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Residential Real Estate

\$80M teacher housing project planned for Oahu high school campus



Preliminary rendering of Kumelewai Hale, a workforce housing development for public school teachers on Mililani High School campus. WRNS Studio

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Story Highlights

What's This?

- Pacific Housing Assistance Corp. will develop 95 rental units for Oahu teachers by late 2029.
- The \$80 million Kumelewai Hale project serves teachers earning up to 120% of area median income.
- Hawaii School Facilities Authority plans to replicate the pilot project throughout the state.

A proposed \$80 million housing development located on the Mililani High School campus will provide 95 rental units for public school teachers on Oahu.

The project is currently in its design and financing stage, having submitted its final environmental assessment in May with plans to apply for permits this year, begin construction in late 2027 and move teachers into the housing units by late 2029.

The project, named Kumelewai Hale, is being developed by Pacific Housing Assistance Corp., a Hawaii-based nonprofit affordable housing developer, chosen by its government partner Hawaii School Facilities Authority in 2024 to develop affordable housing for tenants earning up to 120% of the area median income to help the Department of Education recruit and retain teachers.

The name of the project, Kumelewai, means "like singing water" and is the name of the birthplace of Hawaiian educator and statesman John Papa 'i'i.

The project will provide one-third of the units for households earning up to 60% AMI, one-third for households earning up to 80% AMI and one-third for households earning up to 120% AMI, which for a household of four in Honolulu County is an annual income between \$91,200 and \$182,400.

"Rents will be set below the maximum allowable rents for each income group to increase affordability of the units," said Lacey Shimabukuro, development project manager at Pacific Housing Assistance Corp. "We are considering financing sources, and rents could be lowered with public funding support."



Preliminary rendering of Kumelewai Hale. The 95-unit building is designed with the living units split between two wings that are connected by a bridge on each floor. WRNS STUDIO

The project has so far received a \$2 million grant from HSFA through state funding to assist with pre-development costs. The land is under the control of the DOE and will be leased for 65 years for the project.

This is the first of its kind for HSFA and for Pacific Housing Assistance Corp. Based on the success of the pilot, the state authority intends to replicate the teacher workforce housing throughout the state.

“This is really critical and important, and it’s a big tool for the state department of education to recruit and retain teachers,” said Audrey Awaya, executive director at Pacific Housing Assistance Corp. “Especially starting teachers that are just out of school, they need help finding a safe and affordable place to live that’s secure and in an environment that was designed especially for them.”

The project was previously planned to provide 109 units, but in December 2024, a site change, now located closer to the football stadium at the high school, required the project to downsize to 56 one-bedroom units and 39 two-bedroom units. There will be a perimeter fence to separate the development from the high school campus.

Pacific Housing Assistance Corp. hired a local firm to research and ask teachers what amenities they needed to feel supported in such a housing facility. The building design includes many of the requests from teachers, including a resource room for teachers to collaborate, a fitness center, laundry on every floor, an open courtyard, a pet-friendly building and a copier and laminating machine so the teachers do not have to go early to school.

The development, located across the street from the Town Center of Mililani shopping center, will also include amenities and programs to support the teachers, including financial literacy and budgeting programs.

“It’s not intended for them to stay at this place forever,” Awaya said. “We want to get them started and support them for them to be able to save money and move on, maybe eventually to buy a place and allow other new teachers to be able to live there and benefit from the project.”

The housing is reserved for any DOE teachers and staff, with priority given to teachers; if the units are not filled, DOE staff will be next in line.

Pacific Housing Assistance Corp. recently completed its [\\$84.5 million affordable housing project in Waikoloa Village](#) on Hawaii Island for the hospitality workforce of nearby resorts along the Kohala Coast.