

# 1 | INTRODUCTION

Moloka`i is an island tremendously rich in natural and cultural resources. Its physical geography makes it one of the most striking places in the world to live and visit and its bountiful agricultural lands are among the most fertile in the State. Moloka`i is famous for having the highest sea cliffs in the world, the most intact pre-contact system of man-made fishponds that exist anywhere in Polynesia, [and the longest contiguous fringing coral reef system in the United States](#), ~~and it is purported in the oral tradition to be the birthplace of the Hawaiian Hula.~~

Moloka`i is often referred to as the “last Hawaiian Island”. It is the most rural of the Hawaiian Islands and [excluding Niihau](#), has the highest percentage of native Hawaiians in the State. Many Moloka`i residents still practice a subsistence based lifestyle, relying on fishing, hunting, [farming](#), and gathering for food, ~~and~~ spiritual wellbeing, [and cultural practices](#). [Subsistence and bartering also play a role in the island economy.](#) There is a strong sense of `ohana on Moloka`i. Large extended families are common and sharing resources is customary. For many Moloka`i residents maintaining close ties to the ocean, land, and ancestral places fosters a sense of place and connectedness to past, present, and future generations.

Many Moloka`i families have lived on the island for generations, while some are more recent arrivals. Key events have shaped the structure and vitality of Moloka`i’s economy and land use and in turn have influenced the population makeup and employment of the island. Today, the people, brought together from many different cultures, share common values – a love for `ohana, the land and sea, and the rural lifestyle. The tightly-knit community is mutually supportive, has an array of expertise and background, and a strong desire to be [more](#) self-reliant and sustainable.

But in spite of these great strengths, Moloka`i has historically had ~~a delicate~~ [an undiversified and unstable](#) economy [partially](#) due to the island’s remote location, small population base, and strong control by a few major landowners. Some Moloka`i residents are very protective of their rural and traditional-based lifestyles, and have resisted economic development centered on tourism and real estate. Establishing a more vibrant job producing economy in harmony with Moloka`i’s rural lifestyle, and cultural and environmental resources will necessitate more creativity, harder work, and a greater spirit of entrepreneurialism than required for other economies with greater ~~competitive advantages~~ [economies of scale](#). Moloka`i’s natural environment, cultural resources, and agricultural lands are key assets that, if properly managed and protected, will help to strengthen and diversify the island’s economy and ensure opportunities for future generations.

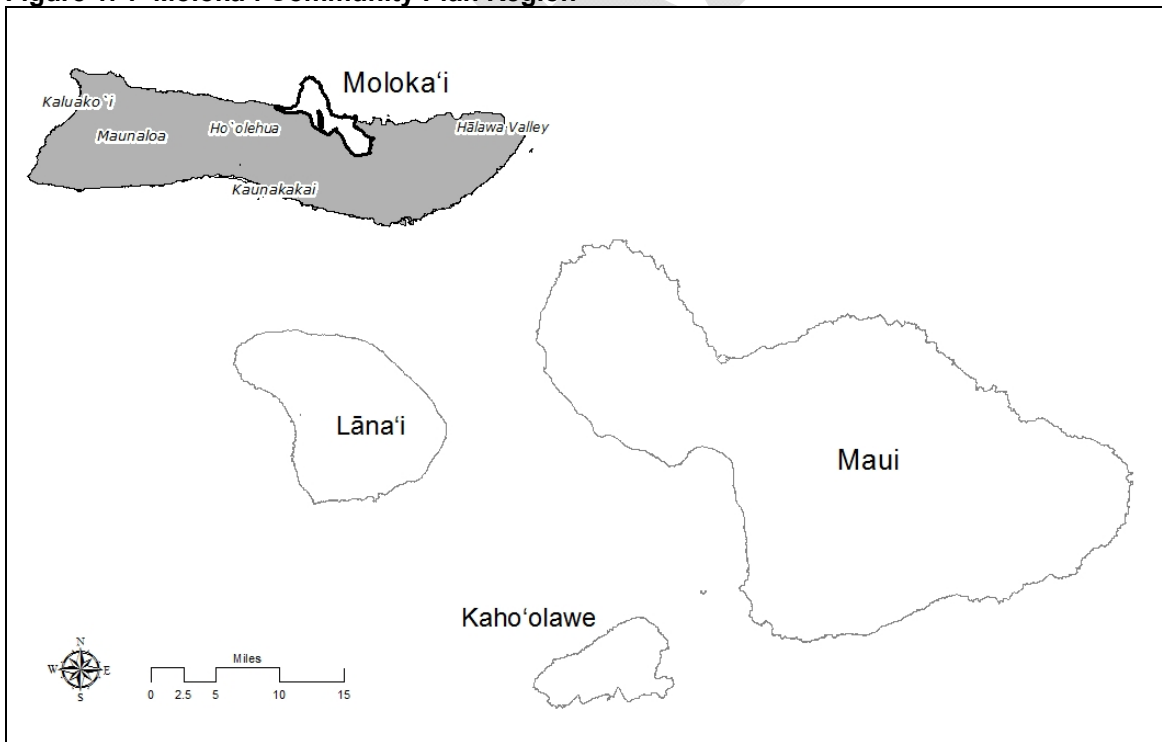
This community plan identifies current and anticipated future conditions and needs on Moloka`i. These conditions and needs are addressed throughout the plan by identifying strategic planning goals, policies, and actions that will guide decision-making and implementation through 2035. Chapter 1 provides a general description of the planning area, the planning framework provide by the Maui County General Plan and the State Plan, an overview of the community plan update process, plan organization, fast facts about Moloka`i, and a summary of the major problems and opportunities facing the island.

1 **OVERVIEW OF MOLOKA`I COMMUNITY PLAN AREA**

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4 Moloka`i is one of four islands that make up the County of Maui (see Figure 1.1). Its elongated  
5 shape embraces widely varying topographic and climatic regimes. The island of Moloka`i is  
6 comprised of approximately 172,000 acres (including the northern peninsula of Kalaupāpā)  
7 formed by a series of three volcanoes. The peninsula of Kalaupāpā, and some of the surrounding  
8 area on the northern coast make up Kalawao County, which is administered by the State of  
9 Hawaii's Department of Health.

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11 Kaunakakai, the island's major population and commercial center, is located about midway along  
12 the south coast. The island's only resort destination area is located at Kaluako`i, on the western  
13 end of the island. [Hotel Moloka`i, just outside of Kaunakakai, also offers limited visitor](#)  
14 [accommodations.](#) ~~There are~~ small plantation communities ~~in~~ Maunaloa and Kualapu`u ~~are~~  
15 ~~located in the central plain,~~ along with Hawaiian homestead settlements ~~in~~ Ho`olehua,  
16 [Kapa`akea, Kamiloloa,](#) and Kalamaula. The settlement pattern along the southeast coast which  
17 becomes more rural and scattered as it extends from Kaunakakai to Hālawā Valley. (See  
18 Appendix 1.1 for a summary of Moloka`i history).

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21 **Figure 1.1 Moloka`i Community Plan Region**



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## FAST FACTS ABOUT MOLOKA`I

### PHYSICAL FEATURES:

- Moloka`i is 261 square miles or 172,000 acres (includes Kalaupapa)
- The island is about 38 miles long and 10 miles wide with 88 miles of coastline
- It is the fifth largest island of the eight main Hawaiian Islands
- The highest elevation is 4,970 feet (1,514 meters)

### POPULATION / DEMOGRAPHICS (2010 Census):

- 2010 population was 7,255 residents (excluding Kalawao County); a decrease of approximately 150 people from 2000
- Population by Age – 0 to 9 years: 15%; 10 to 19 years: 14%; 20 to 59 years: 47%; 60 years and over: 24%
- Average daily visitor count in 2012 was 707 and there were 429 visitor units

### FLORA AND FAUNA

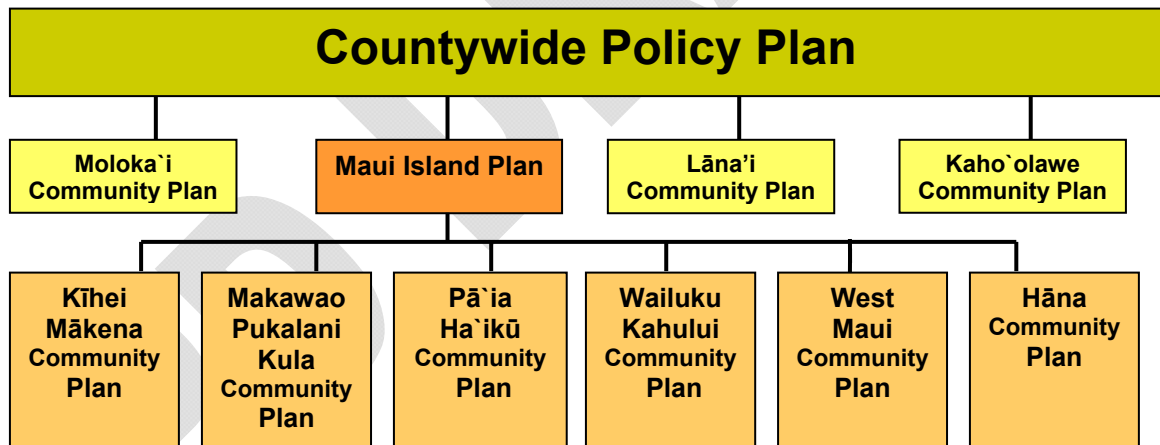
- ~~248 Hawaiian endemic species of flowering plants of which 39 are~~ [Listed under the Endangered Species Act, Molokai has 79 endangered and three threatened terrestrial species and 11 endangered and two threatened marine species.](#) ~~endangered and 25 are endemic to Moloka`i~~
- East Moloka`i Forest Conservation Area is comprised of 40,000 acres
- Moloka`i's south shore has the longest continuous fringing [coral reef in Hawaii the U.S.](#)
- Papohaku Beach is one of the state's longest white sand beaches
- Nature Conservancy [and Molokai Land Trust's](#) Mo`omomi Preserve [and Mokia Preserve](#) contains sand dunes, lithified sand formations, rare endemic Hawaiian coastal plant species, nesting seabirds and green sea turtles, ~~and~~ the occasional Hawaiian monk seal, [and Hawaiian cultural sites.](#)

1 **1.1 MAUI COUNTY GENERAL PLAN STRUCTURE**  
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4 **A. GUIDANCE FROM THE COUNTYWIDE POLICY PLAN AND THE STATE PLAN**  
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6 The County of Maui General Plan consists of three parts: (1) the Countywide Policy Plan, (2) the  
 7 Maui Island Plan, and (3) nine community plans (see Figure 1.2). The General Plan, adopted in  
 8 1980 and updated in 1990, sets forth the long-term social, economic, environmental, and land  
 9 use needs of the County. A General Plan update included the Countywide Policy Plan adoption in  
 10 2010, the Maui Island Plan adoption in 2012, and initiation of community plan updates in 2010.  
 11 The General Plan supports the Hawai`i State Plan and coordinates with the State Functional  
 12 Plans. In 2011, the priority guidelines and principles from the Hawai`i 2050 Sustainability Plan  
 13 promoting sustainability were adopted as an amendment (Act 181) to the State Plan. In 2012, the  
 14 State Climate Change Adaptation Priority Guidelines (Act 286) were adopted. The adaptation  
 15 policy specifies that county or state plans must address potential climate change impacts to  
 16 agriculture, conservation lands, coastal and nearshore areas, natural and cultural resources,  
 17 energy, the economy, and many other factors. Chapters 2 and 4 discuss how these two recent  
 18 acts influence or shape the Community Plan.  
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20 **Figure 1.2 County of Maui General Plan Organization**  
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 25 From 2004 to 2012 the Maui County Code (MCC) was modified to create new requirements  
 26 within Chapter 2.80B (General Plan and Community Plans). Section 2.80B.070 provides the  
 27 specific requirements for the community planning process, including requiring that the community  
 28 plans implement the Countywide Policy Plan's vision, principles, goals, and policies relating to the  
 29 following core themes:  
 30

- 31 • Protect the Natural Environment
- 32 • Preserve Local Cultures and Traditions
- 33 • Improve Education

- 1 • Strengthen Social and Healthcare Services
- 2 • ~~Promote Sustainable Land Use and Growth~~
- 3 • Expand Housing Opportunities for Residents
- 4 • Strengthen the Local Economy
- 5 • Improve Parks and Public Facilities
- 6 • Diversify Transportation Options
- 7 • ~~Improve Physical Infrastructure Management~~
- 8 • Promote Sustainable Land Use and Growth Management
- 9 • Strive for Good Governance

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12 **B. THE 2016 MOLOKA`I COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE**

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The Moloka`i Community Plan was initially adopted in 1984, and first updated in 2001. This 2016 Moloka`i Community Plan updates the 2001 plan with the new requirements of MCC 2.80B. New plan elements required by MCC 2.80B include:

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- 18 ~~1) A statement of the social, economic, and environmental effects of development~~
- 19 ~~2) The desired sequence, patterns, and characteristics of future development~~
- 20 ~~3) A statement of urban and rural design principles and objectives~~
- 21 ~~4) 1) A list of scenic sites and resources~~
- 22 ~~5) 2) A description of a projected multi-modal transportation system~~
- 23 ~~6) A statement of desired population density including visitors and residents~~
- 24 ~~7) 3) A list of streetscape and landscaping principles and desired improvements~~
- 25 ~~8) 4) Implementation requirements that identify priorities, timelines, estimated costs, and the~~  
County department accountable for the completion

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To update the Moloka`i Community Plan the Planning Department’s Long Range Division worked with the Moloka`i community, stakeholders, agencies, the Moloka`i Community Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC), the Moloka`i Planning Commission, and the Maui County Council between 2010 and 2016. Technical studies and issue papers referenced during the update process are identified in Appendix 1.2.

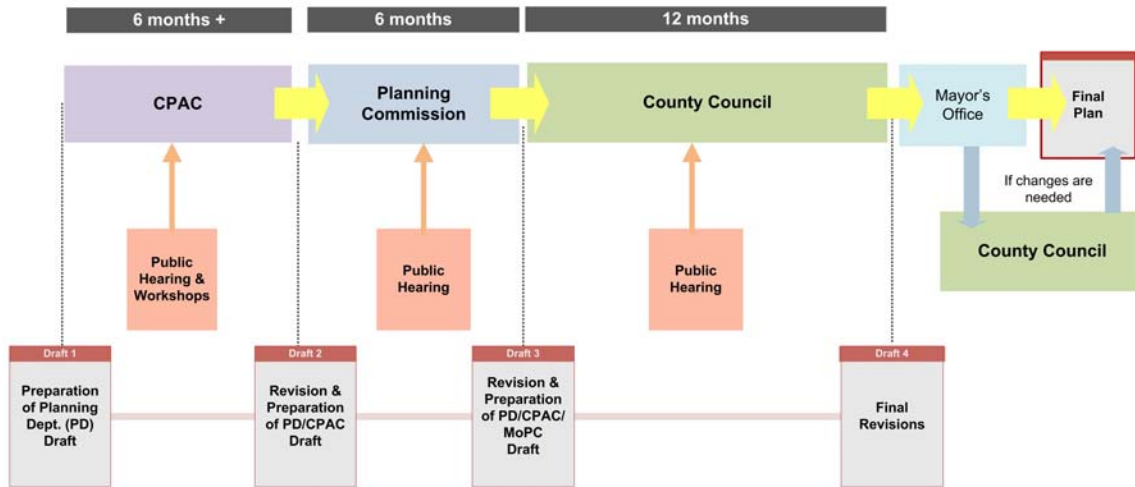
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MCC 2.80B specifies that the CPAC be composed of thirteen members appointed by the County Council and the Mayor. Planning Department staff and the CPAC have up to 180 days to conduct meetings and workshops that include public participation in the update.

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The CPAC's recommendations were forwarded to the Moloka`i Planning Commission for public hearing and review (up to 6 months), then sent with Planning Department comments or revisions to the County Council for further review and adoption by ordinance (up to one year). This process is summarized graphically in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3 Generalized Planning Process & Schedule



Prior to embarking on the Community Plan update, the Planning Department's Long Range Division conducted four community engagement events and numerous interviews to hear directly from residents about their ideas and concerns. The events included (see Appendix 1.3):

- June 2010 - Open house on issues, needs, and ideas
- October 2010 - Two workshops on vision, issues, goals, and strategies
- November 2014 - Open house to present the feedback from previous events

**C. PLAN ORGANIZATION**

The 2016 Moloka`i Community Plan Update is organized into ten chapters with maps and appendices. Chapter 1 provides an introduction, followed by Chapter 2 which explores Moloka`i's future vision, and discusses sustainability and climate change adaptation. Each of Chapters 3 to 9 address the core themes and provides the background, existing conditions, issues, and goals, policies and actions.

Goals are intended to describe a desirable condition of the island by the year 2035. They are intentionally general, but are attainable. Policies are not intended as regulations, but instead provide general guidelines for County decision makers, departments, and collaborating organizations working toward attainment of the goals. Implementing actions are specific tasks, procedures, programs, or techniques that carry out policies. Actions may be implemented by the lead County agency or by another entity, such as the State or non-profit groups assisted by the County agency. This The Moloka`i Community Plan is not intended to be used in the review of applications for "ministerial permits" - a permit that does not involve judgment or discretion and is issued based on established criteria or a set of adopted standards as established by law.

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2 Chapters 3 and 4 discuss Moloka'i's environment, and natural, cultural, historic, and scenic  
3 resources, as well as hazard mitigation and climate change adaptation.  
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5 Chapter 5 discusses economic development strategies to diversify the economy based on the  
6 Molokai'i Economic Development Issue Paper and feedback from community engagement  
7 events and interviews.  
8  
9 Chapters 6 and 7 discuss land use, housing, and community design policies and actions that  
10 will shape the future location and form of development.  
11  
12 Chapters 8 and 9 discuss the existing and future needs for infrastructure and public facilities  
13 and services. The governance section looks at what changes in the system and function of  
14 governance are needed to guide the community toward a sustainable future.  
15  
16 Chapter 10 discusses implementation and monitoring and also prioritizes the list of actions  
17 from previous chapters with—including cost estimates, timelines, and the implementing  
18 agency. The implementation table will facilitate funding decisions during the County budget  
19 process.  
20

## 1.2 PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### INTRODUCTION

The following outline of the problems and opportunities that Moloka`i faces represents not only issues that the county government must address but also top concerns expressed by the community through public outreach events and deliberations of the Community Plan Advisory Committee and Moloka`i Planning Commission.

It is important to clearly define a problem in order to figure out how to solve it, likewise, it is also important to have a critical understanding of opportunities that exist within the community and how to best take advantage of them in order to create a more sustainable, resilient, and livable future for Moloka`i.

### PROBLEMS

- A. ~~Economic Opportunities—Activity and Employment—Socio-Economic Characteristics:~~ ~~Limited—A lack of~~ economic ~~activity~~ ~~opportunity~~ is one of the most significant problems facing the community. There is a lack of ~~economies of scale and economic diversity, and therefore a lack of job opportunities.~~ Moloka`i has lower incomes, higher unemployment rates, and a higher number of people receiving public assistance when compared statewide. ~~In addition, the average educational level is relatively low.~~<sup>1</sup> ~~These socio-economic challenges have contributed to the occurrence of substance abuse, domestic violence, crowding, and generational welfare.~~
- B. ~~Common Vision:~~ ~~One of the critical issues identified in the Molokai Economic Development Issue Paper is to resolve the divisions within the community and define what trade-offs residents are willing to make. Until this is done, it may be difficult for the county and for the business community to make the investments that are needed to establish a more diverse economy.~~  
Low Education Level: ~~The average education level on Moloka`i is relatively low when compared to the rest of the State. While some youth pursue higher education and are able to live and work on Moloka`i, many do not obtain post-high school education, or choose not to return to the island after college. This creates a “brain drain” in the community that directly impacts the economic vitality of Moloka`i.~~
- C. ~~Water—Infrastructure:~~ Water is essential ~~for every-day life, natural systems, agriculture, and especially for~~ economic growth on Moloka`i. ~~According to the County Department of Water Supply, the issue for the island is not a lack of~~ ~~Moloka`i has sufficient water supply to meet current demand;~~ ~~however critical water issues include~~ ~~—but~~ the cost of storage and distribution infrastructure, ~~ensuring aquifer~~

<sup>1</sup> John M. Knox & Associates, Inc. (December 2010). *Moloka`i Economic Development Issue Paper*.



1 [sustainability and water quality, and determining allocations for multiple users as](#)  
2 [demand grows in the future.](#)

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4 **D. Transportation:** [As one of the least populated islands in the most isolated island](#)  
5 [chain in the world, Moloka`i suffers from expensive transportation costs for freight,](#)  
6 [goods, and people. Limited freight transportation to and from the island contributes](#)  
7 [to higher costs for groceries, fuel, and other goods and complicates the export of](#)  
8 [Moloka`i produce. Limited airline and ferry transportation options impact both the](#)  
9 [ability of tourists to visit the island as well as opportunities for residents to travel off-](#)  
10 [island.](#)

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12 **C.E. Cost of Energy:** [Moloka`i faces some of the highest electrical costs in the](#)  
13 [nation which presents challenges for businesses and residents.](#)

14  
15 **D.F. Erosion and Sedimentation:** Erosion is an ~~major~~ issue on Moloka`i which  
16 is negatively impacting soils, streams, fishponds, wetlands, coastal waters, and reefs.  
17 [While erosion is being actively addressed by a number of organizations and](#)  
18 [partnerships, continued work is needed to address this problem.](#) Erosion is caused  
19 by [run-off and](#) a number of land use activities including ranching, farming, and  
20 development, as well as forest damage caused by feral ungulates. Siltation of  
21 Moloka`i's reefs and coastal waters is having detrimental effects on fish, limu, and  
22 other ocean resources which the Moloka`i community depends on for subsistence  
23 fishing and gathering.

24  
25 **E.G. Housing:** The availability of workforce housing and the variety of housing  
26 types on the island are limited. There is a lack of entitled land to build new housing  
27 and there is a limited variety of housing types available to meet the needs of Moloka`i  
28 residents.

29  
30 **F.H. Climate Change:** Climate change will become increasingly serious before  
31 the middle of the 21st century and will impact Moloka`i's economy, the built  
32 environment, historic and cultural resources, infrastructure systems, and ecosystems  
33 and natural resources.

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36 **OPPORTUNITIES**

37  
38 **A. Strong Caring Community:** Moloka`i is a special place with a distinctly rural  
39 Hawaiian lifestyle. ~~Based on several community workshops and interviews, it's clear~~  
40 ~~that a slow and cautious approach to future development on the island is preferred by~~  
41 ~~many. As noted in Moloka`i, Future of A Hawaiian Island, the vision for the island "is~~  
42 ~~based on the values of pono and aloha 'aina".~~

1 ~~Future growth on the island should build on Moloka`i's strengths while maintaining~~  
 2 ~~Moloka`i's uniqueness. The open, uncrowded and undeveloped nature of Moloka`i,~~  
 3 ~~as well as its clean air and water and abundant subsistence resources are valuable~~  
 4 ~~assets.~~ Unlike many other places, residents still help each other with no strings  
 5 attached. There are an abundance of community luaus, and a significant number of  
 6 extended families living together or in close proximity. There is a feeling of sharing,  
 7 belonging and community which should be preserved.  
 8

9 **B. Cultural Resources and Traditions:** Moloka`i has an abundance of cultural and  
 10 archaeological resources and a strong connection with cultural traditions and  
 11 practices that provide a solid foundation for the future. ~~The island is purported in oral~~  
 12 ~~tradition as the birthplace of hula; it has over 100 sites on the National Register of~~  
 13 ~~Historic Places distributed throughout the island.~~ As a result, development of a new  
 14 model of sustainable tourism appears to be a real possibility. This alternative  
 15 approach described in the *2006 Moloka`i Responsible Tourism Initiative*<sup>2</sup> is based on  
 16 the distinctive characteristics and attributes of the island  
 17

18 **C. Distinctive Rural Character:** Moloka`i's natural beauty, ~~and rural character, were~~  
 19 ~~noted as a key assets in the 2001 Community Plan and they continue to be~~  
 20 ~~major attributes~~ of the island. Unlike other islands in the state, Moloka`i's beaches  
 21 are still generally accessible and uncrowded. In addition, the rural character and  
 22 genuine sense of aloha is a draw for many visitors, affording an experience that is  
 23 different from other islands. ~~Based on several community workshops and interviews,~~  
 24 ~~it's clear that a slow and cautious approach to future development on the island is~~  
 25 ~~preferred by many. Future growth on the island should build on Moloka`i's strengths~~  
 26 ~~while maintaining Moloka`i's uniqueness.~~  
 27

28 **D. Entrepreneurial Spirit:** Many of Moloka`i's residents live there because they value  
 29 the sense of community and lifestyle of the island. Since employment opportunities  
 30 are limited, many residents have turned to starting and running their own businesses.  
 31 This trend is evident in Kaunakakai, where almost all of the businesses are owned by  
 32 local residents, some of whom have successfully maintained their operations over  
 33 several decades.  
 34

35 **E. Community Environmental Restoration:** ~~There are various ongoing programs and~~  
 36 ~~partnerships to restore Moloka`i's watersheds and ecosystems. Environmental~~  
 37 ~~restoration is an opportunity for the community, youth, large landowners, and~~  
 38 ~~government agencies to share common goals of restoring and protecting Moloka`i's~~  
 39 ~~environment. Working together will not only accelerate environmental restoration but~~

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<sup>2</sup> McGregor, Davianna Pomaikai, PhD (2006). *Molokai Responsible Tourism Initiative – A Community Based Visitor Plan for Molokai*.

1 will also help build trust between different groups, foster a sense of stewardship  
2 responsibility, and expose youth to careers in environmental restoration.

3  
4 **D.F. Natural Environment:** Moloka`i's natural environment offers many  
5 opportunities to move toward a more sustainable future. With abundant agricultural  
6 lands, year-round growing season, and adequate supply of water Moloka`i has the  
7 capacity to grow produce for both on-island consumption and export. Subsistence  
8 resources are relatively abundant and support an integral component of the Moloka`i  
9 lifestyle. Additionally, numerous opportunities exist to produce renewable energy on-  
10 island.

PD DRAFT