

Kula Community Association
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<http://kulamaui.com>

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*The vision of the Kula Community Association is to preserve open space, support agriculture, maintain a rural residential atmosphere, and to work together as a community.
The specific purpose of this association is to improve the quality of life for the residents of Kula, to promote civic welfare, and generally to benefit the community of Kula.*

TO: Mr. Michael Munekiyo, Project Consultant
FROM: Kula Community Association Board

April 11, 2006

RE: Proposed Kula Federal Credit Union “Affordable / Senior Housing”

The Kula Community Association (KCA) Board of Directors has reviewed the Affordable Senior housing project being proposed by the Kula Federal Credit Union (KFCU) on the existing Kula Gymnasium lot in the Waiakoa area of Kula. The Project lies on a steep lot extending downhill from the gym on Lower Kula Road to the Kula Highway (State #37) at its bottom.

On a number of occasions the KCA Board and its Planning Committee met with representatives of this Senior Affordable Housing Project. In addition, the project was presented to the community at the November, 2005 KCA General Meeting. We have also heard from a few community members.

The applicant (KFCU) has indicated that it will be applying for a “201g fast-track” approval, claiming waiver from most County requirements because this project would qualify as an affordable housing project. We further understand that the Council must vote “yes” or “no” within 45 days, with no conditions attached. Therefore, the KCA Board is writing in the hope that the questions and issues which we raise below will be satisfactorily considered before the project reaches the Council.

Although the Upcountry Community Plan makes no special provision for this kind of project, the Kula Community Association Board recognizes the value such a project would have in our community. We acknowledge the need for both senior housing and affordable housing. We desire to have a richly diverse community. This project would provide for some of this balance in the development of Kula as a whole. Many of the projects we have seen being developed in Kula have been “high end” homes; the KCA, while welcoming our new neighbors to our community, values a balanced, economically diverse community.

We also are expecting a large infusion of new homes in the Hawaiian Home Lands subdivisions of Waiohuli and Keokea. We again welcome these neighbors and the richness they will bring to our community.

The KCA Board is most appreciative of the efforts by the Kula Federal Credit Union to make a positive and time consuming effort to provide affordable housing for our senior residents. It has undertaken this project at great expense and with considerable risk; and for this we are most grateful. We are thankful to Mr. Michael Munekiyo, the project consultant, for his presentations and for helping us understand the project.

In the following lines, we have listed the salient features of the project, and our comments and major concerns related to them. We have three major concerns: water, the intersection/traffic, and the slope of the project as well as other issues we wish to raise.

1. This Affordable Senior Housing project is located on the same 1.69 acre lot as the existing Kula gym (operated by the County Parks Department). It fronts the Kula Elementary School’s exit onto the Kula Highway. It will have 36 units (686 ft.² each) configured into two long three-story buildings. In addition there will be a central meeting facility and a manager’s unit. Because the existing gym is located on the parcel, the lot is zoned as “Public / Quasi-Public” and listed as such on the Community Plan.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: The property is being developed at a very high density level, high for the Waiakoa area.

2. The property is rather steeply sloped from the Kula Highway up to the back of the gym.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: The project has a steep grade and we are concerned about its overall suitability for the senior occupants of the housing units who may have limited mobility. The slope necessitates difficult walking for the senior citizen residents on the property as well as up to the store and back with their groceries.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: There will be rapid water runoff down the road/driveway which will be handled by proposed sub-surface perforated pipes at the bottom of the property. Our concern is that excess water may flow across the state highway onto the school property. We urge extreme care and higher (minimum 50 year rainfall) criteria in the design of the storm catchment system.

3. There may be as many as 72 residents in the 36 units. There will be 44 parking spaces, six on the roadway, 18 under the houses, and 20 under the central meeting facility.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: Additional parking for visitors and for delivery vehicles should be included.

KCA BOARD CONCERN : Emergency/fire/ambulance and public transportation vehicles need to have good access and maneuverability when all the parking spaces are taken in the evening.

4. All of the buildings are designed to be three stories high with staircases.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: Because many residents will have to park below the meeting house, they will have to carry items up the slope to their unit and then up three flights of stairs.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: Since the project is seeking favorable consideration and review due to it’s being a needed senior rental housing project, it must have the amenities (elevators, ramps, handrails, etc.) to keep it suitable and viable for senior citizens. Otherwise the project may be turned over in time to other purposes.

5. Water availability continues to be a major concern for the upcountry community. Residents have been waiting for many years for a water meter. A water meter waiting-list has been established for the past 13 years, and that list now has gone over the 1,000 mark.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: The KCA board has yet to be provided information on the source of the water for this project.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: This “201g project” might step ahead of other proposals including those which have a higher priority for water in the current Upcountry Community Plan. Specifically, both “Hawaiian Home Lands” (HHL) and “agriculture” have a higher priority to obtain water. Since the HHL is now in an expansion phase, it must be given its very high priority.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: This project should not jump ahead of other affordable housing on the list.

6. The proposal is to provide for “right-turns only” at the Kula Highway intersection.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: Although “right-turns” are generally safer, they may result in a number of other problems: vehicles coming from Pukalani will need to find a way to easily get onto the property and may use Kula Elementary School to do so. Similarly, vehicles leaving the property may take a “right-turn” and then take an immediate left-turn and pass through the school grounds if they are going to go towards Keokea.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: Additional safety problems may result from parents from Keokea and the Hawaiian Home Lands wishing to take their children to school in the morning and slowing down at the school. They will be turning left, just as people leaving the senior project are accelerating onto the Kula Highway.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: The most significant issue relates to the exit road from Kula Elementary School where school buses, children walking up to the gym, and automobiles will be leaving the school grounds onto the increasingly busy Kula Highway.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: The School exit intersection must be made safe for all of the various types of traffic, and especially for children walking across the highway. There may even be a need to build an overhead bridge for pedestrians, located about 150 feet north of the intersection connecting the high-points on either side of the highway.

7. The senior -housing project is located on the same land parcel as the gym. Therefore, the project location raises two potential disturbance issues and a legal matter:

KCA BOARD CONCERN: Noise from the gym, especially in the evening (6pm -10pm), may disturb the senior-housing residents.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: Early in the morning children will be passing through the property from residences above the gym, and again in the afternoons, on the way up from the school to the gym and homes. Although there will be no sidewalks on the property, there will be a pathway, probably on the south side of the property, which will allow children to pass up to the gym. The pathway should be separated from the residences by a fence or an appropriate landscaping barrier.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: The KFCU and consultants have made it very clear that they do NOT wish to remove the County-operated, but not County-owned, gym from their lot. The KCA sincerely appreciates this generosity and requests that a formal long-range agreement be established between the land owner and the County describing the conditions for the use of the gym for the benefit of the community along with its long-term maintenance and liability.

8. The actual detailed design of the facility is probably beyond the interest-level of the Kula Community Association. We appreciate that the developer has assured us that all utilities on this project will be underground.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: We would hope that the design is in harmony with the stores/buildings near the gym and the building massing would be consistent with “Country Town” standards to include landscaping to modify the building’s visual impact on the south side.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: We also recommend that all outdoor lighting associated with the project be shielded to prevent light pollution to the night sky, and light trespass to neighboring properties.

KCA BOARD CONCERN: The maximum building height should follow the requirements of the Makawao/Pukalani/Kula Community Plan which limits buildings to 35 ft.

The KCA Board sincerely appreciates the extensive effort by the Kula Federal Credit Union to bring this proposal to our Board at an early stage. We hope that we have been able to give meaningful input. Hopefully the County will hold public hearings in the community to gather further input.

Sincerely,

Karolyn Mossman, President KCA

cc. Mayor Alan Arakawa
Maui County Council
Planning Director Michael Foley and the Maui Planning Commission
Elmer Cravalho, Kula Community Federal Credit Union