



We at Experience Volcano Hawaii (EVH) reached out to the two remaining mayoral candidates in the the County Of Hawaii. We asked both candidates five questions that were chosen from a set of questions that were submitted in advance by members of EVH.

We would like to thank both Ikaika Marzo, Mitch Roth and their respective campaign teams for taking the time to answer these questions.

If you are not a member of Experience Volcano Hawaii we encourage you to join our membership by visiting www.experiencevolcano.com/2020special

Questions From EVH Membership As Answered By Ikaika Marzo

1. Rural transfer stations have recently experienced unexpected closures. In addition to no paper or plastic recycling, many transfer stations now have no timely or legal way to dispose of aluminum, glass, green waste or white goods. What specific actions would you implement to ensure regular and effective waste disposal and recycling?

ANSWER: Fixing our recycling and waste management program is a big priority so we don't contribute to the problem, and set a good example for our keiki. We also are going to need to create jobs that better our island. One of the reasons we've recently had unexpected closures is due to staffing issues that the County has been slow to correct.

My plan for solid waste and recycling is to bring back our County sorting stations and recycling programs while looking at alternative ways to process recyclable materials. We need to look for the best contract options to make recycling financially sustainable for the county in the long term, maximizing our most valuable commodities like metals.

Meanwhile, the County can empower grass-roots community efforts in plastics recycling such as Puna Precious Plastics and explore options to duplicate successful efforts county-wide. No matter how we do it, we need to find unique ways that are sustainable environmentally and financially, while creating net-positive jobs.

2. Due to COVID-19, we have an opportunity to rethink tourism. What type of visitors do you feel our island should target and what tourism changes would you strongly advocate for?

ANSWER: I completely support diversification within tourism, and already have publicly stated that we need safe and responsible tourism as part of the solution for our struggling economy. It's a big part of who we are, with occupations related to visitors making up 30% of jobs across all industries. We need better policies based on current science to allow our economy to function while also keeping our communities and visitors healthy. We cannot separate the health and well-being of our community with our economics. The better we are able to manage the pandemic and potential outbreaks of COVID-19, the more flexibility we have with reopening the economy.

The tourism changes I see are towards quality over quantity of the visitors we receive on our islands. All expectations are that the volumes of visitors we had in 2019 will take years to recover, meaning we have time to pivot the tourism industry towards a more sustainable model of operation.

3. Many Hawaii Island communities are particularly dependent on tourism and the businesses that support it. What is your plan to support industries such as vacation rentals, in places such as Volcano, that don't have the infrastructure and/or the need for larger hotel/resort developments?

ANSWER: As Mayor I would manage development so as to preserve the historical character and feel of places like Volcano, and around our island. Our island is so unique, and each area offers its own landscapes and histories to share with those that visit our islands. Even though some changes are inevitable, we can manage them with our guiding principles of sustainability.

Short term vacation rentals are well-suited to the Volcano area and offer residents a way to make a little money to supplement their incomes. However, statewide there have been issues with off-island investors abusing STVRs, skirting taxes, and creating disturbances in neighborhoods. I will re-examine what can be done with STVRs to cut back on off-island owners operating multiple units inside residential neighborhoods, while working with local operators to incentivize their small business and tax it appropriately.

4. Sections of Hwy 11 between Mountain View and Hawaii Volcanoes National Park are in poor condition. How would you work with the State to prioritize its repair and do you support signage on Hwy 11 welcoming visitors to Volcano, the gateway community to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park?

ANSWER: As Highway 11 is a State highway, the county will need to work with the State Department of Transportation to prioritize the resurfacing of the roadway. Typically, the process of secure funding and planning for such a project takes a few years. We will need to look at what projects are already in the works and if the needed repairs have been requested, which could speed things up. There are multiple sections between Mt.View and Volcano Village that are in need of repair, and we will do what we can to remedy the situation. I do support signage along Highway 11 in Volcano Village to welcome our visitors with aloha.

5. What would you do to support police, medical and emergency services in rural areas such as Volcano?

ANSWER: The easiest answer would be to increase the amount of first responders but with the budget and COVID-19 that might be easier said than done. One option that has worked elsewhere to increase the effectiveness of police is to create bridges between law enforcement and the community. Neighborhood watch groups should be very familiar with law enforcement and hold regular meetings to discuss ways to decrease crime in each district, and the most effective ways to collaborate with police.

I know that residents would like to see more police, medical & emergency presence nearby, to go along with faster response times. We'll take that as far as the budget allows, while also empowering local communities, including Volcano, with frequent communication between neighborhood watch groups with their police force liaisons, as one example.

Mission Statement

To promote, perpetuate and celebrate the rich cultural heritage and environmental wonders of the Volcano area as an exceptional destination.

Steering Committee

Experience Volcano Hawaii (EVH) has grown substantially with its goals, leadership and outreach. Listed below are members who are the active participants in the administration of EVH. The administrative body is called the "Steering Committee."

Lorna Larsen-Jeyte, Marilyn Nicholson, Jim Wilson, Ira Ono, Mike Nelson, Jesse Tunison, Pua Norris, Janet Coney, Lucretia Worster, Chris Becker

NOTE

Experience Volcano Hawaii is a non-profit organization that does not endorse any political candidate. We will simply feature responses from candidates on issues, topics and agendas of interest to voters in the Volcano Area.