



PROJECT ABSTRACT

Hawai'i County needs housing that our families and our workforce can afford. The 2019 Hawai'i Housing Planning Study showed that 8.8% of households pay between 30-40% of their monthly household income toward housing, 21.8% pay over 40% toward housing, and that Hawai'i County needs 13,303 additional housing units by 2025. The Center for Neighborhood Technology combines transportation and housing costs to provide a more accurate measure of affordability, showing that Hawai'i County leads the state in unaffordable housing costs: households pay 61% of their income toward housing and transportation (Shelter burdened is defined as spending over 30% of household income on shelter costs).

In 2020, Vibrant Hawai'i formed the Hawai'i Island Housing Coalition to provide a platform for communication and collaboration, connect stakeholders for a deeper understanding of barriers, and encourage partnerships to organize for efficient and effective collective action.

To build upon the innovation and creativity underway to tackle housing affordability, the Hawai'i Island Housing Coalition proposes to advance Vibrant Communities, which is much more than a housing project – it is a model for creating the kind of communities we want to live in. The initiative will bring together planners and developers, designers, builders and suppliers, utility companies, non-profit organizations and faith communities, private and public land owners, university students, the County of Hawai'i Planning Department, Building Department, and the Office of Housing and Community Development.

The Vibrant Communities project is a small-scale development (under 10 units of mixed sizes) that would be built on less than a 2-acre parcel, thus minimizing impact to surrounding neighborhoods, roadways, and schools. Costs are kept to a minimum by identifying parcels tied to existing infrastructure and securing in-kind service from Housing Coalition members: planners, designers, builders, lenders, and social service providers. Potential homeowners will represent a range of community members: first responders and educators, single parents with children, kupuna, individuals reintegrating from incarceration, and Section 8 voucher holders. These future neighbors will participate in a series of training including Mental Health First Aid, First Aid and CPR, Difficult Conversations, Place Based Education, and designing and sustaining a community garden. The project will also serve as a prototype for subsequent projects and provide an open-source guidebook of detailed steps for others to follow.

Phase I: May – August 2021 – Develop and regularly update a publicly accessible map of vacant public and private parcels tied to existing infrastructure. Available at www.vibranthawaii.org/housing. Identify potential sites for the Vibrant Communities demonstration project. Secure all necessary partnerships, including planning consultant, design-builder consultant, County department collaborators, and philanthropic commitments.

Phase II: September 2021 – February 2022 – Engage with land use planner to identify regulatory requirements, studies and assessments to determine project feasibility. Engage with designers to develop a conceptual design in both digital and print formats. Collaborate with the Office of Housing and Community Development liaison to develop the selection process for homeowners.

Phase III: March 2022 – August 2022 – Secure funds to initiate the pilot project, finalize structural, civil, and architectural designs. Draft RFP for construction. Identify prospective homeowners and provide financial counseling support to ensure viability for lending.