



## 2020 Hawai'i Island Candidate Questionnaire

**Candidate Name:** Tante Urban

**Candidate Race:** Hawai'i County Mayor

**Candidate Website:** [www.facebook.com/TanteUrbanForMayor2020](http://www.facebook.com/TanteUrbanForMayor2020)



**1. In 2018, the Hawaii County Council passed Bill 108 (now Ordinance 2018-114), which regulates un-hosted short-term vacation rentals (STVRs) in Hawaii County. What policies would you implement to further regulate or deregulate short-term vacation rentals on Hawaii Island, whether hosted or un-hosted, and what will be the economic impact(s) of those policies?**

I believe in free enterprise with less government regulations. The newly adopted STVR ordinance is a government over-reach and intrusion. I support free market competition as it will bring prices down. I believe that the intent of the STVR ordinance is to address long term rental shortage in Hawaii County which I support.

**2. In 2019, the Real Property Tax Office implemented policies to assess properties at their “highest and best use”. This changed the real property tax classifications for many residents, mainly those on agricultural-zoned parcels smaller than one-acre in size, increasing their real property tax bill. What are your thoughts on the County real property tax and how revenue may be increased without negative impacts for residents?**

In my administration there will be no tax increases of any kind. I support economic development to generate added income to the county, i.e. booming construction, entrepreneur innovation for small businesses, and sports tourism.

**3. Hawai'i County residents generate over 200,000 tons of solid waste each year. In 2019, the County closed the Hilo landfill and is now hauling solid waste across the island to a landfill in Pu'uanahulu. Additionally, due to significant decreases in the global market for recyclables, the County of Hawai'i is no longer accepting some of the types of materials collected at the County recycling & transfer stations. What solutions would you propose to resolve the County's solid waste dilemma?**

Recycling must start at home. Hawaii County should start a “Recycling Awareness Program” mandating all County buildings and facilities to innovate and utilize technology to go green. The campaign will advocate for commercial establishments to do the same.

If elected, my administration will look for and invest in new technology to lengthen our landfill's lifespan. We must invest in or look into public private partnership on waste to energy technology. I meet experts during the course of my campaign and the technology is available. It just needs the political will to get it done. My plan is to look for grants to help fund the changes or improvements in the County.

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**4. Median home prices in Hawaii County continue to rise with shrinking inventory and increasing demand. Since 2011, the median sales price for a residential home in Hawaii County has increased, year to year, by as little as 0.38% (2015-2016) up to 13.46% (2012-2013) per year. What are your top three (3) actionable items to address housing affordability?**

The State and County must invest and open up more land for workforce housing. My intention is to work with the County Council to offer tax credits and subsidies to developers. This is a win-win for our people. We fulfill the need of workforce housing and bring added revenue to the County.

**5. The Hawai'i state legislature recently proposed legislation that would put the responsibility on the counties to research and provide data on topics such as energy, coastal zone/sea level rise, etc. as they relate to climate change, without addressing funding for any related expenses. What three (3) specific solutions would you propose to address climate change, and how would these proposals be funded?**

My plans to help solve or address climate change are:

- Organize a task force to work with non-profit organizations and support their goals and objectives in addressing climate change.
- Work with Federal and State agencies to address or help mitigate the effects of climate change.
- Create program and campaigns that align with non-profit organization's goals and objectives.

My intention is to reach out and look into public and private partnership to seek grants. I would support non-profit organization to do fundraising event to promote programs and campaigns.

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**6. In 2015, the state legislature adopted a renewable portfolio standard (RPS) of 100 percent by the year 2045, positioning Hawai'i to become the first U.S. state to produce all its electricity from local renewable energy sources and establishing interim targets of 30 percent by 2020, 40 percent by 2030, and 70 percent by 2040. What is your position on expanding geothermal and/or other forms of renewable energy on Hawai'i Island?**

I am not in favor of expanding geothermal systems for energy source. I support Solar Power, which will have less negative impact on the environment. The Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion OTEC at NELHA and wind energy are also cleaner forms of energy sources that need to be considered.

**7. What are two (2) things you like about the Community Development Plan (CDP) in your district that are working well? What are two (2) things in your district's CDP that are not working and why? How would you suggest those issues be addressed/fixed?**

I like the idea that the CDP involves the community and is a good blueprint for the future generation. My opinion of the Kona CDP is funding issues and the process to get things done are taking too long and these need to be fixed.

We need to act on the goals and objectives already set in the Kona CDP in a timely manner, specifically in the areas of transportation and housing.

**Transportation:** My plan is to support and work with the Kona CDP, Department of Planning and Public Works to prioritize the goals and objectives already in place. I plan to have a grant writer specifically to find money to help in this needed area.

**Housing:** My plan is to collaborate with the state to open up land for affordable housing. Affordable housing is important in attracting the workforce needed for the construction industry, police officers, teachers, nurses, retail salespeople, and the restaurant and hotel or hospitality industry. These workforce fill the majority of jobs that fuel our economy.

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**8. The appearance of COVID-19 has brought the world economy to a halt and has exposed major faults in local government's blatant reliance on tourism for revenue. What are your plans to jump start and/or diversify the island's economy?**

If elected, I plan to reduce real property taxes to give more spending money for our people. I will work with commercial landlords to pass on savings to tenants for tenant retention and to fill vacant spaces. I plan to reduce the county budget by cutting department expenses by 10-12%.

To diversify the economy, I plan to work on streamlining the permitting process, work with the State & County to open up more land for workforce housing and bring back booming construction business.

I support new technologies that will help with the workforce employment in our community. Specifically, I will work with the Federal and State on the expansion of Hawaii Ocean Science Technology Park for aquaculture and OTEC for clean energy source, and to become a leader in the nation and the world in these areas.

I plan to create an Entrepreneur Innovation Center for small businesses on Food, Agriculture, Arts & Crafts, etc. I will create a "Made in the Big Island Festival" to feature and showcase our local products.

**9. Many municipalities across the country are exploring bond sales to raise capital for improvements to infrastructure, like road and wastewater improvements as an example; things that are sorely in need of attention on Hawaii Island. The County Council just this year advanced a \$103 million bond issue for road projects with Bill 145. What is your view on expanding municipal bond issuance to finance infrastructure while interest rates are historically low?**

I support the issuance of municipal bond to finance infrastructure projects. I plan to have a grant writer to specifically work on getting additional funds for the projects that are long overdue. At the same time look for Federal and State grants to finance infrastructures.

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