

Highlights of April 7, 2004 HCDA Meeting

Following is a summary of actions taken at the April 7, 2004 meeting of the Hawaii Community Development Authority (HCDA).

Proposed Kaka'ako Improvement District 11 Project

The Authority approved the adoption of proposed amendments to the Hawaii Administrative Rules to initiate the process for proceeding with the proposed construction of infrastructure improvements (Improvement District 11 or ID-11) on a portion of Queen Street, between Kamakee Street and Ward Avenue. With this approval, the Authority instructed the HCDA staff to proceed with the advertising for bids (subject to the Governor's approval) for the project to determine the total cost. Authority members also directed staff to reevaluate the methodology for determining the assessments that would be paid by the landowners in the project area and to report back to the Board with alternative scenarios.

The proposed ID-11 would include the installation of new: sewer, water, drain and underground utility systems; road pavement, sidewalks, curbs and gutters, and streetlights; and traffic signals where needed. The segment of Queen Street, from Kamakee Street to Ward Avenue, is proposed to be widened from 56 to 60 feet. Currently, the HCDA is constructing the Queen Street Extension (Improvement District 10), a new roadway that will extend Queen Street from Kamakee Street to Waimanu Street. ID-11 would be a continuation of HCDA's efforts to improve the remainder of Queen Street between Kamakee and Cooke Streets, although current funding limits the ID-11 project improvements between Kamakee Street and Ward Avenue. As in past Kaka'ako improvement districts, the cost of the improvements is shared by State government, the project area's landowners and the utility companies.

At a public hearing held on April 7, testimony both for and against the proposed rule amendments was given. Those in favor pointed to the economic benefits of the project as well as its compatibility with HCDA plans. Those opposed to the project objected to the HCDA's preliminary assessment amounts and the methodology/formula used to determine the assessments. They expressed concerns that the assessments were too high and would adversely affect their businesses. Some landowners also worried that the project--which will replace unauthorized, perpendicular parking in the roadway right-of-way with parallel, metered stalls--will result in a reduction of on-street parking for the businesses and their customers. In giving its approval to proceed with advertising for bids, the Authority instructed staff to investigate alternative assessment methods that would lower assessment amounts for landowners. Another public hearing will be scheduled after the final project cost is determined once bids are opened in June 2004, and the final assessments are calculated.

Rent Reduction for Volunteer Legal Services Hawai'i

HCDA members approved a request from Volunteer Legal Services Hawai'i (VLSH) to waive the lease rent of \$1,338 per month for the Honuakaha building ground floor office for a six-month period beginning in October 2004 and ending in March 2005. The Authority also voted to waive lease rents owed by VLSH for office space in the American Brewery building for a three-month period.

VLSH is a nonprofit organization that provides legal services to the poor. Its services include child support and custody, divorce, bankruptcies, landlord-tenant disputes, and assistance to domestic violence victims. Under a ten-year lease, VLSH occupies 1,338 square feet of office space on the ground floor of Honuakaha. It also occupies 3,305 square feet of office space on the third floor of the adjoining American Brewery Building under a month-to-month lease, but that lease will be terminated effective April 30, 2004. VLSH is facing financial challenges due to the loss of a significant portion of its funding, resulting in the closure of its community offices on Oahu, Kauai, Maui and Hawaii and the reduction of staff from 56 to 11 employees. VLSH requested assistance from HCDA as it reprioritizes its mission and as its Board of Directors establishes a fund development plan to create more sustainable sources of funding.