

From Planning to Action: Sustainability Council

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We must act. Without a vehicle for implementation, Hawai'i 2050 could sit on a shelf. Without a mechanism for accountability, Hawai'i 2050 might answer to no one. While the Task Force has been instrumental in creating Hawai'i 2050, it wasn't empowered to implement the plan. By law, the Task Force will sunset on June 30, 2008.

We have four specific recommendations to keep the momentum going.

RECOMMENDATION ONE: Focus on and implement policy priorities actions for an intermediate benchmark for 2020.

Hawai'i's 2050 planning process identified nine priority issues that our citizens, stakeholders and experts felt needed to be addressed now. This will take us to the year 2020 as an intermediate benchmark. These nine strategic actions will begin the process of addressing key elements of the Hawai'i 2050 plan. Do them now, and we're on our way towards a sustainable Hawai'i.

RECOMMENDATION TWO: Establish an implementing entity – The Sustainability Council.

The Sustainability Council will be a continuing, governmental organization with a budget and staff. These resources will be essential to carry forward the Hawai'i 2050 Plan, measuring results and building a publicly accessible bank of knowledge about sustainability. The specific responsibilities, budget, revenue source and authorities of the body will be determined by the Legislature.

If the Legislature passes a law establishing the Sustainability Council, it would make Hawai'i a national leader in pursuing sustainability in a serious, strategic way. It is the single most important action that the Legislature can take to advance the cause of sustainability and move Hawai'i toward its preferred future. It will also further cross-sector dialogue and accountability on these vital issues.

In keeping with Hawai'i 2050's spirit of the "people's plan," the Task Force recommends that the Council be a diverse cross-section of individuals, most of whom would be nominated by the public. A broad range of public representation on the Sustainability Council will ensure open communications and cross-sector dialogue among the stakeholders, a crucial factor in moving Hawai'i toward sustainability.

Ultimately, the Council will serve as a focal point for action – a central entity, responsive to the public that will help Hawai'i navigate toward a sustainable future.

That is why we recommend that the Sustainability Council be small in its operational budget, and not regulatory in function.

What the Council would and would not do

An overwhelming majority of those we asked, surveyed and polled recognize the need for creating an implementing entity. Some, however, are skeptical of the need for another government agency to oversee and coordinate the State's sustainability efforts. We agree that the establishment of a new government entity should be done deliberately, skeptically and with precision. That is why we recommend that the Sustainability Council be small in its operational budget, and not regulatory in function. It should not replace the Office of Environmental Quality Control, Land Use Commission, Public Utilities Commission, county planning commissions, the State Office of Planning, or the Department of Land and Natural Resources. It would be similar in size and scope to the State's Council on Revenues, which annually predicts tax revenues, and is a highly credible entity that impacts both public and private action.

It was also suggested that implementing Hawai'i 2050 be administered by a nonprofit or private entity. It would be difficult for a nongovernmental entity to oversee the coordination, management and benchmarking of an official government plan and activity, particularly where many of the initiatives required government action and policy changes. The proposed Sustainability Council will make sure that the strategic actions in Hawai'i 2050 are pursued, that the indicators are paid attention to, and that the effort towards a sustainable 2050 and our preferred future keeps its momentum.

Details of the Sustainability Council

This Sustainability Council would have: 1) a governing board; 2) authority to hire an executive director and staff; 3) appropriate powers and duties to carry out its mission; and 4) a funding mechanism to support the agency's activities. The Sustainability Council is intended to be a governmental entity, initially located in the Office of the Auditor, then transferred to the Office of Planning for administrative purposes only. Its voting board members would comprise both public officials and private citizens more fully described below.

COUNCIL COMPOSITION AND NOMINATIONS

The Sustainability Council would comprise a diverse cross-section of community leaders that will provide the necessary leadership and expertise in creating a sustainable future for Hawai'i. The Council would comprise the following members:

- Total members: Seventeen (17). Fifteen (15) voting members; two (2) non-voting, ex-officio members.
- Governmental appointments: Six (6) members from the following: One (1) member appointed by the Governor; one (1) member appointed by each of the four (4) Mayors; and one (1) member appointed by the



Office of Hawaiian Affairs. These appointments need not be restricted to government officials.

- Public members: Nine (9) members appointed by the Governor. The Governor shall consider the following areas of statewide expertise and interests, including but not limited to, the Kanaka Maoli, business, science and technology, labor, environment, multi-cultures, visitor industry, military, agriculture, education, health and human services, and young adults. The intent of representation in these suggested categories is to create a board that has statewide knowledge of key sectors and components of the community.

Youth representation: One of the nine public members shall represent Hawai'i's youth under 25 years of age.

County representation: Four of the nine public members shall reside in each of the four counties.

Ex-officio (non-voting) members: Designees of the Department of Education and the Office of Planning.

Terms: Four (4) year staggered terms.

Nominations: A call for nominations from the general public will be solicited. All nominees are subject to confirmation by the State Senate.

Scope and function of the Sustainability Council

The Sustainability Council will coordinate, implement, measure and evaluate the progress of Hawai'i 2050 and activities.

The primary functions of the Sustainability Council will be to:

- Coordinate and implement the Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan.
- Collect and analyze data on the approved sustainability indicators.
- Publish and promote an annual "report card" on the indicators.
- Convene statewide summits and forums on sustainability.
- Sponsor cross-sector dialogue to address key sustainability issues.
- Direct an ongoing public awareness and education campaign about sustainability.
- Recommend legislation and advocate for sustainability in Hawai'i's public policy arena.
- Every five years, revise and amend the Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan as appropriate.
- Conduct a periodic review and audit of sustainability activities.

- Negotiate and execute contracts as necessary to achieve the functions listed above. The Task Force recommends that the Sustainability Council be exempt from the Hawai'i public procurement code.

ADVISORY SUB-GROUPS

To implement and advise the Sustainability Council, advisory sub-groups may be created in the following categories that are in accord with the Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan:

- Educational Curricula, Marketing and Public Awareness
- Economic Development and Diversification
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Social and Community Development
- Kanaka Maoli and Island Lifestyle

Funding source

The Task Force recommends that the Sustainability Council be funded through the General Fund.

“INTERIM SUSTAINABILITY COUNCIL” COMPOSITION AND SELECTION

The Task Force recommends that an “Interim Sustainability Council” be established to provide continuity and a transition mechanism from the Task Force to the permanent Sustainability Council. Because of the institutional knowledge the Task Force has gained over the past two and a half years, it would be beneficial for the Interim Sustainability Council to include several members of the Task Force. These members could provide the background and context in which Hawai'i 2050 was developed, and assist the Sustainability Council to get underway. The Task Force recommends that at least five (5) Hawai'i 2050 Task Force members of the fifteen (15) voting members of the Interim Sustainability Council be initially appointed, to be ultimately transitioned out due to term limits.

Attached agency

As a quasi-governmental agency, the Sustainability Council needs to be assigned to a governmental unit for administrative purposes. The Task Force recommends that the Interim Sustainability Council be temporarily attached to Office of the Auditor for the first two years. The Auditor has garnered a great deal of knowledge about sustainability and Hawai'i 2050, and would serve as an ideal transition agency. In 2010, the Task Force recommends that the Sustainability Council be permanently attached to the Office of Planning.



HAWAII VISITORS AND CONVENTION BUREAU

These indicators would be the most comprehensive measure of how we are doing as a state – economically, culturally, and environmentally.

Periodic financial and management audits

The Task Force proposes an audit of the Sustainability Council’s activities every two years to determine the appropriateness of its fiscal activities, and the progress made in implementing Hawai‘i 2050.

RECOMMENDATION THREE: Establish sustainability indicators, aggregating the best data annually, measuring progress towards specific sustainability goals.

Utilizing the data in this report, from the community engagement process, and from future discussions, the Council ought to establish an annual measuring tool of our efforts toward sustainability. These indicators would be the most comprehensive measure of how we are doing as a state – economically, culturally, and environmentally. It will be the primary mechanism to measure our progress. Our annual scores on each of the indicators must be the subject of enthusiastic attention and discussion, among all sectors. This is the most effective way to quantify our progress towards sustainability.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR: Issue a report card – measuring our progress.

In our review of the best practices of other state and municipality sustainability plans, we’ve found that public report cards are an effective tool in ensuring that the public, lawmakers and opinion leaders know how we are doing in implementing our plan.

We believe performance indicators are a crucial component of Hawai‘i 2050. A good indicator helps the public understand the current status of an issue, whether the situation around it is improving or worsening, and how far we are from success. Effective indicators are relevant, easy to understand, reliable and based on accessible data.

The details of this report card must be developed by the Council, but the core of it lies in the strategic actions and indicators set forth in this document. The report card will tell us how we measure up to this plan, and enable us to make adjustments according to what is working and what isn’t.

