

14.8 OPEN SPACE

14.8.1 Introduction and Analysis

A vital part of the environment, open space **is land that is basically not used for buildings or structures and is characterized by scenic beauty, existing openness, and natural conditions.** It is the counterpart of development. Retained in its state of use, open space would maintain and/or enhance the conservation of needed or desired natural, scenic, or historical resources that might otherwise be permanently lost. It would also enhance the present or potential value of abutting or surrounding urban development.

Open space is used to maintain and/or provide forestry pursuits, water supply, fish and marine protection, wildlife and endemic plant preservation, recreational pursuits and visual and scenic amenities. Open space also demarcates potential natural hazard areas. Just as the use of open space is affected by development, so is the character and quality of development influenced by what is done with open space.

Three basic functions are served by open space. Positive human needs such as active and passive recreation amenities can be provided. The natural resource base such as air, water, soil and plants can be protected and enhanced. Economic development decisions, e.g. tourism, real estate values and development patterns, can be affected. The planning of open space is an integral part of any comprehensive planning consideration.

Other elements of the General Plan affect or are affected by this element. Together, these elements and their interrelationships form an overall picture of the County of Hawaii.

Open space on the island of Hawaii consists of lands zoned as Open by the County as well as those in the State Land Use Conservation District. The “Open” zoning district permits golf courses, with a use permit, some recreational facilities, and various public and utility-type facilities. There is currently no County zoning district that calls for land to be preserved in a largely natural state.

Various categories of open space areas have been designated according to use or amenities. Restricted watershed areas are strictly regulated in order to protect the island's essential water resources. Some of these are in close proximity and easy accessibility to development and without protection could be contaminated. All watershed areas are in forest reserves under the jurisdiction of the State Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Potential natural hazard areas are designated as open space for the welfare and safety of the public. These include areas that are highly susceptible to flooding, erosion, volcanic activity and tsunami inundation.

The following goals, policies, and standards are set forth to insure the protection and wise use of open space in the County of Hawaii.

14.8.2 Goals

- (a) Provide and protect open space for the social, environmental, and economic wellbeing of the County of Hawaii and its residents.
- (b) Protect designated natural areas.

14.8.3 Policies

- (a) Open space shall reflect and be in keeping with the goals, policies, and standards set forth in the other elements of the General Plan.
- (b) Open space in urban areas shall be established and provided through zoning and subdivision regulations.
- (c) Encourage the identification, evaluation, and designation of natural areas.
- (d) Zoning, subdivision and other applicable ordinances shall provide for and protect open space areas.
- (e) Amend the Zoning Code to create a category for lands that should be kept in a largely natural state, but that may not be in the Conservation District, such as certain important viewplanes, buffer areas, and very steep slopes.

14.8.4 Standards

Open Space designations shall include:

- (a) Forest Reserves
- (b) Water Areas
- (c) Potential Natural Hazard Areas
- (d) Natural Areas and Reserves
- (e) Open Space Recreation Areas
- (f) Scenic Vistas and Viewplanes
- (g) General Use Conservation Sub-zones with Compatible Uses
- (h) Scientific Areas, including Habitats of Endemic Species