

# The Maui News

## Residents weigh in on the future of West Maui

County Planning Department hosts public open house in order to share information, get feedback, as part of community plan update process



Planner Doug Miller (left) shares a laugh with Lahaina's Dawn Hegger-Nordblom and Hal Nordblom. -- The Maui News / MATTHEW THAYER photo

LAHAINA — Dozens of residents gathered Saturday at the West Maui Senior Center in Lahaina to learn about and give feedback on the impending update of the West Maui Community Plan.

The community open house was hosted by the county Department of Planning as part of an effort to share information and gather public input regarding the issues affecting West Maui and its residents. The department's Long Range Planning Division is in the process of updating the existing West Maui Community Plan; it is the first of Maui island's six regional plans to be updated since the Maui Island Plan was adopted in 2012.

Like its five counterparts, the West Maui Community Plan provides direction for future development and revitalization in the region and will inform decisions about the character of new development, land use, parks and infrastructure over the next 20 years. The plan will be updated in five phases — the first of which, a research phase, is currently underway. Subsequent phases include a series of community workshops, community plan advisory committee meetings, a review by the Maui Planning Commission and approval by the Maui County Council. All phases include a community engagement component and county departments — from parks to water to public works — will play an active and contributory role as the plan moves through each phase.

Once an initial draft of the West Maui Community Plan is completed by the Long Range Planning Division, it will be passed along to the 13-member CPAC (four members will be chosen by the mayor and nine will be selected by the Maui County Council), which will convene over a period of six months to review and make any changes or additions to the draft. During this and all remaining phases, the Department of Planning will only provide support staff and offer its recommendations as appropriate, explained Deputy Planning Director Michele Chouteau McLean. Once the draft is approved by the CPAC, it will be handed over to the Maui Planning Commission, which will have six months to make its own changes or additions before sending it to the Maui County Council for approval. The council is expected to receive the draft version of the plan by January 2019 and will have a year to review and approve it.

Updates for the remaining five regional plans will follow the same five-phase process. As established by the Maui County Council, the Kihei-Makena Community Plan is next in line to be updated, followed by the Wailuku-Kahului Community Plan, the Makawao-Pukulani-Kula Community Plan, the Paia-Haiku Community Plan and the Hana Community Plan.



Maui County Planning Department Long Range Planning Division Administrator Pam Eaton (from left) listens to concerns posed by Lahaina Canoe Club members Boi Crichton, Chad Santiago and Jeremy Delos Reyes and others during Saturday's open house for the West Maui Community Plan update at the West Maui Senior Center. -- The Maui News / MATTHEW THAYER photo

During Saturday's event, West Maui residents had an opportunity to pore over documents and maps, ask questions and offer comments to county planners. Attendees highlighted a range of issues, but new development, affordable housing and transportation emerged as top-of-mind concerns.

P. Denise La Costa, a 20-year resident of West Maui, said that she fears the region may start to look like Honolulu if new development is not kept in check.

*"I'm not happy with the exponential growth that's happening in West Maui," she said, pointing to a map depicting development projects in the area. "If we continue to develop, it's going to look like Honolulu. We need smarter growth; we should expand existing communities instead of building new ones."*

La Costa said she'd also like to see the next iteration of the West Maui Community Plan make affordable housing a top priority.

*"We need truly affordable housing here," she said, "\$400,000 for a single-family home is not affordable housing."*



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Kaanapali resident Bob Pure, who previously headed up the now-inactive Lahaina Bypass Now action group, said that he appreciated the opportunity to talk to county planners.

*"Like so many others, I'm here to listen and I'm here to learn," he said.*

Pure added that he would like the West Maui Community Plan to place a special emphasis on transportation planning.

*"We must focus on the transportation issues that affect West Maui," he said. "My No. 1 goal is to get the state to reinstate the fourth phase, Phase 1-C, of the Lahaina bypass."*

Lahaina resident Dawn Hegger-Nordblom, who commutes to Wailuku every day for work, would also like to see a concerted effort to solve West Maui's worsening traffic problem.

*"I spend two to three hours driving (each day) during the week," she said.*

And it's more than just an inconvenience, she said.

*"It affects people's quality of life," she said. "It needs to be addressed."*

Noting record-breaking king tides, wave-driven flooding and coastal erosion, Hegger-Nordblom also suggested that all of the parties involved — county planners, CPAC and Maui Planning Commission members and Maui County Council members — keep climate change in mind as they create a long-range blueprint for the region.

Lahaina resident Jeremy Delos Reyes said that he wants the updated plan to focus heavily on the preservation of West Maui's cultural sites and practices.

*"Preserving culture should supersede everything else," he said. "I also want to see a moratorium on all development until we come up with a better plan for sensible development. Right now, we don't have sensible development — it only caters to one socioeconomic class."*

Echoing the sentiments of several others in attendance, Delos Reyes expressed skepticism that the West Maui Community Plan, once completed and approved, will be followed to the letter.

*"The (Maui County) council is not following the existing plan — and if they don't follow the plan, this is all a moot point," he said.*

Delos Reyes said that he hopes more residents will get involved and attend events like Saturday's open house to stay informed and hold elected officials accountable.

Noting that community engagement plays a pivotal role in the planning process, Long Range Planning Division Administrator Pam Eaton is encouraging West Maui residents to attend a series of thematic meetings in September and October.

From 5 to 8 p.m. Sept. 12, state Department of Transportation Director Ford Fuchigami and Maui Hotel and Lodging Association Executive Director Lisa Paulson will discuss West Maui's transportation issues and solutions. On Sept. 30, the public is invited to learn about community design during an open house from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. There will be an infrastructure discussion from 5 to 8 p.m. Oct. 11, followed by a coastal resilience discussion from 5 to 8 p.m. Oct. 18. All four meetings will be held at the West Maui Senior Center, which is located at 788 Pauoa St. in Lahaina.

In an effort to gather even more public input, the Department of Planning debuted a new website, [www.wearemaui.org](http://www.wearemaui.org), on Friday. The site gives users an opportunity to learn about, and participate in, the community plan update process by taking surveys, posting comments and tracking the progress of the West Maui Community Plan through an interactive timeline.

To learn more, visit [www.wearemaui.org](http://www.wearemaui.org), [www.facebook.com/wearemaui](https://www.facebook.com/wearemaui) or send email to [wearewestmaui@mauicounty.gov](mailto:wearewestmaui@mauicounty.gov).

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