

Moloka`i's Visioning Process

The Molokai Enterprise Community process began in 1998 with Moloka`i residents providing hundreds of volunteers hours in community visioning and planning meetings. The result of this community based planning effort was a 10 year strategic plan that captured the community's dreams and aspirations for Moloka`i's future. The community's shared vision and united effort was recognized and honored as a U.S. Department of Agriculture rural Enterprise Community as part of the federal government's Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community Program.

Ke Aupuni Lokahi (KAL), a non profit entity made up of community volunteers, was tasked with working with the community to implement the 10 year Moloka`i Enterprise Community Plan. KAL's core purpose is to help Moloka`i residents empower themselves to implement their community strategic plan and, thereby, control their own destiny.

As a result of a broad based community planning process, a long developing vision of Moloka`i residents was articulated in the Moloka`i Enterprise Community Strategic Plan:

“Moloka`i is the last Hawaiian island. We who live here choose not to be strangers in our own land. The values of *aloha `aina* and *malama `aina* (love and care for the land) guide our stewardship of Moloka`i's natural resources, which nourish our families both physically and spiritually. We live by our *kupuna`s* (elders') historic legacy of *pule o`o* (powerful prayer). We honor our island's Hawaiian cultural heritage, no matter what our ethnicity, and that culture is practiced in our everyday lives. Our true wealth is measured by the extent of our generosity.

- We envision strong *`ohana* (families) who steadfastly preserve, protect, and perpetuate these core Hawaiian values.
- We envision a wise and caring community that takes pride in its resourcefulness, self-sufficiency and resiliency, and is firmly in charge of Moloka`i's resources and destiny.
- We envision a Moloka`i that leaves for its children a visible legacy: an island *momona* (abundant) with natural and cultural resources, people who *kokua* (help) and look after one another, and a community that strives to build an even better future on the *pa`a* (firm) foundation left to us by those whose *iwi* (bones) guard our land.”

This vision underscores the core values and principles that guide Ke Aupuni Lokahi as it implements the 10 year strategic plan laid out by the Moloka`i community. At its strategic planning retreat in February of 2004, KAL's board affirmed these values and emphasized the following as core to its work:

- Sustain Moloka`i's unique *rural lifestyle*.

- Use *Native Hawaiian culture* as the foundation of Moloka`i's economic base.
- Practice the *principles of stewardship* to protect and sustain the island's resources for generations to come.
- Practice *community driven and community-based economic development* to strengthen Moloka`i's capacity for self-governance and self-determination.

Ke Aupuni Lokahi believes that, by holding true to these principles, it will be able to achieve its primary purpose of *empowering the Moloka`i community to control its own destiny*.

When the Enterprise Community (EC) process began in 1998, the economic numbers for the island of Moloka`i were in many cases the worst in the state – with the poverty rate around 25 percent and nearly the same percentage of food stamp recipients. There were limited opportunities for high-school graduates and, as a result, many young people were forced to leave the island. At the time, the average annual unemployment rate hovered around 16 percent.

In order to identify viable strategies for community action to address these issues, the community organized itself and involved residents in hundreds of planning meetings in 1998 that resulted in the development of a 10 year strategic plan for the island of Moloka`i. The plan lays out strategies and specific initiatives in the areas of:

- environmental protection,
- economic development,
- housing development,
- education, and
- health and human services.

The more than forty initiatives being developed by the community are intended to achieve community development that is compatible with the rural lifestyle of Moloka`i. As KAL moves into its final years of its Enterprise Community designation, concerns for creating meaningful economic and employment opportunities for Moloka`i residents looms even larger for the community than it has in the past. As a result, KAL's Board of Directors has identified the following as priority programmatic strategies:

- create an *economic base* that –
 - maintains Moloka`i's preferred lifestyle,
 - builds on Native Hawaiian culture as a foundation,
 - protects Moloka`i's natural resources for future generations through the incorporation of stewardship principles, and
 - generates new businesses and jobs that generate viable economic opportunities for local residents;
- establish *sustainable development* for continuous improvement of the economy where Native Hawaiian culture and values provide the resource base and evaluative framework for viable community-based economic development strategies and projects that nurture Native Hawaiian cultural development;

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