

NAME: Thomas Royer
AGENDA ITEM: C.1) Subarea 1: Mā'alaea/Keālia
DATE RECEIVED: 8/26/2023 via email

Dear CPAC,

Regarding a recommendation to designate the Ma'alaea Mauka/Pohakea lands as Open Space rather than Ag, the August 2023 Lahaina fire is an excellent, though very terrible, example of what happens when high winds combine with dry grasses in a populated area with power lines. I have lived in Ma'alaea since 2008 and witnessed in March 2012 Ma'alaea wildfire burn. I viewed it from the rooftop of the Lauoa Condos on Hauoli Street. That fire was started by a downed power line near Waikapu. The winds were strong and from the north. The Ma'alaea typical winds are rumored to be the strongest in Hawaii. As the fires moved toward Ma'alaea, I planned my escape route by way of the ocean, swimming eastward toward Kihei along the shore since all roads had become impassable. Eventually helicopters were successful in dropping water in a manner to keep the fire away from the Honoapi'ilani Highway. Fortunately, the firefighters were able to keep the fire mostly mauka of the Ma'alaea Triangle and Hauoli Street as it continued southwestward to the ocean. I believe that only a single building in the Triangle and a few homes along the Honoapi'ilani Highway were damaged. If the Ma'alaea Mauka/Pohakea lands had been inhabited and occupied, the consequences would have been much more severe.

Based on the above arguments, I strongly recommend that these lands remain as an Open Space.

Aloha,

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