

sion of retail establishments that may be or become a superstore. In essence, the proposed ordinance would create a "ban" on superstores.

The Maui Chamber of Commerce has had a long-standing position on future development and the process for considering development. We support growth that promotes the quality of life in Maui County. The chamber's position is that development should be consistent with the county's General Plan, community plans and implementation plans. Future development also should be coordinated with "smart-growth principals" conceived by our community, with the development investing in adequate physical and social infrastructure.

Therefore, with the county embarking on a process to update our General Plan, the General Plan process seems an ideal fit for discussing this issue and involving broad community participation in that discussion.

The General Plan is our county's long-term blueprint for the physical, economic, environmental development and cultural identity of the county. The General Plan comprises goals, policies, programs and actions that are based on an assessment of the current and future needs and available resources. Once adopted, it is the principal tool for the county and its residents to use when evaluating public and private projects and their impacts on land use, the economy, the environment, infrastructure and cultural resources.

Concerns raised to date — such as appropriate locations for development, aesthetic and design issues, traffic considerations

and cultural sensitivity — all could be addressed in this planning process, a point made by the Planning Department during the meeting.

Further, the county officials actively are promoting public participation in the General Plan process. In their "Why should I get involved?" with the General Plan, they ask, "Do you have an opinion on how the county should grow? Are there certain things you would like to see in Maui County in the future? Are you concerned about issues like housing, the environment and traffic?" They then state, "Then help plan the future of Maui County!"

At the Maui Chamber of Commerce, we believe our residents can and will come together to create this plan and "blueprint" for future development in our county, determining what we do and don't want in our future, where development is acceptable, and under what conditions.

The planning commissions are charged with advising the mayor, County Council and planning director in matters concerning planning programs and reviewing the General Plan and revisions, after hearing public testimony. The planning commissions also are charged with making recommendations to the County Council for consideration and action. The initiative to send the superstores bill for review by the planning commissions would be viewed as inadequate if the review pre-empted the matter from being taken up in the context of the General Plan.

That is our concern. If the referral is designed to supplement the General Plan review, then it seems premature.

Unfortunately, following our testimony on the matter, Council Chairman Hokama was left with a question. Following the close of testimony and questioning, he expressed that he wondered why the chamber would want to reduce public input on this matter, and commented that if it is a matter of timing, there will always be challenges with timing. It's too bad he didn't raise his question after testimony in the provided period, when we could have addressed his understanding or interpretation of our testimony; engaged in an important discussion on planning process to further educate and inform the community on these processes (General Plan versus planning commission reviews) and their purposes; and consider which provides the more inclusive opportunity for the public to ring in on these issues.

The County Council voted to pass this bill on to our planning commissions (Maui, Lanai and Molokai) for their review, which can include public input, as well as input by the Hana Advisory Committee and the Maui Cultural Resources Commission. We are pleased to see the Hana Advisory Committee and Maui Cultural Resources Commission included for additional review and input; however, we still have questions about the process and hope that their review leads them to recommend that a bill which includes a "ban" be addressed in the framework of our General Plan.

■ *Pamela Tsoumpis is president of the Maui Chamber of Commerce.*