



Focus Maui Nui Summary

Focus Maui Nui is the response to a community-wide concern that Maui County lacked a defined vision for the future. Frustrated with often contentious planning processes, residents agreed the islands and people that comprise Maui Nui needed a plan that would provide a vision for all communities and a creative set of actions to tackle over the coming years.

From May through August 2003, the people of Maui Nui engaged in a groundbreaking process to define a vision for their future. Focus Maui Nui brought approximately 1,700 residents into an intensive participatory process, emphasizing the importance of local needs and priorities. Representing all planning districts and the islands' broad range of demographic groups, participants articulated the values they believed should guide Maui Nui, the challenges the islands face, strategies for addressing these challenges, and a set of broad and diverse actions involving participation by all residents, businesses, and government.

During the two-hour Focus Maui Nui sessions, small groups of 10-15 participants were asked to identify and group together areas of need. Seven distinct categories emerged: *economic, environmental, human service-related, educational, cultural, political, and infrastructure-related*. Because some of these areas of need competed with others for resources and attention, participants recommended planning and decisionmaking with a balanced approach. Participants recommended that everyone – residents, government, businesses, educators, the media, and youth – needed to play a role in building a productive future for Maui Nui. The importance of ongoing dialogue, civic engagement, and shared commitment to Maui's future was stressed.

A number of key strategies for action were identified to shape the future that participants envisioned:

1. To foster the development of young people, to create more economic options down the road, and to strengthen the ability of local residents to direct the islands' future, the first priority is to **improve education**. Recommendations range from K-12 reform to the establishment of a public university.
2. To ensure that precious resources exist for future generations, to preserve the beauty of the islands, and to maintain the distinct rural identity and tradition of Maui Nui, the second priority is to **protect the natural environment**, including **addressing water needs**.
3. To maintain the quality of life on the islands and to ensure local residents have the chance to own their own homes and to move easily throughout the islands, **infrastructure challenges, particularly housing and transportation, must be addressed**.



4. To supply quality jobs for local residents, broaden the tax base, and provide Maui Nui with financial resources to accomplish its other goals, another priority is to **adopt targeted economic development strategies** that support and enhance the needs and desires of residents.
5. To pass history and culture to future generations and to ensure a healthy community in years ahead, Maui Nui must take steps to **preserve local culture and traditions** and to **address human needs**, particularly the epidemic of substance abuse among young people.

Overwhelmingly, participants in Focus Maui Nui expressed a sense of optimism that the islands could become a model for clean, sustainable living and a place where every child could grow to lead a successful and productive life amongst family on the islands. By bringing into balance the needs of the land and its people and involving the entire community in the achievement of a shared vision, participants believed the opportunity exists to protect treasured natural and cultural assets, while also investing in the best potential of Maui Nui.

Focus Maui Nui will now move into a new phase of outreach and implementation – encouraging residents, business, government, nonprofits – youth and seniors – to become involved in building Maui Nui in a way that reflects the values and concerns of residents, and encouraging decisionmakers to heed the priorities of Focus Maui Nui: to put the interests of residents first and to recognize the importance of *our islands, our future*.

To participate in Focus Maui Nui, contact Maui Economic Development Board at 875-2300 or info@focusmauinui.com.