



# HĀMĀKUA:


## Community Strengths, Needs and Opportunities

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*April 2019*



Hāmākua  
Institute



Established in 2016, the Hāmākua Institute supports social and economic development through collective action. Although based in Hawai'i, the Institute primarily works overseas in regions facing poverty and conflict to bring together communities, businesses, and governments to create healthier, more prosperous societies. Fundamental to this work is ensuring different viewpoints from community members, business professionals, elected leaders, and those responsible for implementing policy are considered when analyzing development challenges and proposing solutions. This participatory approach, which focuses on greater inclusivity to hopefully provide more opportunity for collective agreement, was used when completing this assessment.



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# INTRODUCTION

As a recently established nonprofit, the Hāmākua Institute began a collective assessment process in 2017 to better understand the strengths and needs of the Hāmākua region. As part of the assessment, the Institute wanted to identify ways of assisting local communities in implementing actions from the Community Development Plan (CDP) and determining where shared interest and support for collective action overlapped.

The assessment process applied a participatory approach by gathering different community perspectives through interviews and focus groups. Representatives from local nonprofits, academia, county government, and the business community provided strategic guidance to the Institute while undertaking the assessment. Ideas on who to interview and key questions to ask were developed during a planning workshop in June 2018. Data collection then took place through November. Primary data was obtained from 116 people during 35 interviews and 10 focus group discussions, while secondary data was gathered through various Hāmākua-related research reports and information from the US Census Bureau.

In mid-November, individuals from government, academia, and the private and nonprofit sectors

took part in an analysis workshop to identify findings, conclusions, and recommended actions from data gathered during the assessment. During the workshop, after the primary and secondary data was analyzed, participants collectively identified conclusions and ideas for community development actions. Feedback was also shared on how the Hāmākua Institute could potentially help implement those actions.

Qualitative data gathered during the assessment was not meant to be statistically representative, but it serves as a way of finding insights about the different perspectives of Hāmākua community members. Responses in this report are intended to provide food for thought and spark dialogue for individuals who have a vested interest in Hāmākua so they can decide for themselves how the assessment findings compare to their own experiences in the region. This report summary focuses on recapping key findings and conclusions from the assessment while providing a potential roadmap for collective action to support socioeconomic development in the Hāmākua region based on the feedback gathered.

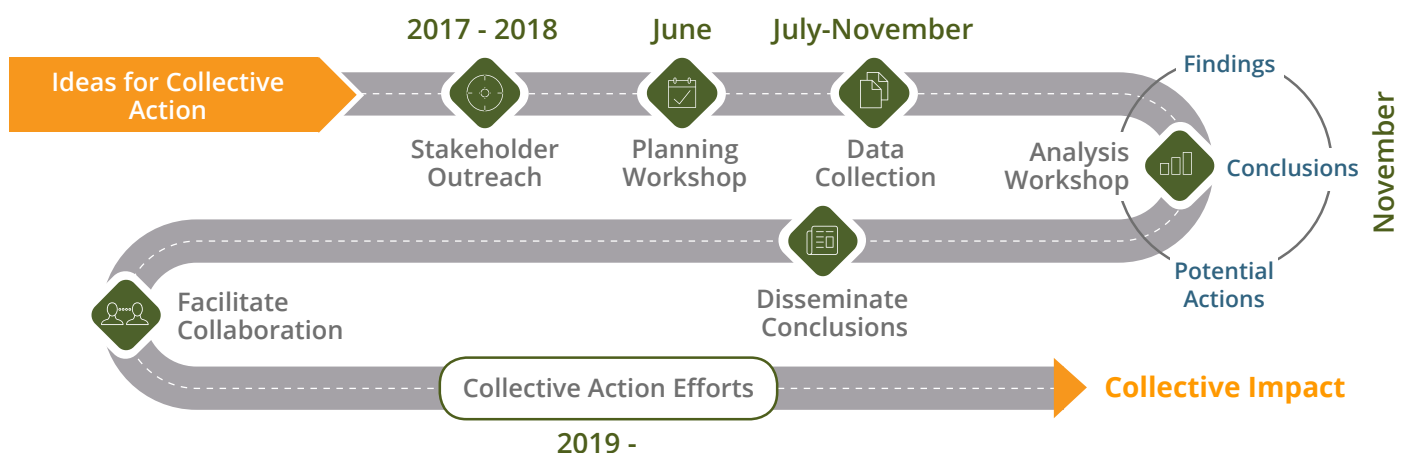


Figure 1: A timeline of the assessment process and activities.

# HĀMĀKUA COMMUNITIES



## Environment

With its lush landscape and significant rainfall, the Hāmākua region on the island of Hawai‘i boasts one of the most unique climates in the United States. The region is still seen as well-positioned to be an important agricultural center, as it was during the decades of plantation-era sugarcane production that ended in the early 1990s. In addition to its natural beauty, the region is often lauded for its slow-paced, rural lifestyle, which community members wish to celebrate and preserve. Although each town in Hāmākua is unique, as a whole, residents living in the region share a *“deep appreciation for the historical heritage of their small towns and preserving an Ohana-centered community.”*<sup>1</sup>



## Demographics

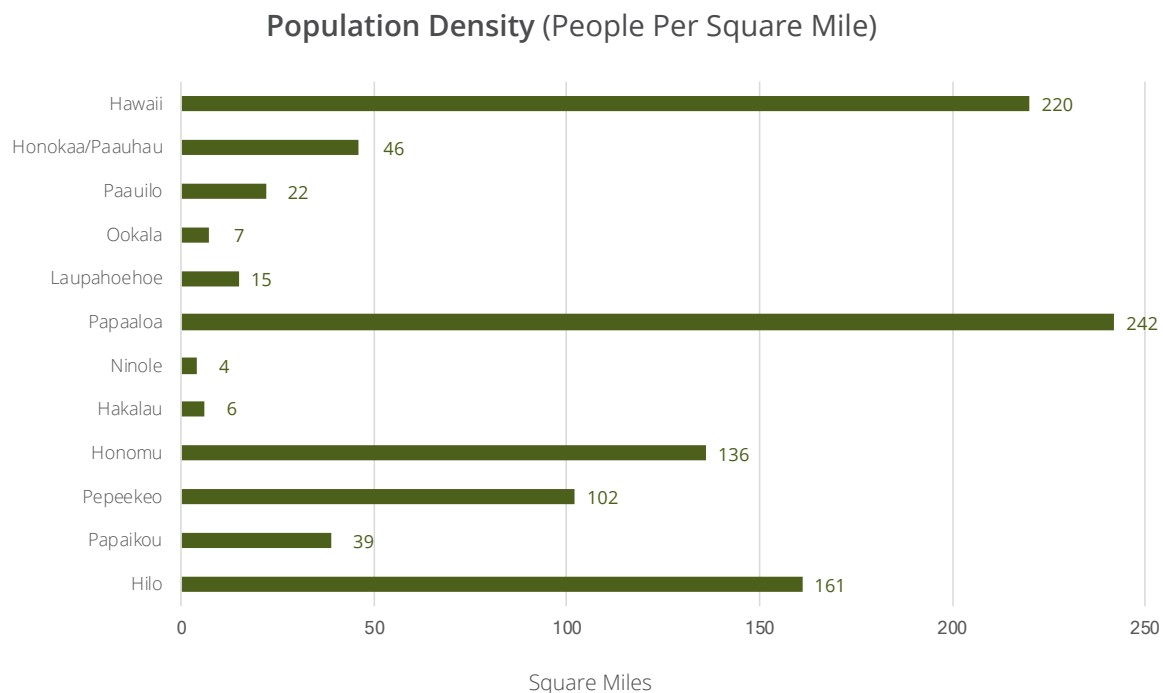


Figure 2: The graph above shows population per square mile of land area. Data sourced from the US Census Bureau's 2017 American Community Survey.

<sup>1</sup> County of Hawai‘i. (2018). Hāmākua Community Development Plan.

Since the early 2000s, the populations of most of Hāmākua’s main towns have remained fairly small, which has kept the rural nature of the area intact. Based on US Census data, in 2016 there were 13,382 residents in Hāmākua.<sup>2</sup> However, towns such as Honokaa and Papa’āloa have seen increases in their population since 2010. In Honokaa, for example, residents perceive the growing population in the variety of new storefronts. The region’s open spaces and generally low population density continue attracting new people to the area, many of whom are now retired and looking to avoid the often-crowded urban areas on the mainland. Although pockets of Hāmākua are seeing population growth, the generally small population presents challenges for job creation and economic development. With relatively few jobs in their town centers, many residents commute either to Hilo or Waimea for work, some even relocating to either city for shorter commute times.

### Population (2016)

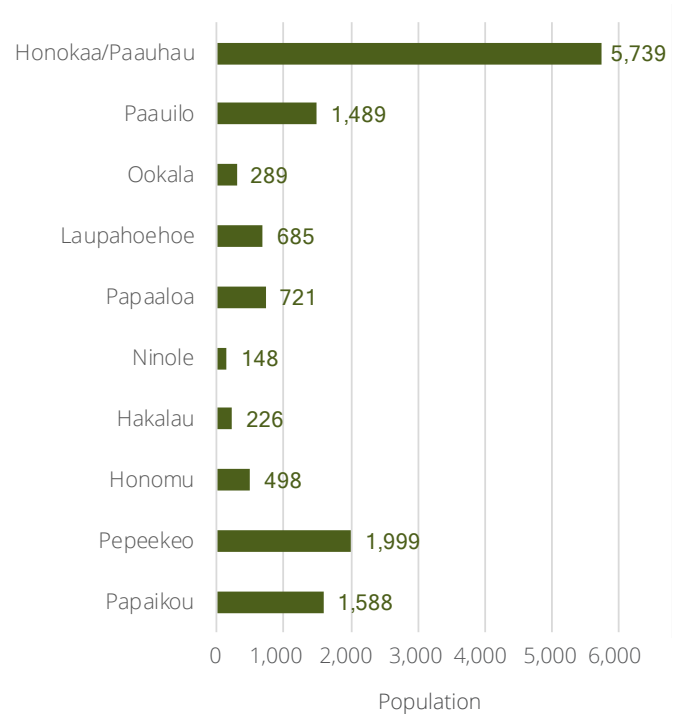


Figure 3: The graph above shows the number of residents within each zip code related to the towns listed. Data sourced from the US Census Bureau’s 2017 American Community Survey.

**57%**  
White

**38%**  
Filipino

**29%**  
Native Hawai’ian

**15%**  
Japanese

**13%**  
Chinese

\*Alone or in combination with other races.

Although population figures continue to be low relative to many other parts of Hawai’i, Hāmākua residents comprise a diverse mix of ethnic backgrounds, with many families’ ancestors having immigrated to the region in search of employment opportunities in agriculture offered by the once-bourgeoning sugarcane industry. According to the US Census in 2010, roughly 57% of the Hāmākua population identifies as white, either alone or in combination with other races. More than 38% identify as Filipino, 29% as Native Hawai’ian, 15% as Japanese, and 13% as Chinese—again either alone or in combination with other races. Because of its plantation heritage, Hāmākua is in many ways a cultural and ethnic melting pot. The region’s rich cultural and ethnic heritage is still being shaped by individuals moving to the area from countries outside the United States. Nearly 18% of the region’s residents from 2010 to 2014 were foreign born, more than double that of Hilo (8.2%).<sup>3</sup> Those living in Hāmākua communities also tend to be older, with the median age of residents in towns like Hakalau, Ninole, and Honomu being in the mid- to late-50s.

<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau. (2016). Data from the 2017 American Community Survey.

<sup>3</sup> Family Health Services Division, Hawai’i Department of Health. (May, 2016). State of Hawai’i Primary Care Needs Assessment Data Book 2016.



## Economy

Since the early 1800s, the economy in Hāmākua was largely based on plantation-scale, mono-crop agriculture for sugarcane production and ranching. As world markets became increasingly competitive for sugar production, companies in Hāmākua saw their profit margins shrink, eventually leading to the loss of the two last sugar mill operations in 1994. These final closures resulted in the loss of 1,200 jobs and the idling of roughly 43,500 acres of land formerly used for sugarcane production.<sup>4</sup> Local commerce supporting sugarcane production also declined significantly. However, since the closure of the last mill, the Hāmākua economy has in many ways rebounded. Some communities in the region, such as Honomu and Honokaa, now have median per-capita incomes near or above the national average. However, economic disparity and the high cost of living remain key issues.

## Median Household Income (2016)

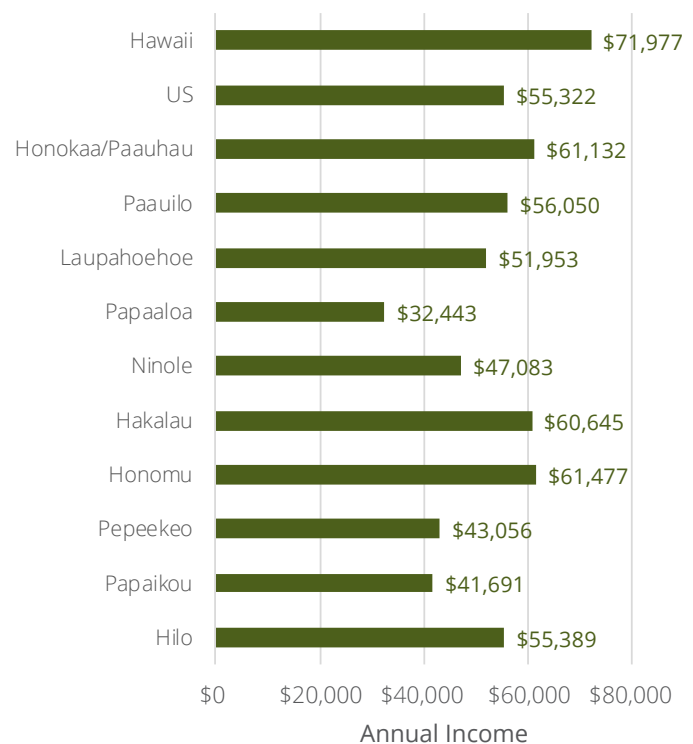


Figure 3: The graph above shows the median income for all household members (related and unrelated) 16 years of age or older. Data sourced from the US Census Bureau's 2017 American Community Survey.

<sup>4</sup> Kohala Center; Research and Development Department, County of Hawai'i. (2010). The County of Hawai'i Agricultural Development Plan.

### Percent of Population in Poverty (2016)

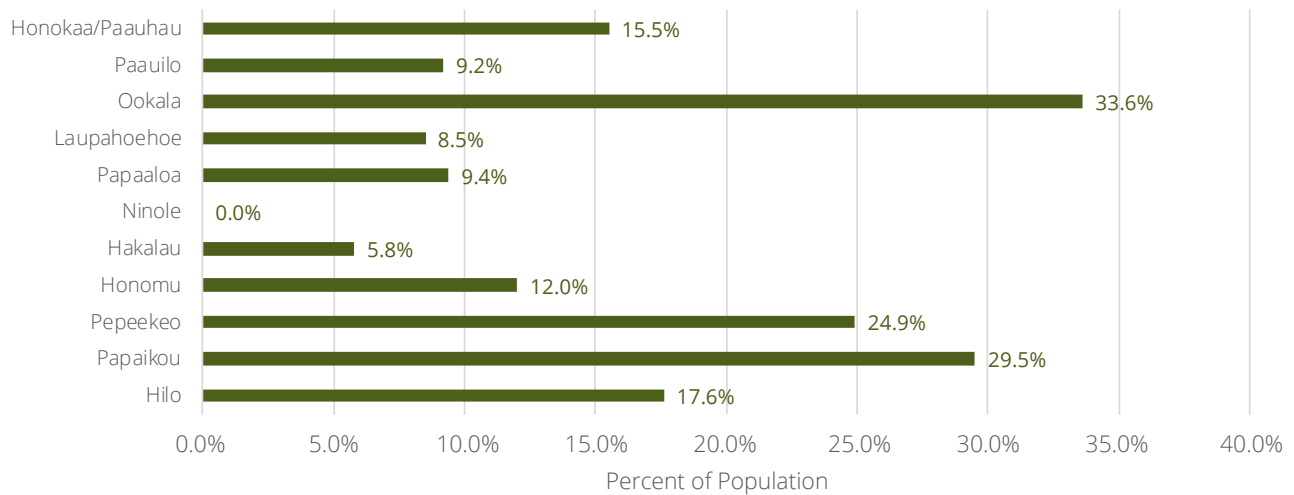


Figure 4: The graph above shows the percent of the population that earns less than the poverty level of earnings. Data sourced from the US Census Bureau's 2017 American Community Survey.



### Land

According to the Hāmākua Agricultural Plan finalized in 2006, land area on the island of Hawai'i covers roughly 2,577,808 acres. Of this total, the Hāmākua area as defined in the CDP comprises 1,011 square miles that encompass the Hāmākua and North Hilo judicial districts and a portion of the South Hilo District commonly referred to as Rural South Hilo.<sup>5</sup>

Since the end of the plantation era, much of Hāmākua remains held by landowners with large amounts of land. The agricultural plan states there are more than 163,000 acres, roughly 40.8% of the total acreage, zoned for agriculture in Hāmākua. The State of Hawai'i and Kamehameha Schools own a large percentage of Hāmākua's agricultural lands. Historically, more county building permits are requested for agriculture than for residential zoning. However, in 2010, a higher number of building permits were requested for residential zones, reflecting a possible shift in the region away from farming and towards residential development.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> County of Hawai'i. (February, 2018). Hamakua Community Development Plan (CDP).

<sup>6</sup> Prepared by the Kohala Center for the Hawai'i County Research and Development Department and Hawai'i State Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs. (January, 2015). Hāmākua Broadband Assessment Study.



## Agriculture & Forestry

According to the 2015 Statewide Agricultural Land Use Baseline, co-authored by Jeffrey Melrose, after the closure of the Hāmākua Sugar Co. in 1992, the majority of the land was purchased in foreclosure by Kamehameha Schools and then leased primarily for pasture and forestry use. Kamehameha Schools have pursued long-term forestry investments on the land and have provided ranchers relatively long-term leases compared to private landowners. The largest agricultural crop is eucalyptus, with over 14,500 acres in commercial production, mostly on land leased from Kamehameha Schools and Parker Ranch to forestry investors from the mainland. Although the forests were originally intended to be harvested into wood fiber for producing paper, various factors shifted the overall project's economic outlook, ultimately making the initially conceived investment unattractive. Factors included *“a combination of market conditions, changing leasehold ownership, and export infrastructure issues which caused harvest delays.”*<sup>6</sup>



Figure 5: From “Statewide Agricultural Land Use Baseline 2015,” prepared for the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture, p. 74.

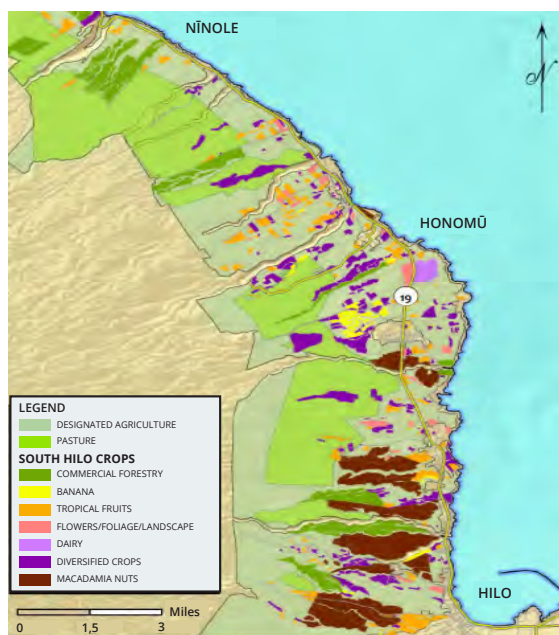


Figure 6: From “Statewide Agricultural Land Use Baseline 2015,” prepared for the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture, p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> Prepared by Melrose, Jeffrey, Perroy, Ryan, and Cares, Sylvana for the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture. (2015). Statewide Agricultural Land Use Baseline.

# HĀMĀKUA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (CDP)

Rather than duplicate efforts, the collective assessment was intended to build from the recently-approved Hāmākua Community Development Plan (CDP) constructed over several years. Based on stakeholder input, the CDP lists community actions which were identified as high-priority needs and opportunities by community members for the improved development and wellbeing in the region. Those community actions were reviewed during the analysis workshop to see, where possible and appropriate, the Hāmākua Institute and resulting collective actions could support the implementation of those actions. A list of the community actions from the CDP are provided as a reference in the appendix.

## HĀMĀKUA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The assessment focused on the social and economic development of Hāmākua, including issues and opportunities within agriculture, the economy, health and education sectors, as well as community cohesion. Below are summaries based on feedback provided.



### Agriculture & Forestry

Most respondents agreed they would like to see greater opportunity in agriculture throughout Hāmākua. Although many wanted farming to continue playing a key part in the region's culture and economy, differences existed in what type of agriculture would be best suited to the region and how it should be managed. Some stakeholders suggested creating less industrial and more small-scale, diversified, and environmentally sustainable farming. Many pointed to the fact that the region's land and climate makes it suitable for a variety of crops. Although most were optimistic about the potential for agriculture, there was recognition of significant obstacles for making farming viable. As in many regions within the United States, creating profitable small farms is difficult. Some respondents felt larger companies taking sizable shares of the market, coupled with high land prices, has left many unable to make a living with a small farm. Major land reform was seen as necessary to support agricultural as a viable income-generating option for individuals and not just a lifestyle choice.



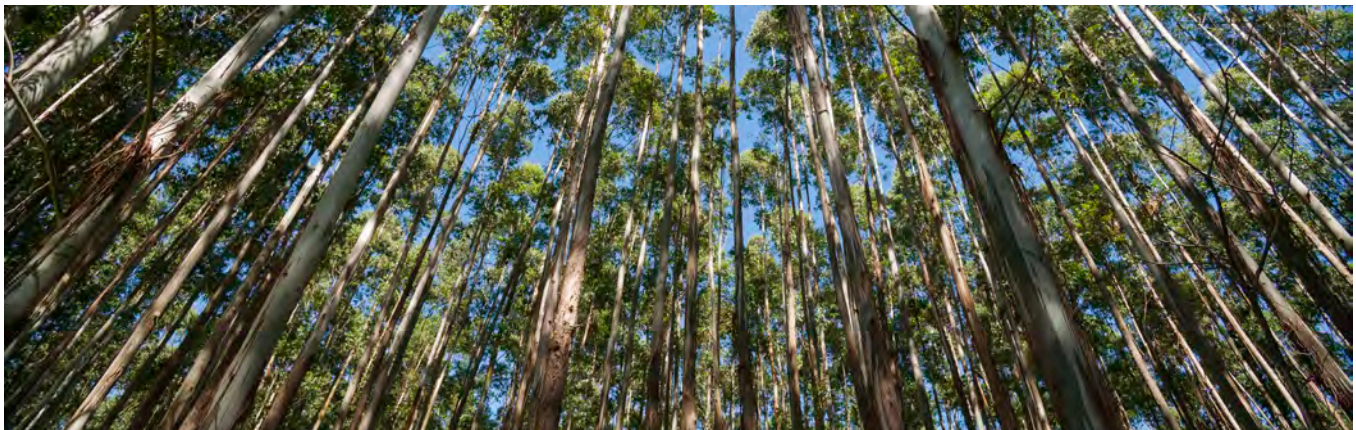
*I would like to see a growing forestry industry here, but one that provides job opportunities for local youth instead of simply importing workers. I want to see as much value and as many forest products processed and produced here on island instead of just exporting logs. I'd like to see a growing number of local artisans working with wood products from Eucalyptus."*

State Government  
Representative

Additionally, respondents thought upgrading current farming skills and practices and creating more value-added products would be critical for making small-scale agriculture profitable in the future. Many farmers could improve their optimization of inputs and use more data for decision-making. A return to traditional Hawaiʻian agricultural practices, which tend to be more environmentally sustainable than other popular practices, were also seen as a key opportunity to improve farming practices going forward. Although many small-scale farmers grew crops, they ran into issues when trying to expand. In general, however, there was consensus that the future of farming in Hāmākua would likely be smaller-scale, diversified agriculture consisting of typically 5- to 20-acre farms versus large-scale monocropping seen during the plantation days.

Cooperation between farmers was also a key issue. Many felt there were significant opportunities for greater collaboration between farmers through cooperatives, where knowledge and services could be shared, and members could consolidate supply to access larger markets either in Hilo, Kona, or even the mainland. Creating organic food cooperatives to provide fresh, locally-produced food to community members was also suggested. Having additional food-processing capacity within Hāmākua would be helpful, such as a co-packer or co-processor and an FDA-certified kitchen.

Forestry was also mentioned as having potential to create jobs given the large tracts of eucalyptus forest already planted and Hāmākua's competitive advantage, compared to other states and the mainland, as one of the best places to plant trees. Since 2015, harvested logs have been shipped to China from Kawaihe Harbor. Today, an option under consideration is the use of eucalyptus trees as biomass feedstock for electricity generation. Although some believe the forestry industry is an opportunity for economic development within Hāmākua, it has to be fully realized. Some believe since the trees are an existing resource and already planted, it would be in the region's best interest to harvest and produce value-added products from them, helping to create jobs and increase incomes for residents. Others, however, are uncertain harvesting the trees would provide local economic development. Instead, they worry that, like other large-scale businesses they have seen in the past, a few bigger companies would profit from tree harvesting and would fly in workers rather than hiring community members, leaving little financial benefit to the local economy and more environmental damage. Like most all development issues, how the forestry sector is developed would be critical in determining which reality emerges.





## Vision for the Future

Although diversity was often viewed as one of Hāmākua’s strengths, the wide range of perspectives and opinions in the region can make reaching a consensus on a vision for the future difficult. However, nearly all respondents emphasized maintaining the rural character of Hāmākua as critical going forward. They would like to see the small towns along the Hāmākua corridor retain their small-town hospitality and charm. However, they also recognized that, in order to thrive, community members needed greater access to products and services, including health and educational providers, without having to drive a significant amount of time to Hilo, Waimea, or Kona. Striking the right balance between job creation and income generation while retaining the region’s unique, rural qualities will be key. Some respondents recognized outside private investment is needed to make the region more prosperous, but they would like to see investors working closely with smaller businesses to support a fairer economy for all, not just large companies. Agricultural tourism was also mentioned as a potential opportunity to support job growth given the region’s agricultural backbone. Overall, many agreed the future of Hāmākua should focus on smart development to increase incomes and create healthier, more vibrant communities without changing the rural character and history that make Hāmākua great.



*The most important thing in Hamakua is the structural organization of people, organizing them to pursue common goals in a constructive and cooperative fashion. There is a real need for that here to help avoid the random critic from preventing things that the rest of the people want.”*

Nonprofit Representative



## Community Cohesiveness

Social cohesion within communities relates to the positive relationships among residents—essentially the bond or glue which holds people together. Most stakeholders agreed they would like the towns in Hāmākua to have a greater sense of cohesion or unity among residents. As in many areas in the US, both urban and rural, technology has played a dominant role in connecting people online but often decreases in-person interaction among neighbors.

Some were especially concerned that younger generations are not as connected to the land or each other. Many felt this disconnection stemmed from an overreliance on technology and communicating primarily through cell phones or computers rather than in-person, as previous generations did. Some stakeholders felt social cohesion in Hāmākua was stronger within the previous



*Depends on the situation. People can be unified at times, particularly when they are all facing a common problem. Against crime, yes, they can come together. But for other things, it’s not so easy.”*

Community Member

plantation camps, where historical ties among neighbors were stronger and physical proximity between them closer. Although there was recognition that every town in Hāmākua has a different sense of community, there was a perspective that the middle of the coast is less unified, particularly as each town gets farther apart. Like most of the state, however, as demographics change, so too do community characteristics. Although not in every case, there was a general sense that there is a division between people who grew up in the region and those who came from elsewhere. Many felt significant opportunities exist to bridge those divides and provide more avenues for expression and connection among community members. Overall, stakeholders generally agreed they would like to see new ways of building a sense of cohesiveness throughout the region, not only for when threats arise, but also to take advantage of opportunities that benefit the greater good.



*There are a lot of groups representing specialized interests that are doing good work and some that barely exist. There doesn't appear to be enough organizations that represent broad, multi-stakeholder interests that can bridge divides and promote community cohesiveness for the whole region."*

Nonprofit Representative



*Most people's intentions are good, but people need to be better informed about what actually creates real social and economic development."*

Educator



## Economy

Like many regions, income inequality and a growing disparity between socioeconomic classes was an increasing concern for many interviewed during the assessment. Some respondents felt that community members during the plantation era had similar economic situations, which helped people connect easier. Figuring out how to promote development equitably (i.e. not having the rich get richer) and sustainably (by taking environmental impacts into consideration) was key for the region's residents. Many felt the widening gap between economic classes is making community building more difficult. Local residents in particular found it challenging to afford basic necessities. As much as individuals are feeling the pinch of increasing housing costs and general affordability,

they also had a strong desire to preserve the region's distinctive character amid development efforts. Related, a key concern for many was finding a balance between job creation and maintaining the region's rural lifestyle.

The issue of infrastructure was also identified as a key constraint to economic development. Addressing infrastructure gaps was seen as critical for enabling small business development. Without better infrastructure, such as sewer systems in Lapahoehoe or Honomu, new local businesses cannot open, and older businesses cannot remodel since putting in infrastructure, such as a sewer system, is too expensive for any business to cover on its own.



## Tourism

Overall, most individuals felt the region's residents have a somewhat tenuous relationship with the tourism industry. On the one hand, community members recognized the significant revenue-generating potential of tourism. However, there was general agreement that increases in tourism need to be done in a sustainable way that highlights the unique history of the landscape. Marketing Hāmākua as a region for agricultural products was also mentioned as an opportunity to support local farmers. Some respondents felt, with the exception of a few products (such as Hāmākua mushrooms), the region is not recognized on a broad enough level. Having more, and better organized, cooperatives could help increase farmers' ability to collectively market and brand their products for greater reach.



## Education

Many saw opportunities to improve the overall standard of education in Hāmākua. There was a general concern that youth growing up in Hāmākua would eventually feel the need to move elsewhere for better job opportunities. Discovering how to reverse this trend was a high-priority for many participants. Outside the classroom, many families struggle financially, requiring most households to have dual incomes. Consequently, some felt this resulted in parents having less time for their children, forcing them to be less involved in their children's school activities, miss opportunities to meet parents in the community, and foster important parent-to-parent relationships. Finding a way to improve bus transportation for children to attend after-school and summer programs and getting greater state support for schools within Hāmākua were seen as two actions to help these issues.



## Environment

Given Hāmākua's rich and unique landscape, environmental concerns tended to be a high priority for many residents. The management and use of water, particularly in farming, was a key consideration. Some respondents felt infrastructure is needed to make water available to farmers and ranchers, particularly during periods of drought. Concerns about the overuse of the aquifer by farmers and the number of cesspools within communities were also mentioned. Some thought taking serious action against invasive species was not getting enough attention from farmers, policymakers, and community members alike. Fire ants were mentioned as an example that can cause significant harm to local crops, sometimes even crippling farmers' ability to find individuals willing to harvest them. With climate change and concerns about increasingly common and destructive storms, erosion control was also considered a key issue for community members in Hāmākua.



## Health

Although Hawai'i County fares well in many health, wellbeing, and economic vitality indicators compared to other counties in the US, there are key health challenges many on the island face. Respondents felt health issues involving access to medical care, emergency and ambulance services, mental health issues, domestic violence, and substance abuse were some of the highest priorities to address in Hāmākua. Similar to general products and services, Hāmākua lacks key health facilities, forcing most residents to travel to Hilo, Waimea, or Kona for healthcare services at clinics or hospitals.





## POTENTIAL FUTURE ACTIONS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

After developing their findings and conclusions from the data gathered, the assessment team considered where there seemed to be the most opportunities for generating collective action in support of the Hāmākua region's community development. Collective action occurs when people and organizations, both public and private, work together to solve a complex problem or pursue a shared opportunity. It usually addresses an objective no one individual or organization can meet alone, requiring collaboration and cooperation with others.

As the assessment team itself represented a diverse set of institutions and interests, it was well suited to identify potential areas of collective action in support of Hāmākua's community development. The following areas were discussed among the team.

## Agriculture & Forestry

There is potentially strong interest in collaborative efforts to systemically and synergistically analyze ways to support small-scale agricultural activities that are mutually complementary. Many organizations involved in agriculture cooperate in numerous ways already, but most collaborative efforts are more tactical and project-oriented. There may be an interest in taking a fresh and more strategic look at how agricultural development in the region should be promoted and supported in Hāmākua. Indeed, the responses received during this assessment about the future of agriculture in Hāmākua not only reinforce the diverse types of farming taking place but also reveal the many reasons why people want to farm in the first place. In Hāmākua, this includes everything from farming for primary income, secondary income, full or partial subsistence, as a hobby, for tax reduction, land utilization, etc. Without understanding and building upon these drivers, agricultural development strategies will struggle to achieve their desired impact.

Agricultural organizations, agencies and cooperatives can also work together more in sharing, developing, and applying new models and techniques for organizing cooperatives, extension services, incubator kitchens, farmers markets, and post-harvesting facilities. While a number of support efforts currently exist, there is little time or opportunity for different projects and practitioners to learn from each other.

There is a potential interest across a broad range of organizations and companies to conduct further collaborative analysis into specific agricultural sectors that could be viable on a small-scale. There

is a need for value chain analysis to be done to identify opportunities in sectors such as:



*Pork*



*Animal/Fish feed*



*Agro-tourism*



*Value-added processing of agricultural and forest products*

## Community Cohesion

There appears to be a genuine interest from people to want to take pride in their communities, celebrate their history, and realize their full potential. This means that both the plantation history and the Hawaiʻian history of the Hāmākua region should be further supported and promoted. There is considerable opportunity in Hāmākua to document, showcase, and celebrate its unique history in ways that help preserve it for future generations. Government agencies, non-profits, and cultural organizations can work collaboratively together to help make Hāmākua into a historical heritage corridor.

Community gathering places and special events are great enablers of community cohesion. There are opportunities for more collaboration in Hāmākua between businesses and community organizations to secure gathering spaces for

special sporting, cultural, or musical events. The First Fridays celebrated in Honokaʻa were seen as an example of the kinds of activities that help communities gather together more often. The Papaʻaloe Store and Café was also seen by many residents as creating a useful new gathering place in the middle part of the Hāmākua coast. The Wailea Market has also served as a useful gathering space, and many respondents in the interviews asked about its re-establishment during the course of the data collection. Over time, it will be important to increase the number of community events that enable the Hāmākua population to truly appreciate their neighbors and neighborhoods to avoid seeing them as primarily satellite areas for larger towns of interest.

## Economic Opportunity

There is a need to see government agencies, non-profit organizations, and businesses cooperating more to promote and support local businesses, farms, and artisans. Together these groups can explore how to develop common resources that can serve small, local businesses and enable them to grow competitively. They can work together to incentivize the county and state government to provide better roads and transportation access that can facilitate more small enterprise development.

There is space for more cooperation between the public and private sector to proactively create opportunities for youth in the region.

This could help reduce the need for young graduates to go far from home in search of employment and experience. New mentorship and apprenticeship schemes in the Hāmākua region for common vocational skills could also help create more employment opportunities for the region's youth.

The team also suggested that a collaborative effort among a diverse set of organizations could conduct economic analyses of Hāmākua corridor communities to create local commercial centers that could more effectively serve the surrounding areas and become small hubs of economic development within the region.

## The Hāmākua Institute

The assessment team also made recommendations for how the Hāmākua Institute could support community development and stimulate more collective action following this assessment. They recommended that the Institute continue to reach out to Hāmākua's communities to better understand who is already working on community activities, map out what is happening and where, and identify how existing efforts can be better supported to have a greater impact.

They suggested that the Institute bring together a broad range of people and organizations to support different elements of Hāmākua's community development. This would make the Institute a convenient place to collaborate and figure out who is doing what. There is a recognized need in the Hāmākua region for some organization to be a clearinghouse of information to share resources

and support for community development, support the establishment of public-private partnerships, and stimulate community cohesion in the region, all roles the Institute could fill.

The assessment team also recommended that training support be given to entrepreneurs, farmers, students, and community organizers on how to do collective socio-economic assessments, stimulate enterprise development, and generate dialogue among diverse segments of the population to overcome mental models that often limit community cohesion. The Hāmākua Institute is now looking into the possibility of developing infrastructure to support agricultural and entrepreneurial development by establishing a demonstration farm and commercial kitchen.

## CONCLUSION

This assessment is a key starting point for the Hāmākua Institute. It is the Institute's first attempt to bring together different voices and perspectives and start a dialogue about the future development of our beautiful home and community. It is a future that can happen by design and not by accident, but only if there is an alignment of interests and support from within.

We genuinely hope this report and the preceding assessment generate conversation about the Hāmākua region's future and how to preserve its treasured culture, history, and environment while helping resolve systemic issues of poverty and exclusion holding back segments of the community. To do this, our experience in community development tells us the analysis and information sharing needs to continue. If done well, tremendous efforts of community progress, goodwill, and collective action can emerge. The Institute will build upon the findings of this assessment to develop its programs and activities and will continue to consult and engage people and organizations in Hāmākua and beyond along the way.



**APPENDIX**

## Key Findings

Listed below is a summary of findings developed by the assessment team during the analysis workshop.

- ▶ Stakeholders are very attached and connected to the region. They are invested in the future and want to remain in Hāmākua. However, there is a strong need for a forum to communicate, share ideas, and have opportunities to collaborate.
- ▶ The preservation of the region's rural character, forestry, and agriculture are all important. There appears to be agreement among many stakeholders that development must be balanced with preserving the rural nature of Hāmākua. The influence, history, and respect for the host culture and environment are important, along with connection to place. History here goes beyond the plantation.
- ▶ Communities want to work together and have stronger associations and groups. A network of community groups and organizations exists but needs better coordination to address broad interests. There is a need for more community building in the region.
- ▶ Most people want Hāmākua to retain its rural character but are not unified on how to do so. People want a collective voice but don't always feel their community leadership structure allows one to emerge.
- ▶ There are pockets of tight-knit communities in Hāmākua, but there's a lack of regional cohesion overall. It's fragmented, and most people commute or telecommute. Community participation in development projects is needed, but it's difficult to attract involvement when people are dealing with so many day-to-day needs.
- ▶ There is a need for county parks to be reopened and well maintained to increase community spirit and tourism. Stakeholders strongly value natural beauty but also seek opportunities from industries, including forestry, farming, and ranching.
- ▶ Local businesses can help build community. Social infrastructure is developing, but more cooperatives, marketing centers, marketing strategies, and business consulting expertise are needed.
- ▶ There are untapped opportunities for agro-tourism. Most farmers recognize a need for better ways to organize themselves to improve marketing opportunities and support services. There is space for more cooperatives representing a broader range of interests.
- ▶ There's a conflict between wanting economic development and resisting by wanting to maintain the status quo. There is a need for more analysis of economic opportunities, particularly in finding ways businesses can serve local interests.

## Community Development Plan (CDP) Community Objectives

### **‘Aina** *(Natural Resources & Agriculture as Related to Conservation of Natural Resources, Public Access)*

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1. Protect, restore, and enhance watershed ecosystems, sweeping views, and open spaces, from mauka forests to makai shorelines, while assuring responsible public access for recreational, spiritual, cultural, and sustenance practices.
2. Protect and restore viable agricultural lands and resources. Protect and enhance viewsapes and open spaces that exemplify Hāmākua’s rural character.
3. Encourage community-based collaborative management plans to assure that human activities are in harmony with the quality of Hāmākua’s unique natural and cultural landscape.

### **Community** *(Culture, Town Planning, Infrastructure, Public Facilities, Services, Transportation)*

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1. Protect and nurture Hāmākua’s social and cultural diversity and heritage assets, including sacred places, historic sites and buildings, and distinctive plantation towns.
2. Direct future settlement patterns that are sustainable and connected. Honor Hāmākua’s historic and cultural assets by concentrating new development on existing, walkable, mixed-use town centers while limiting rural sprawl.
3. Develop and improve critical community infrastructure, including utilities, healthcare, emergency services, affordable housing, educational opportunities, and recreational facilities to keep our ‘ohana safe, strong, and healthy.
4. Establish a rural transportation network that includes improving roadway alternatives to Highway 19, expanding and improving the existing transit system, and encouraging multiple transportation options.

### **Economy** *(Employment, Industry, Business Development, Small Town Revitalization, Agriculture, Tourism)*

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1. Promote, preserve, and enhance a diverse, sustainable, local economy.
2. Encourage the increase and diversity of employment and living options for residents, including living wage jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities that allow residents to work and shop close to home and complement Hāmākua’s ecology, rural character, and cultural heritage.
3. Revitalize retail, service, dining, and entertainment centers that complement the community’s rural character and culture.
4. Enhance and promote local and sustainable agriculture, farming, ranching, renewable energy, and related economic support systems.
5. Preserve traditional subsistence practices and encourage a reciprocity (e.g. bartering) economy as a sustainable complement to Hāmākua’s resource-based economy.
6. Promote appropriate rural tourism that welcomes guests to an alternative visitor experience. Promote Hawai’i’s host culture and Hāmākua’s heritage, including historic roads, plantation towns, and festivals that celebrate our rich multi-cultural music, art, and agriculture.

## Community Development Plan (CDP) Community Actions

### Section 3: Preferred Land Use & Settlement

#### ACTION 1

Develop Town Revitalization Plans focused on developing guidelines for preserving historic and cultural character, infrastructure improvements, developing affordable housing, and promoting economic revitalization.

### Section 4: Protect and Enhance Natural and Cultural Resources

#### ACTION 2

Establish acquisition priorities using PONC criteria, and secure priority lands.

- *Partner with existing Hawai'i Land Trusts to acquire land through conservation easements and acquisition to ensure viewshed protection.*
- *Identify appropriate critical habitat areas needing further protection as priority areas through PONC criteria to protect through easement or acquisition mechanisms.*

#### ACTION 3

Develop a coastal resource management plan as part of watershed management plans.

#### ACTION 4

Support the organization of a community-based hui for the fisher people of the Hāmākua Coast.

#### ACTION 5

Educate landowners about agriculture, ranch, and forestry land preservation programs, and encourage participation in these programs.

#### ACTION 6

Educate residents on scenic viewshed importance and alternatives to tall, vegetative wind-breaks that impact viewsheds.

#### ACTION 7

Support the development and promotion of a Heritage Corridor and/or sections of the Old Mamalahoa Highway as Scenic Byways.

#### ACTION 8

Collaborate with Mauna Kea Watershed Alliance, the county, and appropriate state and federal agencies in developing and implementing watershed management plans and projects.

- *Ensure that native Hawai'iian practitioners directly tied to the subject area are consulted while developing or implementing natural resource plans in culturally sensitive areas.*

<b>ACTION 9</b>	Partner with the Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species and the Big Island Invasive Species Committee to manage invasive species.
<b>ACTION 10</b>	Promote soil and water conservation best practices.
<b>ACTION 11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document the Mo'olelo of Hāmākua using resources outlined in oral history, hula, chant, and other sources.</li> <li>• Work with the Hawai'i Tourism Authority and possibly seek assistance through the County Product Enrichment Program (CPEP) to develop appropriate cultural signage for moku and ahupua'a boundaries.</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION 12</b>	Identify and inventory important sites, map resources, and make recommendations to County Cultural Resource Commission for sites.
<b>ACTION 13</b>	Develop and implement place-based strategies to retain village and town character, including alternatives to Historic District designations.
<b>ACTION 14</b>	Develop, promote, and maintain the continuity of community festivals and events.
<b>ACTION 15</b>	Develop and implement plans to establish and manage specific access points and trails.
<b>ACTION 16</b> (Waipi'o Valley)	Form a 501(c)3 nonprofit entity for community empowerment to develop a Land Management Partnership.
<b>ACTION 17</b>	Develop a detailed Master Plan for Waipi'o Valley, including a community-based management plan for Waipi'o Valley visitor's center.
<b>ACTION 18</b>	Secure funding through PONC, DLNR LLCP, or other similar programs for purchase of easements and potential acquisition of land to protect views of Waipi'o Valley rim.
<b>ACTION 19</b>	Support community organizations, such as the Waipi'o Circle, in developing a watershed plan based on the Waipi'o Valley Stream Management Plan, the Hanalei Watershed Hui model, or similar community-based management plans.
<b>ACTION 20</b>	Strengthen community capacity through the Hawai'i Community Stewardship Network.
<b>ACTION 21</b> (Mauna Kea)	Document the Mo'olelo of Mauna Kea using resources outlined in oral history.

**ACTION 22** | Develop an educational program for tour operators, visitor information staff, and volunteers as part of orientation training for regular users of Mauna Kea.

**ACTION 23** | Collaborate with surrounding land owners and the user-community to educate users and manage ATV use in mauka areas and in the Mauna Kea region.

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## ***Section 5: Strengthen Infrastructure, Facilities, and Services***

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**ACTION 24** | Actively advocate for CIP appropriations, financing, allotments, and encumbrances that support implementation of the CDP.

**ACTION 25** | Engage community associations and volunteers to work with self-help nonprofits to promote construction of homes for eligible buyers in the Planning Area.

**ACTION 26** | Develop “road improvement districts” in order to finance improvements.

**ACTION 27** | Work with the owners of private roads and local community groups to help identify and develop road management agreements that mitigate road closures and access disagreements for public access and/or residential use. The following private roads have been identified as examples of roads needing improvements in their road management/ access strategies:

- *Mill Road in Papa’ikou*
- *Beach Road to Honoka’a Landing*
- *Blair Road in Laupahoehoe*

**ACTION 28** | Identify locations for bus stops, biking facilities (bike racks, lanes, etc.), and park-and-ride facilities.

**ACTION 29** | Host composting and recycling workshops in collaboration with agencies/organizations such as the Dept. of Environmental Management, Recycle Hawai’i, and the University of Hawai’i College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resources Cooperative Extension Service.

**ACTION 30** | Partner with the county to manage recycling/reuse centers at county facilities.

**ACTION 31** | Educate neighborhood watch groups and other community groups about how to actively identify and report littering and illegal dump sites to the Department of Environmental Management. Raise awareness of the issue through the use of outreach and social media tools to report sites and offenders.

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| <b>ACTION 32</b> | Coordinate with Civil Defense to develop emergency evacuation plans for Laupahoehoe and the valleys of Waip’o and Waimanu.   |
| <b>ACTION 33</b> | Develop and train CERTs throughout the Planning Area.  |
| <b>ACTION 34</b> | For communities identified by DOFAW as Communities at Risk (CAR), develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPS) and work towards gaining Firewise recognition. |
| <b>ACTION 35</b> | Develop volunteer firefighter capacity for the Laupahoehoe Fire Station.   |
| <b>ACTION 36</b> | Encourage expansion of community policing programs (neighborhood watch, farm watch, etc.).   |
| <b>ACTION 37</b> | Develop and implement Safe Routes to School programs.  |

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## ***Section 6: Build a Sustainable, Local Economy***

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| <b>ACTION 38</b> | Work with County Dept. of P&R through the County Cooperative Park Management Programs (Adopt a Park, etc.) to maintain/improve existing park facilities.   |
| <b>ACTION 39</b> | Hakalau community group to advocate and pursue management and redevelopment options for the Hakalau Gym facility (through County P&R Dept.) and/or the old Hakalau School property (through the Dept. of Education). |
| <b>ACTION 40</b> | Work with State and private landowners to develop and maintain additional trails for non-motorized recreation.   |
| <b>ACTION 41</b> | Work with County and private enterprises to bring broadband and Wi-Fi services to the Planning Area’s towns.   |
| <b>ACTION 42</b> | Develop a distinctive identity for the Hamakua region to enable public and private industries to promote it as unique within the State of Hawai’i.   |
| <b>ACTION 43</b> | Coordinate regional, cross-sectoral economic development strategies.   |
| <b>ACTION 44</b> | Develop a high-tech, high-touch regional education, enterprise development, and research network.  |
| <b>ACTION 45</b> | Coordinate regional strategies to increase “buying local.”   |

**ACTION 46**

Strengthen local agriculture through the following:

- *Develop a marketing brand for Hamakua products (Assist in the promotion of products produced in Hamakua).*
- *Support Farm to School/Farm to Table programs, CSAs, and other local farm-to-consumer initiatives.*
- *Support and develop celebratory events that support agriculture (e.g. festivals, rodeos, parades, community gathering events at farmers' markets, etc.).*
- *Work effectively to manage or eradicate invasive species that impact agricultural production.*
- *Develop agricultural cooperatives to facilitate farming collaborations, cost- and resource-sharing opportunities, provide a mechanism for marketing assistance and educational opportunities, and coordinate with County, State, and Federal agricultural specialists.*
- *Pursue the development of incubator community kitchens for the production of value-added agricultural products.*

**ACTION 47**

Promote farmers' market events as community and visitor gathering places.

**ACTION 48**

To better address issues related to the Lower Hamakua Ditch: form a cooperative community group (for example, a "Friends of the Lower Hamakua Ditch" group) composed of adjacent landowners to the ditch and other affected parties to advocate to and collaborate with the Department of Agriculture in developing a cooperative management plan that would seek to resolve issues relating to water quality, water efficiency, ditch maintenance, and to assess ditch trail access opportunities.

**ACTION 49**

Establish a comprehensive network of health and wellness services.

**ACTION 50**

Collaborate with farm groups, community organizations, and County to support the Kohala Center's research and training programs (i.e., the Beginner Farmer-Rancher Development program).

**ACTION 51**

Develop a regional ho'okipa network – a place-based approach to community tourism.

**ACTION 52**

Develop and support cultural festivals and events with a view to welcoming visitors.

**ACTION 53**

Develop and promote public restroom facilities at various locations along Highway 19.

**ACTION 54**

Promote the collaborative development, use, and management of community gardens in towns and neighborhoods.

**ACTION 55** | Develop local, renewable, distributed energy networks.

**ACTION 56** | Pilot a program to secure community payments for ecosystem services (PES).