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## KPT rehab plan offers opportunity for change

Residents of the troubled Kuhio Park Terrace and Kuhio Homes complex have reason to view a proposed redevelopment with a great deal of hope. But their advocates can't yet afford to let up the pressure for vast improvements in living conditions there.

For starters, the rehabilitation of the Kalihi projects, largely to be underwritten by the state's private partners, will be 18 months in the planning, with the full buildout to take 10 years after that. So the Hawai'i Public Housing Authority must still make pressing repairs, particularly in the area of health and safety, during the long transition to make the projects livable. These include accessibility accommodations for disabled tenants, basic plumbing repairs and fire safety improvements.

The good news is that the decision to privatize the development is in keeping with nationwide trends away from government-owned housing projects.

The housing authority's board, which had called for proposals in April, this week announced a unanimous decision to tap Michaels Development Company and Pacific Housing Advisors as a team to take on the redevelopment and ongoing management of the projects. In light of the past complaints about management, from federal overseers as well as tenants, it would be prudent for the state to ensure the project has turned the corner on that point.

In its request for proposals, the board correctly inserted a requirement that the revamped project comprise at least as many low-income units as it now does: 614 in KPT and 134 in Kuhio Homes.

The total project, which will include additional construction of affordable and near-market-priced units, should yield a larger capacity of housing for needy families, said board chairman Travis Thompson. This is critical, considering the long waiting lists that already exist for this target population.

Just as important in these recessionary times: The proposal would not directly tap the state's general fund, although some state financing through tax credits may be sought.

Michaels Development has logged 35 years of experience rehabilitating housing in 21 states; in 15 years Pacific's portfolio includes owning and operating 4,500 units in Hawai'i and eight other states. Those are encouraging credentials.

The redevelopment presents a prime opportunity to jump-start a viable tenants' association on the site: Residents want to have a voice in the process, and giving them a sense of ownership in the final product will boost chances that the improvement will be sustainable for the long term.

Throughout the process, the housing authority and elected lawmakers still must provide oversight, as well as support through streamlined permitting processes to keep the project on schedule.

Government is duty-bound to ensure decent and safe housing for its neediest citizens, who unfortunately have waited far too long for that to happen.

## Additional Facts

Learn more

Read The Advertiser's previous editorials on conditions at Kuhio Park Terrace and Kuhio Homes under Special Reports at [www.HONOLULUADVERTISER.COM/OPINION](http://www.HONOLULUADVERTISER.COM/OPINION)