

HLU Committee

From: Robyn Garner <robynmgarner@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 22, 2025 3:03 PM
To: HLU Committee
Cc: James G. Krueger; Ellen B. McKinley
Subject: Re: Bill 78 (2025) - Change in Zoning for 1550 Nukuna Place (HLU-7)
Attachments: Garner Rezoning AAR.pdf; 250903 HLU Committee Meeting Agenda.pdf

You don't often get email from robynmgarner@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Aloha,

I am not entirely sure if this is the correct office to receive this report; please let me know if I should forward it to another group.

On 3 September 2025, I attended the change-in-zoning hearing for my property. During that hearing, Council members asked for my opinion on the rezoning process. My understanding is that the next hearing regarding this rezoning will be held on Friday, 26 September 2025.

Attached is my After Action Report documenting the experience of rezoning this property. It does not need to be included in the next hearing. I am submitting it to fulfill the commitment I made to share my perspective on the process.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Mahalo.

Very Respectfully,
Robyn "Tenacious-G" Garner

Dr. Robyn Misaye Garner, DM, MBA, PMP
Owner | Kamasaki-Garner Properties, LLC
robynmgarner@gmail.com

On Aug 31, 2025, at 4:05 PM, Robyn Garner <robynmgarner@gmail.com> wrote:

Aloha,

Please find attached the presentation materials for Bill 78 at the HLU hearing on 03 September 2025.

Mahalo.

After Action Report

After Action Review & Lessons Learned

Rezoning & Permitting for a Multigenerational Property in Waikapu
(CIZ2021-0002)

This After Action Report was prepared by Kamasaki-Garner Properties, LLC to document the permitting and rezoning process for CIZ20210002, at no cost to the County of Maui. It represents an independent evaluation for policy and process improvement and does not constitute an official statement of the County of Maui.

Kamasaki-Garner Properties, LLC
September 2025

Executive Summary

The permitting and rezoning process in Maui County plays a decisive role in shaping community growth and determining whether families remain on their ancestral lands. This After Action Report (AAR) uses the Garner Residence rezoning (CIZ20210002) in Waikapū as a case study to highlight both the potential and systemic shortcomings of the County’s land-use system. The case, which sought to rezone a multigenerational parcel to R-2 residential, was approved after four years of delays, redundancies, and inconsistent guidance. The lessons drawn from this experience extend beyond one application to reveal institutional patterns affecting families across Maui.

The review found clear successes: (a) the rezoning aligned with the Waikapū Community Plan, (b) garnered community support, (c) advanced housing goals, and (d) preserved cultural stewardship of the ‘āina. However, it also exposed recurring failures: (a) outdated notice requirements, (b) conflicting departmental instructions, (c) redundant documentation requests, (d) opaque tracking systems, and (e) a process that shifts costs onto applicants rather than designing for accessibility. Collectively, these problems constitute institutional failure, systems optimized for internal protection and compliance at the expense of timely, equitable service delivery.

Root cause analysis traced these failures to structural barriers such as obsolete ordinances, siloed workflows, weak accountability, fragile communication, and equity gaps. An Ishikawa fishbone diagram shows how these conditions reinforce one another, converging in inefficiency, inequity, and erosion of trust. The report recommends reforms across three domains:

- **Internal practices:** professionalizing management, instituting service benchmarks, and strengthening staff training and knowledge continuity.
- **External processes:** redesigning MAPPS into a workflow system, establishing a “single front door” liaison role, and modernizing public communication with mobile tools.
- **Policy and ordinances:** replacing outdated requirements, enabling electronic notices, and instituting a five-year review cycle for ordinance modernization.

Integration into revised processes requires embedding reforms into the County’s policy frameworks, workflows, and organizational culture. Continuous improvement should be institutionalized through quarterly performance scorecards, feedback loops, escalation protocols, pilot-to-scale testing, and annual ordinance tune-ups.

At stake is more than administrative efficiency. Each delay represents a lost home, a displaced family, and a missed opportunity to address Maui’s housing crisis. By embracing citizen-centered reform, Maui County can reduce costs, shorten timelines, and restore public trust, while ensuring that families remain rooted in their land and culture. Modernization is achievable, measurable, and essential for aligning governance with the values of kuleana, resilience, and aloha.

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Introduction

The permitting and rezoning process in Maui County plays a decisive role in shaping community growth and determining whether families can remain on their ancestral lands (Maui County Planning Department, 2021; Jung & Tummers, 2022). The experience of the Garner Residence (CIZ20210002) in Waikapū illustrates both the potential and the systemic shortcomings of this process. The project sought approval to rezone a multigenerational parcel to R-2 residential, aligning it with the County’s community plan (County of Maui, 2012) and enabling the construction of three long-term rental homes intended to address local housing shortages (Hawai’i Housing Finance & Development Corporation [HHFDC], 2023). Despite the eventual approval, the application required four years from filing to resolution, during which the applicant encountered repeated inconsistencies, administrative redundancies, and prolonged delays documented through correspondence, MAPPS records, and departmental interactions (Maui County Auditor, 2022). These barriers were not isolated missteps but evidence of institutional weaknesses embedded within ordinances, workflows, and communication practices (GAO, 2018; Bozeman, 2019). Understanding these failures matters because they directly affect whether Maui residents, particularly multigenerational families, can achieve their goals of providing housing, maintaining stewardship of land, and keeping future generations rooted in the community (Maui News, 2023; Harvard Kennedy School, 2019). This After Action Report (AAR), therefore, examines the Garner case as a lens for systemic learning and proposes actionable recommendations to modernize processes in support of equity, efficiency, and resilience (Deming, 1986; Drucker, 1993).

Methodology

AARs are designed to move beyond individual anecdotes and generate lessons that can inform systemic improvement (U.S. Army, 2011; Darling, Parry, & Moore, 2005). This review applies the AAR framework to the Garner Residence rezoning (CIZ20210002), asking what was expected, what actually occurred, why it happened, and how the process might be improved. To answer these questions, the report uses root cause analysis, specifically the “5 Whys” technique, to trace problems from surface-level symptoms back to institutional barriers (Ohno, 1988; Card, Ward, Clarkson, & Clarkson, 2012). Evidence was drawn from primary records and correspondence, including County correspondence with the applicant, MAPPS system interactions, invoices for required mailings and legal notices, and documentation of departmental delays and inconsistencies (Maui County Auditor, 2022). Organizing these materials into patterns allowed the analysis to distinguish between isolated errors and recurring systemic weaknesses (GAO, 2018). This methodology matters

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because it ensures that the findings are not grounded in personal frustration but in evidence-based evaluation. By structuring the inquiry around both qualitative experience and documentary proof, the analysis provides a credible foundation for recommendations that can support the County in modernizing its permitting and rezoning processes (Drucker, 1993; Deming, 1986).

After Action Review

The AAR of the Garner Residence rezoning revealed both areas of success and significant points of friction in Maui County's permitting process. Highlighting both achievements and shortcomings ensures a balanced record that recognizes what worked while providing a factual basis for systemic improvement (Darling, Parry, & Moore, 2005).

Successes

Several aspects of the rezoning process aligned with County objectives and community needs. First, the ultimate rezoning from Agricultural to R-2 was consistent with the Waikapū Community Plan, ensuring that the parcel's use matched long-term policy designations (County of Maui, 2012; State of Hawai'i Office of Planning, 2020). This alignment demonstrated that, at its core, the County's planning framework can support housing goals when followed through. Second, community input revealed no objections, and in some cases, neighbors voiced support for the improvements, underscoring that the project was seen as a community benefit rather than a disruption (Maui County Council Minutes, 2022). Third, the Housing and Land Use (HLU) Committee provided a fair and transparent hearing process, culminating in an approval that advanced both individual and countywide housing priorities (Maui News, 2021). Finally, the project itself contributes meaningfully to the housing shortage by producing three long-term rentals while also maintaining cultural stewardship through restoration of kuleana water and care of ancestral land (Kanahele, 1986; Maui County Comprehensive Affordable Housing Plan, 2021). Together, these successes show that when the system functions as intended, it is capable of advancing both public and cultural goals.

Failures

Despite the positive outcome, the process revealed persistent systemic weaknesses that hindered efficiency and fairness:

- **Rezoning Misalignment with Community Plans:** Processes were not designed to identify alignment between parcels and existing Community Plan designations. Instead of streamlining approvals when zoning and policy already match, applicants were forced

into redundant steps and costs, undermining efficiency and public trust (GAO, 2018; Jung & Tummers, 2022).

- **Outdated Ordinances and Excessive Burdens:** Several requirements, such as newspaper notices and certified mail, are relics of an earlier era that no longer reflect Maui’s communication infrastructure or community needs (Maui County Code §§19.510.020–030; GAO, 2012). These outdated mandates impose disproportionate costs on residents while failing to add substantive value (USPS, 2020).
- **Inconsistent Ordinance Application:** Conflicting instructions on notice requirements and other procedural details reflected inconsistent interpretation of ordinances across departments. This created confusion, rework, and inefficiency for applicants who relied on staff for authoritative guidance (Bozeman, 2019; GAO, 2015).
- **Weak Communication and Tracking Systems:** MAPPS and departmental workflows lacked transparency, leaving applicants without visibility into progress or next steps. Departments often failed to coordinate, producing long delays and duplicative requests for information already on file (Maui County Auditor, 2022; NIST SP 800-53, Rev. 5).
- **Institutional Prioritization Over Accessibility:** The process consistently shifted costs and burdens to applicants rather than designing for accessibility. Fees were forfeited, re-noticing expenses were imposed, and professional legal or consulting services became a practical necessity, barriers at odds with the County’s stated commitment to supporting local families (GAO, 2018; Harvard Kennedy School, 2019).

Collectively, these problems constitute institutional failure: systemic weaknesses that prevent families from achieving housing goals, delay urgently needed community improvements, and erode trust in local government (Deming, 1986; Drucker, 1993).

Root Cause Analysis

Root cause analysis provides a systematic way to move beyond surface-level problems and uncover the deeper organizational conditions that produced them. While the permitting and rezoning challenges described earlier may appear as isolated inefficiencies, closer examination reveals persistent patterns across policy, process, leadership, and technology. Applying the “5 Whys” method to each identified failure exposes underlying barriers that are structural rather than incidental (Ohno, 1988). This analysis shows how outdated ordinances, fragmented communication, and weak accountability mechanisms collectively create a system that frustrates residents and delays much-needed housing (GAO, 2018; Deming, 1986). Understanding these root causes is important for developing targeted reforms that address the foundations of failure rather than its symptoms.

Analysis of Key Failures

The following analysis distills each major failure into its systemic origins, as identified through the root cause matrix. Each case illustrates how practices that appear routine, such as requiring certified mail or resubmitting documents, are linked to deeper institutional patterns. By examining these failures through the lens of root cause analysis, it becomes clear that the permitting and rezoning system does not simply require minor adjustments but a fundamental redesign grounded in equity, efficiency, and service to residents (Drucker, 1993; Harvard Kennedy School, 2019).

- **Policy Clarity and Alignment:** The absence of automated alignment between rezoning applications and Community Plan designations reflects a digitization effort that replicated outdated workflows rather than redesigning them. Without a continuous improvement framework or leadership focus on citizen outcomes, processes remain internally oriented and inefficient (GAO-18-427G, 2018). The result is that residents shoulder unnecessary steps and costs when their properties already conform with County planning goals (County of Maui Code §19.510.040).
- **Outdated Ordinances:** Persistent reliance on certified mail and newspaper notices stems from antiquated ordinances that have not been modernized. The lack of proactive policy review cycles and an institutional culture centered on compliance with legacy practices has allowed inefficient, inequitable requirements to persist (Maui County Code §§19.510.020–030; GAO-12-1022, 2012). This misalignment is especially pronounced given Maui’s lack of a qualifying print newspaper, which forces residents to advertise outside their own county (Maui News, 2021).
- **Inconsistent Application:** Conflicting instructions result from uneven interpretation of ordinances across departments. Weak training, limited management oversight, and the absence of a centralized quality assurance function reinforce inconsistent practices (Bozeman, 2019). Without efficiency and consistency as performance metrics, contradictions remain unresolved, leaving residents to navigate contradictory guidance and repeated submissions (GAO-15-247, 2015).
- **Technology and Coordination Gaps:** MAPPS functions primarily as a static repository rather than a workflow management system. Procurement decisions prioritized cost over functionality, and no participatory design process was used to incorporate user needs (Maui County Auditor, 2022). This has left departments siloed, with limited communication and accountability mechanisms. Applicants experienced months-long delays because departments could not seamlessly access or share needed information (NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 5).

- **Equity and Cost Burden:** The rezoning system was built around institutional protection and risk aversion, not service delivery. Applicants are expected to absorb costs and navigate complexity with minimal support. Without citizen-centered design or staff resourcing for guidance roles, the burden shifts to property owners, forcing many to rely on costly consultants (GAO-18-427G, 2018). For Maui’s multigenerational families, this imposes financial barriers that prevent them from restoring housing stock and keeping keiki rooted in the community (Harvard Kennedy School, 2019).

The review of these failures shows that the challenges faced during the rezoning process are not isolated missteps but symptoms of deeper structural issues. Policies that have not kept pace with local realities, processes that replicate outdated practices, and limited management capacity all converge to slow progress and shift costs onto families. These patterns matter because they affect more than one applicant; they shape how Maui residents can maintain homes, support multigenerational living, and contribute to easing the housing shortage (Porter, 1990; Burns, 1978). Understanding these failures as interconnected elements of institutional failure provides the foundation for the fishbone diagram, which illustrates how these root causes reinforce one another.

Ishikawa Fishbone Diagram

The Ishikawa Fishbone method distills the failures identified in the preceding analysis into a framework that makes their interconnections visible (Ishikawa, 1982). What appear as separate issues: (a) policy misalignment, (b) outdated ordinances, (c) inconsistent application, (d) weak interdepartmental coordination, and (e) citizen-burdened processes, are in fact structurally linked. Reduced to descriptors such as inequity, inefficiency, fragmentation, obsolescence, and deficiency, the patterns reflect Deming’s (1986) insight that systemic waste arises from poor design, not individual error, and Drucker’s (1993) warning that institutions managed for internal consistency will fail their external purpose. When visualized, these conditions converge on a single diagnosis: **institutional failure**.

Understanding this matters because the consequences are not abstract. Every unnecessary delay or redundant cost represents a family unable to restore housing, a generation pushed further from ancestral ‘āina, or a missed opportunity to expand Maui’s limited rental stock. The diagram underscores an urgent truth: ***without adaptation, the County’s systems perpetuate inefficiency and inequity at human cost***. Reform is therefore not optional but essential to safeguard resilience, equity, and community continuity (GAO-18-427G, 2018; Harvard Kennedy School, 2019; Maui Now, 2023).

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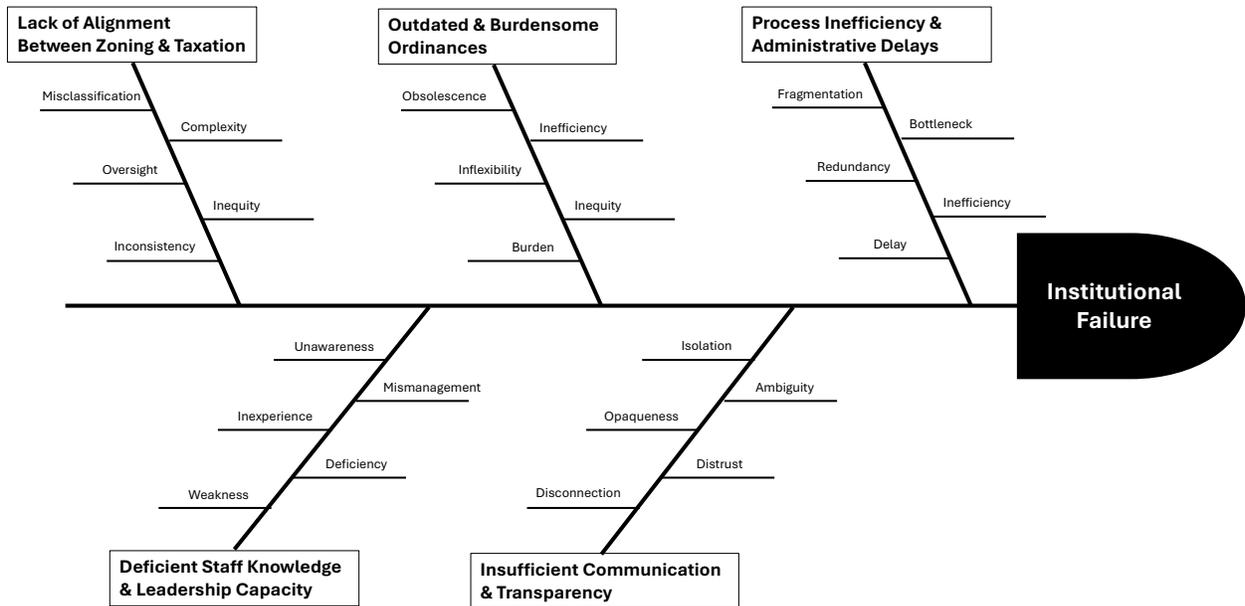


Figure 1. Ishikawa Fishbone Diagram - Institutional Failure in Rezoning and Permitting. This diagram shows how misaligned policies, outdated ordinances, inconsistent application, weak coordination, and citizen-burdened processes converge into systemic institutional failure. These overlapping inefficiencies hinder families from modernizing homes, reduce equity, and limit Maui’s housing resilience.

Systemic Themes and Institutional Barriers

Maui’s rezoning workflow exhibits cross-cutting barriers that transcend any single file or staff action. The system’s design choices, not just isolated missteps, create friction for residents and staff. The correspondence and submittal history for CIZ20210002 show recurring issues with policy clarity, coordination, transparency, equity, and process design, each of which amplified timeline and cost risks. Addressing these themes at a system level is the most direct path to faster and fairer outcomes (Deming, 1986; GAO, 2018).

Policy clarity and modernization: The notice requirement was clear but misaligned with purpose and cost. The County explicitly required certified mail with return receipts, even though its own checklist framed the evidentiary need as “mail receipts as proof of mailing.” Applicants documented that USPS offers lower-cost proof options (e.g., Form 3817 Certificate of Mailing) that satisfy the County’s evidentiary standard without unnecessary expense. In practice, mandating return receipts imposes undue burdens without improving due process integrity. This reflects what Drucker (1993) described as “policies managed for internal consistency rather than external effectiveness.” Obsolete requirements undermine equity by forcing families to spend hundreds of dollars unnecessarily (GAO, 2005).

Coordination and accountability: Departmental hand-offs lack a single accountable owner, leading to breakdowns when staff turnover or absences occur. In one case, an

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employee's email was inaccessible after departure, causing uncertainty about case status and necessitating IT intervention. Barnard (1938) emphasized that organizational survival depends on maintaining cooperative systems across roles, while Kotter (1996) argued that accountability and ownership are central to sustaining progress. The absence of continuity rules or cross-functional accountability creates systemic vulnerability, with residents experiencing the seams between units rather than a coherent process.

Transparency and tracking: The MAPPS portal surfaces artifacts, not process flow, and lacks diagnostic indicators such as elapsed time or escalation signals. Applicants were directed to “track progress in MAPPS” but described months with no communication and no clear status updates. Without visible benchmarks, small delays compound into years of waiting. NIST (2020) guidance stresses the importance of audit trails, role-based access, and escalation features in workflow systems, while GAO (2018) highlights that transparency is foundational for trust in public services. Absent these features, bottlenecks remain invisible, undermining predictability and accountability.

Equity and cost burden: Current requirements impose unnecessary costs on residents, often pushing them toward consultants or attorneys. In this case, return-receipt services added expense without improving evidentiary reliability, illustrating how outdated rules create inefficiency without value. As the Harvard Kennedy School (2019) notes, citizen experience is itself a measure of performance, and when systems force residents to “over-buy” process to avoid uncertainty, equity erodes. For Maui's multigenerational families, such burdens risk displacing keiki from Maui and slowing restoration of much-needed housing.

Process design (digitized ≠ modernized): Several paper-era practices were migrated into digital form without rethinking workflows for modern conditions. Examples include notarized affidavits, print-newspaper rules despite reduced availability, and unclear mapping standards. This reflects what Deming (1986) called “repaving the cow path”—digitizing old inefficiencies rather than designing new systems for efficiency and clarity. Porter (1990) emphasized that reducing transaction costs is critical for organizational competitiveness, a principle equally relevant to government permitting. In Maui's case, workflows still replicate 1950s friction under a 2000s interface, undermining the promise of modernization.

These themes reveal institutional failure at the system level, preventing families from returning home and thriving in place, while overtaxing staff with avoidable rework. With targeted fixes to clarity, coordination, transparency, equity, and process design, Maui County can shorten timelines, restore trust, and deliver more housing with less strain, benefiting residents and employees alike (GAO, 2018; Deming, 1986; Kotter, 1996).

Actionable Recommendations

	Recommendation	Action	Success Metric
Internal Practices	Professionalize management and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish SLAs (e.g., max 60 days for agency comment, 12–18 months for rezoning completion) institute escalation protocols and annual reviews. 	90% of rezoning cases resolved within 18 months by FY2027. (GAO-12-1022)
	Build staff capacity and knowledge continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement quarterly training on ordinances and customer service create a searchable internal knowledge base updated semi-annually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≥80% of staff pass annual ordinance-knowledge check 50% reduction in contradictory guidance reports by FY2026. (ICMA)
	Institutionalize equity review	Conduct biannual audits of applicant cost/time burdens and publish results in a public report.	Annual report released starting FY2026 showing ≥20% reduction in applicant-borne repeat costs. (GAO-18-427G)
External Processes	Redesign MAPPs as a workflow system	Add applicant dashboards, real-time status tracking, elapsed-time counters, and two-way communication features.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median rezoning timeline reduced by ≥30% (baseline 48 months → ≤34 months) by FY2027 50% reduction in status inquiry emails. (NIST SP 800-53)
	Rebalance citizen burden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County covers re-notice costs when delays are County-driven establish “single front door” applicant liaison role. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≥75% of re-notice costs reimbursed or absorbed by FY2026 liaison services accessed by ≥50 families annually. (Honolulu Permit Center case study.)
	Modernize public communication & accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revamp County websites using icons, guided click-through menus, and multilingual plain-language “apps” for permitting/rezoning steps incorporate mobile-first design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≥50% reduction in failed/incomplete applications by FY2027 ≥90% of applicants report “easy to understand” guidance in annual survey. (GAO-21-104325, U.S. Digital Service Playbook; APA equity guidelines.)
Policy & Ordinances	Modernize notice and publication rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace certified mail with USPS Certificate of Mailing allow electronic notice/publication in local online platforms. 	Average notice cost reduced from ~\$700 to ≤\$200 per case by FY2026 without legal challenges to sufficiency. (GAO-05-72)
	Implement proactive ordinance review	Institute a 5-year cycle for rezoning/permit ordinance review with mandatory public reporting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of ordinances reviewed at least once every 5 years starting FY2027 obsolete requirements (e.g., print notice) retired. (APA Planning best practices.)

Maui County’s permitting and rezoning processes are structurally misaligned with the needs of residents, reflecting what scholars describe as rules designed for institutional protection rather than service delivery (Bozeman, 2019; Drucker, 1993). The failures identified in this AAR are not incidental inefficiencies but manifestations of institutional failure (Deming, 1986; Kotter, 1996). Public administration research shows that such failures erode legitimacy, reduce trust, and ultimately diminish an institution’s capacity to meet community needs (Burns, 1978; Harvard Kennedy School, 2019). Yet they are not immutable. By adopting evidence-based reforms that prioritize clarity, coordination, transparency, equity, and process redesign, Maui can realign its governance with the principles of continuous improvement and citizen-centered service (GAO, 2018; ICMA, 2019). In doing so, Maui County can modernize its permitting framework in ways that keep families rooted in their communities, sustain cultural continuity, and ensure land remains in local hands. Achieving this outcome requires a fundamental shift in perspective, from preserving institutional convenience to delivering citizen-centered service. With deliberate action, the County can embody efficiency, equity, and aloha, transforming land-use governance into a system that serves its people for generations to come.

Integration into Revised Process

The root cause analysis and recommendation matrix underscore that Maui County’s planning and permitting challenges are systemic rather than incidental. However, identifying barriers is only the first step. Long-term improvement requires integration of solutions into the County’s foundational structures. This means modernizing policy frameworks, redesigning processes, and strengthening organizational practices in ways that move beyond incremental fixes. As Drucker (1993) argued, institutions fail when they are managed for internal consistency rather than external effectiveness; the County must shift toward an orientation that privileges citizen outcomes over bureaucratic convenience.

Policy: The policy environment that governs permitting and rezoning is fragmented and excessively detailed, placing families at a disadvantage. Current ordinances replicate mid-20th-century methods, such as certified mail and newspaper notices, that no longer align with technological, economic, or cultural realities (Maui County Code §§19.510.020–.030; *The Maui News*, 2021). Deming (1986) emphasized that outdated rules perpetuate waste, while Burns (1978) argued that legitimacy erodes when rules create inequities. A modernized approach should reduce duplicative ordinances, while differentiating between family-scale projects and large commercial developments. In practice, this can be achieved through a phased rollout of reforms: beginning with a consolidated “one source of truth” for ordinance requirements and then modernizing notice rules and fair-cost sharing. Because

such reforms may require legislative action, the County should not hesitate to involve the public directly; transparent votes on policy modernization can build legitimacy and ensure reforms reflect community priorities (GAO-05-72; APA, 2017).

Process: Digitization alone does not constitute modernization. As the evidence shows, MAPPS currently functions as a static repository rather than a true workflow management system (Maui County IT Strategic Plan, 2021). Deming (1986) and Kotter (1996) both highlight that systems must support clarity, speed, and measurable outcomes; otherwise, digitization merely entrenches inefficiency. To achieve genuine reform, workflows must be re-engineered to enable real-time updates, automated status notifications, and interdepartmental coordination. Porter's (1990) theory of competitive advantage suggests that institutions thrive when they lower transaction costs and enable predictable exchanges. For Maui residents, a system designed around usability, employing icons, multilingual guidance, and simplified "click-through" pathways, would reduce inequities faced by those with lower computer literacy or limited English proficiency (U.S. Digital Service, 2014). Applicant journey mapping can reinforce this shift: by co-designing the permitting process with ordinary homeowners and validating it with pilot applicants, the County can ensure the system is not only efficient but also navigable without consultants or attorneys (GAO-21-104325).

Organizational Practices: Meaningful reform also requires transformation at the organizational level. Barnard (1938) stressed that institutional survival depends on leadership's capacity to adapt and maintain cooperative systems, while Bennis (1989) and Blanchard (2007) emphasized the importance of empowering people to lead at every level. The County's challenges, knowledge gaps among staff, limited managerial oversight, and inconsistent communication, reflect weak systems rather than weak individuals. To address these deficits, the County should institutionalize service benchmarks and structured escalation pathways, supported by a cross-functional council of Planning, Public Works, Counsel, IT, and Finance (ICMA, 2019). Kotter's (1996) change model underscores that lasting transformation depends on cultivating urgency, building coalitions, and institutionalizing new practices. Applying an equity lens, testing whether a typical resident without legal or consultant support can complete the process within established timelines, offers a practical check on progress (Harvard Kennedy School, 2019). Finally, publishing a public scorecard that tracks cycle times, backlog, and service level agreement (SLA) performance on a quarterly basis would both celebrate improvements and transparently own misses, thereby reinforcing trust and accountability (GAO-18-427G).

Integration is the bridge between diagnosis and durable reform. Without embedding changes into policy frameworks, operational workflows, and organizational culture, the

failures documented in this AAR will repeat. But with deliberate integration, Maui County has the opportunity to transform its system into one that is efficient, equitable, and trusted. For families, this would mean reduced costs and timely approvals that enable them to keep land and homes in local hands. For County staff, it would mean clearer rules, more efficient systems, and a culture of accountability. For the island as a whole, it would mean aligning land-use governance with the shared goal of resilience and community continuity. In this sense, integration is not merely administrative reform; it is an investment in Maui's future.

Continuous Improvement Plan

Continuous improvement is essential for transforming one-time reforms into lasting institutional change. Deming (1986) emphasized that quality improvement requires recurring cycles of planning, implementation, evaluation, and adjustment, while Drucker (1993) observed that "what gets measured gets managed." For Maui County, embedding these principles into rezoning and permitting will ensure that modernization efforts remain dynamic, accountable, and community-centered.

Quarterly Reviews and Transparent Metrics: Regular reviews provide accountability and visibility into system performance. A quarterly one-page KPI sheet should track median cycle time, percentage of on-time reviews, re-notice incidents, applicant satisfaction (CSAT), and top causes of rework. Public reporting would demonstrate the County's commitment to efficiency and equity while giving staff measurable goals that reinforce continuous improvement (Bennis, 1989; GAO-18-427G).

Feedback Loops and Surveys: Closing the loop between process and lived experience is essential. Short post-decision surveys for both applicants and staff should capture challenges and opportunities for improvement, with results used to update checklists, revise training, and refine procedures. This reflects Burns' (1978) principle of transformational leadership, ensuring organizational learning elevates both staff and residents. Case studies confirm that feedback loops improve responsiveness and reduce repeat errors (Jung & Tummers, 2022).

Aging Alerts and Escalation Protocols: Time-bound accountability prevents minor delays from becoming multi-year stalls. Automated alerts at day-45 and day-60 should flag pending reviews, with escalation to a manager at day-61. This embeds discipline and operationalizes Kotter's (1996) call for urgency and clear escalation channels. Federal IT guidance likewise stresses escalation protocols as critical to timely performance (GAO-21-104325).

Pilot and Scale Approach: Resilient systems adapt through small-scale trials before rollout. Maui County should pilot reforms, such as an applicant liaison model and a new MAPPS tracker, across 20 active cases. If targets are met (e.g., >80% satisfaction, 25% cycle-time reduction), reforms can scale countywide. This reflects Blanchard’s (2007) emphasis on iterative learning and mirrors Honolulu’s Permit Center, where pilot reforms improved timelines and reduced confusion before expansion (City & County of Honolulu, 2020).

Ordinance Tune-Ups: Policy frameworks must keep pace with practice. Annual reconciliation of ordinance requirements with actual operations should ensure rules remain efficient, equitable, and enforceable. Examples include modernizing notice requirements and aligning mailing proofs with lower-cost options. Institutionalizing such “tune-ups” signals proactive governance rather than reactive compliance (APA, 2017; GAO-05-72).

A continuous improvement plan ensures that Maui County’s permitting and rezoning reforms evolve into a sustainable system of resilience rather than stalling at incremental fixes. Quarterly scorecards, feedback surveys, escalation protocols, pilot-to-scale transitions, and ordinance tune-ups provide an evidence-based and transparent framework for ongoing progress. For residents, this means faster, fairer, and more accessible processes. For staff, it reduces inefficiency and frustration while fostering professional growth. Ultimately, continuous improvement is about more than efficiency; it is about restoring trust and ensuring governance enables Maui families to sustain their housing, cultural, and community goals.

Conclusion

Maui’s families deserve clear, fair, and timely pathways to maintain homes, steward ancestral lands, and provide housing for future generations. The Garner Residence rezoning (CIZ20210002) demonstrates how outdated ordinances, fragmented processes, and citizen-burdened requirements extend timelines and inflate costs, revealing institutional failure: systems designed for internal protection rather than public service. Modernization is both necessary and achievable, by updating notice requirements, re-engineering MAPPS, consolidating ordinances, and shifting burdens from residents to institutions, the County can reduce delays, cut costs, and rebuild trust. Embedding continuous improvement through transparent performance metrics, equity reviews, and responsive communication will ensure reforms endure. At stake is more than efficiency: every delay represents a lost home, a displaced family, and a missed opportunity to strengthen community resilience. By embracing citizen-centered reform, Maui County can honor kuleana, support housing stability, and build a planning system that truly serves its people.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: References

- American Planning Association. (2017). *Planning for equity policy guide*.
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APPENDIX B: Root Cause Analysis

#	Failure / Problem	Immediate Causes					Root Cause (Summary)	Evidence Pattern	
		Q / A	Why 1	Why 2	Why 3	Why 4			Why 5
1	Rezoning processes are misaligned with Community Plans, generating redundant steps and costs	Q	Why do rezoning applications proceed without alignment to Community Plans?	Why is this verification not standard practice?	Why has such a tool not been implemented?	Why are workflows designed primarily for internal convenience?	Why does the County digitize without re-engineering?	<p>The absence of automated alignment between rezoning applications and Community Plan designations reflects a digitization effort that replicated outdated workflows rather than redesigning them. Without a continuous improvement framework or leadership focus on citizen outcomes, processes remain internally oriented and inefficient.</p>	<p>Emails show County staff never cross-referenced the Waikapū Community Plan during your rezoning, requiring redundant submissions.</p> <p>Maui County Code §19.510.040 outlines zoning consistency but does not mandate automated plan checks.</p> <p>GAO-18-427G highlights the need for integrated digital services that align with strategic plans.</p> <p>Research in <i>Public Administration Review</i> (Jung & Tummings, 2022) shows lack of “design thinking” in planning leads to inefficiencies and citizen burden.</p>
		A	Because staff do not first verify whether parcels are already identified for future rezoning.	Because no automated or standardized review tool connects applications to Community Plan maps.	Because rezoning processes are designed around departmental workflows, not applicant efficiency.	Because County modernization efforts have focused on digitizing old processes rather than re-engineering them.	Because leadership lacks a continuous improvement framework that prioritizes citizen outcomes.		
2	Outdated ordinances impose excessive administrative and financial burdens	Q	Why do applicants face high costs and redundant requirements?	Why are these outdated requirements still enforced?	Why has the Code not been updated?	Why is reform reactive instead of proactive?	Why is no review cycle in place?	<p>Persistent reliance on certified mail and newspaper notices stems from antiquated ordinances that have not been modernized. The lack of proactive policy review cycles and an institutional culture centered on compliance with legacy practices has allowed inefficient, inequitable requirements to persist.</p>	<p>Maui County Code §§19.510.020–.030 still require certified mail and newspaper notices, despite <i>The Maui News</i> no longer meeting publication requirements.</p> <p>Receipts show ~\$700 spent on certified mail and ~\$2,000+ on newspaper notices.</p> <p>GAO-12-1022 stresses modernization of notice requirements in government permitting.</p> <p>USPS offers verified delivery options (e.g., Certificate of Mailing) that cost ~70% less, but these are not authorized by County code.</p>
		A	Because ordinances still require certified mailings and newspaper notices.	Because Maui County Code has not been updated to reflect changes in media and communication practices.	Because ordinance reform is reactive, not proactive, and occurs only after litigation or crisis.	Because policymaking lacks structured review cycles for efficiency and equity.	Because institutional culture emphasizes compliance with legacy processes over innovation.		

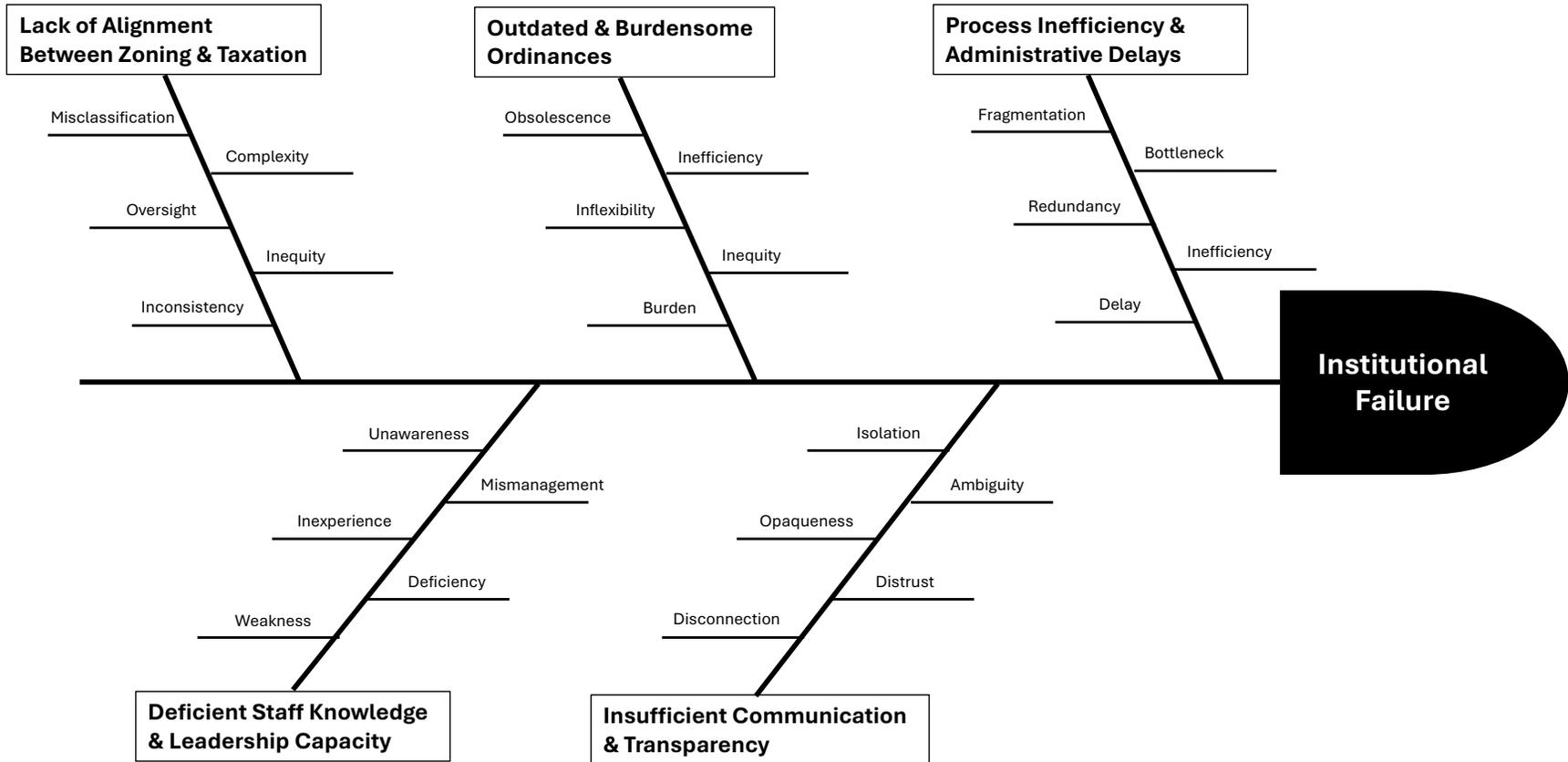
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3	Inconsistent ordinance application creates contradictory guidance and inefficiency	Q	Why do applicants receive conflicting instructions (e.g., mailing, notices)?	Why are interpretations inconsistent across departments?	Why is oversight weak?	Why is cross-departmental standardization not enforced?	Why has no such function been created?	Conflicting instructions result from uneven interpretation of ordinances across departments. Weak training, limited management oversight, and the absence of a centralized quality assurance function reinforce inconsistent practices. Without efficiency and consistency as performance metrics, contradictions remain unresolved.	<p>Emails document Planning requiring certified mail while Corporation Counsel accepted proof of mailing; contradictory instructions caused resubmissions.</p> <p>Forwarded ordinance excerpts back to clerks, showing staff lacked awareness of their own code.</p> <p>GAO-15-247 notes that inconsistent agency guidance is a key driver of administrative delay.</p> <p>Academic research (Bozeman, 2019, <i>Bureaucracy and Red Tape</i>) shows frontline staff inconsistencies drive inequities in outcomes.</p>
		A	Because departments interpret ordinances differently.	Because staff training is uneven and management oversight is weak.	Because leadership does not enforce cross-departmental standardization.	Because there is no centralized quality assurance function for permitting and rezoning.	Because efficiency and consistency have not been established as performance metrics.		
4	Weak interdepartmental communication and tracking systems cause delays and opacity	Q	Why do departments fail to coordinate effectively?	Why does MAPPS lack these features?	Why was it implemented in this limited way?	Why was functionality undervalued in procurement?	Why were user needs not gathered?	<p>MAPPS functions primarily as a static repository rather than a workflow management system. Procurement decisions prioritized cost over functionality, and no participatory design process was used to incorporate user needs. This has left departments siloed, with limited communication and accountability mechanisms.</p>	<p>Emails show a year-long silence from Water Department and delays from Planning; MAPPS contained no contact details or progress notes.</p> <p>MAPPS operates as a locked database — citizens cannot upload documents without County unlocking it.</p> <p>Maui County’s 2021 IT Strategic Plan emphasized the lack of integrated systems.</p> <p>NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 5 calls for audit trails and role-based access to support accountability — features absent in MAPPS.</p>
		A	Because MAPPS lacks integrated communication and accountability features.	Because it was implemented as a document repository, not a workflow management tool.	Because procurement prioritized cost and expediency over long-term functionality.	Because user needs (citizen and interdepartmental) were not systematically gathered.	Because the County lacks a participatory design process in technology adoption.		

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5	Processes prioritize institutional convenience over citizen accessibility	Q	Why must citizens hire consultants to navigate rezoning?	Why is public-facing support inadequate?	Why are staff not resourced for guidance roles?	Why is responsibility shifted to applicants?	Why is institutional protection prioritized?	<p>The rezoning system was built around institutional protection and risk aversion, not service delivery. Applicants are expected to absorb costs and navigate complexity with minimal support. Without citizen-centered design or staff resourcing for guidance roles, the burden shifts to property owners, forcing many to rely on costly consultants.</p>	<p>Cost breakdown from this case shows applicants could shoulder \$10,000–\$20,000 to hire consultants for processes that should be navigable independently.</p> <p>Emails document dismissive and sometimes rude communications, with no liaison provided for small property owners.</p> <p>GAO-18-427G: government programs must be “user-centered,” not institution-centered.</p> <p>Harvard Kennedy School (2019) emphasizes that citizen experience is a performance benchmark; failure to design for accessibility creates inequities.</p>
		A	Because County processes are complex and lack public-facing support.	Because staff are not resourced or trained to provide case guidance.	Because leadership assumes applicants should bear responsibility for compliance.	Because processes were built for regulatory protection of the institution, not service delivery.	Because risk aversion dominates County decision-making, discouraging citizen-centered reform.		

APPENDIX C: Ishikawa Fishbone Diagram



The fishbone diagram illustrates that Maui County’s rezoning and permitting challenges stem from an accumulation of failures across multiple domains. Process burdens (complexity, redundancy, bottleneck), capacity gaps (unawareness, mismanagement), and transparency issues (isolation, ambiguity, distrust) converge into institutional failure. These weaknesses prevent families from improving their properties, reduce housing availability, and erode trust in local government.