

'WalkStory' allows community input on General Plan

By KRISTA WALTON, Staff Writer

Tuesday, June 20, 2006 9:50 AM

WAILUKU – It's an opportunity to make a difference for residents who want to preserve Maui's resources and contribute to the shaping of the island's future.

The program being held Saturday is "WalkStory," a series of public sessions sponsored by Maui County and hosted by Focus Maui Nui offering anyone who wants to walk in to speak directly to county planners on issues they consider important.

Participants can attend any of three two-hour sessions – from 10 a.m. to noon, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. or noon to 2 p.m. – all being held at Iao Intermediate School.

The goal of WalkStory is twofold, says Kathleen Ross Aoki of the county's Division of Long-Range Planning.

One aim is provide a forum for county planners to inform residents about the preparation of the county's "General Plan 2030." Secondly, it will give residents an opportunity to tell the planners what they want to see in the future for Maui.

"This is an event where people can talk to the planning department about any concerns they have – traffic, water, elderly care, police services," says Aoki. Heritage preservation, education, growth boundaries and the economy are all prevalent issues that will be the focus of the event, but Aoki says participants can bring up any and all issues that concern them.

"It's very much an open forum," she says. "If they come to WalkStory, their involvement doesn't end there. They will walk out knowing how to talk to the county about their concern, and they can share that information with others who perhaps couldn't attend WalkStory."

The event is intended to attract a diverse cross section of Maui's community, with notices about the event issued to most of the people, young and old, who participated in the Focus Maui Nui forums held last year.

"Of course I'd like to express my concerns, but I'm also interested in hearing what other people think is important," says Jani Sheppard, chief executive officer for Maui Family Support Services.

At WalkStory, Sheppard hopes to talk about how the county and community can support and strengthen families and children.

"It's a chance to dialogue, and that's really exciting," she said.

Also planning to attend is 16-year-old Kihei resident Monica Garcia, a member of the Focus Maui Nui Youth Alliance, who says young people are also concerned with the island's future.

"I want future generations who live on Maui to be able to grow up the way I did," she says. "We talk about housing and development. . . . We love the environment here, and we don't want the natural beauty of Maui to be overtaken by buildings."

Glenn Shishido, forest management supervisor for the Maui District Division of Forestry and Wildlife for the state Department of Land and Natural Resources, said he's concerned about economic issues and the environment.

He plans to attend WalkStory to have an impact on the long-range planning process.

"It's an way for people to influence Maui's future and keep abreast of what's going on in the community," Shishido adds.

The county's General Plan, which serves as a guideline for Maui County's growth, is undergoing an update now, with a Maui General Plan Advisory Committee opening a review that will lead to recommendations for the new General Plan 2030.

Public comments during the WalkStory project and related community sessions will also be provided as input on the final recommendations to the county planning commissions and County Council in finalizing the county General Plan.

For more information or to register, call 875-2388.

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