

May 23, 2017

Kauai Planning Commission
c/o County Planning Department
4444 Rice Street, Suite 473
Lihue, HI 96766

Re: ZA-2017-03 (General Plan Update)

Aloha Planning Commissioners,

The problems that excessive tourism has brought to Kauai are painfully obvious. Tourist traffic already overwhelms roads, bridges and parking capacity on the east side and the north shore. Tourist activities are already crowding out residents at parks and beaches. Excessive growth in tourism is already contributing to the affordable housing shortage. And the safe evacuation of the north shore's tsunami hazard zone is already no longer possible due to the massive increases in the numbers of tourists and tourist vehicles in the area.

As I have documented several times in written testimony to the Planning Commission (using data in the General Plan, the General Plan Socio-Economic Analysis & Forecasts, and DBEDT tourism reports), tourism grew at an annual rate of 4.6% per year from 2010-2015. But the Draft General Plan predicts a growth rate of only 0.4% per year for 2015-2035. And it predicts that the 2016 Average Daily Visitor Census (of 24,809, according to DBEDT) that Kauai actually experienced in 2016 will not occur until 2025 (see Appendix D, Figure 11)! This simply defies credibility.

Question: Why does the Draft General Plan cover this up?

Answer: If the General Plan were to acknowledge this reality, its lack of any measures to deal with excessive growth in tourism would simply be too embarrassing.

The General Plan should be sounding the alarm. But instead, it deliberately conceals the problem. Nowhere does the Draft General Plan acknowledge the very obvious need to take action to slow down harmful growth. Not one of the actions related to tourism in the Draft General Plan (on pages 3-88 through 3-90, or anywhere else in the Draft) proposes that the County should act to slow down the out-of-control growth of tourism.

- Let's be honest: restricting the future growth of tourist accommodations to the Visitor Destination Areas is not in any way a solution to the problem, because there are more than 3,700 unbuilt tourist units, and the more-than-3,000 already approved-but-not-yet-built tourist units will be more than enough to accommodate a 30-to-40% increase in tourism beyond today's level, far beyond the General Plan's ludicrous prediction of an ADVC increase of less than 9% over the 20 year period of 2015-2035.

- Shamefully, the Draft General Plan's only substantive change related to tourism growth is to actually make matters worse, as the current draft has retreated from the November draft's removal of County support for the outdated idea of converting the Princeville Phase 2 agricultural lands to resort uses. Instead, the current draft supports giving the developer 10 more years to rezone the land from Agriculture to Resort. So the Draft General Plan in fact calls for increasing the size of the Visitor Destination Areas. This is irrational and contrary to the public interest.

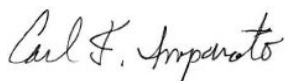
Kauai does not have to lie helpless in the face of the tourism onslaught. Community groups have proposed almost two-dozen policies and actions to responsibly manage growth in order to protect the character of Kauai's communities, increase public safety, protect quality of life, and respect local communities' desires. They include:

- Limiting the expansion of tourist support *facilities* (not just tourist *accommodations*) outside the Visitor Destination Areas;
- Restricting tourist vehicle access to the north shore tsunami evacuation zone;
- Instituting resident-only parking areas at parks, beaches and neighborhoods impacted by tourist parking;
- Instituting priority access for residents at crowded parks; and
- Increasing various taxes on tourism in order to reduce the growth in tourism and at the same time pay for tourism infrastructure.

The current draft of the General Plan is a charade. Please do not approve it until it is changed to:

1. State that County policy is to use all measures at its disposal to vigorously discourage the tourist population from growing beyond the level that exceeds infrastructure capacity, threatens Kauai's rural character, or degrades residents' quality of life;
2. Delete the proposed expansion of the Princeville VDA on the Future Land Use Map by designating the Princeville Phase 2 lands to remain agricultural; and
3. Incorporate a set of meaningful actions to reduce the growth in tourism that is harming Kauai today and threatens far greater harm in the future.

Thank you for considering this testimony.



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