

STATE OF HAWAII OFFICE OF PLANNING  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MEMORANDUM

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AUTHORITIES: State Planning, HRS Chapter 225M; Hawaii State Planning Act, HRS Chapter 226; Hawaii Land Use Law, HRS Chapter 205

SUBJECT: Priority guidelines and principles to promote sustainability

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The Office of Planning provides technical assistance to state and county agencies in administering the statewide planning system.<sup>1</sup> This technical advisory discusses a “priority guideline.” Priority guidelines provide guidelines for decision-making by the State and the counties for the immediate future and set priorities for the allocation of resources.<sup>2</sup> State functional plans, county general plans and development plans, and state programs (including state budgetary, land use, and other decision-making processes) must consider priority guidelines.<sup>3</sup>

Pursuant to Act 181, Session Laws of Hawaii 2011, the Hawaii State Planning Act provides the policy framework establishing sustainability as a state priority to ensure a coordinated and coherent approach to fulfilling the long-range vision for a sustainable Hawaii.

Under the Act, Sustainability is defined as follows:

- (1) Respect of the culture, character, beauty, and history of the State’s island communities;*
- (2) Striking a balance between economic, social, community, and environmental priorities; and*
- (3) Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.<sup>4</sup>*

The priority guideline for sustainability is as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> HRS §§ 225M-2(b), 226-53(10).

<sup>2</sup> HRS §226-52.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> HRS § 226-2.

***Sustainability.*** *Priority guidelines and principles to promote sustainability shall include:*

- (1) Encouraging balanced economic, social, community, and environmental priorities;*
- (2) Encouraging planning that respects and promotes living within the natural resources and limits of the State;*
- (3) Promoting a diversified and dynamic economy;*
- (4) Encouraging respect for the host culture;*
- (5) Promoting decisions based on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations;*
- (6) Considering the principles of the ahupuaa system; and*
- (7) Emphasizing that everyone, including individuals, families, communities, businesses, and government, has the responsibility for achieving a sustainable Hawaii.<sup>5</sup>*

To address the principles and priority guidelines for sustainability, the Office of Planning recommends that decision-makers consider a sustainability plan or relevant elements thereof as part of program and plan development. In state and county land use approvals, a sustainability plan or relevant elements thereof should be included as part of the applicant's submission for approval (e.g., in environmental assessments or in petitions for district boundary amendment to the State Land Use Commission submitted pursuant to HRS Chapter 205). This will help ensure that sustainability considerations are incorporated early in planning process for programs and land use developments subject to approval.

A sustainability plan should address the following areas as applicable:

#### **A. Sustainable Development**

The applicant and the approving agency should consider the project's contribution to creating a high quality of life and a mutually supportive balance among environmental, economic, and social equity concerns, as enumerated in HRS § 226-108. Existing regulatory criteria frequently include these elements, which can be referenced in a section specifically addressing Act 181.<sup>6</sup>

#### **B. Smart Growth and Livability Principles**

Development decisions touch people's everyday lives, including their homes, their health, the schools their children attend, the taxes they pay, their daily commute, the natural

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<sup>5</sup> HRS § 226-108.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., HRS § 205-17, Land use commission decision-making criteria; HRS §205A-26, Special management area guidelines.

environment around them, and economic growth in their community. Land use-related activities should at least consider the following based on Smart Growth and Livability Principles:

1. **Provide more transportation choices.** Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce Hawaii's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.<sup>7</sup>
2. **Promote equitable, affordable housing.** Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.<sup>8</sup>
3. **Enhance economic competitiveness.** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.<sup>9</sup>
4. **Support existing communities.** Target infrastructure investment toward existing communities (through strategies like transit oriented and mixed-use development) to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments.<sup>10</sup>
5. **Coordinate and leverage State, County, and Federal policies and investment.** Align state, county, and federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> HRS §§ 226-17, 226-18.

<sup>8</sup> HRS § 226-106.

<sup>9</sup> See *Leveraging State Agency Involvement in Transit-Oriented Development to Strengthen Hawaii's Economy*, Office of Planning, Dec. 12, 2012, available at <http://planning.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Hi-State-TOD-Strategies-Final-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> See *Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)*, Office of Planning, (Sept. 9, 2013, 8:00 AM), <http://planning.hawaii.gov/spb/transit-oriented-development>.

<sup>11</sup> See *Transportation*, Hawaii Clean Energy Initiative, (Sept. 9, 2013, 10:00 AM), <http://www.hawaiicleanenergyinitiative.org/transportation>.

6. **Value communities and neighborhoods.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods.<sup>12</sup>
7. **Compact Building Design.** Design communities to preserve more open space with compact building designs that make efficient use of land and resources.
8. **Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.** Preserve natural areas that provide important community space, habitat for plants and animals, recreational opportunities, places of natural beauty, and critical environmental areas. Protect farm and agricultural lands and promote locally grown foods.<sup>13</sup>
9. **Promote community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.** Promote an inclusionary process with a common understanding among diverse stakeholders using effective communication techniques.
10. **Preserve and perpetuate our island cultural values.** Consider the ahupuaa management concept to integrate resource management decisions from the mountains to the sea.<sup>14</sup>

### C. Resource Conservation

1. **Energy Efficiency** – incorporate energy efficiency measures in the design, construction, and operation of project/site, infrastructure, and buildings, and use renewable energy generation.
2. **Water Efficiency** – incorporate water efficiency measures in the design, construction, and operation of project/site, infrastructure, and buildings, including irrigation and landscaping, and use of non-potable water.
3. **Waste Management** – implement solid and liquid waste management, recycling, and reuse.

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<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., *Hawai'i Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan 2013-2020*, Haw. Dep't of Health (2013), available at <http://hawaii.gov/health/family-child-health/chronic-disease/pdf/panplan.pdf> (includes State health policies related to Community Design and Access).

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., *Increased Food Security and Food Self-Sufficiency Strategy*, Office of Planning, October 2012, available at <http://planning.hawaii.gov/spb>.

<sup>14</sup> HRS §226-2: "Ahupuaa" means a traditional native Hawaiian resource and behavioral management system that ensures respect for the air, land, water and other scarce natural resources that make life sustainable from the mountains to the sea.

4. **Low Impact Development** – incorporate site design, green infrastructure, and structural best management practices to increase on-site infiltration and reduce off-site flows and pollution from stormwater runoff.<sup>15</sup>
5. **Climate Change and Hazard Mitigation** – provide mitigation and adaptation strategies to address the potential risks from natural or man-made hazards, including new or intensified hazards resulting from climate change. These include sea-level rise, hurricanes, tsunamis, drought, wildfires, storm flooding, and coastal erosion.<sup>16</sup>

#### **D. Green Building Standards**

Hawaii's overall goal for energy efficiency is to meet the Energy Efficiency Portfolio standard of 30% by reducing electricity demands by 2030. The Hawaii State Energy Office of the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, has several recommendations and programs related to achieving building efficiency on its Web page entitled, Lead by Example for Government Agencies, at <http://energy.hawaii.gov/lead-by-example>.

The use and pursuit of green building standards such as U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or similar are encouraged in attaining sustainable community and building designs.

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<sup>15</sup> See *Low Impact Development a Practitioner's Guide*, Haw. CZM Program, June 2006, at <http://planning.hawaii.gov/czm/initiatives/low-impact-development>.

<sup>16</sup> See *Adapting to Climate Change*, Office of Planning, (Sept. 9, 2013, 8:00 AM), <http://planning.hawaii.gov/czm/initiatives/adapting-to-climate-change-2>.