



HAWAII NEWS

Next phase of Hawaiian homestead houses in Kapolei awarded

By [Andrew Gomes](#)
Today • Last updated Midnight



DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

Gentry Homes is building the Kapolei homestead homes, which awardees can purchase at prices starting from \$498,000. A model of one of the plans being offered.

More than 100 state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands beneficiaries are set to become homeowners in Kapolei early next year after a lottery Saturday.

DHHL selected 115 beneficiaries to buy homes being built in Phase II-C of its Ka'u-luokaha'i homestead subdivision, where infrastructure work costing \$152 million began two years ago.

Leslie Gohier, who is 76 years old and had been on DHHL's homestead lease waitlist for 37 years, was the 58th beneficiary selected during Saturday's event at Honolulu Middle School attended by more than 600 Native Hawaiians.

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"I'm at a loss for words, but the reality of being called is the greatest gift I could ever receive," Gohier, who was called nearly three hours into the ceremony, said in a statement. "For me, to have this opportunity to share with my family is a blessing. ... I know the struggle of not getting a (homestead) lot."

Gentry Homes is building the houses with two to five bedrooms to be purchased by awardees at prices from \$498,000 to \$691,000.

Applicants for Saturday's drawing prequalified for mortgage financing, which includes loans from DHHL funded by federal appropriations under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act.

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Gov. Josh Green, who participated in the event, called it progress in motion to see families selected to receive homes and removed from the list of nearly 30,000 beneficiaries who have pending applications for homesteads.

"These ohana have endured far too long and deserve this opportunity," Green said in a statement. "My office will continue to work alongside DHHL to ensure the resources the department needs are available to fully execute on its mission."

Lt. Gov. Sylvia Luke, who also attended the event, said it reflected results from the Legislature's \$600 million appropriation in 2022 to help DHHL accelerate development of homestead lots.

DHHL has previously earmarked \$143 million of the appropriation from Act 279, known as the Waitlist Reduction Act, to produce 500 lots between 2026 and 2029 at Ka'u-luokaha'i, where 700 house lots are planned. An initial phase of 160 lots was previously completed.

Gentry is to build and sell 517 homes in four phases of Ka'u-luokaha'i, including the 115 matched with beneficiaries Saturday. The other phases — II-D with 118 homes, II-E with 133 homes and II-F with 151 homes — are slated for completion in 2027, 2028 and 2029, respectively.

The 115 beneficiaries selected Saturday to buy homes at Ka'u-luokaha'i were among 605 beneficiaries who were awarded advance lot leases in the subdivision in March.

Those advance lot leases — known as "undivided interest" leases or "paper leases" — are commitments to provide an actual lot at what can be an undetermined time in the future.

DHHL received criticism during an earlier big push of paper lease awards in the 2000s that resulted in a roughly 50% failure for conversion to homestead leases and homes 16 years later.

Current DHHL administrators are issuing paper leases again in part because they can be transferred by a beneficiary to a successor who would not qualify to receive a lease directly from DHHL, due to blood quantum requirements, if the awardee dies before an actual lot lease is issued.

Under DHHL rules, beneficiaries must be at least half Hawaiian and can pass on a homestead lease to an approved successor who is at least a quarter Hawaiian.

At least 2,100 DHHL beneficiaries have died while on the agency's waitlist.

DHHL's homestead program was established in 1921 by Congress to return Hawaiians to their ancestral lands after the U.S. annexed the islands. Administered by the state since 1959, the program offers residential, agricultural or pastoral land leases to DHHL beneficiaries for \$1 a year, and lessees must pay for or build their own home.

The \$600 million appropriation has allowed DHHL to advance subdivision development and buy land that can be developed more efficiently than much of the agency's existing landholdings where putting in infrastructure is very expensive.

DHHL's pipeline of planned development includes 29 projects involving more than 3,000 homesteads, including some that are dependent on additional funding.

Kali Watson, DHHL director, said in a statement that the agency is excited to work closely with Green and the Legislature next year to fund remaining parts of Ka'u-luokaha'i.

During this year's legislative session, which began in January and ended in May, DHHL unsuccessfully sought another \$600 million to expand and accelerate homestead development.

"DHHL will continue seeking innovative strategies to accelerate housing options for our families," Watson said.

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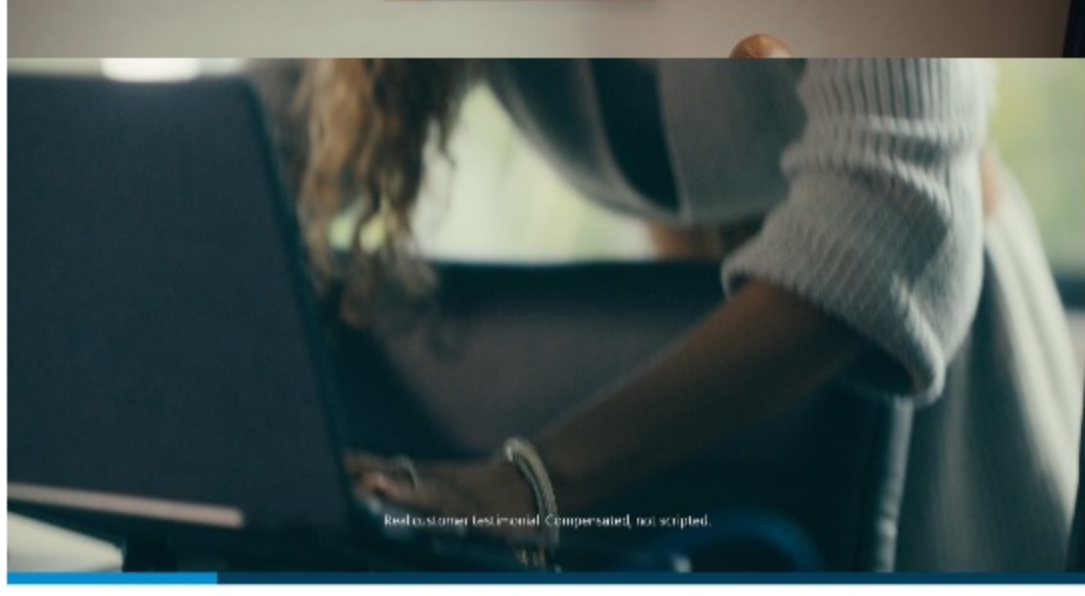
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