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Tourism officials support Ala Wai site

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Plans for a convention center at the Ala Wai Golf Course drew qualified endorsement from the tourist industry yesterday, but a "go slow" warning from Mayor Frank Fasi.

The occasion was a Senate Ways and Means Committee hearing on legislation to build the convention center on 25 acres at the ewa edge of the public golf course. The proposal was developed by Sen. Milton Holt's Tourism Committee.

Ways and Means Chairman Mamoru Yamasaki said after the hearing the Senate is more committed than ever to the Ala Wai site.

Rep. Romy Cachola's House Tourism Committee, meanwhile, has proposed building the center at Magic Island, adjacent to Ala Moana Park.

The two sides also disagree over the use of the facility. The Senate would focus the convention center on tourists while Cachola's committee wants a "multi-use" project for visitors and residents alike.

At yesterday's Senate hearing, the Hawaii Convention Park Council, the chief lobbying group for the convention center plan, supported the Ala Wai site bill. President Tom Mitrano said his group endorsed the measure because it puts the center near Waikiki, it sets up a convention management "authority" and it makes provi-



sions for improvements to the remaining golf course and to Neal Blaisdell Center.

Richard Kelly, president of Outrigger Hotels Hawaii and one of the earliest proponents of the convention center, said he firmly supports the Senate plan.

While Kelly said he would prefer to see a convention center built at Fort DeRussy (which is close to many Kelly hotels), he said, the Ala Wai location "has a great deal of

potential."

Also speaking in support were Larry Clapp, incoming chairman of the Convention Park Council, Lawrence Chun of United Air Lines, Arven Saunders of the Honolulu Airlines Committee, the Hawaii Hotel Association and others.

Fasi — an opponent of the Ala Wai site — took a different tack.

He warned lawmakers against "acting hastily" in choosing a convention center site, saying they should not "take the future Central Park of Honolulu and cut it up."

Fort DeRussy, Fasi said, might be a lot less expensive than people think.

He said an "in-house" 1983 city appraisal put the value of the mauka part of the Army installation at \$19 million.

Some estimates have reached as much as \$400 million. But Fasi said, "We've said flatly, we don't think it'll be more than \$50 million."

Fasi said that if Fort DeRussy cannot be the convention center site, the facility should be built on the 32 acres of Ala Wai Field.