

ML&P ready to detail housing proposal

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MAHINAHINA -- Starting March 19, Maui Land & Pineapple Co. will go to the public for comments on Pulelehua, which could be one of the biggest projects on the West Side in years.

Phase one, of 150 acres, is proposed as a mix of affordable and moderately-priced housing, including at least 125 permanent affordable rentals, along with a school and other elements to create a community.

The company envisages eventually surrounding Kapalua-West Maui Airport with a town development, but the first phase is limited to land makai of the airport and bounded by Honoapiilani Highway, Kahanaiki gulch and a property line just south of Mahinahina gulch.

Formerly in pineapple and sugar cane, the land has been little used in recent years. Besides housing, the company says the development could include parks, a school, churches, day care or preschool centers and a neighborhood commercial center.

The project will be outlined at a Community Kick-off Presentation from 6 to 8 p.m., Friday, March 19 at The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua, with consultant planner Victor Dover describing the town planning concepts being considered.

That will be followed by a Hands On Design Session (in architects' jargon, a charette) from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, March 20; an open house from 5 to 9 p.m., Tuesday, March 23; and a Work-in-Progress Presentation from 6 to 8 p.m., Friday, March 26.

All meetings are free and open to everyone and at the Ritz-Carlton, except the open house, which will be at Napili Plaza.

David Cole, chairman of ML&P, said, "The vision and values underlying Pulelehua are aligned with Maui Land & Pineapple Co.'s values of creating and managing holistic communities that invite a sustainable future for Maui."

It also will fulfill affordable housing requirements for the Kapalua Mauka expansion of Kapalua resort.

Pulelehua is Hawaiian for butterfly, the symbol of the resort.

The company intends that at least half of phase one housing will meet affordability guidelines established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development -- to be sold at prices within reach of persons making between 80 percent and 140 percent of the county median income.

That median is now around \$60,000 a year, although the actual prices will be set according to the median income when the project homes are delivered.

The project will include single-family houses and condominiums, and "speculation will not be allowed."

On the subsidized units, resales will be restricted to prevent buyers from "flipping" their homes for quick profits.

Mayor Alan Arakawa, who opposed the Pu`unoa project that would have been priced according to the same guidelines, is "working closely" with ML&P on this one.

Robert McNatt, vice president at Kapalua Land Co., says the project could be fast tracked with the county as the governmental agency sponsor in a 201-G arrangements.

When groundbreaking could occur depends on getting permits and land use authorizations, but McNatt hopes it could be by 2006.

As for the number of dwellings in phase one, "We don't know." Community input will help determine that.

Although part of the motive for the project is to fulfill Land Use Commission affordable housing requirements, the broader goal of ML&P is to "create something really spectacular," a community that will encourage workers to make the company "the employer of choice" because besides jobs it provides "this great community" to live in.

Besides the affordable housing requirement, ML&P also plans to provide housing choices to its own employees first and to other persons already working on the west side.

"We'd like to encourage them to move to West Maui," says McNatt, and cut down on the commuting that clogs Honoapiilani Highway.

Worker now commute from Central, South and even Upcountry Maui because

West Maui is short of housing and therefore has has the highest prices in the county.

"It is important for us at ML&P to hear your thoughts about Pulelehua. We encourage you and your neighbors to join us," Cole said.