

# The Maui News

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## Developer: Working with community is likely the key to project's success

Developer Mike Atherton, whose Waikapu Country Town project has been in the works for more than a decade, said good things take time.

Atherton owns 2,000 acres of land that includes and surrounds Maui Tropical Plantation. His 500-acre development project, which predates its 2007 recommendation for Maui Island Plan inclusion, has garnered widespread support over the years for its mix of affordable housing and agricultural land.

*“It’s been in the process for over 10 years,” Atherton said last week. “You have to do everything and it takes time, but if you work with the community first, it is worth it.”*

Community involvement and giving back are reasons why farmers such as Bobby Pahia and James “*Kimo*” Simpliciano support Atherton. The two are among nearly 10 who are farming on smaller lots within a 310-acre Atherton parcel.

*“He’s a great visionary,”* Simpliciano said Friday. *“With his new community, can you imagine being the first (modern) green community? We need to teach in the direction of farming. Hawaiians have done it for generations.”*

Waikapu Country Town calls for 1,433 single-family, multifamily and rural units, as well as 146 ohana units; 200,000 square feet of commercial space; 82 acres of parks and open space; 8 miles of sidewalks, paths and trails; a 12-acre elementary school; and a 910-acre agricultural preserve. An additional 277 acres would be subdivided into no more than five agricultural lots.

Developers are currently seeking community plan and zoning changes for the project. The Maui County Council’s Land Use Committee heard the request Wednesday and deferred a vote until its next meeting.

Atherton estimates building will take place one year after the committee and subsequently the full council approve the permits.

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