

A multi-story building with balconies and palm trees under a blue sky with clouds. The image is faded to serve as a background for the text.

Aloha...

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Landscape Assessment:

Observations and Revitalization Recommendations

Kalele Kai Condominiums

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Since the original plant installation in 1993 when Kalele Kai was completed, the landscaping has had subsequent planting replacements most likely due to plant, health, age, site location and conditions (sea air, wind etc.) soil conditions, questionable appropriateness of plant location etc. Due to the fact that the project is build on low elevation fill land and age of the project, it is very common for drainage to be an issue which is visible throughout the property. Poor drainage / percolation appear to be the most prevailing problem in the planting areas.

Here in Hawai'i, It is common for a general landscape revamping of a residential / commercial product approximately every 6-8 years since we do not have a winter when plants go into dormancy. It is not uncommon for ornamental planting such as those planted at Kalele Kai, to run its cycle and leach out nutrients from the soil without a "natural" succession of other plants to replacing the vital soil components for healthy plant communities. Since a large percentage of the plants on the property are non-native originating from other regions they do not function as sustainable plant communities. Thus they all need the help of a comprehensive, reasonable maintenance regime.

During a landscape "revitalization" project, it is typically "best practice" to clear planters of smaller existing shrubs and groundcovers and start with a "clean slate." This enables the landscape contractor to properly clear and grub the areas as needed and to till and amend the planting media. Since some of the existing planting appears to be of good health and of reasonable remaining length of life, it appears practical (in some areas) to supplement the existing health planting with new, carefully tilling and amending the adjacent exposed soil areas.



LANDSCAPE BASIS OF DESIGN FOR REVILIZATION

Site Design Criteria

The landscape revitalization recommendations are based on the following criteria:

- Selectively remove unhealthy, diseased and undesirable high maintenance plants
- Introduce new plant material to be incorporated with existing planting design
- Focus on a simple but strong plant palette, with plant themes for specific areas
- Create intimate entry areas by using colorful ceramic potted planters with planting
- Assess efficiency of existing irrigation system

Landscape Design and Maintenance Recommendations

- Use a mix of native and highly adapted (non-invasive) species that are drought tolerant, low maintenance and have a mature form that is compatible with the space available.
- Use wood chip mulch or black cinder as a top dressing to finish the look and reduce moisture loss and control weed growth.
- If possible, designate an area for composting green waste. This is an excellent way to add nutrients naturally back into the gardens. <http://www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow/how-build-compost-pile>
- Establish a fertilizer and organic material top-dressing schedule of appropriate nutrients along with grounds keeping and maintenance. Plants use up the soil nutrients and often time there is no protocol for fertilization to add nutrients back into the soil. This leads to the decline of plant health and easy introduction of diseases, and poor soil texture and composition where poor drainage could be attributed.



GENERAL PLANTING ALTERNATIVES

TREES AND PALMS

Use trees lower maintenance trees that drop minimal leaves and fruits and complement existing design structure. Use tree guards at the base of all trees and palms in lawn areas or provide a 3” deep circle of mulch approximately 2’-3’ in diameter to keep lawn away from the base of the tree to avoid damage from string mower girdling damage to tree bark.

- Hawaiian Kou trees to be Supplemented/Replaced that are declining around Manager’s office.
- Hala (thornless and also available a variegated variety for color) near seating areas or focal points and as anchors where there are larger planter spaces provide some shade and privacy, as well as a large native tree to anchor the spaces.
- White Tecoma has a somewhat upright columnar form and no fruit for pedestrian safety.
- Plumeria in areas where the canopy can expand and not interfere with the building. They provide great flowers and welcoming scent, no fruit, can handle the small planter space.
- Native Loulu palms or other fan palms for accents provide a topical feel with low maintenance.

SHRUBS

- Pīkake is moderately salt tolerant and provides a beautiful scent in full sun if protected by wind.
- Hibiscus species provide a variety of color and tropical feel.
- Eldorado is a relatively low maintenance and water use hedge plant with a golden yellow color.
- Variegated Hau for color and screening.
- ‘Purple’ Spider lilies can be introduced the green commonly found on site.

GROUNDCOVERS

- ‘Akia and Pohinahina for sunny exposure groundcover
- Kupukupu and Lāua’e ferns in areas where it will be variable sun/shade
- Walking iris in seating areas for softer interest and flower that can handle sun and some shade.
- A good native alternative would be ‘uki ‘uki where we have some shade.
- Mondo or Pothos in deep shade



SOILS

- Test soil from various locations on the property
 - http://www2.ctahr.hawaii.edu/tpss/research_extension/rxsoil/soilsample.htm
- Amend / replace soil in areas where plants currently don't seem to be doing well and roots are uplifting soil and algae is visible. This will help with drainage.
- If possible, develop a green-waste composting system somewhere on the property. This is not only a sustainable practice, but will also aid in cost savings for adding organics to planting areas as a maintenance regime.

MISCELLANEOUS RECCOMENDATIONS

- Add 2-3 inches of organic cover mulch over all planting areas. In “high touch” or high visibility areas, such as entries or clubhouse, black cinder can be used which provides a more luxurious appearance.
- Execute a tree and palm inventory health and life duration assessment performed by a Certified Arborist in conjunction with any landscape design improvements.
- Generally the plant varieties should be grouped in massing with “swooping” movements
- Using fewer plant varieties in a given area will help to simplify and modernize the design so as not to appear too busy.
- Always be conscious of the mature size and shape of any proposed plant and proximity to structures, walkways and how it may affect views.
- Coordinate design with maintenance crew for ease of access thorough planters and degree of maintenance.



Building 1 Entry (L)



Observations:

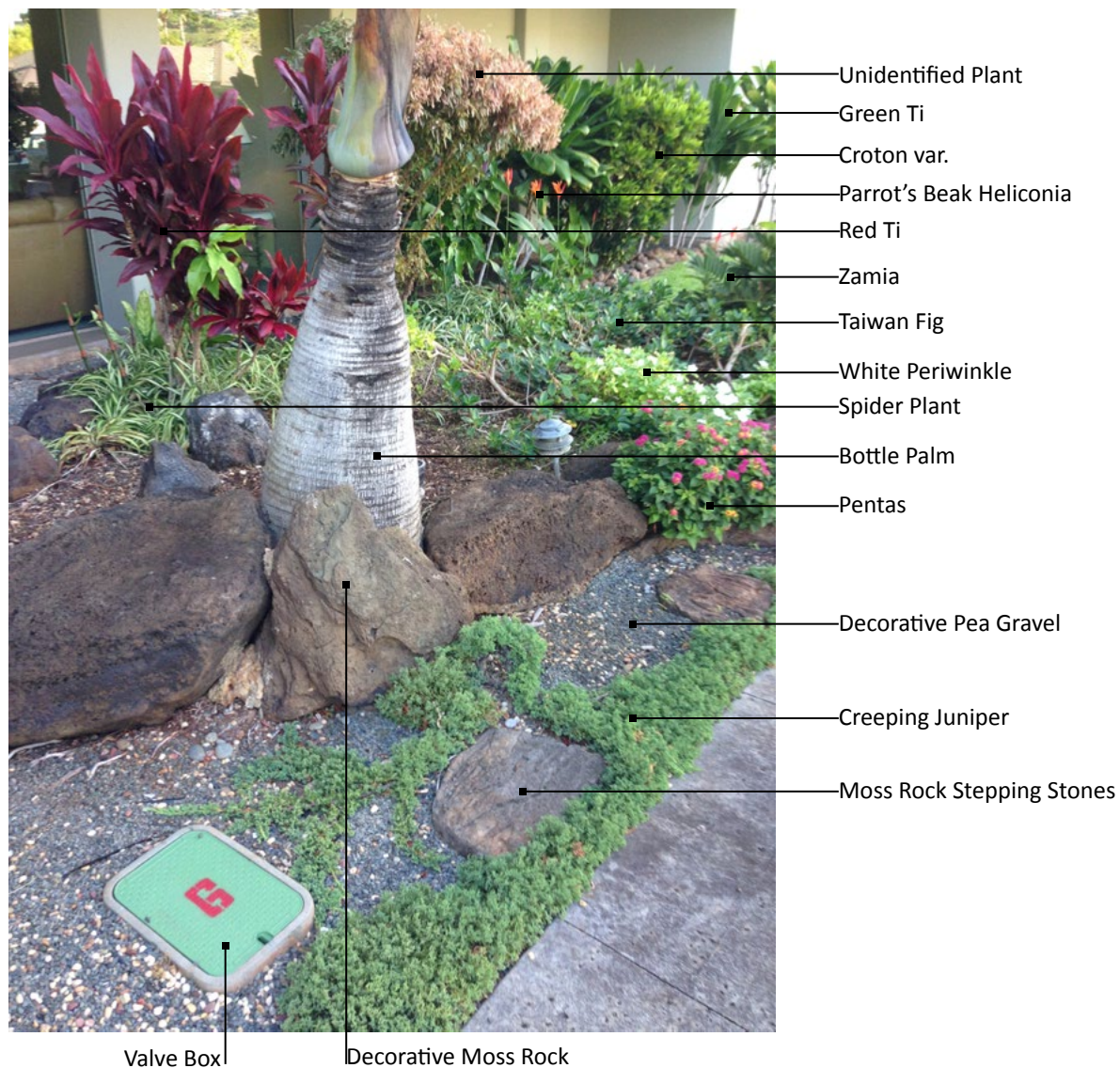
The general composition of the planting spaces are good. The moss rock placement allows an elevated area along the wall creating a terraced effect. The varied sizes of the moss rock help to convey a more “natural effect.” The layout location of the boulders also act as a containment for planting and may also allow for better percolation and drainage. With the acceptance of the “seasonal” placement of the Poinsettia, there are approximately 7+ different species of plants in about a 100sf area. The planting seems to reflect different “cultural themes” and planting “trends.” i.e. Japanese/Topical and Old Fashioned/Contemporary. The decorative pea gravel and decorative tile pavers at the entry also differ from the other two building entries. This entry has the most “robust” appearance of the three.

Recommendations:

Reducing the number of species would help to “calm” the presentation of the entry. The moss rock boulders could remain in place as-is. Also selecting plants of a consistent palette would also help to appease the eye. For example, if the design intent is to be “Japanese” then all plants of the pallets should be of that “style” or visual quality. The decorative multi-colored pea gravel can appear a bit “messy” due to the small texture and multi-color. The river rock as the other entries have may be a good alternative.



Building 1 Entry (R)



Observations:

Similar to the opposing side, the general composition of the planting spaces is good with the moss rock placement elevating a planted area as well as the other reasons mentioned for the left side. Also similarly to the left side there are many different species with only one or two that are used on the opposing side of the entry.

Recommendations:

Also similar to the opposing side, reducing the number of species would help to “calm” the appearance of the entry. The moss rock boulders could also remain and having a consistent plant pallet would tie the two sides together providing continuity.



Building 2 Entry (L)



- Bottle Palm
- “Japanese” Lantern
- Ceramic Tile Pavers
- Decorative Moss Rock
- False Heather
- Lawn
- Decorative River Rock
- Plastic Header

Indian Hawthorn
(Out of View)

“Japanese” Bridge

Rock Salt Finish
Concrete

Observations:

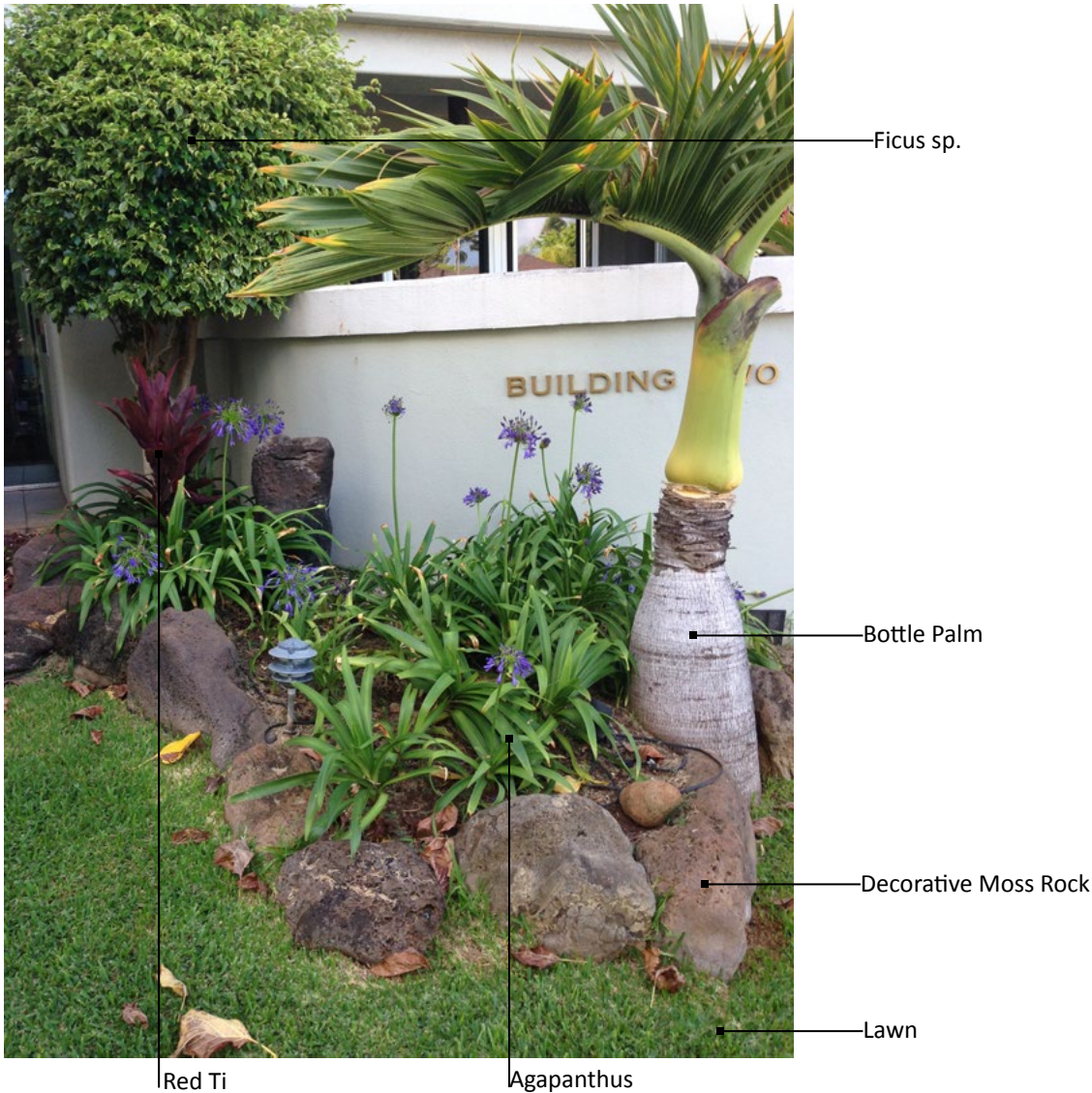
This area takes a minimalist “zen garden” approach. A simple “river” of pebbles in lawn though lacking in dimension, texture and color. The “Japanese” bridge and lantern appear kitschy and out of place at their locations and the plastic header has an unflattering effect to the “river” concept. Small irregular lawn areas make for tedious maintenance.

Recommendations:

Add moss rock boulders for a raised planting area similar to opposing side and other building entries. Incorporate small shrubs and ground covers will add dimension, texture and color which will eliminate the need for frequent grass trimming. Changing pavers at the entry would update the look and feel and provide a warmer more appealing “welcome mat” to the doorway.



Building 2 Entry (R)



Observations:

The general moss rock locations are good, similar to building entry one, providing a raised planting area below the Building Two wall sign. This helps to highlight the sign and adds height dimension to the space. The plant combination and positioning of the Ficus and Bottle Palm seem to clash with each other. In time, the root system of the Ficus may damage the adjacent wall. The planting selection differs at both sides of the entry as there is nothing to tie the two together except the Bottle Palms.

Recommendations:

Remove the Ficus tree and replace with another plant with a mature height of 10'-12' to soften the corner. Replant raised area and use similar planting selection on opposing side. Removing Bottle palms are optional but recommended to update the look and feel of the entries. Use decorative river pebbles in front of the moss rock boulders eliminating the lawn and reducing maintenance. This will also help to tie the opposing side together.



Building 3 Entry (L)



Observations:

This area has nice existing presence with the mature Traveler's Palms and Monstera. These provide scale to the building, shade screening. This is the largest planting area of the three entries and the most visible from the property's main entry. The general plant selection is good, but removing the "single" species and adding more of the others will provide a more sophisticated feel.

Recommendations:

The Variegated Liriope should be located further back just in the front along the edge of the Monstera. The Spathoglottis is a nice hearty plant that works well in the composition. If desired, the Periwinkle (vibrant pink flower). Red Ti and should be located at the outer edges of the composition. Song of India (behind Red Ti) should be removed. Add puka lava rock stepping stones in planter to fill out area, accompanied with decorative river pebbles. Add groundcover such as Mondo.



Building 3 Entry (R)



Observations:

This area's existing planting obscures the Building Three wall sign. The moss rock boulder positioning a size variation could be improved.

Recommendations:

Reconfigure moss rock layout similar to building entries One and Two. Incorporate similar planting pallet as opposing side. Remove Bottle Palm. Extend planter out further to reduce lawn area.

Overall Building Entries One, Two and Three Conclusion:

It would make sense to tie the three building entries together but vary just slightly to give each a personality. Incorporate location for seasonal or rotational planting, for example poinsettia, orchids and bromeliads. A "double pot system" works well which is a pot buried bellow the surface where the seasonal or rotational planting can be inserted temporarily. A focal feature such as a decorative pot or sculpture could also be located at the entry to add a "pop" of color and interesting form. Being consistent with hard materials at the entries is a good way to tie the property together.



Existing Condition Observations and Recommendations



Conditions such as in this image is typical around the property where there is bare ground within a planter. The drainage is poor as indicated by the visible algae on the ground surface and probably low in nutrients and oxygen. As mentioned it is “Best Practice” to clear existing shrubs, grub and amend the soil, but a skilled landscaper could work around the existing shrubs to till up the biomass below the surface, amend the soil of necessary organic material and nutrients and add new planting. When replanting it would also help to add stepping stones or maintenance pathways in strategic locations to help minimize compaction of soil when working in the planters.



This is a similar situation where there is poor drainage and a lot of biomass at the surface of what is left of the soil. Root from the adjacent trees fill up the planting area and choke out the other plants. The tree roots may also compromise wall footings and side walks leading to costly repairs. In this particular situation it may be best to dig up and remove all biomass and replace with new planting media. If there is a low point with bad drainage and no drainage inlet to a sewer system, then a dry-well might be an option so ponding is minimized.



Existing Condition Observations and Recommendations



This area along the pool deck appears to have poor drainage as well. If this is an area where pool and deck water drains to then there may be chemical imbalances. Also if a string trimmer is used in the planter and the maintenance personnel isn't careful, there may be girdling of the Mock Orange leader stems. From the appearance of the leaf color, it appears that there is a lack of nutrients and poor drainage. Recommendations are to remove the existing planting material, excavate approximately 18" minimum and add organic material and nutrient amendments then replant desired plant species.



This planter adjacent to the guest parking and BBQ area could be potentially set up for an herb and vegetable garden. One idea is to construct raised planters between the palms (if they are to remain) with composite material "timbers" for containment of planting media, and ease of access for people that may have a difficult time bending down. Since this location has a direct and close vehicular access and is its proximity and relationship to the BBQ and eating area, this is an opportunity to make this planter a functional amenity.



Existing Condition Observations and Recommendations



The property has a nice variety of specimen palms and trees. Some of the Kou trees around the office have died and are in decline. But just across the driveway others flourish. It's difficult to determine why this is. Reasons could be that the tree trunk cambium is being damaged by string trimmers. Or the roots are being bound in the tree pit with poor oxygen. Or the tree is somehow diseased. This would be best determined by a Certified Arborist but to reduce the potential of girdling, it's a good idea to mulch about 3' around the base of the trees and palms to keep the lawn away from the trunk base reducing the chance of the string trimmers to do any damage.



This planter along the wall of the town-homes shows obvious signs of poor drainage and low nutrients. Algae growth is visible and soil color has a red clay appearance. Only the Spider Lily seems to be not to be phased. Eldorado, the hedge planting, is typically quite hardy and can stand full sun to partial shade. It is doing well along Building One but still needs good drainage and adequate nutrients. Recommendation is to remove the existing planting material, excavate approximately 18" minimum and add organic material and nutrient amendments then replant desired plant species.



Existing Condition Observations and Recommendations



These two corner pocket planters at “Front door” have potential to have a nice composition. There are competing plant species “styles” and also have plants of similar heights which also is a competing factor. Soil again looks very poor. Recommendation is also to amend soil and improve plant composition by plant selection. Vary textures and add “pops of color.” Use repetition of plant species and plant in massing layering up from the wall down to low groundcover at the concrete header.



See Above

A multi-story building with a grid-like facade and balconies, partially obscured by several tall palm trees in the foreground. The scene is set outdoors under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The text 'Mahalo...' is overlaid in the center of the image.

Mahalo...

Brad