

A Petition for Affordable Housing in the New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District

Statement of Faith

We, the members of Faith Action for Community Equity, call upon our community and our decision-makers to prioritize one of the State's most urgent and basic human needs: permanent affordable housing. We cannot sit idly by as our poor and working-class residents experience hardship from low wages and high housing costs. People resort to do whatever they can to survive by couch surfing, living in cars, crowding multiple families into single-family homes and apartments, and sleeping on the streets (all different forms of homelessness). We must unite as a community bonded by our love, concern, and compassion for one another.

Through prayer and meditation, we call upon the higher powers of our faith for guidance and clarity. Through study and discernment, we seek systematic changes to ensure that everyone can afford their housing and be secure in this basic human need.

The redevelopment of Aloha Stadium is an opportunity to considerably address our affordable housing needs as a thoughtfully planned and vibrant addition to the community. The stadium site will continue hosting events, contribute to our quality of life, and establish a new sense of place within our community. But it can accomplish more. Our vision for redeveloping our public land must include more affordable housing. This is our moment to ensure the stadium site lives up to its name: Aloha.

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Our Situation: Hawai'i faces a housing affordability crisis.

Hawai'i's high cost-of-living is commonly understood and the lived experience of kama'āina. The biggest contribution to this problem is the high cost of housing. Below are references defining our State's housing affordability problem:

"Hawai'i has had an affordable housing crisis for decades... the scarcity of safe, sanitary, and affordable rental housing constitutes a crisis for nearly two-thirds of the state's residents."

-Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism^[1]

Housing costs exceed wages.^[2]

Given the \$10.10/hour wage, you would need to work 111 hours per week just to afford a one-bedroom apartment at the market rate (\$1,458/month in Hawai'i). In order for a worker to only work 40 hours per week and afford a two-bedroom apartment at the market rate (\$1,914/month in Hawai'i), that worker would need to earn a \$36.82/hour wage.

60% of Hawai'i households are cost burdened.

Nearly 60 percent^[3] of Hawai'i households are cost burdened. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development considers households who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing to be cost burdened.^[4] These families may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care. Households with an annual income of \$75,000 or less are more likely to be cost burdened.^[5]

Hawai'i needs 65,000 more homes.^[6]

The Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism (DBEDT) "projects demand for an additional 64,700 to 66,000 housing units, during the 2015-2025 period." DBEDT also reports that the result of the "increasing gap (between the population and housing supply) has been continued housing price increases, leading to an unbalanced market."

Studies and reports have been published. The problem has been identified. Our need is clear. It is time to stop talking about the need for affordable housing. It is time to fulfill our need for more affordable housing.

Our Situation: Aloha Stadium will be redeveloped.

The State of Hawaii plans to redevelop the 98-acre state-owned Aloha Stadium land. As of January 2020, the State is executing a master planning study that would evaluate “different patterns of development.”^[7] The plan would comprise stadium reconstruction and ancillary mixed-use developments for residential, commercial, and entertainment uses through a strategy called transit-oriented development. In 2019, the State Legislature allocated \$350 million for Aloha Stadium redevelopment. The State can also set a goal for housing development at the site that will significantly contribute to meeting the 65,000-unit demand by 2025 and plan to meet future housing demands.

What is transit-oriented development (TOD)?

“Transit-oriented development (TOD) is a pattern of different uses—housing, jobs, and services—surrounding a transit station that takes advantage of the convenience and affordability of transit. TOD generally occurs within a radius of one-quarter to one-half mile, or a five to 10-minute walk, from a transit stop, as this is considered to be a comfortable distance for pedestrians.”

-Honolulu Department of Planning & Permitting^[8]

What does TOD have to do with Aloha Stadium?

The Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation (HART) is nearing completion of its rail station and bus transfer center at the 98-acre Aloha Stadium site. This public transportation hub is the first piece of successful TOD. The next step is to develop the area surrounding the rail/bus station with useful facilities such as affordable housing. The combination of low-cost public transportation access near low-cost housing is a symbiotic relationship. This enables people to reduce their housing and transportation expenses, economically liberating more people to freely participate in our economy. Our investments in public transportation and our future investments in the Aloha Stadium site are part of a holistic vision to sustain the people of our State. Affordable housing at Aloha Stadium is a critical part of that vision.

Affordable housing at Aloha Stadium is an effective use of public resources.

As state-owned land, the Aloha Stadium site should be redeveloped to fulfill the needs of our people: public land for public benefit. The 98-acre land area is sufficient to support the needs of the stadium and affordable transit-oriented housing.

State-owned land is optimal for affordable housing because the State can retain ownership of the land and issue 99-year leases to homeowners and rental apartment operators. Separating ownership of the land from ownership of the housing structures atop it would remove the high cost of land from the total cost of housing.^[9] People need affordable roofs over their heads, not expensive land.

Affordable housing on our public land near the rail/bus station would also contribute to utilization of our public transportation. Transit-dependent households would be better served by living close to the station. Other households would be more likely to choose transit with the improved convenience of public transportation, reducing dependency on personal automobiles.

Let us commit to more affordable housing at Aloha Stadium. To not do so would be a waste: a waste of our investments in public transportation, a waste of our urban public land, and a waste of an opportunity.

Who could live in affordable housing at Aloha Stadium?

Everyone and anyone should be able to live in affordable housing. However, as affordable housing pertains to Aloha Stadium, our state and local governments have already identified a strategy: transit-oriented development. Below is a list of possible transit-oriented residents in the stadium district:

- Transit-dependent people who cannot afford automobile ownership
- People who belong to the disability community
- Kūpuna
- Anyone who wants to live a transit-first lifestyle

“According to the 2010 Census, persons with disabilities, over the age of 65, and living below the poverty level have very few mobility options to meet their basic travel needs and, as a transportation disadvantaged population, they face chronic problems that reduce their quality of life and productivity... Transit-oriented development (TOD) has been seen as effective for creating housing opportunities for low-income families and improving mobility and accessibility to jobs.”

-Federal Transit Administration^[10]

Transit-oriented Aloha Stadium housing would also be an affordable choice for households that want to reduce or eliminate their car use. Public transportation would be their primary means to transport to work and other destinations. Commercial transit-oriented development within a five-minute walk of residences would serve other regular needs such as groceries, healthcare, recreation, banking, shopping, and dining. Parking could be made available for car owning residents within the stadium event parking footprint for an extra fee; this will ensure non-car owners are not automatically assessed the cost of parking in their housing costs, further promoting and sustaining the housing affordability objective. Furthermore, residents who desire other convenient transportation options could use transportation network companies (Uber, Lyft, etc.), carsharing networks (Hui, ZipCar, etc.), and active transportation/bikeshare (Biki, Lime, etc.).

Who would build and maintain Aloha Stadium housing?

Constructing and sustaining affordable housing requires coordinated efforts and commitments from many public and private organizations. It is not the sole responsibility of the State. However, it is imperative the State commits to a master plan for the Aloha Stadium District that meets the infrastructure needs for multiple contributions to the fulfillment of affordable housing. The State can divide the site into multiple lease parcels (including 99-year residential ground leases) for a mix of affordable housing contributors apportioned by each organization’s capability. Below is a list of possible developers/operators of affordable owned and rental housing:

- Government agencies with an affordable housing kuleana (Hawaii Public Housing Authority, Department of Hawaiian Homelands, Hawaii Housing Finance & Development Corporation, etc.)
- Non-profit developers
- For-profit developers

The State can recover its capital and operational investments through other transit-oriented development, such as commercial leases. Residents would have a symbiotic

relationship with the conveniently located district businesses, contributing to their economic viability. This economic viability would increase the State's likelihood of sustaining the stadium district with commercial lease revenue.

Other site-related issues

The stadium currently impacts surrounding neighborhoods most noticeably through noise and traffic. Redevelopment should bring a benefit to the state-wide community through affordable housing and mitigate existing impacts.

The State could explore strategies to use high-rise residential buildings to physically block stadium noise from reaching nearby neighborhoods. A few strategies include sound-absorbing building materials and living plant walls, which would serve as noise abatement to both stadium residents and nearby residents.

The State could also prioritize redirecting stadium event traffic from arterial roads with direct links to the adjacent freeways. Event traffic mitigation promotes pedestrian safety into and around the district allowing everyone to enjoy the stadium.

The City could partner with nearby residents to institute and enforce residential parking zones to mitigate the problem of stadium visitors parking on residential streets. Residential parking zones would also be a long-term solution to preventing stadium district residents from parking vehicles within nearby residential areas.

Faith Action is a partner participating in the community-based planning which seeks community equity in the Aloha Stadium redevelopment plan. We seek a plan that is mutually beneficial to our State, stadium-adjacent residents, and our neighbors in need of housing they can afford.

Conclusion

Clearly our elected officials and government agencies have identified our housing affordability problems and studied solutions. It's time to take the next step and implement transit-oriented development on our state-owned Aloha Stadium land with steadfast devotion to affordable housing.

People who can afford their homes are empowered with economic self-determination. Greatly reducing Hawai'i households' cost burdens will open doors to economic mobility with the ability to pay off debt, invest in education, and improve quality of life. This is our vision for a community in which everyone can afford to live.

A community is not simply a place. Nor is it a collection of individual people. A community is the convergence of people and place, thriving by our contributions to the whole. A community is bound together with our humanity and interdependence. We affirm our commitment to such a community: a community loved by our Creator, and a community which we are called to love through faithful action.

Faith Action for Community Equity petitions the State's decision-making authorities to adopt a New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District master plan that prioritizes the maximization of affordable transit-oriented housing development to alleviate the statewide housing shortage.

References

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- [3] Hawaii News Now, [*More Honolulu renters are counted among the 'cost-burdened'*](#), November 9, 2017 (updated August 15, year unknown).
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- [6] Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, [*Measuring Housing Demand in Hawaii, 2015-2025*](#), March 2015.
- [7] State of Hawaii New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District Delivery Team, [*Quick Facts*](#), last updated 2019.
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- [9] Marina Yu (A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of Architecture and Planning), Columbia University, [*Ground Leasing for Housing Affordability: An Ancient Land Tenure Form Reinvented*](#), March 2015.
- [10] Federal Transit Administration, [*Report No. 0030: Transportation Needs of Disadvantaged Populations: Where, When, and How?*](#), February 2013.