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Hawaiian Homes increases land lease awards

LOCAL NEWS

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Those attending the Hawaiian Homes meeting Saturday on Maui were able to look at the location of four different projects, including this one in Lahaina. Photo courtesy of Hawaiian Homes

State Department of Hawaiian Homes officials hope to decrease the number of Native Hawaiians waiting for housing leases by more than a fourth.

The department has announced plans to award 1,100 residential leases to turnkey homes on Maui that will be occupied as early as 2028 and as late as 2030. Altogether, the department aims to award more than 6,000 project leases statewide in the next two years.

"The department is excited for the opportunity to bring more homes to the island of Maui on newly acquired lands close to infrastructure and suitable for residential development," said Kali Watson, chair of the Hawaiian Homes Commission. "The combination of new lands and the awarding of project leases will help our families move off the waitlist and into homes more expeditiously."

Maui Commissioner Archie Kalepa was pleased with the department's action.

"We're moving in the right direction," Kalepa said.

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During a meeting Saturday on Maui, potential awardees were introduced to project developers and able to review maps of four proposed projects.

The move comes as recent censuses show more native Hawaiians are living on the U.S. continent than in Hawaii and housing prices remain too high for many families.

In April, Gov. Josh Green's administration offered a glimmer of hope when Hawaiian Homes awarded leases in Waikapu to 91 Native Hawaiian applicants, the first Hawaiian Homes turnkey residential development on Maui in the last 17 years.

Green pledged he would move forward with more Hawaiian Homestead projects, and his administration has added to the inventory of leases. The awarding of 1,100 Maui residential leases is scheduled for Nov. 8 and Dec. 6, according to the department.

The number of people on the waiting list for Maui is currently at 3,900.

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Qualified applicants will have to pay upfront for the land lease at $1 a year for 99 years, and they will have a variety of options as far as building their houses. Developers have been asked to take the applicant's financial capabilities into account when planning a house. Loan programs are also available through Hawaiian Homes and the Federal Housing Administration.

Among the projects, Leiali'i 1B subdivision in Lahaina has a projected cost of $128 million and includes 155 homestead lots. Construction is expected to start in 2026 and residents could move in sometime in 2028.

Also, the Waiehu Mauka project in Wailuku has 343 homestead lots with construction starting in 2027 and occupation beginning in 2030. The project is projected to cost $95 million.

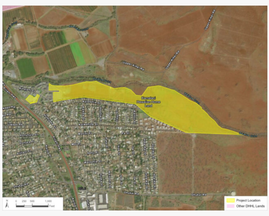
The Wailuku Single-Family project has 204 future homestead lots. Construction is slated to start in 2026 with occupation about three years later 2029 at a projected cost of $45 million.

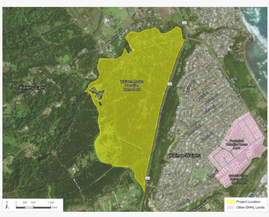
Kamalani in Kihei includes 400 homestead lots with construction starting in 2026. Occupation would begin in 2028 at a project cost of $35.1 million.

Eligible applicants consist of people on the Maui residential waitlist with application dates up to Dec. 24, 2024.

According to the Hawaiian Homestead Act of 1920, applicants must be at least 18 years old and have a blood quantum of at least 50% Native Hawaiian. Project lease holders have the right to transfer their lease to a qualified successor with a blood quantum of at least 25%.

Those interested in receiving a residential project lease, should contact the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands Housing Branch at dhhl.housing@hawaii.gov or by phone at (808) 730-0311.





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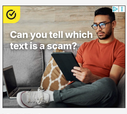

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