

HLTA – HOTEL PAC Questionnaire

1. Throughout this COVID-19 pandemic, many have called for our State to diversify away from tourism. To me, these calls are not only ridiculous, but unfeasible and in no way a solution to our financial woes. Tourism is a natural economy in Hawai'i and no industry has the ability to immediately replace the number of jobs and revenue that it generates.

Events like the 2012 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference and the 2016 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) showcased Hawai'i's ability to host major conferences and events that attract thousands of participants while also bringing in millions of dollars in revenue to the State. I strongly agree with HLTA's position that we should be looking to diversify within tourism and expand industries that also complement the tourism sector (i.e. hosting major conferences, movies & television production and etc.).

We should also be looking at how we can promote and integrate the Hawaiian culture to further enhance the visitor experience. In my opinion, a successful tourism industry in Hawai'i relies on the health of our natural and cultural resources, community, economy and relationship with the visitor.

Engaging visitors in ecotourism activities that support local businesses and restore the natural environment can help manage the balance between the cost and benefits of tourism.

Our islands are known for it's natural beauty, unique culture, and the spirit of aloha. Integrating sustainable and responsible practices that increase environmental stewardship, perpetuate Hawaiian culture, and support local communities is paramount to our long-term economic prosperity, while also allowing us to be a global leader in sustainable tourism.

2. To better manage tourism and the effect that it has on our communities, I believe that we need to do more than just charge visitors and implement user impact fees.

Yes, revenue generated from tourism is critical in funding conservation efforts and covering the cost for infrastructure improvement. But we need to implement management models that will benefit both the visitor and the local community.

As the Chief of Staff to State Senate Majority Leader J. Kalani English, I've been leading efforts to come up with community-driven solutions that will allow for the effective management of tourism in East Maui. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, unmanaged tourism in East Maui was the cause of many issues in the community (i.e. traffic, trespassing, unregulated tour groups, overcrowding of parks and other destinations).

Since June 2020, our office has been working with partners from the Hawaii Tourism Authority, the County of Maui, the State Department of Transportation and the Department of Land and Natural Resources in coming up with uniform platform solution that will allow for a:

- Integration of various reservation systems, including the State Park system and other popular destinations
- Assess and improve East Maui road flow
- Identify business revenue opportunities for the East Maui community
- Provide a user friendly experience for visitors when travelling to East Maui

In short, while impact fees will help cover costs related to the impact of tourism, utilizing innovative technologies and other “smart tourism” practices will allow for a more integrated approach that will be able to accommodate the needs of both the visitor and the local community.

3. Unlike my opponent who has alluded to the City Council's practice (in her Civil Beat questionnaire) of using real property tax rates from hotel and resorts to cover the cost of rail in the wake of the pandemic, I am opposed to increasing real property tax across the board in the near future. These are unprecedented times and we should not be making it harder for businesses and other major industries to survive.
4. I agree with HLTA's position that transient vacation rentals (TVR) need to be regulated at the same level as hotels and resorts. TVR

owners should also be responsible for paying the property tax associated with the resort property, as well as the GET and TAT.

It truly is an issue about fairness and equality. If hotels and resorts are expected to be in legal compliance, so should TVR's. They need to be regulated and I support an increase in enforcement and raising the fine amounts.

5. Hawaii is currently facing a homeless epidemic. Not only do we have one of the highest rates of homelessness per capita in the country, cost of living and lack of affordable housing make it difficult for many families to survive here in the islands.

If homelessness is as a major priority for the city, it needs to be reflected in the city budget. For example, instead of investing \$43.6 million for a partial redevelopment of the Blaisdell Center (as proposed in the mayor's original budget), those monies should instead be used to help with the development of affordable housing or for the expansion of mobile hygiene centers, mental health treatment and addiction rehabilitation facilities.

We also cannot continue with our traditional "one size fits all approach." Putting our houseless populations in shelters or other "housing first models" won't solve the issue completely. It may work for some, but many suffer from issues such as drug abuse and mental illness that require specialized treatment and rehabilitation; and putting a roof over their head won't address the root of the issue.

Therefore, I believe that we need to expand specialized outreach services and better support community partners and other local agencies who have the skillset and ability to effectively combat the issue.

6. I'll reiterate what I mentioned in question 1 - we should be looking at how we can promote and integrate the Hawaiian culture to further enhance the visitor experience. In my opinion, a successful tourism industry in Hawai'i relies on the health of our natural and cultural resources, community, economy and relationship with the visitor.

Engaging visitors in ecotourism activities that support local businesses and restore the natural environment can help manage the balance between the cost and benefits of tourism.

Integrating sustainable and responsible practices that increase environmental stewardship, perpetuate Hawaiian culture, and supporting local communities will not only make us an even more attractive tourist destination but it will further solidify our role as a global leader in sustainable tourism.

7. I strongly support HLTA's Health, Safety and Security Standards as statewide policy for all lodging properties.
8. For O'ahu's third Visitor Public Safety Conference, to be held in 2021, I would like to see the following issues discussed: combating illegal sex trafficking, addressing visitor safety in the community and decreasing robberies.
9. In my first year of office, I'd like to bring back responsive leadership to the community. For far too long, there has been a disconnect between city officials and the residents of my community. I hope to use innovative technologies to keep our neighbors connected during these unprecedented times.

I'd also like to work with the public and private sector to reimagine and re-envision a better Hawaii for our keiki. This includes changing the way we do business. By reforming the way government operates and building trust with the community, I believe that we can emerge stronger and more resilient.

10. I'm the eldest of 11 children.