in the pavement? Local materials, such as volcanic stone, are readily available to improve slip resistance especially in unprotected areas. A variety of finishes also provides identity. Finally, the size matters. Widen sidewalks where possible, not just on Restaurant Row, for sidewalk cafe/seating.



*Providence, RI provides an example of a community that took advantage of its natural setting to create a significant event that would bring people back downtown. WaterFire Providence®, the award-winning sculpture by Barnaby Evans installed on the three rivers of downtown Providence, has been praised by Rhode Island residents and international visitors alike as a powerful work of art and a moving symbol of Providence’s renaissance. WaterFire has captured the imagination of over ten million visitors, bringing life to downtown, and revitalizing Rhode Island’s capital city.”*

## Urban Forestry Program

Beyond the narrow streets in Downtown Hilo, the streets in downtown are devoid of any significant vegetation and appear stark. By carefully choosing trees that are easily maintained, supplemented with setting generous build-to-lines, many of the streets in downtown can be landscaped with native trees that have wide over-hangs. These trees will greatly help cool the pavement and buildings in the summer and reduce air-

conditioning demands and costs. They will also help bring another level of interest, color, texture and ecology back to the downtown area. Ponahawai Street, Kapi’olani Street and Waiānue Avenue are natural candidates for boulevard treatment. The waterfront also presents an excellent location for several allées of native trees (particularly after the road system there has been simplified). These will not only help restore the natural ecosystems along the water, but if the right specimens are selected, they can be the invaluable first line of defense against a tsunami while absorbing stormwater runoff. If this is not a full-fledged program, these principles should be considered every time a street is dug up or repaved. Even utility work can be an opportunity for improvement.

## Celebrate Heritage and Culture

Hilo is replete with living traditions, the practice of “talking story”, and a rich cultural history. The downtown area and its surrounding open spaces and natural elements such as the Wailuku River, provide the perfect settings in which these can be recorded, shared and celebrated. In addition, the rich natural environment can be revealed through the design of interpretive landscapes. Historic plaques, self guided tours, art, and museums among other programs can all help bring Downtown Hilo’s rich heritage to light.

## Excite the Senses

Another layer of interest can be added to the design of Downtown Hilo’s public spaces. This could be in the form of art, sculpture or crafts that embody the richness and complexity of Hilo’s natural environment. These can take advantage of the importance of water to Hilo’s history and culture; and celebrate water through artificial or real streams and rivulets, and fountains that could reinvigorate downtown’s public spaces. Or, it could be wrapped into local art and painting. Similarly, Hilo’s winds can be guided through wind chimes, across flapping flags and banners or captured in small wind turbines. Hilo also is blessed with a number of flowers and plants that have exciting scents and can be wrapped into the downtown’s landscape design.

## Plan for an Integrated Open Space Program

While there are many factors that make Downtown Hilo



unique, what sets it apart is its vast open and green space along the waterfront. Currently this amazing asset is broken up into smaller pieces by roads, canals, topography, clusters of trees and so on. This large open space could be well served through master planning to creatively maximize the use of the space, strengthen its edges and make sure that the size and access to the various components within the space are designed to accommodate programmed activities. This includes access to parking, restroom facilities, and safe pedestrian crossings and so on.

### Water Management

Water availability is a worldwide issue. In an area that has an over abundance of water, Downtown Hilo can send a powerful message about this resource to the rest of the world.

The internationally successful WaterFire, a 501 C (3) arts organization in Providence, RI began as a sculpture by Barnaby Evens and has become an award winning event that is responsible for the economic renaissance of downtown Providence.

Consider Water as the theme for Downtown Hilo. Stewardship of a sustainable future, a place for elders, for Kua'āina, as part of the Downtown Hilo branding process: Water is life. Water cleans, nourishes and refreshes. Water also connects people. Hawai'i already exports water all the way to New England; is it not time for Downtown Hilo to take the lead in protecting this precious resource? Water has defined Hilo in so many ways, from the canopies protecting sidewalks, to the rivers that flow towards the coastline and bay front; to the food that it grows; bring the water back to the surface; bring back the fishing ponds; bring back some of the tropical forest and streams that were once there. Play with water as it runs off buildings and runs down sidewalks to the ocean.

Water interacts with the town and clearly influences design. It makes sense to celebrate water as a central theme to share with world as Hilo's primary calling card. There is strong traditional respect and stewardship of this precious resource. We recommend developing a meaningful, emotionally sustainable figurative or abstract image of water as part of the Downtown Hilo brand. To be successful, it needs to be a clear, recognizable design using colors and graphic imagery. Any information or community calendars, regardless of format, need to be easily recognizable as the go-to place for events information. A meaningful, emotionally sustainable figurative or abstract image needs to be established.



*Traditional and alternative landscaping strategies allow water to percolate into the subsurface thereby reducing the propensity for flooding downtown and noxious pollutants in the bay.*

# Housing Options



JAMAICA PLAIN (Boston), MA COHOUSING: Architects-Domenech, Hicks & Krockmalnic Architects; Programming-Kraus-Fitch Architects, Inc. Above Left: First Floor Plan. Above Right Common House and Courtyard

THE GREENHOUSE PROJECT Center Left Typical Porch, Center Right Calvary Baptist, Columbus, GA. Below Left: Dining Room + Kitchen - Tabitha Healthcare Services, Lincoln, NE. Below Right: Floor Plan - Green Hill, West Orange, NJ 1-Living Rm, 2-Kitchen, 3-Dining, 4-Bedrooms, 5-Office, 6-Laundry, 7-Storage, 8-Screen Porch Entry, 9-Garden Patio



## HOUSING OPTIONS

Any successful downtown needs a resident population to sustain it. For a sustainable downtown, that population needs to be as diverse as possible and to keep people downtown you need housing. To support a diverse population, you need a variety of housing options that can fulfill the needs of a constantly evolving family and social structure. Current trends in the US are predicting that most households will consist of single individuals, young professionals, elderly widows and single parent families. Many couples are delaying childbearing to focus on careers while they enjoy a more urban lifestyle and many retirees want to remain active and independent as long as possible. Recent graduates often want to stay in a community but the lack of affordable housing makes it difficult. Hilo may experience slightly different demographic shifts, but the fact remains that these shifts require a corresponding shift in housing options. A few alternative models of ownership and unit configuration would be appropriate in the setting of Downtown Hilo. These models would support a range of needs.

The economics of home ownership in Hawai'i provide another compelling reason to support alternative ownership models. In 2005, the Median family income on the Island of Hawai'i was \$55,441 with the average annual wage at \$32,590. With the median home price at \$418,000, ownership is a challenge for most residents.

### Cohousing

Cohousing is a type of collaborative housing in which residents actively participate in the design and operation of their own neighborhoods. It is crucial that cohousing residents be consciously committed to living as a community. The physical design encourages both social contact and individual space. Private homes contain all the features of conventional homes, but residents also have access to extensive common facilities such as open space, courtyards, a playground and a common house. Cohousing communities are defined by a participatory planning process during development. There are always common shared facilities, resident management of the community and a non-hierarchical structure and decision making process. A neighborhood design layout defines and fosters



community. A cohousing community can be located in an urban environment and often makes home ownership very affordable since development costs are shared between the unit owners. Other shared amenities, such as guest rooms and laundry reduce the upfront costs for residents. Abandoned parcels are perfect opportunities for development into cohousing communities. See Resources for more information and web site links.

### Housing options for Seniors and the Developmentally Disabled

The greenhouse movement is a senior housing model similar to successful programs in Europe and Canada. Developed by Dr. William Thomas and rooted in the tradition of the Eden Alternative, a model for cultural change within nursing facilities, The Green House model is intended to de-institutionalize long-term care by eliminating large nursing facilities and creating habilitative, social settings. In form, it has similarities to cohousing; 7-10 residents share meals and activities together but remain autonomous in their living situation. The program requires a large house with individual, full bath bedrooms and common living, dining room and support facilities. Meals are shared as are other activities. A downtown setting is perfect for this program since seniors and program directors remain connected to a community as opposed to being isolated in a remote location requiring a vehicle for access.

### Economically Attainable Housing

Encourage renovations rather than tear down and new construction. Mixed-use housing needs to be encouraged by public policy and related codes as another vehicle to housing ownership. Leasable space can help pay a mortgage for a property owner. In Seattle, mixed income units have been economically successful in providing small affordable units in a building with high end larger units. New developments also provide an opportunity for parking to be internalized in the town block rather than creating another parking lot and interrupting the flow of buildings defining the block.

Create temporary housing for homeless. Population needs to be evaluated to determine if a center for services is required. As an alternative, a locker or place to secure belongings and find minimal shelter in inclement weather; a parking place for those who live in their cars.

Legalize accessory units for existing homes. Limit maximum size

to 450 s.f. and require shared utilities.

### Universal Design and Age in Place Housing

The concept of Universal Design is intended to provide access to products, buildings and environments that are safe, usable and effective for everyone not just the disabled. It also recognizes the importance of design and how things look. Ergonomically designed kitchen utensils and appliances are an example of products that adhere to universal design principles applied to product design. Fully accessible entries to buildings are another example. The codification of safer stair design in the building code is another example.

Age in Place Design is targeted specifically to buildings and their location. Properly designed dwellings give everyone the ability to live in their home even when faced with short or long term infirmities and mobility challenges at one time or another. Age in place implies your residence is designed in a way to accommodate your changing needs. With minimal modification, a space can be adapted for specific infirmities or disabilities. It also implies that the necessary support services are available for a range of needs. The location of these dwelling units is critical. Ideally they are within walking distance of a transportation hub so the children and the elderly have access to amenities outside walking distance.

For Downtown Hilo these concepts should be on the forefront of any design for the future. Universal Design and Age in Place Housing responds to all three aspects of sustainability by supporting long term independence, creating neighborhoods that have access to basic necessities nearby and keeping that access affordable for all. As part of it the redistricting of downtown and its establishment as a Business Improvement District, Downtown Hilo should be identified as a Universal Design Zone.

### Live/ work units

Live/ work units should be encouraged by public policy for the obvious benefits of residential use in Downtown. Creating housing downtown on existing parcels reduces the need for new infrastructure. Economies of a scale that are made by reducing new infrastructure development should be reinvested into encouraging downtown housing through tax abatements. Live work units have proven to be economic engines in downtowns



*Above: Jamaica Plain-Boston, Cohousing Common House and Exterior View.*



## Commercial Space



Vendor Carts -  
Philadelphia, PA  
Honoka'a, HI

*Most of these carts have a regular customer base who come because of convenience, uniqueness and quality of food and familiarity with vendor. The success of these vendors relies on word of mouth and location.*

Taco Trucks, Los Angeles, CA



across the US. Passionate, creative urban pioneers are willing to make-do with less, given the convenience and opportunity to work where they live. With minimal investment these stand alone projects provide a viable alternative to whole sale urban renewal. This, in turn, keeps a downtown neighborhood genuine and real. As the owner's enterprise grows, profits are reinvested over time keeping equity in the neighborhood. A live/work space also fosters a full time vitality avoiding the after five ghost town.

### Sprawl development and Public Health

Island wide, sprawl development is impacting the natural ecology of the island. With subdivision development comes strip malls, traffic congestion and increased commuting time for residents. The most important rule in Smart Growth and Sustainable Urbanist development is to redevelop and densify existing parcels. In Hilo, consider downtown parcels outside the FIRM line as a high density mixed use development priority. Reward this more dense, sustainable development with density bonuses, tax abatements and expedited permitting.

Island wide, incorporate smart growth strategies and tools in the Form Based Code. These include the following:

- Redevelop existing parcels first
- Low Impact Development
- Open Space infrastructure

Community Gardens, Community Supported Agriculture, and Plant Nurseries

In a lush tropical area where there is an abundance of growth and vegetation such as Hilo, it is easy to forget the value of the community garden. Allowing students to cultivate a small urban parcel, or creating an opportunity for a homeless person to be a caretaker of a community garden in exchange for simple shelter fosters community in immeasurable ways. Downtown Hilo would benefit tremendously from beautification of gateways and downtown streets. The new hanging baskets are an excellent start and a potential for a small local craftsman to use recycled metals to fabricate decorative and artistic hangers for the downtown area.

For many visitors to the State of Hawai'i, they are seeing the plants that produce their flowers and indoor greenery in context

for the first time ever. Stumbling upon the familiar out of context creates a memorable experience. Greening downtown needs to be a priority of any downtown beautification project. The town should take an empty lot for the cultivation of a nursery. Plant nurseries also function successfully as community gardens and parks if pathways are incorporated. The success of the Queen Lili'uokalani Park shows the desirability of green spaces for health. Overall, the county should ensure a green park or walking trail within walking distance of most densely populated areas or places of employment. These can even be integrated into nursery gardens or vegetable gardens. Creating extra driving time reduces the benefit of the park. Create one to two mile loops in green areas. Each park or green area has the opportunity to provide a safe dwelling for a potential caretaker at a low cost scale. The right to dwell can be awarded on a semi-annual or quarterly basis based on performance.

### COMMERCIAL SPACE

Every successful downtown has a variety of commercial venues that contribute to its success and its economic sustainability. We all want convenience and variety where we live and work, especially when eating or shopping. In a small urban area such as Downtown Hilo, the alternative, non-traditional venues will support a variety of cultural, social and economic needs and most importantly, will easily adapt to available space. This diversity of non-traditional commercial spaces creates the messy vitality that will continue to keep Hilo genuine and unique.

#### Neighborhood store

As the downtown looks to revitalize itself and increase its resident population, one cannot underestimate the corner store. It provides value in any neighborhood where residents or daytime visitors, come to rely on the ability to walk to the store and get what they need on a daily basis. Often these stores can also function as a third place for a community.

#### Incubator Shops + Start-ups

Multiple low cost, minimally sized commercial spaces are critical for any burgeoning economy. Often, an older buildings or motels have the infrastructure required for tenants, so young or new entrepreneurs can try out their business with minimal risk; with success they can move to a better location

or larger space. The Farmer's Market offers a similar option with low cost stalls and the big market days on Wednesday and Saturday. Unfortunately, much of the merchandise sold there is geared toward a tourist market. Small specialty shops are often frequented and supported by college students and teens; consignment shops are also increasingly popular and successful across generations and economic backgrounds. Many well known success stories started in these small incubator type shops.

Any increased pedestrian access to Hilo Bay will also foster economic development to well positioned parcels. The increased foot traffic will create the demand for services in close proximity to the Bayfront area.

Vendor Carts offer another economical venue to start up a cooking business. Carts might be encouraged on campuses, near office buildings and near the high school and library for afternoon snacks. This provides another opportunity for a small entrepreneur to set up shop with minimal upfront costs.

### SUSTAINABILITY OF URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Climate change is expected to bring about many changes in the way we build our communities. This project presents an opportunity for Downtown Hilo to assess where it is contributing to the climate change phenomenon, how it could better withstand potential impacts of climate change; and lastly how it can recover from disasters brought on by climate change. These disasters vary per location, but some that could be foreseen for Hilo are increased rainfall and concurrent flooding, sea level rise and breach of the waterfront levees, or hurricane level damaging winds.

#### End of Oil

Of greatest concern is the projected depletion of petroleum and natural gas resources. This is expected to initially raise the price of gas. Increased gas prices will not only elevate the cost of travel and goods distribution, but also the cost of manufacturing of goods, as well as the construction of roads, utilities and buildings. Ultimately, as reserves are depleted, it is likely that manufacturing may turn to other fuels and energy sources. Energy plants could turn more to coal, and without proper planning, communities that are designed around the use of the private car

may be severely impacted by the lack of affordable fuel choices.

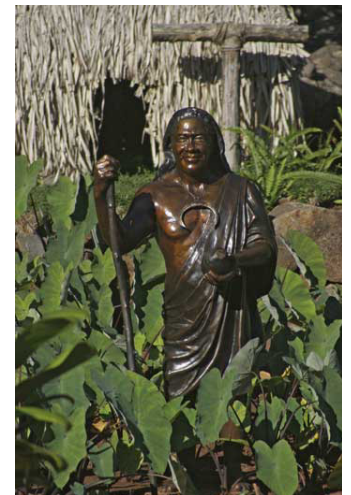
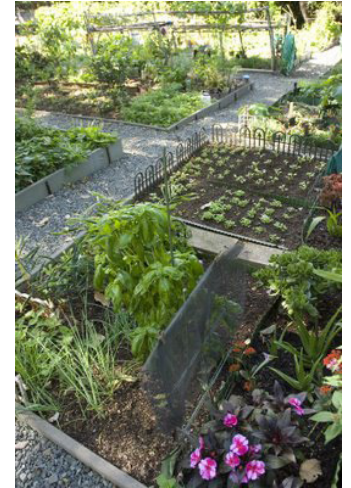
Downtown Hilo has evolved from a walkable, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood to one that is increasingly dependent on private vehicles. As it has become more car dependant, the evolution of the downtown has eroded this feature of its buildings and streets. As the area has become less pedestrian-friendly, residents are more inclined to drive rather than walk to or within downtown. The cyclical pattern creates a tendency to drive from one destination in downtown to another just a few blocks away. The same car may park in more than one space in downtown. This behavior has compounded the traffic congestion in downtown as cars circle the area for convenient parking spaces.

As the community becomes more car-based it is forced into oil-dependency which causes its carbon-based fuel use and its greenhouse gas emissions to increase exponentially. This also begins to affect the community's affluence as over 20% of its wealth is spent on supporting a car-dependent lifestyle that involves importing cars, purchasing foreign fuel and paying significant sums of money for car maintenance and insurance.

This car-driven community design has other impacts on the community. As more land is paved over for roads and parking, the stormwater runoffs that flood the local creeks and rivers increase exponentially, wreaking havoc on the natural aquatic habitat and marine life. This runoff also carries with it a number of metallic deposits from vehicles that eventually end up in the waterways and further deteriorates water quality and damages aquatic habitat on the island.

A community designed around cars requires an extensive road network. As the number of cars increase, it extends the miles and width of roadways and available land is gradually paved over. This expansive network is often forced into environmentally sensitive lands. In many instances, roads and culverts block the natural flow of the rainwater, which gets diverted and on occasion ends up in dry creeks. They are also known to block natural migration paths of native animals. Extending roads and buildings into delicate natural areas is extremely damaging and could take many decades and costs to reverse the land back to its natural conditions.

Climate change is a global problem, but the causes of climate change often manifest themselves locally as well. For Down-





## Sustainability of Infrastructure



town Hilo, there are three broad strategies for addressing climate change. These are discussed below.

### 1 - Reinforce / fortify natural infrastructure

Hilo's many natural systems have been degraded over the years. Its streams have been channelized, waterfront polluted and aquatic habitat greatly eroded. Efforts to control and contain new infrastructure through sea walls have created other issues along the waterfront. Cities are finding that the long term costs of altering the functions of the natural infrastructure can make for costly repairs. Cities across the world are therefore learning that the best investment into infrastructure is fortifying and allowing the natural infrastructure that surrounds our communities to function naturally. Where streams have been covered, they should be day lit; where they have been channelized, their natural banks should be restored; and where they have been blocked, they should be released and restored to their original functions. Similarly the vegetation in Downtown Hilo could be restored somewhat with street trees and parks.



Stormwater management needs to prioritize percolation and natural aquifer recharge over channeling into costly sub surface infrastructure. On a County level, all new subdivisions should incorporate vegetative drainage swales and shoulders as opposed to paving. Stormwater management in Hilo happens uphill.

### 2 - Relocate important infrastructure from vulnerable locations

The Bay Front Highway in Downtown Hilo is very vulnerable to climate change related phenomena. The town would benefit from relocating this facility to safer and higher ground such that the exposure to disasters is reduced and it is operable during emergencies. Such expensive infrastructure elements would then be much less likely damaged and the town (or the federal government) will not have to bear the costs of rebuilding the infrastructure.

### 3 - Maximize existing infrastructure – building up where possible and sharing the road as allowed

As new infrastructure is going to become increasingly more expensive, the town would benefit from directing growth such that it maximizes the use of existing infrastructure



including utilities, capital facilities and roads. Roads should be designed to not singularly focus on accommodating cars. Rather they should equally cater to bicyclists, pedestrians and public transit. The road network could be made more efficient by making connections where the grid is abruptly ended. In these cases, the street could be extended to complete the grid and further ease the flow of traffic through the area. The pedestrian network is weak and there are many opportunities to create a downtown-wide mid-block pedestrian web of streets that will encourage more walking as the large size of the blocks can be navigated through easily.

Similarly, the roads along the highway provide a barrier between downtown and its greatest asset – the waterfront. Redesigning the road by consolidating the many roads there, redirecting truck traffic to an alternate truck route and intersecting the road with pedestrian crossings will not only slow the through traffic to manageable safe speeds, but will also allow downtown goers to use the waterfront area. Furthermore, by creating alternate routes to downtown – either by a wide generous bike path or a shuttle system, the Downtown could attract more business. A shorter shuttle system could help pedestrians access the many destinations within the town without having to resort to driving.



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*“All healthy cultures, urban or rural, are thick with choices. The thicker a culture, the more resilient it is to dramatic change and catastrophe”*  
*Zaid Hassan*



## Sustainability and Communities



*Old San Jaun , Puerto Rico*



*Honoka'a , HI*



Sustainability is as much about ecology and the environment as it is about fostering community. It is our connection to each other and our ancestors that defines our place in the world now and in the future. How does that connection manifest itself and what fosters those ties? It is our connection to the past and our ancestors that informs our world view and gives us a place in the future.

There are several ways to reconnect with the past, revealing its hidden wisdom. The quaint appeal of the older buildings calls forth memories for older residents and younger ones alike who know the stories behind them. It is quite fortuitous for Hilo that the recent decades have passed over this corner of the Island of Hawai'i. The soda fountain days of Downtown Hilo are gone but the vibrancy they engendered is not irretrievable. The critical piece of this puzzle is in the people. A truly sustainable and livable community fosters a sense of connection to place, continually reinforcing a sense of connection to the past as well as the future.

We have already discussed many of the important recommendations for Downtown Hilo to become more attractive, livable and sustainable. Implementing these changes will require the town to prioritize their goals and work with different groups in the community in different ways to keep them engaged. In order for a community to thrive, all member groups regardless of age, ethnicity, profession or persuasion, must be represented and feel connected at some level.

The traditional Hawaiian culture embodies an inherently sustainable social structure where Kūpunas and Keiki have a relationship of caring and respect to each other. Knowledge, culture and wisdom, have a vehicle for continuance across generations. The significance of this tradition and its presence in contemporary Hawaiian culture was experienced firsthand by the SDAT team during our visit with its traditional warm welcome.

Hilo is truly a place where one can feel genuine embrace, but there is no denying the fact that different populations or groups have different desires. The design strategies should accommodate everyone, but sometimes the amenities of a certain street or the institutions of a city must cater to a subset of the population or find creative ways to create linkages between them. Clearly this section cannot address these issues or groups

comprehensively, but there are a few that should be highlighted.

### **BUSINESS COMMUNITY**

During the SDAT visit, several issues with direct and indirect impact on the Downtown Hilo economy were discussed at length. Some of these, such as the difficulty in dealing with FEMA requirements, a lack of housing opportunities as well as others were addressed elsewhere in this report. Most of these challenges such as marketing, communication, as well as those that follow can be addressed in a concerted way under the purview of a Business Improvement District (BID) which is discussed at the end of this section. The topics below can be addressed with or without establishing a BID for Downtown Hilo.

#### **Business Incubation**

Many historic downtowns across the country have discouraged the establishment of franchises in their downtown locations. While franchises appear to bring in prosperity to a community, for all purposes, they thrive on low-paying wages and a significant portion of their revenue is sent off-shore. They also bring down the costs of local services, often threatening the viability of local businesses.

Downtown properties lend themselves to a small-business incubation program. Relatively inexpensive rental spaces can support burgeoning, home-grown businesses. Outreach and partnership with many organizations such as Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) can help the growth of this industry. This can also be an effective infill strategy where vacant lots can be developed into live-work or small business incubator spaces. Business incubation should also be incorporated into the BID and funding the incubator could be a potential use of the BID funds. There is evidence of several young entrepreneurs and artists with stalls at the Hilo Farmer's Market. Supporting burgeoning enterprises is critical for Downtown Hilo.

**Recommendation:** Create a tax abatement program for new investments and provide tax credits that support specific types of development where it's needed.

#### **Parking Strategy**

Parking is not traditionally linked with economic development and the business community, but the opportunity costs involved in constructing additional parking can be quite large. Construc-

tion of a single surface spot will cost several thousand dollars and parking minimums in many zoning regulations require businesses to absorb this cost.

There is currently an expectation of convenient, free parking for all. When parking is not immediately available, many drivers become frustrated and perceive a lack of parking. All parking problems are relative, however, and the team routinely observed available spots – even in the main parking lots during the busier parts of the day. Whether or not Downtown Hilo decides this is a pressing issue that must be addressed, the main thing the team wants to advocate against is the creation of additional surface lots. Instead, as a way to encourage customers, and open up spaces for regular turnover, the town could try free parking for the first hour or two but then charge for all day parking in certain zones. This would open up short term parking for customers. Business owners need to park outside the downtown area and free up spaces for their customers.

Another fund-raising tool that has been used successfully in other small communities is a long term parking strategy which is instituted gradually over time. A parking master plan would have a variety of options that target each need; downtown employees, tourists, residents and shoppers. It would have a variety of time limits from short term to extended stay parking overlaid by a variety of fee options from paid to free parking, or even annual permits. Visitors and tourists could be charged a fee for short-term parking in key locations in Downtown Hilo. In high use areas meter feeding needs to be penalized to discourage all day parking by business owners. With the scale of downtown, it is unreasonable for every business owner to expect parking for themselves and their customers. Over time, this could be expanded in size and term, such that parking in remote long-term lots could also be charged a fee. All parking revenue including tickets should be dedicated to the BID for infrastructure improvements. This parking strategy must be calibrated by an expert and coordinated with the transit strategy mentioned earlier.

#### Alternative Modes of Transportation

Originally designed in 1922 by Mr. Kusumoto to fill a need for more economical alternatives to a taxi, the Sampan are a wonderful example of island ingenuity. Between 1930 and

1940 there were reportedly 200 vehicles in operation charging between a nickel and dime to transport people around town. In the 1990s there was an attempt to bring them back, but residents found the Hele-On buses were more convenient for travelers. Many participants sited these vehicles as a wonderful means of transportation. With increasing energy costs, the time is ripe for Hilo inventiveness.

Light weight electric assist tricycles present a wonderful option for all ages. Outfitted with a fiberglass shell, they can be used all year round and even transport groceries and or small children. Electric four wheel vehicles for downtown offers a convenient and safe mode of transportation for a partially disabled resident.

**Recommendation:** Whether through Sampan, increased Hele-on service, concerted efforts to expand bicycle or electric vehicle use, the town should promote convenient alternatives to automotive travel. This will increase citizen health and decrease congestion.

#### District Energy

With the redevelopment of downtown, Hilo can begin to lay the foundation for passive alternative energy, energy conservation and district energy. Building codes can be reviewed and revised to encourage passive solar design, natural ventilation and better insulation to reduce the demand for energy to heat buildings in the winter and cool them in the summer. Codes can also be incorporated that direct the use of natural lighting through the use of courtyard development, light wells and light shelves, among others. Additionally, unifying many of the merchants with a BID could be a precursor to joint investment in district energy



Above: Drymer Electric Assist Hybrid Prototype Tricycles  
Center: Electric Hybrid Bicycles  
Below: Electric four wheel cart  
Left: Hilo Sampan originally in Lyman Museum



Sampan Interiors



“If civilization has risen from the Stone Age, it can rise again from the Wastepaper Age.” - Jacques Barzun



production.

The wastewater treatment plant also presents a tremendous opportunity either as a retrofit of the existing plant, or the relocation and construction of a new plant. Modern plant technologies are such that a single facility can not only process sewage, but provide thermal heating through a hot water system that captures heat from waste energy; methane gas for lighting; diesel for transit buses; and compost for fertilizers. As electricity is diverted from heating and cooling homes, and more energy is generated through PVC cells and thermal solar water heating technologies, Downtown Hilo can begin to redirect electricity to create an electric grid throughout the town to power “Plug-in Hybrid Electrical Vehicles” (PHEVs). These vehicles can be charged overnight from overflow electricity; are quiet; and depending on the source for electricity; can be relatively free of carbon emissions. Many city governments have purchasing programs of PHEVs for municipal use.

### Recycling

The Hilo landfill is reaching critical capacity and threatens to become a greater burden on government expenditures. Solid waste management needs to be coordinated in downtown so that all biodegradable waste is separated from other waste and composted. By carefully sorting and recycling all other waste, Hilo’s landfill capacity can be stretched for many years. The pricing and management of the recycling program has to be structured carefully to dissuade businesses from illegally dumping their waste to avoid the fees or to not recycle because it is inconvenient to do so. Local industries could be set up that recycle many materials that would either end up in the landfill or be exported off the island as non-biodegradable waste. Downtown businesses could be educated on green purchasing programs to reduce the amount of waste and recycling material currently generated.

The success of any recycling program relies on changing habits and instilling a sense of pride in the community to increase success. Levy fines for noncompliance.

**Recommendation:** Design and fabricate recycling bins that allow presorting of materials at drop off site. Make them aesthetically pleasing so they can be conveniently located in high use downtown areas.

### Business Improvement District (BID)

Business Improvement Districts (BID) began in Toronto, Canada in the 1970s and later emerged in the 80s and 90s as creative public-private partnership to address the needs of downtowns across the US and Canada. They are a result of two trends; the need to provide a creative solution to competition from the suburban mall phenomena and a shift in thinking that municipal government should be less involved in providing services to a commercial district and more involved in making sure services are provided. Through supplemental taxes or fees, similar in principal to shopping malls, funds are generated to cover the cost of improvements and services. Fees are adjusted every 3-5 years and in some instances can be partially phased out once improvements have been made.

Three types of organizations can manage a Business Improvement District; non-profit (most common), quasi-public authorities and mixed public-private enterprises (least Common). Regardless of structure, they are typically responsible for overseeing and often providing the services listed below:

Consumer marketing of events and festivals as well as the production and distribution of maps and newsletters.

Social services including aid to the homeless, job training and providing youth services.

Maintenance of a downtown area including trash removal, recycling, graffiti mitigation and landscape maintenance.

Capital improvements of the downtown area including urban furnishings such as lighting, seating, decorative planters, trees and identifying signage specific to the area.

Policy advocacy to the community and the local government on behalf of business interests. This can also involve advocacy for the livability of downtown and surrounding areas.

Regulating the use of public space such as sidewalks, squares and parks by vendors, buskers and delivery trucks. Controlling panhandling also falls under this jurisdiction.

Providing security to the downtown area by providing supplemental security in coordination with the local police force and in some instances the installation of electronic surveillance

Economic development incentives in the form of tax abatements

and low interest loans to new and expanding businesses.

Parking and transportation management to balance access for visitors, business owners and residents alike. Maintenance of transit shelters would also be the responsibility of the BID for downtown transportation.

By organizing merchants, Business Improvement Districts can be vital partners to implementing the types of design strategies described in the previous section. A Downtown Hilo BID has the potential to address several goals of the EDH 2025 Living Action Plan but the proper organizational structure will be critical to its success. The BID can be set up as a quasi-public authority or as a non-profit with a Board of Directors; ultimately, the County of Hawai'i, citizens and stakeholders will need to assess whether a public, non profit or public-private partnership would be more effective for the particular needs of downtown. The county should work with local merchants and residents to set up a Business Improvement District.

The merchants of Downtown Hilo are important partners, but they are not the only ones concerned with how Downtown Hilo implements its design strategies. Youth, elders, the homeless, and other citizens that make up the customer base are the other side of this economic ecosystem. All of these groups will experience Downtown Hilo in different ways and the design of the downtown and the sense of its character must cater to the whole community.

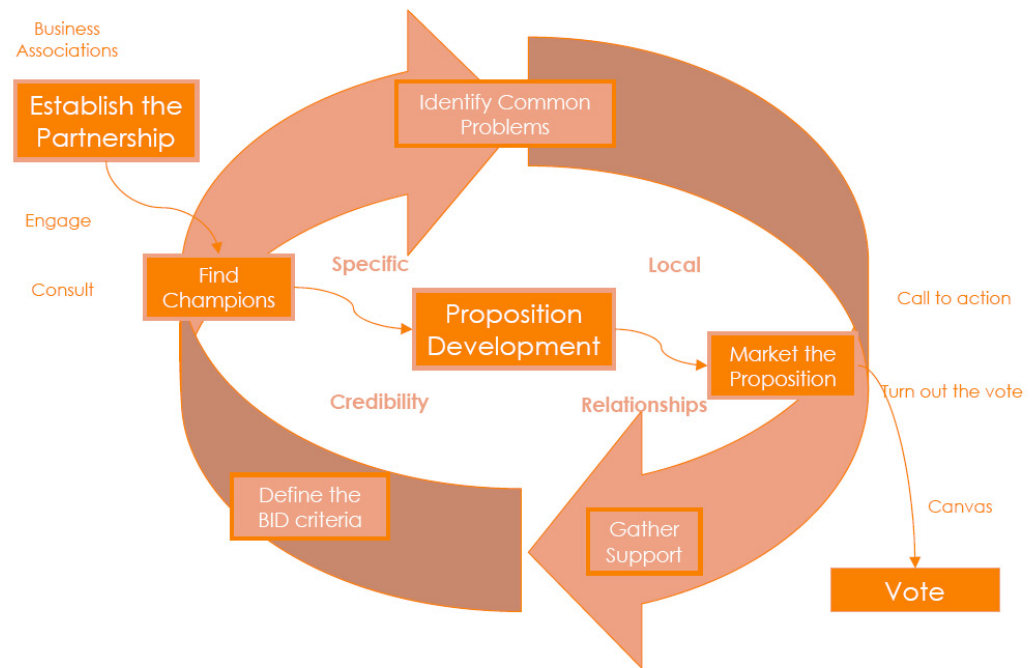
## YOUTH and STUDENT POPULATION

During the SDAT visit, the team met with a group of High School age students to focus on youth and "placemaking" in Hilo. The issues raised with these students focused on their needs, their sense of belonging, what brings them downtown and specifically what their ideal downtown would look like.

Hilo has a community college and a campus of the University of Hawai'i; but as elsewhere in the US, if families have the means, many high school students choose to leave home to study. In the case of Hilo, this means leaving the Island of Hawai'i for Honolulu or the Mainland. After completing their studies, many students do not return, choosing instead to pursue their careers and professional lives elsewhere. The downtown does not have the vibrancy of opportunities or appeal that young professionals

look for as they negotiate their social lives. Many older students drive to school, often dropping off younger siblings on the way. Others are dropped off by their parents and picked up after work in the evening.

In meeting with students from Hilo High School's Key Club and Connections Public Charter School, as well as elementary age students, the Hilo High guidance counselor and various community leaders interested in engaging Hilo's youth, key issues were identified for the downtown area. One of the biggest challenges was the lack of communication between the schools, their programs and offerings as well as a lack of communication between community groups, associations and cultural centers throughout the town, which might offer programs and opportunities that would be interesting to youth and their families. There was a clear desire on the part of students to be involved in shaping



Diagrammatic example of a process used to develop a successful BID that will have support from residents and stakeholders alike. Diagram courtesy of Northwest Regional Development Agency, UK



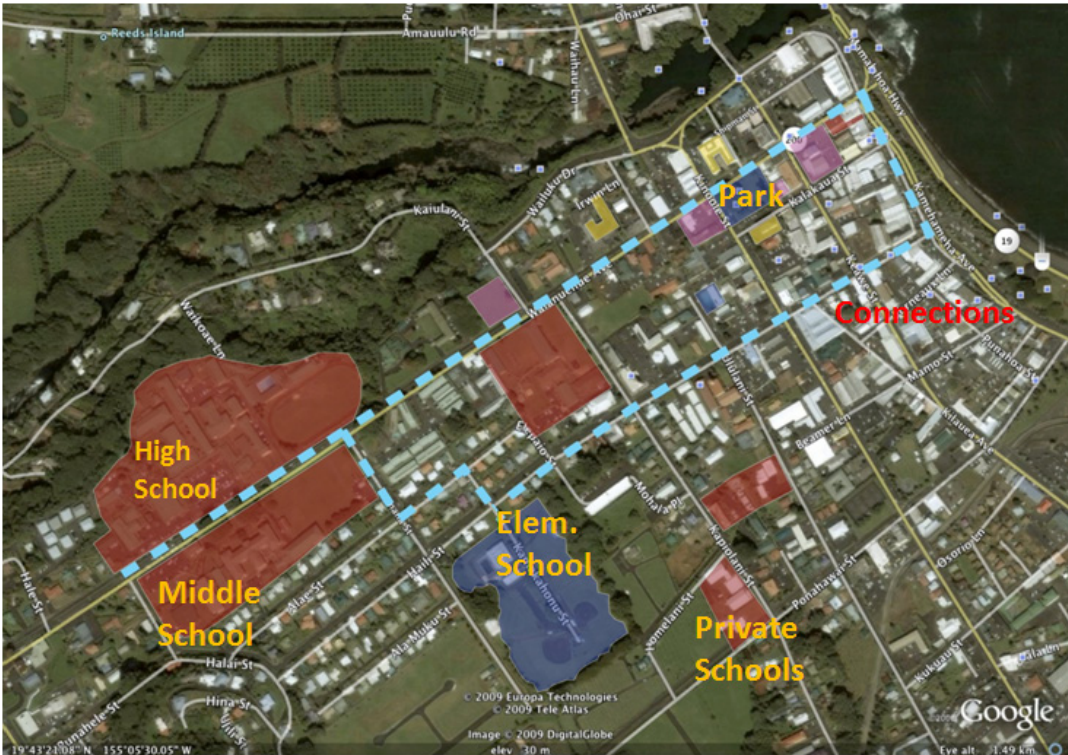
# Youth and Student Population



their downtown through community service, organizing and participating in festivals and having a voice in planning for their needs. The ideas that follow were generated by the students. The recommendations are a result of this conversation with the SDAT team.

## Communication

A desire for access to cultural events, mentoring opportunities and overall connection to the life of downtown is important for Hilo's students. In brainstorming how to build bridges to and from this age group, a few ideas were generated. As a place where interesting things are happening and learning opportunities abound, integrating students in shaping the forces of downtown will immediately produce palpable results. Overall, Downtown Hilo would greatly benefit from increased exposure to youth and their families and students will rise to meet the responsibility of their new role as planners.



**Recommendation 1:** Create 2-4 designated kiosks or bulletin boards near gathering areas such as the Farmer's Market, Library, High School, parks or transportation hubs in downtown for a listing of events. This presents an ideal opportunity for the Community College to design and potentially fabricate these kiosk structures.

**Recommendation 2:** Resume the online calendar and newspaper listing of events. The Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce or a nonprofit entity such as the Hilo Downtown Improvement Association needs to take this on to insure reliability at "information central." The success of any event listing is in its reliability as a source and its thoroughness. Assign the responsibility of posting school productions and events to Student groups. This could be combined with information on local businesses and restaurants.

**Recommendation 3:** Coordinate youth activity offerings throughout the town. Currently there exists several programs that have limited or exclusive participation that would benefit from increased exposure. Many successful downtowns not only focus on physical improvements, but also provide programming and coordinating activities and events. These can help attract more visitors downtown. An events coordinator can also be responsible for activating and better using the parks and other open spaces around downtown. Any events calendar should be centered on Hilo and based there. Kailua-Kona events can be listed under the regional events section. Any new businesses or cultural activity should be highlighted on a regular basis and all communications need to target and be accessible to all age groups. This would also dissolve the current perception that nothing is happening.

## After School Needs

There is a noticeable lack of after school and weekend venues downtown for students. This drives students to the Mall and other destinations after school and on weekends in desperate search of snacks and a place to eat and meet. Many students felt their youthful presence was not wanted by coffee shops that cater to a more professional clientele or by the library which requires a quiet atmosphere.

High school students need social time and they need to congregate. It's where they learn to be responsible, caring, engaged

and interested. With today's schedules, many students have early evening programs or sports practice they need to attend after school. Often they are waiting for rides home that revolve around their parents work schedule. They also have group assignments they need to complete or just want to hang out with friends before returning home. They would also love the opportunity to meet up with local artists, community members, and other Kūpuna who could "talk story" with them, and share knowledge and wisdom. This is a recurring frustration observed in other communities around the country.

There was a clearly articulated need for a variety of places to accommodate basic needs between dismissal and dinner at home. These include:

- A place to study individually or as a group without disturbing anyone; ideally with a snack bar
- A place to just hang out and call their own
- A place to learn other skills that are not taught in school, such as traditional Hawaiian crafts or culture, business skills, music, film making, photography, etc.
- A place to connect with a mentor.
- A place for specialized sports such as roller-blading or skateboarding
- A place to eat snacks with friends that are nourishing but fun. This could be combined with an opportunity to learn culinary skills.

Hilo is incredibly fortunate to have the secondary schools within walking distance to downtown. The opportunity to be downtown provides excellent social benefits for the community as a whole. The presence of youth in the downtown is an opportunity to foster an intergenerational population in Hilo and create social sustainability.

**Recommendation 1:** Revive the Community Center with a designated Youth Center Area. This could easily take shape in an existing facility such as the old Telephone Company building, currently vacant but next to the East Hawai'i Cultural Center, Kalākaua Park and Federal complex. This district was identified as an ideal place for a "heart of Hilo" district, and having a place for youth here would make it extremely rich.

**Recommendation 2:** Expand the Girls and Boys club as it already provides athletic activities and supports a community garden, something the youth also expressed interest in. Create a gathering place with a lanai where kids can be outside year round, regardless of weather.

**Recommendation 3:** Build a permanent skateboard area. Use the prototype design as an opportunity to refine the design and its siting. Reach out and encourage the skaters who will use the facility to assist in the design process. Consider holding regional skate boarding events.

**Recommendation 4:** Encourage partnering with existing businesses and entities to build entrepreneurial activity with youth. As an example selling drinks and popcorn at school events, playing music, selling locally made art, organizing family friendly festivals and events.

### Food and Snack Bars

Food is an opportunity to be with friends and socialize. The SDAT team heard a clear desire for more food options; cafes, sandwich shops, etc. - inexpensive places where students could get a snack in between school and dance or piano lessons. Being able to stay within the downtown vicinity between evening activities and school was of real interest to the high school students who drove, as it would cut back on the amount of driving they would be doing by being able to stay in town rather than going to someone's house. It would also encourage them to walk after school. For students waiting for rides from working parents, this was just as critical.

**Recommendation 1:** Strategically locate adolescent friendly venues. These shops or cafes need not be exclusively oriented towards adolescents, but they must not see groups of students as a nuisance. A successful formula seen in many cities and towns around the country thrive on catering to the early morning business coffee crowd; mid-morning lingering senior coffee crowd; quick-bite lunch time crowd; afterschool snack crowd. While Starbucks cashed in on this formula at a corporate scale, the local flavor venues are usually the most successful. These are often the "third place" in a community. A few critical ingredients need to be present to sustain this full day's worth of traffic:

1 - Convenient location that offers grab and go and a place to linger at the same time.



Simply Natural Cafe - Honoka'a, HI  
Exterior Sidewalk Seating

**The Third Place-** In his book *The Great Good Place*, Ray Oldenburg coined the term the "third place" to refer to a social surrounding that was different from the usual places of social interaction of home (first place) and workplace (second place). He argues that third places are an essential component of civic engagement and particularly critical in fostering a sense of place in contemporary society. They are the anchors of a community that facilitate and foster creative interaction.

Simply Natural Cafe - Honoka'a, HI  
Interior Mural by Local Artist





## Cultural Heritage



2 - Local owner who is familiar, often on a first name basis, with the customers.

3 - Low cost offerings

4 - Variety of caffeinated and non-caffeinated beverages

5 - Flexible seating, indoors and out.

6 - A place that hires local high school or college students to cater to the afternoon crowd.

**Recommendation 2:** Expand the library to include a snack bar and food friendly area where students can talk and work in groups. These are often used as revenue generators in communities.

### College and University Students

With two higher education campuses and numerous research facilities, Hilo has the potential to attract, retain and engage a younger professional population. The presence of these institutions can also add value to the Downtown. Acknowledging this population as an important part of downtown will also add value to Hilo and the Institutions as a whole.

### Safety

Safety is a concern for students and elders, both in terms of the number of homeless who hang out downtown, and the lack of merchants, or “extra eyes” in the evening when the town shuts down. Increasing the number of establishments that have extended hours in the early evening with an intergenerational atmosphere could easily change this perception. Downtown Hilo has the potential for successful “after 5” businesses that cater to the youth and university students that are active from the afternoon to late evening. Accommodating a variety of schedules by extending operations past the typical 5:00 closing time would support a more diverse population and foster a more diverse business community. This is not to say that Downtown Hilo needs to open up several watering holes, but venues for jazz, poetry, coffee, dessert only or wine bars are popular options for university students looking to get off campus and take in some cultural events after dark. Extended hours can have a rejuvenating effect on a downtown district.

The future of our world and the places we cherish and enjoy today, lies in our youth. Providing this group with a positive en-

vironment in which to learn, grow and socialize, is the ultimate expression of sustainability. Leading by example, we add value to what we say about our environment as a whole. Care of the built environment naturally engenders respect from the users of that environment.

**Recommendation 1:** Support the growth of venues that cater to high school students. Proportionally speaking, it is important to note that a simple block or two centered on one street such as Waiānuenu Avenue can be sufficient to define a district, given the current scale of downtown Hilo.

**Recommendation 2:** Consider accommodating college student needs in developing the downtown as well

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

Multiple forces have come together to create the Hilo of today. With many sacred and historic sites in and around Downtown Hilo, acknowledgement and preservation of these sites can only enhance Hilo and the life of its residents. This is an extraordinary legacy for Hilo that needs to be preserved for future generations. With the Hawaiian Cultural Renaissance, the opportunity to engage a population seldom involved with the Downtown area presents itself in a newly significant way. Currently visitors to Downtown Hilo have minimal exposure, if any, to the cultural sites and traditions in Hilo. Consider developing other cultural festivals similar to the Merrie Monarch. Cultural resource centers can also provide opportunities to engage residents and scholars while attracting visitors.

**Recommendation 1:** Engage local groups committed to cultural preservation when planning the best approach to protecting and sharing these sites with other residents and visitors alike. Create a group of stewards who will be able to enhance the value of these sites with additional activities and mentoring opportunities for younger students who want to learn traditional arts and crafts.

**Recommendation 2:** Preserve access to and around all sacred and historical sites.

### Aging Population

The benefits of a tropical climate and an easy pace of life have attracted many retirees to the Island of Hawai‘i and Hilo. Though



Downtown Hilo is not perceived as a place for young professionals, it is not always thought of as safe by the elderly either.

As the population in Hilo ages, there is increased interest to “age-in-place” and a disinclination to move out of the community. With proper planning and attention to Universal Design principles, Downtown Hilo can remain attractive for seniors as well as a younger population. As mentioned earlier, the key to success lies in fostering and supporting the connections between people through design.

Statistics confirm the importance of staying connected -- especially for those with mental impairments such as dementia or Alzheimer’s. Daily engagement with others is critical for mental fitness at any age. Our 21st century challenge lies in creating the secondary social infrastructure that can function independently of family ties but be just as meaningful and useful for all involved. Downtown Hilo, as an intergenerational space, provides an opportunity for senior residents to act as stewards of the past and mentors to younger generations. A car free lifestyle should be completely accessible for any downtown resident.

### HOMELESS POPULATION

While not a crisis situation, Hilo does have a typical homeless and drug problem proportionate in size to its downtown. A detoxification center may reduce the level of danger to residents and individuals. There are indications that a small size center would be sufficient without overwhelming the downtown. Consider a public-private partnership or the establishment of a charitable or civic organization to undertake this role in a creative way. The state health department and the local hospital can hold screenings to help identify the level of the problems and how to address them. Consider a work release arrangement where minimal lodgings are provided in exchange for gardening, trash collection, painting and other manual labor. Other options for integrating individuals in an intermediary arrangement are discussed elsewhere in the report. Local police should continue to hold the homeless accountable by learning their real names. The critical issue to consider is that many homeless people are in their current situation by choice. It might not have started that way, but socialization challenges are such that for many individuals, a permanent transition situation would be the best solution.

#### Public Restrooms

There is a clear need for public rest rooms in the downtown area. The popularity of the bay front playing fields, the Hilo Farmer’s Market and the likelihood of more tourists and increasing resident population make rest rooms a necessity. The problem is the trade-off between this need and the fact that the local homeless population tends to occupy any public facilities in a detrimental way. When the transit station is closed, travelers have no access to public restrooms which presents a real challenge for people who travel to work in Kailua-Kona. Visitors downtown have the same challenge unless they are dining in one of the restaurants.

**Recommendation 1:** As a pilot program, build a set of male/female public restrooms at the west end of downtown. These would need to be designed to be highly abuse resistant and open at bottom and top to be able to see if occupied. The restrooms should be locked after a certain hour. The reason for these features is mainly for public safety but it also discourages illicit activity, and is easier to clean.

**Recommendation 2:** Pair up another activity with the transit station so existing facilities can be open for access after hours. Provide other venues for the homeless as mentioned elsewhere in the report.

**Recommendation 3:** Engage Downtown Ambassadors to help and watch. The more eyes there are in the area, the less likely for crime to occur. These ambassadors can be a mix of youth, seniors and even a well established trustworthy homeless individual. Volunteers would benefit from an office downtown with supplies and support. Consider an expanded citizen watch group, similar to the “Aloha Patrol.” Balance the needs of all and maintain diversity. As downtown develops more residential units it will also add to the cleanliness and safety of the restrooms by reducing the expectation of complete privacy.

*“The voyage of discovery lies not in finding new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” Marcel Proust*



*Old San Juan, Puerto Rico Public Restrooms are provided for a small fee of 50 cents. A full time attendant provides supplies, maintenance and sells assorted personal care items.*





# Prioritizing Next Steps



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*You can either get the  
change you plan for  
or the change others  
give you.*



## Conclusions



The SDAT team visit confirmed the support of the EnVision Downtown Hilo 2025 Plan by the community and its stakeholders. Now is the time for Downtown Hilo to be bold and take action with significant projects of far reaching impact. To that end, we have four high priority recommendations to make.

- **Designate Downtown Hilo a historic District**
- **Develop a Form Based Code**
- **Form a Downtown Business Improvement District**
- **Relocate Bay front Highway**



Each of these should be a priority for the community and the county since their implementation will jump-start and support most goals contained in the Vision Plan. Other recommendations mentioned throughout this report can be implemented within the context of these four recommendations.

We also strongly recommend immediate action to avoid the loss of any critical parcels in the historic downtown. With an area of approximately 123 acres, Downtown Hilo is small enough that improper development of any property will have irrevocable consequences for the long term. We would be so bold as to say that there should be a moratorium on building until the first three recommendations are in place and finalized. You can either get the change you plan for, or the change others give you.

In moving forward it is important to keep in mind the following essential components of long term sustainability. Without taking in to consideration these fundamental principles, successful implementation of the EnVision Downtown Hilo 2025 will be difficult. Embrace these as an underlying approach to all that you do.

- **Population Diversity:** In all your planning, keep in mind the need to accommodate: generational, ethnic economic and occupational diversity.

- **Cultural Diversity:** Hilo's rich cultural past should be visible to visitors as well as residents. Acknowledging these contributions will increase the relevance of downtown to all.
- **The Richness of the Hilo Brand:** Affirm the value of Hilo's culture by making sure the downtown is "thick with choices". This will enhance the vibrancy of downtown for current and future generations.
- **Sustainable Thinking:** Sustainability is often a question of scale and maintaining that personal connection. Wonderful things happen in the least likely places with the most unusual partners. The diversity of participants will yield the best results. Sustainability is also about going up stream to the source of problems. Look for solutions that incorporate lasting results that restore and continually regenerate a natural balance.

As part of our recommendations we have restructured your strategic plan under different headings since many of these items fit within the context of the SDAT recommendations. In most cases, several EnVision Downtown Hilo 2025 action items will be developed and addressed within the context of one bold recommendation. It is also important to understand the interdependence of action items and how they are implemented. The intent of this restructuring is to link your goals and action items to design projects and suggestions for potential oversight. Many projects will happen simultaneously and others will evolve organically as Downtown Hilo continues to grow.

Participation will continue to be critical. A downtown is the heart and soul of many communities. In Hilo's case the historic downtown is significant for many people in different ways. Acknowledge the connection to a wider population. This will take bold action and conviction of purpose. It will also require an invitation to participate. The team has no doubt that all these goals are achievable.



Creating Economic Vitality	Preserving Environment	Sustaining Community	Education, Culture + Arts	Promoting Health + Safety	Managing Growth
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop walking access from Downtown to Hilo Bayfront.</li> <li>2. Encourage diverse, local-style festivals, events, and celebrations that attract visitors and residents.</li> <li>3. Develop new diverse commercial activities, such as boutiques and sidewalk cafés, that would help create a vibrant night life in Downtown Hilo.</li> <li>4. Promote Hilo as a globally recognized producer of unique foods, arts, crafts and other products.</li> <li>5. Promote mixed-use development in Downtown.</li> <li>6. Increase access to Downtown Hilo through a variety of transportation services.</li> <li>7. Develop a permanent major attractor in downtown to increase the number of visitors.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protect significant view corridors, including views of Mauna Kea, Mauna Loa, the Hamakua Coast, and the ocean.</li> <li>2. Restore Hilo Bay to a clean, healthy, and pollution-free state.</li> <li>3. Develop a Wailuku River Park and Trail connecting to Downtown.</li> <li>4. Beautify Downtown Hilo through landscaping, plantings and related improvements.</li> <li>5. Promote energy-efficient, non-polluting alternative transit options for Downtown Hilo, such as bicycles, trolleys, shuttles, Sampan buses, water taxis, and a train.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Honor and support Downtown Hilo’s historical, cultural, ethnic, and spiritual heritage.</li> <li>2. Develop and promote ongoing, youth-centered activities and programs.</li> <li>3. Create a public square that serves as an actively used civic gathering place.</li> <li>4. Support lower-income households through ongoing collaborative programs and activities.</li> <li>5. Promote implementation of the Downtown Hilo Vision and Living Action Plan through collaborative stakeholder efforts.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop an interpretive plan-signage program that highlights Downtown Hilo’s important historic sites + cultural monuments.</li> <li>2. Support new and existing educational programs and activities focused on Downtown Hilo’s unique crosscultural heritage, environment, cultures arts, and institutions.</li> <li>3. Support our community-centered library in Downtown Hilo.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and implement a comprehensive all-hazards preparedness and prevention plan for Downtown.</li> <li>2. Establish a comprehensive plan to make Downtown safe and inviting.</li> <li>3. Make Downtown Hilo an accessible, barrier-free community, inviting to all persons with disabilities.</li> <li>4. Promote a pollution-free downtown (noise/air/water/litter pollution).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a comprehensive growth management plan for Downtown through community + stakeholder collaboration.</li> <li>2. Preserve Downtown Hilo’s historic character and unique assets and promote renovation of its historic buildings.</li> <li>3. Establish a vehicle-free, pedestrian zone in Downtown Hilo with free public transportation.</li> <li>4. Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to provide adequate parking in + near Downtown Hilo.</li> <li>5. Develop a range of housing opportunities and choices available to all income groups.</li> </ol>



# Prioritizing EnVision Downtown Hilo 2025 Goals

## DESIGN

### URBAN DESIGN

Any future development and growth in the Downtown needs to be within the framework of a form based code that incorporates the following:

- Reduced and calibrated building height that protects view corridors to natural and significant sites. (2.22)
- An expanded Aloha Gateway Project.(1.22)
- Public squares, pocket parks and community gardens. (3.31, 2.53, 2.21, 1.63)
- Expand Downtown Hilo’s existing geographic boundaries to include the County Government area east of Ponahawai St. (6.31)
- Incorporate “smart growth” principles. (6.32)
- Establish sidewalk standards including width, options for outdoor seating, paving patterns, meter locations and curb cuts. (5.24, 5.41)
- Strategically placed parking and transportation stops to Increase accessibility to public buildings such as the Library and other culturally sites. (4.32)
- Revisit and update inventory to identify buildings, structures, and sites with historic preservation potential. (6.41, 4.21, 2.21)
- Require underground utilities for all new development. (2.23)

### URBAN FURNISHINGS

A comprehensive street lighting, signage and landscaping plan will solidify the identity of downtown. Consider partial funding through the BID. A Form Based Code should include the following:

- Interpretative signage for culturally and historically significant sites. (4.23)
- Street lighting plan (2.23, 5.23)
- Connecting bikeways, paths, or lanes. (2.12)
- Landscaping plan for Downtown Hilo. (2.51, 2.52)
- Community gardens and pocket parks. (2.53)

### TRANSPORTATION + ACCESS TO DOWNTOWN

Prioritize pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation in Downtown. Support with the following:

- Identify potential parking alternatives. (6.22)
- Develop a plan to redevelop downtown streetscapes to accommodate pedestrians, calm traffic, and promote alternative forms of transportation. (2.31)
- Bike-friendly access - bike lanes, bike racks and park + ride. (1.14, 2.32)
- Expand tour bus loading, unloading, and parking areas. (1.12)

## ARTS + CULTURE + EDUCATION

Foster and support the arts and culture through an arts + culture overlay district. Include the following programs:

- Support the development of new festivals and events, such as the Agricultural Festival and Expo in Downtown Hilo. (1.54)
- A community history project that includes oral history and historic preservation. (3.41, 4.21)

- Develop walking or self guided tours of downtown that highlight culture and history within downtown (4.23, 6.41, 4.21, 3.42)
- Further incorporate the Library and other cultural institutions with expanded hours and expanded use of program space. (4.33)
- Develop a center for Hula and other traditional Hawai’ian arts. (1.62)

## BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Forming a BID is a priority for Hilo and allows the implementation of the several of the EnVision goals and actions in a concerted and efficient way. Collectively, financial resources can be leveraged for greater impact and benefit to all. The Association that oversees the BID will be a resource for the community and oversee the actions listed below. (1.34, 3.23, 3.21)

- Develop a marketing campaign for Downtown Hilo. (1.73)
- Form alliances to develop and promote: new + existing festivals, concerts and events; “Hilo Brand” products; pre and post-convention programming; Hilo as a “Universal Access” Community. (1.72, 1.53, 1.54, 5.42)

### MARKETING AND PROMOTION

One of the most effective role for a BID is that of convener and clearing house.

- Become the source for the community calendar online and other media.(4.12)

### KEEPING DOWNTOWN CLEAN AND INVITING

As a collective, Hilo’s BID association can oversee the maintenance of the downtown area including the maintenance of landscaping, planters, lighting, interpretative signage, trash removal and recycling. (4.22)

- Create a Malama ika Aina Program to promote and educate the need for

increased recycling and discouraging trash. (5.32, 5.34, 5.31)

- Create drop centers and trash receptacles that have an option to sort for recycling. (5.33, 5.35)

### ARTS CULTURE YOUTH EDUCATION

With a BID association in place, the ideal network is already established to foster community partnerships between businesses and cultural organizations in education, the arts and culture.

- Develop a coordinated effort of community partnerships and cooperative efforts related to education culture and the arts, including: youth-centered activities and programs; new and existing festival and events . (4.11, 3.12, 3.11, 1.51)
- Produce the interpretive plan and signage to promote walking tours of downtown.(3.424.23)

### PUBLIC TRANSIT AND PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY DOWNTOWN

With an intimate knowledge of downtown resident, visitor and business owner needs, the BID association should develop the Transportation Plan. Improvements can be funded through parking meter revenue.

- Develop a pedestrian focused transportation plan. Coordinate with the Form Based Code. Develop a pilot project using an event such as “First Fridays” for a vehicle-free area as part of a promotion of pedestrian areas and walking tours. (6.11 , 3.42, 6.12, 6.21)
- Launch a downtown circulating shuttle. (1.13)
- Determine parking needs for employees, shoppers, visitors and cultural institutions. (6.21, 4.32)
- Investigate a loaner bike program for residents and visitors. (2.33)
- Determine parking needs for employees, shoppers, and visitors and incentivise remote parking for business owners. (6.21)

### HOMELESS POPULATION + PUBLIC SAFETY

Use the BID Association network to provide nontraditional opportunities to homeless and economically challenged individuals. Seize the opportunity to undertake Downtown improvements.

- Provide emergency shelter options for Downtown Hilo’s homeless community including providing bikes for remote locations(3.51, 2.33)
- Develop and promote programs to assist, support and help re-integrate Downtown’s homeless population through internships and/or employment programs for low-income people. (3.52, 3.52,)
- Develop accessible, clean, and safe public restrooms in Downtown. (5.21)
- Promote a more visible police presence in the Downtown. (5.22, 2.53)

### SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES

Policy advocacy to the community and local government on behalf of local business, community livability and downtown cultural needs will be a key role of the BID

- Research, develop and publicize incentives for downtown property owners and developers to: provide a variety of housing options in Downtown Hilo; to help develop mixed use in empty, derelict buildings and vacant lots. (6.51, 1.41, 1.42, 1.33)
- Support expansion of a “First Friday” for extended business hours. (1.31)
- Establish a permanent Farmers Market in Downtown(1.71)
- Allow a one year trial permit for portable vendors, sidewalk cafés and sidewalk vending in a small area in lieu of a study.(1.32)

### ENVIRONMENT HEALTHY HILO

- Develop a pilot clean-up project to increase visibility of the Wailuku River. (2.11)
- Identify, map, and stencil storm drains to educate the public on the impacts of pollution on Hilo Bay. (2.44)

## COUNTY REGULATIONS AND CODES

In varying degrees, most of the goals and action items of the EnVision Plan have impact beyond the Downtown area and they will need broad support to come to fruition. Specifically some actions need to be coordinated and implemented by the County or the State, such as disaster preparedness and transportation. We have listed some of these below. As an entity supporting and promoting community livability, the Downtown should be involved in all these planning efforts.

### ALL HAZARDS MITIGATION

- Develop and deliver an education program on all-hazards preparedness for Downtown. (5.12)
- Develop an evacuation plan for businesses and facilities in Downtown.(5.11)
- Revisit and update design guidelines for building renovation and construction downtown including fire prevention by design. Consider developing a compilation of model prototypes and case studies.(6.43, 5.13)



- Provide emergency shelter options for Downtown Hilo’s homeless community. (3.51)

**STORMWATER MANAGEMENT + WATER QUALITY**

- Develop a comprehensive drainage and flood abatement system for downtown.(2.42)
- Initiate community and government cleanup efforts to make the beach more

inviting . Establish a testing program to determine water quality and explore alternative methods to clean the bay and improve water circulation, including options to alter the breakwater.(2.41, 2.43)

**TRANSPORTATION**

- Launch a downtown circulating shuttle. (1.13)
- Expand Hele-On routes and stops. (1.11)

**STUDIES**

Last but not least, we have collated the remaining studies that were not directly incorporated into or priorities for the EnVision action items. As mentioned earlier, the SDAT felt strongly in its recommendations that the Downtown moved ahead with 4 big projects. The rest will follow and begin to take on a life of its own. That said, we have added a few suggestions on approached to these action items.

- Form a library committee to undertake a feasibility study for expansion of the Downtown facilities. Coordinate findings with the calibrated master plan for downtown.(4.31)
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing historical structures to assure their protection from hazards and degradation due to neglect. Study the potential for relocation of these structures outside the inundation zone. Once they are severely damaged, it will be hard to justify restoration. (4.21)
- Undertake a thorough inventory of cultural sites in and around Downtown Hilo. With community elders, develop stewards of these of these sites to make sure they are properly respected and protected. This provides a

significant opportunity to engage kua ‘ aina and others who normally do not participate in downtown(3.41).

- With information from the aforementioned studies, this provides the basis for an interpretive and other needs in Downtown Hilo. (4.22)
- Develop design options for the newly expanded Bay Front area including a downtown pier. Engineer a Highway bypass away from downtown and at risk inundation areas. (1.21, 1.15)
- Conduct a feasibility study for allowing portable vendors and sidewalk cafés and review sidewalk vending and usage constraints. Allow a one year trial permit in a small area in lieu of a study. Design guidelines will either support or hinder the success of this enterprise.(1.32)
- It is critical that any festivals be developed organically, by the community. Any programs motivated solely by tourism, or looking for the desire for that magic economic bullet will ultimately lose their long term value to the community and may possibly contribute to the loss of all that you cherish. To be truly sustainable any new programs must evolve out of need based in the community. (1.52, 1.61)

## Web Site Resources

**Center for Universal Design** - A good resource for universal design guidelines.  
<http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/>

**Waterfire Providence** - The festival website.  
<http://www.waterfire.org/>

**Natural Step Principles** - Up- stream systems thinking for sustainability. <http://www.naturalstep.org>

**Oregon Structural Specialty Code:** - An example of a building code that could be useful for Hawai 'i County [http://www2.iccsafe.org/states/oregon/07\\_Structural/Building07\\_Frameset.htm](http://www2.iccsafe.org/states/oregon/07_Structural/Building07_Frameset.htm)

**Place Economics:** <http://www.placeeconomics.com/publications.html>

**AIA programs for youth.** Examples of programs for youth around the country  
[http://www.wafonline.org/programs/ais\\_spring2005.htm](http://www.wafonline.org/programs/ais_spring2005.htm)  
[http://www.aia-mn.org/\\_assets/pdf/FinalAISWorkbook.pdf](http://www.aia-mn.org/_assets/pdf/FinalAISWorkbook.pdf)  
<http://www.afregon.org/main.php?section=education&category=schools>  
<http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=3463>

**FEMA** <http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=3463>

**Urban Land Institute** - Access to publications and information about programs. <http://www.uli.org/>

**International Downtown Association (IDA).** <http://www.ida-downtown.org>  
entitled Form Based Codes: A Guide for Planners, Urban Designers, Municipalities, and Developers, such codes:

**Congress for New Urbanism** Access to publications and information about programs.  
<http://www.cnu.org/>

**Norfolk, VA form Based Codes** - Example of form based codes as implemented in Virginia.  
[http://www.norfolk.gov/Planning/ComeHome/Pattern\\_Book.asp](http://www.norfolk.gov/Planning/ComeHome/Pattern_Book.asp)

**Louisiana Speaks Form Based Codes – Pattern Book** - Post Katrina projects written to help residents rebuild their communities.  
[http://dc.road2la.org/en/family\\_home/home/design\\_construction/Culture+Community/Pattern+Books/](http://dc.road2la.org/en/family_home/home/design_construction/Culture+Community/Pattern+Books/)

**Cohousing Communities:** Alternative home ownership options that prioritize healthy communities.  
<http://www.cohousing.org/>

[http://www.bioregional.com/programme\\_projects/opl\\_prog/principles.htm](http://www.bioregional.com/programme_projects/opl_prog/principles.htm)

**Busines Alliance for Local Living Economies**  
<http://www.livingeconomies.org/>

**The Center for the Business of Government**  
<http://www.businessofgovernment.org/>

## Books

**Senior CoHousing A community Approach to Independent Living** by Charles Durrett <http://www.cohousing.org/node/1876>

**The Great Good Place** by Ray Oldenburg Discusses the Third Place as a new social  
[http://dc.road2la.org/en/family\\_home/home/design\\_construction/Culture+Community/Pattern+Books/](http://dc.road2la.org/en/family_home/home/design_construction/Culture+Community/Pattern+Books/)

**The Transition Handbook: from oil dependency to local resilience** by Rob Hopkins An evolving exploration into the head heart and hands of energy descent. How communities can make the change.





# SDAT Team Bios



**Cooper Martin - AIA Staff Liaison.** Cooper Martin has been with the Center for Communities by Design at the AIA National Component since 2008. He is responsible for managing the Disaster Assistance network and supports the rest of the Center's work by assisting with Sustainable Design Assistance

Team (SDAT) program. Although he is the newest member of the Communities by Design team, his work for the AIA began in June of 2007 when he served a research assistant on Local Leaders in Sustainability, a series of reports published by the Government Advocacy department. His areas of interest include local sustainability programs and political process. Cooper holds a masters degree in Public Policy from American University and earned his BA in political science at the University of Kansas. Prior to moving to Washington, Cooper was active in Kansas politics and worked in the Kansas State House of Representatives. When he's not thinking about urban policy, Cooper enjoys cooking, brewing his own beer, playing ultimate frisbee and rooting for the Kansas Jayhawks.



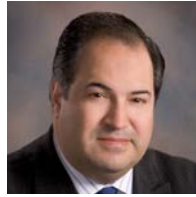
**Erica Rioux Gees - TEAM LEADER.** Initially trained as an Industrial Designer, Ms. Gees obtained her architecture degree in Switzerland at the EPF in Lausanne. For the last 19 years, she has been in private practice in Western Massachusetts. Her projects include master planning, library design, renovation and expansion of educational facilities, community and residential

design. Prior to her return to the United States she practiced architecture in Switzerland. Her public project work there included, lakefront development studies, pedestrian streetscape design and mixed use community centers. She has taught architecture and industrial design in Guatemala and has traveled extensively researching industrial design, architecture and planning in Europe and Latin America. As part of AIA's Design Assistance Programs—SDAT + R/UDAT—she has been a team leader for communities throughout the US. Ms Gees is active locally in Western Massachusetts developing public awareness and educational outreach for regional sustainability and smart growth.



**Ashley Clark, Assoc. AIA - Youth** As a young designer with multiple interests and talents within the design field, Ashley has found her role within Shook Kelley as a "Jack of all Trades." Though trained in architecture, she has an aptitude for planning, graphics and business, which gives her the ability to work on a variety of

project types. Her involvement with the AIA at both the state and national levels has given her a unique perspective of the profession, uncommon for many architects. She currently lives along Charlotte's light rail line where she can walk to a variety of amenities— including work, It's a living situation she feels is desirable to many young professionals, and will continue to become increasingly popular among other demographics in the near future.



**Gabriel Durand Hollis, FAIA, Housing and Economic Development -** Mr. Durand-Hollis has twenty-four years of professional experience in design, master planning, programming, costs estimating, and project management. In addition, his experience ranges from the renovation of the San Antonio International Airport to housing projects, warehouses and space planning, governmental and high-rise office buildings. Mr. Durand Hollis has concentrated on the business aspects of Architecture, planning and design. His firm has developed feasibility studies and estimates for a wide range of work. In addition, their forecasting and projections have proven to be fairly accurate. The firm studied demographic projections for the San Marcos independent school District for development of new campuses and much of the master plan was brought to fruition.



**Anindita Mitra, AICP - Green Trails - Pedestrian Connections - Transportation.** Anindita Mitra is a certified planner and urban designer with nearly 20 years experience in the arena of local government administration, strategic planning and comprehensive planning. She has worked in more than seven states for local, county and state government entities. During that time, she has been advocating for policies and programs that promote green, energy efficient, pedestrian and transit friendly development. She was the Chair of the Chapter's Energy Task Force and currently Co-Chairs its Climate and Sustainability Initiative. She is the Sustainability Advisor to the Municipal Research Services Center; the President of the Community Indicators Consortium; and is on the LEED-ND Corresponding Committee. Locally, she is active in planning and environmental issues and sat on the Design Commission from 2004-2007 and on the Mayor's Green Building Task Force (2008). She also volunteers for the professional organization "Seattle Great City Initiative". Trained as an architect as well as an urban designer, she has been recognized for her green building designs and plans based on sustainable and green development principles. She is the author of Painting the Town Green (RICS

Foundation, 2003) and writes occasionally for the National Civic Review,



**Jay Raskin, AIA Historic Preservation – Tsunami Mitigation + Codes.** Jay Raskin, AIA is an architect based on the northern Oregon coast. He worked in Europe and the Bay Area before opening an office in Cannon Beach. His practice is a mix of custom residential along the coast and historic preservation of commercial buildings in Astoria (one of the oldest communities in Oregon). Active in earthquake and tsunami preparedness, he has served on the local emergency preparedness committee, was selected as a reviewer on the most recent Five Year Review of the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program, and is currently working as a member of an Ad Hoc Design Team developing a conceptual design for a Cannon Beach City Hall/Tsunami Evacuation Building. Mr Raskin has also been engaged civically, having been recently on the Cannon Beach City Council both as Councilor and Mayor. Mr. Raskin has been involved in Cascadia earthquake/tsunami planning for over 15 years dealing with emergency planning issues to pre-disaster mitigation.



**Charles Terry Shook, FAIA – Urban Design - Form Based Codes.** Charles Terry Shook, FAIA, is a founding partner and principal of Shook Kelley, a Perception Design firm specializing in strategic consulting services including urban planning, design, architecture, branding, communication and interior design. Serving as principal-in-charge,

Shook runs a multi-million-dollar New Urban planning and design group with an emphasis on retail and main street development and has been recognized as a vanguard in the movement to return meaning to the urban environment.

An annual lecturer at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, Shook also serves on the board of the College of Architecture at UNC-Charlotte, from which he graduated cum laude in 1976. He is the past president of the Charlotte Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and a frequent guest lecturer for national organizations such as the Urban Land Institute, The Seaside Institute, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the International Council of Shopping Centers, among others. Shook has also served for many years as president of Berryhill Preservation Society, a non-profit revolving fund that saves historic houses in Charlotte's Fourth Ward neighborhood. He is currently president of Charlotte Trolley, Inc., dedicated to reviving vintage street car service. He has also been an Architect for over ten national registered properties in his career.

**The American Institute of Architects  
Center for Communities by Design  
Sustainable Design Assessment Team Program (SDAT)  
Downtown Hilo, May 5 – 8, 2009**

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### Major Sponsors

American Institute of Architects – Center for Communities by Design, State of Hawai'i Department of Health – Healthy Hawai'i Initiative, County of Hawai'i Planning Department, Healing Our Island Grant Fund, a State Grant in Aid project administered by the Hawai'i County, Resource Center, a program of the County Department of Research and Development

### Supporting Sponsors

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### Contributions

Big Island Delights – Jeff & Carla Takamine, Bob "Steamy" Chow County Department of Environmental Management, County Research & Development, Dr. Manu Meyer, UHH Conference Center/Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce/Dr. Walter Dudley, Hilo High School Key Club, Kapi'olani Community College – Daniel Leung, Pacific Tsunami Museum, State of Hawai'i Department of Health State of Hawai'i – HI5 Beverage Container Deposit Grant, YWCA Hawai'i Island.

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### Hawai'i Island AIA Liaisons

Scott Fleming + Rochelle Nagata-Wu

### Local Expert Resource Team

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### Downtown Hilo/Volcano Tour

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### Recorders

Christian Kay, Frecia Basilio, Nalani Parlin, Rachelle Ley, Ron Whitmore

### Public Meeting Facilitator

Kanani Aton Keli'ikoa

### Public Meeting Registration

Hilo High School Key Club – CyVan Yamamoto, Laurie Meguro, Reina Sako, Taylor Escalona

### Charrette Participants – Lead Solution Partners and Stakeholders

Alice Moon, Alice Moon & Co., Andrew Chun, KTA Superstores, Barbara Stremski, AARP, Beth Dykstra, County Research & Development, Brian Kajikawa, County Public Works, Carolina Macias, Bamboo Village Hawai'i, Chief Darryl Oliveira, County Fire Department, Chris Cholas, AARP/Hawaii Disability Rights Center, Crysttal Atkins, County Planning Department, CyVan Yamamoto, Hilo High School Key Club, Dana Okano, County Planning Department, Dennis Taniguchi, East Hawai'i Cultural Center, Donna Saiki, Pacific Tsunami Museum, Elroy Osorio, Frank DiMarco, County Public Works, Gantry Andrade, County Fire Department; George Curtis, University of Hawai'i at Hilo; Greg Peters, Connections Public Charter School; Ian Birnie, Jeff Melrose, Hilo Downtown Improvement Association; Jeffrey Mermel, Fireplace & Home Center; Jeremy McComber, Office of Housing & Community Development; John Thatcher, Connections Public Charter School; Judi Steinman, Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce; Kanani Aton, County Department of Water Supply; Kathy Kosaka, Legislative Aide to Councilman "Fresh" Onishi; Kawehi Stevens, Lindsey LLC; Keith De La Cruz, Hilo Farmers Market; Kenneth Vierra, County Police Department; Koran Munafo, Hilo Downtown Improvement Association; Kūpuna Bob "Steamy" Chow; Kūpuna Millie Uchima; Larry Black, Landscape Architect; Larry Nakayama, County Planning Department; Lauren Miyata, Hilo High School Key Club; LeAna Gloor, Green 'Aina; Linda Peters, County Department of Environmental Management; Mary Begier, Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce; Megan Kurohara, Hilo High School Key Club; Mitchell Roth, Office of the Prosecuting Attorney; Neil Erickson, Architect; Pauline Fukunaga, County Office of Aging; Quince Mento, County Civil Defense; Ron Whitmore, County Planning Department; Sam Pulu'ole, Hilo Downtown Improvement Association; Stan Tamura, State Department of Transportation; Thomas Young, Hilo Bay Watershed Advisory Group, Tip Davis; Tom Brookman, Architect, Vincent Tai, Architect; Walter Tachibana, Taishoji Soto Mission; William Derr, County Police Department

### Hospitality

AARP Chapter 655, Anne Sturgis, Beth Dykstra, Carolina Macias, Charlene Masuhara, Chris Yuen, Connections New Public Charter School, Darryl Oliveira, Donna Saiki, Ellen Takazawa, Elroy Osorio, Hans Santiago, Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce – Judi Steinman, Hilo Downtown Improvement Association, Just Fabulouso – Eric Boyd, Kaholo Daguman, Keith De La Cruz, Kylie Alexandra, Millie Uchima, Sharon Nomura, State Department of Health, Sanitation Branch – Curtis Takai, Susan Gagorik, Tom Goya

### Logistical Support

County Data Systems – Burt Tsuchiya, James Kiley, Kevin Norris, & Rose Kauhane  
County Parks and Recreation – Eydie Clay & Aubrey Summers  
County Planning Department – Hans Santiago  
County Public Works – Trevor Jackson

Downtown Hilo 'Kuka Kuka' Film: On Camera Talk Story: Dr. Manu Meyer, Ian Birnie, Tom Wolforth, Kepa Maly, Alice Moon, Production: Lokemele Davis, Ann L. Kalber

### Organizers

EDH 2025 VisionKeepers and County of Hawai'i Planning Department  
EnVision Downtown Hilo 2025 VisionKeepers Eileen O'Hara, Chair Ellen Takazawa, Treasurer Kaholo Daguman Tom Goya Kathleen Nielsen Caleb Yamanaka Susan Gagorik, Planning Department Liaison Alex Frost, Hawai'i County Resource Center Liaison Kylie Alexandra, Community Planning Assistant Marlene Murray, Document/Graphics Specialist Hans Santiago, County Planning Department Student Intern Additional Thanks Hawaii Tribune Herald Sherrie Bracken, LAVA 105  
For more information, visit our website at: <http://co.hawaii.hi.us/edh2025>. Email: [edh2025@gmail.com](mailto:edh2025@gmail.com)  
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What makes Hilo special is the authenticity--the genuine live, work, play function of town. Part of that function is the message we hear from Hilo calling out to us. To me, it's like hermeneutics, when talking about hermeneutics, it is about hearing such a call--a message that is heard through inner dialogue. It is first felt deeply, then moves to outer dialogue, and is expressed through shared values, very much like what is happening here. That message is then captured masterfully/expertly, then manifest in concert with everyday life. This is the form of Hilo's message over time--time way before us, closer to us, now, and into the future. What is the FORM of Hilo? It is right here!

What is the picture that was envisioned by those who came before us? What is that snapshot framed with? I ask these questions because we are framing the snapshot of my grandchild walking through Hilo in 2050, 2055, 2075, and on and on. Working with each and every one of the ancestors who came before is comforting. Working with each and every one of you, the team, the community, and government is invigorating because I am learning, contributing, constructing knowledge and positive emotion with others in my community.

Serving Hilo's future generations means so much to me because I can tell my grandchildren "Do not forget who you are, where you come from. Look at Hilo, this is your legacy." Let me be bold, let me be courageous now for them to step up and follow me when I need to stop.

How do we codify Hilo Maoli? We need to quietly observe, reflect, and ponder. How do we manifest the code? Show up as a supporter and lover of Hilo Maoli. Ultimately, art is what this is all about, and art, really good art is a product of sustainability.

The value of this process is having an expert bird's eye view of our home. To Hawaiians, birds were deeply revered for their natural ability to go places we couldn't. The form of Hilo has to do with water as a blessing: we need to know our connection to it, know the purity of the source, the high quality of that water, and the visual beauty of that water.



- Kanani Aton Keliikoa