

Since I moved here in 1986 I have always worked in the tourist industry in various occupations. I used to say that 99% of the visitors I served said they preferred the Big Island to the other islands because of its natural beauty and open spaces. I was just thinking the other day that I hadn't heard that for a long time - and why would I? The island has changed. With all our big box stores and upscale developments - development period - it's not the same island.

I moved from a beach town that had lots of character when I was growing up - and beauty. Through unconscious development it changed and then one day tourism was down and the city fathers were perplexed. What they couldn't see was that all we were offering now was an overcrowded, generic experience.

Open spaces are important for our island's residents and our visitors. It's good for the soul and you can't put a price on that. Yes, times are hard, but don't sacrifice something of true value for a short term fix. If changing the land fund percentage is the only thing you can think of to find money then at least be fair and put it to a vote again.

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