



Hawai'i Community
Development
Authority

June 2026

Community Connection

Board Calendar

July 1

The next HCDA Board meetings will be held. Agendas are post on the website the Thursday before the scheduled Board Meeting.

For more information about HCDA, the public hearings or board meetings visit <https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/hcda/>.



Affordable Housing



<80% of AMI

Workforce Housing



80-140% of AMI

Supporting Housing for Hawai'i's Workforce

HCDA Chair Sterling Higa emphasized the importance of workforce housing and expanding homeownership opportunities for Hawai'i's working families at the June 3, 2026, Kalaeloa Board meeting.

Discussions about housing affordability often involve two distinct kinds of housing, Higa explained. They include 'affordable housing' for households earning 80 percent of area median income (AMI) and below, and 'workforce housing' for households earning between 80 and 140 percent of AMI.

Households earning between 60 and 80 percent of AMI often face significant barriers to homeownership because financing can be difficult to obtain, leaving limited opportunities for new for-sale housing at those income levels.

As a result, most new housing developments are targeted toward households earning between 100 and 140 percent of AMI. Higa noted that this income range includes many of Hawai'i's working professionals and public servants, including firefighters, police officers, nurses, engineers, teachers and small business owners.

"These are our civil servants. These are our small-business owners. These are people working hard in the community who I believe deserve to have homeownership opportunities," Higa said.

He emphasized that housing availability is closely tied to retaining the professionals who provide essential services throughout Hawai'i.

Higa also addressed concerns about the cost of newly constructed homes, noting that much of Hawai'i's housing inventory was built 50 to 60 years ago, when construction costs and regulatory requirements were significantly lower. Today, developers face rising material and labor costs, strict-

er building and safety codes and lengthy approval processes.

"When you build something new, not only do you have to buy the materials, not only are labor costs higher, not only are the safety standards and building codes much more stringent than they used to be," said Higa, "but you also have to deal with a thicket of approvals and court challenges that can delay things for years and years."

He said those challenges have contributed to a decline in the number of homebuilders operating in Hawai'i, limiting housing production at a time when demand remains high.

Higa expressed strong support for Gentry Homes and other developers focused on workforce housing, noting that workforce housing developments help create homeownership opportunities for first-time buyers while also freeing up housing inventory elsewhere in the market.

"Typically, the people who are buying Gentry homes are first-time homebuyers and this is their entry into homeownership," he said.

Higa also voiced support for HCDA's efforts to encourage responsible housing development and reduce barriers to building homes for local residents.

"I personally have believed in my whole term on HCDA that we should be doing all that we can to enable homebuilders like Gentry to build houses in this state," he said.

He underscored the role of government agencies in addressing housing needs while remaining accountable to the public.

"The job of this agency and all government agencies is to provide, according to statute, what the public needs — and to do so in a way that is responsible and accountable to the public," Higa said.

Ikaika Hawaii Helps Shape the Next Generation of Watermen and Waterwomen

Drowning is the leading cause of injury-related death for children ages 1 to 15 in Hawai'i, according to the Hawai'i Water Safety Coalition. For Shelley Oates-Wilding, founder of Ikaika Hawaii, those statistics underscore the importance of teaching keiki how to safely enjoy the ocean.

Founded in 2012, Ikaika Hawaii provides water safety, paddling, cultural education and leadership programs for youth. The nonprofit's mission is to perpetuate Hawai'i's waterman tradition while building confidence and ocean awareness among participants.

Oates-Wilding's connection to Hawai'i began long before she moved here. Raised in Australia, she visited the islands regularly with her family and felt a strong connection to Hawai'i's culture and ocean traditions. After competing in the 1996 and 2000 Olympic Games and founding an outrigger paddling team called Ikaika in Australia, she eventually relocated to Hawai'i to pursue her vision of developing a comprehensive watermens' program for local youth.

"I knew I couldn't get kids to the Olympics if I didn't first get a million kids loving the water," said Oates-Wilding.

The program's curriculum is guided by the Ikaika ASPIRE philosophy: Attitude, Sportsmanship, Perseverance, Individual Responsibility, Respect and Enjoyment. These values are woven into every activity, helping participants develop as leaders both on and off the water.



A key component of the program is its emphasis on cultural learning and environmental stewardship. Keiki are introduced to Hawaiian language, traditional practices and mālama 'āina principles through activities such as lei making, hat weaving and community service projects.

"When the kids do these activities, they love it," Oates-Wilding said. "It gives them a connection to why they're so lucky to live here in Hawai'i."

Over the years, more than 100 Ikaika athletes have represented Hawai'i and the United States in national and inter-



national canoeing, kayaking and rowing competitions. The organization also works to remove financial barriers to participation through scholarships and community support, ensuring opportunities are available to youth of all backgrounds.



The HCDA recently leased space between Kewalo Basin Harbor and Ala Moana Regional Park to Ikaika Hawaii for its youth programs. The site provides waterfront access and a dedicated location for summer activities focused on ocean safety, recreation and cultural learning, expanding opportunities for keiki to connect with the ocean in a safe and structured environment.

Oates-Wilding said her long-term goal is to expand access to water safety education and create more opportunities for local youth to participate in water sports throughout the state.

"We have big goals," she said. "But if we can help more kids love the water, stay safe and believe in themselves, then we're making a difference."

As Hawai'i works to expand water safety education statewide, organizations such as Ikaika Hawaii are helping equip the next generation with the skills, knowledge and confidence to safely enjoy the ocean.

For more information, visit www.ikaikahawaii.com.