



State Planning Act Task Force

Meeting #4

MEETING MINUTES

March 31, 2026

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Office of Planning and Sustainable Development, 6th Floor Conference Room
State Office Tower – Leiopapa A Kamehameha Building
235 South Beretania Street, Honolulu
and Via Videoconference

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeN5iHYgJD8>

All meeting materials are posted at <https://planning.hawaii.gov/spb/hawaii-state-plan-update-phase-2/past-meetings-and-materials/>

Members/Designees Present:

Michelle Ahn, County of Hawai‘i Planning Department
Mary Alice Evans, Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD), Chair
Steven Bond-Smith, University of Hawai‘i Economic Research Organization
Michael Cain, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission
Jeffrey Darrow, County of Hawai‘i Planning Department
Jacky Takakura, Planning Department, County of Maui
Jackie Kaina, Kaua‘i Economic Development Board
Leinā‘ala Ley, Office of Hawaiian Affairs
Marie Williams, Planning Department, County of Kaua‘i
Leslie Wilkins, Maui Economic Development Board
Dina Wong, Planning Division, City and County of Honolulu
Cat Awakuni Colón, O‘ahu Economic Development Board

Members/Designees Excused:

Ken Kakesako, Department of Education
Chris Liu, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission, Coastal Zone

Management

Jacqui Hoover, Hawai'i Economic Development Board

OPSD Special Plans Staff:

Scott Allen, OPSD

David Kobayashi, OPSD

Claire McCreery, OPSD

Lauren Primiano, OPSD

Isabelle Sholes, OPSD

Guests:

Kate Frucht, University of Hawai'i Department of Urban and Regional Planning

Rebekah Kim, Office of Vice Speaker Linda Ichiyama

Matthew Prellberg, Holomua Collective

Kainalu Pu'u-Robinson, Office of Speaker Nakamura

Josh Wisch, Holomua Collective

1. **Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum**

Mary Alice Evans, the Director of OPSD and Chair of the Task Force, called the meeting to order at 11:06 AM.

2. **Approval of Minutes from Task Force Meeting #3 on December 18, 2025**

The Draft Meeting Minutes from the Task Force meeting on December 18, 2025 were approved.

3. **Presentation and Discussion: Framework Research Report**

OPSD Special Plans Branch staff Claire McCreery, Scott Allen, Lauren Primiano, and David Kobayashi, along with OPSD Director Mary Alice Evans, presented findings and analyses from the Framework Research Report prepared by the University of Hawai'i's Department of Urban and Regional Planning. The report, informed by literature reviews and interviews with public sector and nonprofit/community stakeholders, included the following key findings:

Current Planning System Context: In the current planning landscape, state agencies have shifted away from the Chapter 226 functional plans. Additional planning contexts include capacity constraints, a lack of State Planning Act-related training for staff and other implicated agencies, and largely informal interagency coordination practices.

Comparisons to Other State Planning Systems: The report included a review of states with strong roles in planning. Maine establishes statewide land use and resource goals, but relies on voluntary municipal participation, supported by incentives and legal levers, to drive plan-making and implementation. Maryland has statutorily established statewide planning principles that must be integrated into local comprehensive plans. Maryland's framework includes required plan elements, regular update cycles, structured state and intergovernmental review periods, and targeted agency reviews of specific components. California's model requires long-term plans with specified components. Most General Plan compliance is enforced through consistency requirements and litigation.

Purpose, Principles, Values and Goals: The review of the County General Plans and interviews suggest that the purpose remains relevant. The guiding principles remain relevant but could benefit from further clarification. Further, the State Plan's broad goals are difficult to translate into actionable strategies. The County General Plans were found to be less economically focused and less individualistic compared to the State Plan's values and goals.

Applicability to the Public Sector: The interviews suggest that the State Plan is viewed as outdated, that it has overlapping and conflicting policies, and that there is a lack of clear guidance for the plan's implementation, update frequency, and process. Further, agencies tend to rely on sector-specific plans, county plans, and federal regulatory frameworks to guide their implementation.

Applicability to the Nonprofit / Community Sector: The interviews suggest that the State Plan has not kept pace with contemporary challenges, that the State Plan is outdated, lacks "teeth," is overly broad and weakly enforceable, and that there is a gap in implementation and a lack of ownership related to the Plan.

Relevance and Use of the State Plan's Objectives: The literature review and current interviews suggest that the State Plan's overarching objectives remain consistent with State agencies' missions. The existing objective areas still capture dimensions of statewide planning, but policy contexts have evolved since the Plan was last revised, and more recent county general plans have shifted from the original five objective areas.

Emerging Planning Priorities: Common issue areas were identified across the county general plans. The interviews revealed additional emerging issues and needs including climate change and environmental hazards, outdated hazard data,

water availability, Native Hawaiian cultural knowledge and community-based perspectives, economic diversification, workforce development, housing stability, and social infrastructure. Planning-specific issues and needs were also identified.

Key Takeaways from the Report: The report identified preliminary takeaways, framed as recommendations: 1) maintain the overall structure but update the scope of each policy area, 2) strengthen integration across policy areas, 3) reflect emerging planning priorities, 4) address data, technology, and evidence-based planning, 5) strengthen links between objectives and implementation, and 6) reinforce the role of community engagement and cultural knowledge.

In OPSD's analysis, **1) climate adaptation and resilience, 2) housing and community stability, 3) economic stewardship and resilience, 4) culture and place, and 5) planning systems and coordination** were introduced as cross-cutting priorities that could be used to frame the work of future Permitted Interaction Groups (PIGs).

Discussion questions were shared throughout the presentation. The first question was posed in relation to findings associated with the relevance of the State Plan's purpose, principles, values, and goals. The question stated, "do these findings resonate with you?"

Leslie Wilkins explained that she liked the comparison between the three states and agreed that the purpose of the Plan is relevant for improving infrastructure and housing inventory. Wilkins added that it can be challenging to focus on long-term planning and that it can be difficult to integrate broad goals into actionable plans.

Dina Wong agreed that the purpose remained relevant but did not fully understand the finding that County General Plans are less economically focused and individualistic. Wong noted that Honolulu's development plans tend to focus on land use and its' influence on the economy.

Jacky Takakura explained that Maui's Planning Department refers to the State Plan in reviews of bigger discretionary permits and refers to General Plan documents, including the Countywide Policy Plan and the Maui Island Plan, for community plan updates. She agreed that general plans are less economically focused and more specific to certain areas. Takakura pointed to work with the Corporation Council to review the State Plan and to ensure its consistency with community plans.

Cat Awakuni Colón acknowledged that it was helpful to see comparisons among the three states, agreed that the purpose remains relevant, and noted that differences exist at the State and County levels.

Leinā‘ala Ley commented that she would not favor California’s system, particularly its consistency mandates. Ley suggested that Hawai‘i’s model of letting county plans lead is more flexible and responsive to the community. She added that because local and community plans are more regularly updated, these processes should drive planning.

Marie Williams expressed interest in research on other states’ planning frameworks and agreed with findings on the Plan’s purpose, the importance of a state-level goal, and long-term planning. Williams was unsure of the individualistic finding and noted that all County General Plans are different in how comprehensive they are – suggesting that it may be hard to generalize the Plans. She expressed interest in research on approaches to County General Plans and a potential State Plan template.

Jackie Kaina commented that State Plan is relevant in purpose, but perhaps not in practice. Kaina further explained that the intent of the Plan is needed, but it is mostly used as a high-level reference today. She agreed with Ley that agencies and counties are not using the State Plan to guide decisions and agreed with previous comments.

Jeffrey Darrow stated that he liked the state comparisons and explained that Hawai‘i County’s General Plan update is undergoing a major shift related to its implementation and accountability. Darrow expressed that this is missing the point of a long-range general plan, which is why he tends to agree with California’s consistency mandates. He added that if the General Plan is not followed, goals for long-range planning efforts will not be achieved. He also added that he had to battle to maintain necessary components of the General Plan and emphasized the importance of a public process, noting that state and general plans belong to the people and are a collaboration.

Michael Cain agreed with findings associated with the applicability of the State Plan to the public sector. He explained that he had not heard of the Plan and mainly references sector-specific plans, county plans, and follows federal laws in his work with the Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands. He explained that the Plan could be useful, but it is currently treated as an archival document. Cain noted a bias in favor of development over sustainability or the protection of public trust resources and suggested avoiding California’s enforcement through litigation approach, if possible.

Steven Bond-Smith expressed that he was pleasantly surprised by the finding that the principles remain relevant, suggesting that they have remained flexible. He highlighted the importance of how to operationalize principles with current priorities. He suggested that although the Task Force stated that they do not refer to the State Plan, they should not have to refer to it – rather, local plans should do the functional job of planning. He stated that the role of planning is to facilitate decisions, and that State Plan should set rules to facilitate discussion on how to make those decisions.

Josh Wisch stated that while common themes were encouraging, other themes may be missing, and other voices may be needed. Wisch agreed that while parts of the Plan remain relevant, it is not being used. Wisch recommended approaching the update not only in terms of identifying new content, but in terms of structures that could create the right incentives. Wisch then described a paved and grass pathway analogy and asked about which path are we trying to incentivize the use of, and which we are trying to lose. Wisch added that the private sector could be helpful with providing “teeth” and metrics.

Rebekah Kim stated that she was taking notes for Representative Ichiyama and expressed interest in why the Plan was viewed as more individualistic.

Kainalu Pu'u-Robinson added that Speaker Nakamura appreciated the work on the report.

The second question posed, in relation to the applicability of the State Plan to the public sector, was, “if the Plan is updated, what is the role that the State Plan should play in today’s world?”

Wong explained that Honolulu’s Planning Department looks to the State Plan, General Plan, and development plans to process discretionary land use approvals and monitor consistency. To the question, Wong responded that role of the Plan would be the same, but that an updated Plan would be more applicable because it would include more relevant subject areas. She agreed that the Department tends to rely on county plans.

Takakura stated that it could be more effective to tie funding to the State Plan and agreed with Wong that the State Plan is used for bigger discretionary permits. She added that certain remote areas like Hana or Moloka‘i might not want to be consistent with some State goals, and that community members are more familiar with their own plans.

Williams noted that State Plan updates should include clear guidance for the county planning departments. In agreement with Takakura on funding to update the General Plans, Williams suggested that the funding be tied to uses of templates or ensuring that a

state planning framework is built into the county plans. Williams also questioned the role of the State Plan and OPSD in coordinating at a statewide level, and how the Plan might apply to State agencies' work.

Darrow explained that he would not go as far as Takakura and Williams in using funding mechanisms but acknowledged that it would create pressure. He added that the Department tries to follow the State Plan and that while the update is helpful, coordinating with the counties and is more helpful – noting that this is being done more now compared to the past. Darrow also suggested that OPSD consider participating in general plan reviews to guide and check the connection between the State Plan and county plans.

Evans called for comments from Cain, but he noted that he addressed the discussion question in his initial comments.

Bond-Smith inquired if the public should have input into other people's planning, noting that he thought that the public should not necessarily have more of a role more than any other stakeholder – rather, the mechanism should be set up to be flexible.

The second question was posed again, but in relation to the applicability of the State Plan to the nonprofit/community sector. Evans called for comments from Kaina.

Kaina commented that the State Plan should be used as a tool to connect community priorities to State action and explained that many community organizations do not see the Plan reflected in decisions, programs, and on-the-ground outcomes, limiting its' relevance. She added that the Plan should play a practical and enabling role and clearly signal priorities and pathways for community organizations to implement.

Awakuni Colón responded that because the Plan is outdated, there can be a disconnect between community input/plans and the State Plan. She expressed interest in compliance through referencing the State Plan and not wanting to omit the Plan, which could appear as an oversight. She suggested finding a way to connect community plans and the State Plan, noting that part of the challenge will be timing when the Plan is refreshed.

Evans commented that the CEDS is on a five-year schedule while the State Plan is on a forty-year schedule.

Wilkins agreed with previous comments, emphasizing a cultural disconnect where nonprofits manage the day-to-day realities of communities. Wilkins noted that nonprofits

and boards tend to review organizational plans at least every 5 years with midterm adjustments. She agreed with findings that the Plan was viewed as outdated and disconnected and added that 95% of the nonprofits will say that the State's role is to allocate funds for implementation. She questioned how these factors can be better aligned for the future of the State.

Cain noted food security, homelessness issues, housing issues, and mental health issues as topics for developing statewide policies for economic stability. He suggested that environmental stewardship could be a potential role for the State Plan. He added that there are currently no state or federal housing policies.

Wisch commented on the gap in implementation, noting the book, "Recoding America" by Jennifer Phalka, which describes deep policy and implementation gaps. Wisch added that even when the State is providing funding through nonprofits, enough funding is not provided to actually support their work, which feels like a gap in implementation.

Next, on emerging issues and needs described by stakeholders, the Task Force was asked, "What other planning-specific issues are your agency/organization facing? What other issues do you think will need to be addressed by your agency/organization?" Were there any reactions from the Task Force and does that resonate?

Williams highlighted wildfires as an emerging issue, emphasizing reducing risk through planning, zoning, and subdivision codes. Williams reiterated climate as a priority issue and added that focusing on hazard mitigation in community plans can help with land use codes. Williams attributed the Department being unable to update plans frequently to capacity issues but noted that this may also be an issue in terms of plan update processes. She questioned if plan updates could be more nimble.

Evans asked Williams for clarification on Kaua'i's hazard plan. Williams responded that all of the counties' emergency management departments have a plan that is updated on a 5-year cycle. Evans also questioned if emergency management agency hazard plans were used by county planning departments to look at how hazards are changing. Williams agreed and noted that the hazard mitigation plans are more focused on projects that FEMA might fund and explained that the Climate Adaptation and Action Plan develops policy and is more mid-range.

Ley stated that it is a priority for beneficiaries to have Native Hawaiian perspectives reflected in State decision making. Ley added that it can be challenging for communities to see where the rubber hits the road on the plan and how it connects to actual decisions.

Evans called for comments on water as an emerging issue. Awakuni Colón stated that water is connected to everything, but it is also fraught. She noted that she was unsure of the silver bullet in terms of how to address those issues, but that water needed to be among the topics that are regularly updated and addressed.

Wilkins added that water is a top issue as an infrastructural planning requirement in Maui, particularly for hazard mitigation and planning. She emphasized that water is an obstacle for housing inventory, which is critical for economic issues across sectors in development. She added that ownership of water is a huge topic and that how to approach it is fraught with disagreement. She noted the cultural value of water, adding that the topic goes back to colonization issues that are challenging and emotional. Wilkins concluded that not giving water the attention it needs has led to issues.

Takakura added that Maui's Planning Department is taking on more of a water role, but that the issue goes beyond the planning departments. She emphasized the need for the inclusion of the water commission, water departments, and other entities. She added that the Department is working with the Corporation Council on the regulation of gulches but noted that some environmental factors may be better addressed at the state level.

Evans called for comments on planning-specific issues and needs.

Wong added that Honolulu uses a One Water approach, and that there is a working group that is listing projects to be implemented in the near mid-long term. On topics in the General Plans, Wong noted that she did not see information on food security and agriculture – highlighting that these are big topics on the North Shore and Waianae.

Evans followed up on Wong's comments and asked what topic area she saw the discussed topics falling under. Wong responded that the Honolulu General Plan has a finer breakdown of topics compared to the topics presented.

Bond-Smith commented on distinguishing between mechanisms and specific issues, explaining that if the plan is too specific, it will become outdated. He suggested that the framework for the new Plan should focus on mechanisms.

Following the presentation of cross-cutting priorities, the final question posed was, “do these cross-cutting priorities resonate with you? Is anything missing?”

Williams noted that public health and safety were missing. Williams referred to the Department of Health's Healthy Hawai'i Plan, which explains how the health issues tie back to planning, building roads, infrastructure, etc. She highlighted the consideration of the health of everyone for plans and zoning code changes.

Evans agreed on the inclusion of transportation, land use, and public health.

Cain added that public health and mental health should be prioritized but was unsure where transportation issues would fit. Cain noted being advised to not participate in PIGs, given their limitations. Evans clarified that PIGs do not have to post an agenda, they can meet when it is convenient, and that they must be one less than quorum.

Scott Allen commented that he did not want to imply that topics like public health or transportation were not included. Instead, the topics would be unpacked - for example, transportation would be unpacked under climate change adaptation and resilience, whereas under housing and community stability, access to services could be addressed. Evans suggested including these topics, so that people know that they are there.

Bond-Smith commented that the planning systems and coordination cross-cutting issue is a foundational piece that is the mechanism for managing other topics. Bond-Smith added that he would not necessarily want more specific topics prescribed in the Act, and to instead consider how different groups can think about different issues and how issues can be addressed by planning systems and coordination mechanisms.

Lauren Primiano responded that the PIGs would be run in parallel due to time constraints. To this comment, Bond-Smith suggested having feedback between the PIGs. Primiano responded that a separate PIG on planning systems and coordination did not mean that other PIGs should not discuss this topic. Bond-Smith stated the current presentation of PIGs does not show planning systems and coordination as an equal part of the list.

4. **Announcements**

Ahead of the next Task Force meeting, analysis, planning, and research will be continued. During the next meeting, the Task Force will finalize the guiding framework and form thematic area PIGs.

5. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:49 PM.