

# A New Kind “Upcountry”

The westerly slopes of Kahalewai, the West Maui mountains, have always been a combination of wild spaces and agri cu



**R**ather than waking up to just a cup of Maui-grown coffee, a few homeowners in West Maui will be enjoying their breakfasts, gazing out on hundreds of acres of it.

That's what is happening at the Ka'anapali Coffee Farms, a new agricultural subdivision created by Ka'anapali Development Corporation (KDC). The idea is relatively simple: Subdivide 336 acres of ag land into 58 separate farms of four to seven acres each, setting aside about one acre of each sold farm as a home-building site. Later, the acreage will be increased by nearly 50 percent to accommodate a second phase of development.

Several factors make the concept more appealing, more contemporary and more in line with both the demands of agriculture and West Maui's upscale housing market.

Naturally, when we're talking about the beautiful, green, westerly slopes of Kahalewai, the West Maui Mountains, we're talking about luxury homes. The hillside mauka of (above) Ka'anapali Resort is about as desirable as real estate can be on Maui, maybe in the world. Even so, the farms will sell for prices starting at just \$1.2 million. That may sound "crazy," but this is Maui and this is—now. Besides, the farms will have the breathing room and seclusion provided by the expansive vistas of coffee growing in neat rows.

The sites also have what KDC modestly describes as "sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean and the neighboring islands of Lana'i and Moloka'i..." Visitors on the coast below are having the vacation of a lifetime gazing at that view. Maybe the more seasoned travelers are also thinking, "Wow. Imagine what this view would be like from up *there*."

Perhaps best of all, the "farmers" who buy Ka'anapali Coffee Farms don't have to lift a finger to plant, maintain or harvest the coffee crop on their land.

The development seeks to balance many interests that are usually seen as irreconcilable. Proponents of Maui agriculture decry the construction of homes on ag land, but the Ka'anapali Coffee Farms will put very few homes on the land and, in the process, will ensure the continued agricultural use of more than 80 percent of it. And that's genuine, productive agriculture, not "sod farming" that is actually a lawn. The ultra-low-density development will also minimize the visual impact of the land use.

"You want to keep the hillside as pretty as it is today," said Steve Lovelette, KDC executive vice president. "If you look up, driving along Honoapi'ilani Highway, you'll see farm land. It will still be beautiful."

Lovelette was speaking largely of the sparse scattering of what he calls "farm dwelling sites," on the hillside. Once the idea of the pleasant appearance of the ag subdivision came up, he continued, speaking of another aspect of that concept. "The design guidelines are made for a number of different reasons.

# d of "Maui

**By Joseph W. Bean**

ure. The Ka'anapali Coffee Farms project respects and retains that history.



**Kimo Falconer, the farmer of Ka'anapali Coffee Farms, says coffee is a beautiful crop**

First, they comply with county rules for things like the height of the buildings. But, if the county rules change in the future, the design guidelines won't. People will still have to comply with the guidelines" regardless of future county allowances. "We specify colors, too. We want colors that 'fit in' with the view of the agricultural operation."

It is impossible not to expect that any home development on ag land, however sensitive or beautiful, would necessarily reduce overall agricultural acreage. Not so in this special case. Ka'anapali Coffee Farms actually will increase agricultural use of land in the area. Not only will KDC be restoring more of the old coffee plantation there, but the developer will be incorporating acres of the once-expansive sugar plantation that were never before planted with coffee.

"There are 500 acres of coffee up there," said Kimo Falconer, "and KDC is developing 250 of them in phase one. They're restoring more coffee. I already restored about 100 acres before this came in. I started about three years ago."

"Kimo is *the* farmer," added Lovelette of Falconer, a former employee of KFS/Ka'anapali Estate Coffee, Inc. who is also the founding entrepreneur of Maui Grown Coffee, Inc. "KDC does

the maintenance and Kimo does the harvest and then he takes the coffee from there. And we're employing 20 to 25 people in the farming. Some are our people. Some are Kimo's people."

Building a farm home in an active farm—effectively creating a smaller farm within a vast ongoing farm operation—comes with some surprising facts of life and some limitations which, although they are spelled out in the Land Owners' Association (LOA) agreements and declarations, might not be obvious until you read the documents. Farm workers, for example, may have to be able to cross the building sites with agricultural equipment.

The mention of farm workers' access requirements came up when Lovelette was talking about the possibility of one buyer purchasing more than one farm to have a larger building site. "They can buy contiguous lots. The issue is that on each of these lots we have determined where the buildings can go. That's for the farm equipment to get through and because of the [existing and necessary] irrigation lines. So they can do it, but we'd have to talk about which lots and about their plans..."

The idea of farm equipment and laborers needing access to the cultivated land naturally inspires the question of whether farm buyers will have their lives invaded on behalf of the coffee trees at all hours, on any and every day. Definitely not. The agreement between the organizations representing the development and farm owners on the one hand and the farming entities on the other is very specific about all that. With exceptions for emergencies, farming operations will take place only after 7 a.m. and end by sundown. On Sundays and national holidays, there'll be no farming operations before noon; and on selected major holidays, there'll be no farming operations at all. Also, harvesting operations are expected to require only about three days a year on each farm.

Another potentially surprising fact of coffee farm life is that the vegetation planted on each farm-home site and the fencing around the personal-use areas have to conform to guidelines based on what is safe and supportive for the coffee plantation. It's unlikely that the restrictions will be troublesome at all to families who really want to live in a rural community, though.

Water is always an issue for any Maui development. KDC has that handled by providing two water supplies to the coffee farms. Potable water is supplied for home use, but all irrigation of the coffee and home-site landscaping is done with non-potable water. The non-potable water is also used for any private farming done by the homeowners.

Then, speaking of the possibility of buyers doing



**Steve Lovelette, Ka'anapali Development Corp. executive vice president, is at the helm for KDC's ag subdivision above the Ka'anapali Resort area.**



The farms developed in West Maui today will not become strip malls tomorrow—or ever.

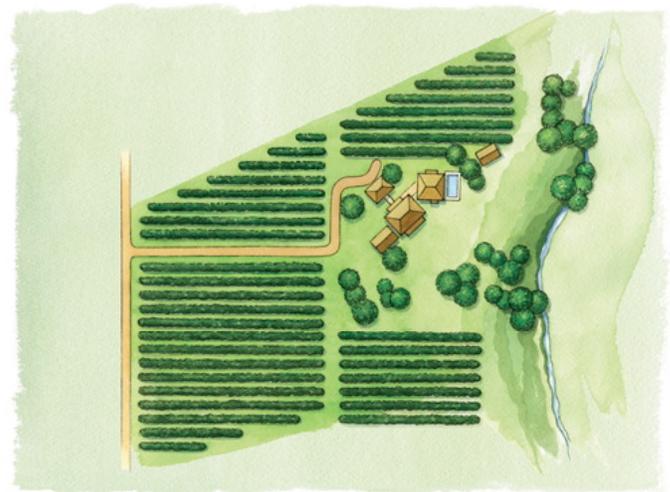
farming of their own, Lovelette added, “Not animals. We’re trying to keep the horses out of there. We have a pretty pristine coffee crop up there. I’m not saying the animals or the manure from the animals would damage the coffee. But... We’re trying to keep it a vibrant coffee crop. After a number of years, I don’t know, but for a number of years it will be coffee.”

Falconer is really enthusiastic about the coffee plantation. He said, “It’s a beautiful crop. Coffee is a really beautiful crop, low impact, and here on Maui we don’t have any pests to spray. We don’t have the rust here or anything. And with coffee, there is none of the farming mess. If they decided to take out the coffee and put in corn, that’s a 90-day crop!” All the dirt-raising plowing, the year-round dust, the regular noise and other unpleasantness of being on a regular plant-and-harvest farm or animal-husbandry farm is taken out of the equation with coffee.

“It’s kind of like being on a golf course,” Falconer said. “It’s beautiful and easy. With coffee, we harvest in the fall, we prune in the winter and we don’t have to prune all the trees all the time. This is the perfect ‘subsidy’ for agriculture for Maui.”

“We’re selling now,” Lovelette added. “Some farms are sold. Some are on contracts. Some are reserved. This worked out really well. We got rain at the right time so the buds came on, and the coffee is looking good. Everything is green.” There are only 13 farms in the first offering, and they’re going fast. The rest of the first phase will come online as coffee plantings are restored and land is made ready.

The land in question is already zoned for agricultural use, and that zoning allows exactly the kind of subdivision being developed at Ka’anapali Coffee Farms. Buyers are permitted to build, as PM Land Company, a KDC subsidiary, puts it, “a spacious primary farm dwelling, plus an accessory farm dwelling and farm shed. Design guidelines will guarantee that all the architecture is appropriate for a farming community



This rendition of a typical Ka’anapali Coffee Farm displays the roominess provided by the coffee acreage around the building site.



Hundreds of acres are already planted in now-mature coffee trees.

and is part of a harmonious and pleasing overall style.”

No rental of Ka’anapali Coffee Farms dwellings or ohana units is permitted.

KDC conducted several years of community outreach about the development of the land formerly used by Pioneer Mill—originally for sugar. Then, more than a year ago, the company began the sometimes wearying trek through the permitting process. “We’re over all the hurdles for the subdivision,” Lovelette said. “Buyers don’t have to worry about the farm... all the soil tests and archeological work are done.” Now, KDC is able to supply many of the attachments required when buyers apply for their individual building permits and the needed approval of the Agricultural Lease Compliance Committee (ALCC).

As with any homeowners association, there will be assessments. Unlike most communities, however, Ka’anapali Coffee Farms will see some of the assessments offset by “rent” from the use of the coffee farming land. The LOA covenants, conditions and easements spell out a lot of limitations and requirements, but they will not be burdensome or odious to buyers eager to live a farm lifestyle. Depending on the details of a farm owner’s building plan and his or her willingness to adhere to the special requirements placed on agricultural land, it is assumed that swimming pools and other desirable appointments will be allowed by permitting departments and approved by the ALCC.

KDC’s former development manager, A. James Wriston, is said to have been profoundly dedicated to the Hawaiian value of *malama ‘aina*. He is described as believing “passionately that the continuation of agriculture on the former Pioneer Mill sugarcane plantation would provide residents with a livelihood and keep the land green and growing. He saw numerous small farms as the best way to support coffee operations in the area.”

Pioneer started experimenting with coffee, testing varieties and plantation locations, in the 1980s. After selecting the best sites and coffee varieties, the company started what was intended to be their permanent coffee plantation in the early

1990s. Coffee, it turned out, didn’t save Pioneer. Wriston’s vision for the slopes of Kahalewai seemed very much in danger. But the Pioneer plantings gave Falconer a place to start in 2003 when he formed Maui Grown Coffee.

PM Land and KDC now see The Ka’anapali Coffee Farms development as the final realization of Wriston’s dream. Lovelette said, “Our goal is to keep some prime land in agriculture,” and this project “combines country living with modern-day convenience and sets a standard for sustainable agriculture on Maui.” These farms, he believes, are everything Wriston could have hoped for, and more.

A sustainable farming community on the best island in the world, where real estate values are stratospheric, would be impossible without the ingenious and creative thinking that went into devising the Ka’anapali Coffee Farms, but is this really country living at all?

It is.

“First, this is not a gated community,” said Lovelette. “There are a number of natural trails that will be there still. There are archeological sites and those will be restored and maintained. There’s a cemetery. You can’t just go in there and restore a cemetery. We have to work with the Burial Council on that, but, yes, there are all kinds of trails and walkways and easements and the roads. There are natural and man-made paths to walk. Man-made, over time, that is by use... and... they will be maintained through water diversion, run-off control and the actual agricultural use. They have to be maintained.”

It’s all real, it seems—real country, real community and real farming.

“It’s going to be one of the few growing agricultural industries,” Falconer said, then corrected himself. “It’s going to be the only growing agricultural industry in Maui—or, for sure, in West Maui. I’m leaving out Maui Land & Pine here.” That’s not inappropriate. Maui Land & Pine is not an increasingly agricultural enterprise. “This may not be sole-proprietor farming,” Falconer continued, “but we’re doing what we can to save agriculture and to make another product for Maui.” **REMS**