

Future of the Oahu Community Correctional Center

Vol. 38 – What If We Don't Replace OCCC?

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Hawaii Department of Public Safety

The Hawaii Department of Public Safety (PSD) is responsible for carrying out judgments of the state courts whenever a period of confinement is ordered. Its mission is to uphold justice and public safety by providing correctional and law enforcement services to Hawaii's communities with professionalism, integrity and fairness. Currently, offenders are housed within State of Hawaii jail and prison facilities located within Hawaii, at the Federal Detention Center in Honolulu, and in private contractor facilities on the mainland.

PSD operates Community Correctional Centers (CCCs), widely known as jails, on the islands of Kauai, Maui, Hawaii and Oahu. Each CCC houses short-term sentenced felons, probation, and misdemeanor offenders; pretrial felons and misdemeanor offenders; other jurisdiction; and probation/parole violators. CCCs provide the customary county jail function of managing both pre-trial detainees and locally-sentenced misdemeanant offenders and others with a sentence of one year or less. CCCs also provide an important pre-release preparation/transition function for prison system inmates who are transferred back to their place of origin when they reach less than a year until their scheduled release. Although some offenders will remain in prison for life, the majority (over 95 percent) will serve their sentences and be released, eventually returning to the community.

PSD is committed to providing a safe, secure, healthy, humane, social, and physical environment for inmates and staff. However, aged and obsolete CCCs have limited PSD's ability to provide such environments. All jail facilities are antiquated with limited space for programs and treatment services. Improvement of the declining facilities (and replacing facilities when necessary) is a priority. Chief among such priorities is replacement of the existing Oahu CCC (OCCC) with a new facility at the Animal Quarantine Station (AQS) in Aiea/Halawa. Assisting with OCCC planning and development is the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) and a team of consultants (the "OCCC Team").

Why "Doing Nothing" Will Be Costly

Since the 1990s, the State of Hawaii has conducted numerous studies of its correctional system infrastructure including Master Plans for upgrading and improving the jails and prisons operated by PSD. OCCC has been the subject of various studies with each study documenting its obsolete design; declining physical plant; and inefficient, ineffective, and costly operation. Findings common among each of the studies are the need to replace the current OCCC with a new jail designed, constructed, and operated to modern standards and approaches, which today emphasize reducing the high incarceration rate, ensuring racial equity, and providing facilities that are therapeutic rather than punitive. With considerable documentation in hand, planning for a new OCCC began in earnest in 2016 with PSD recognizing the opportunity to significantly change the current system and improve how individuals are housed and treated while held at OCCC.



Current OCCC -- Kalihi, Hawaii

Why “Doing Nothing” Will Be Costly (Continued)

Since planning started, significant progress has been achieved, including identifying, evaluating and selecting the site for the new OCCC; preparing Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements in accordance with State regulations; engaging in an extensive public outreach, education, and engagement program; and conducting a wide range of technical studies addressing transportation systems, utility services, environmental resources, and geotechnical conditions among other topics. The progress achieved during this time has been the result of efforts by a dedicated team led by PSD and DAGS and supported by Governor David Ige and the Hawaii State Legislature.

OCCC was once considered a “new generation” facility based on best practices at the time it was developed. However, OCCC no longer aligns with the vision for the future of the justice system that the citizens of Hawaii (and many other jurisdictions) are seeking to implement: reducing recidivism by improving living and working conditions and providing training, counseling, and re-entry services with a greater emphasis on behavioral and mental health treatment. PSD is seeking to deliver on a new vision for OCCC – one articulated by Governor Ige and members of the Judiciary, Legislature, justice and health system experts, community advocates, and other stakeholders. A new vision that’s based on a thorough understanding of the disparate populations to be housed and their needs, including redefining existing programs and developing new programs within a new facility that promotes positive change and supports the mental health and medical services required by the offender population.

PSD has been describing the poor conditions within OCCC to a wide audience for many years, along with the necessity to replace the facility, portions of which are 100+ years old. Efforts include wide distribution of monthly OCCC newsletters; attending regular meetings with neighborhood groups and stakeholders; providing briefings to local and state officials; and by reports in the media. Prior to the pandemic, tours of OCCC were also provided to elected officials, members of the media, and others to document the conditions under which offenders and staff must live and function.

Nonetheless, in the face of such hardships, there are some in Hawaii advocating for all work involving the new OCCC to end. This, at a time when conditions in OCCC are worsening with each passing day and the COVID-19 pandemic presenting new risks to offenders, staff and visitors. Delaying or terminating plans for a new OCCC at this time will effectively end the program

and squander the progress achieved to develop a new facility. Doing so will also force the State of Hawaii to continue operating the current OCCC for the foreseeable future. The implications of halting work on the new OCCC are many, some of which are summarized below.

Safety, Services, and a Successful Return to the Community

- Offenders in OCCC with special needs, including those with a mental illness or serious medical condition, as well as individuals in protective and maximum custody, will continue to be housed among the general population; an arrangement that is detrimental to the entire population.
- OCCC’s historical overcrowding required conversion of areas intended to be used for treatment and other programs to housing. The loss of these spaces has limited the availability of therapeutic programs and treatment services needed by the offender population. By operating OCCC as is, future offenders will be denied the effective and humane treatment environments and services needed to successfully return to the community.
- Overcrowding, threats of violence, imposed isolation, lack of meaningful activities, inaccessible social networks, and insecurity about future prospects are all part of the existing OCCC experience. These, coupled with the current physical environment – dark and narrow corridors, poor acoustics, limited natural light, temperature fluctuations and lack of privacy – are counter to the therapeutic conditions necessary for mental health, rehabilitation, and reintegration.
- The needs of the offender population determine the types and sizes of interior spaces needed to accommodate the programs and personnel for various treatment modalities. Without the proper size, layout and configuration of treatment and programming spaces, the services needed to prepare offenders to successfully return to the community will be unavailable.
- OCCC is incapable of providing conditions that are therapeutic, curative, compassionate, and hopeful to the offenders it houses. OCCC staff is working diligently to help the offenders, but it is not reasonable to expect individuals to become healthy in an unhealthy environment. Halting planning will ensure that future occupants of OCCC will also be denied environments that elevate the spirit, heal the mind, and offer hope for a better life.

- Daylight and views of the outside world from dayrooms, soothing colors, climate control, and acoustic dampening, available in a modern jail and missing from the current OCCC, are known help to create positive offender and staff attitudes and promote an atmosphere conducive to positive behavioral change.
- The latest security electronics and management technologies currently available at the existing OCCC, would be incorporated within the new OCCC to improve functionality while keeping offenders, staff and visitors safe.
- OCCC, like many older generation jails, was built with a different purpose in mind, is misaligned with the size and type of population it currently houses and serves, and fails to promote well-being. Halting plans for the new OCCC will ensure the status quo continues into the future.
- Halting plans for the new OCCC will further delay much-needed additional community transitional beds and spaces for transitional programs and services currently lacking (or inadequate) at OCCC. The transitional programs and services envisioned at the new OCCC would provide offenders the assistance necessary to avoid reoffending and help reduce the high levels of recidivism.



Modern vs. traditional cell design



**Modern dayroom with natural light
(Credit: National Institute of Corrections)**



**Modern vs. traditional transition housing
Credit: CGL Companies**

Working Conditions

- Recruiting and training new correctional officers represents a substantial annual cost to jail systems throughout the U.S. For many years, PSD's ability to recruit and retain correctional officers and other personnel necessary to operate its facilities has been highly challenging as other employment opportunities, within and outside the justice community, provide better working conditions and environments. Halting plans for the new OCCC will perpetuate the unfavorable work environment at the current OCCC.
- The current OCCC work environment is not conducive to attracting and retaining the workforce needed and places an additional burden on PSD and cost to Hawaii's taxpayers. Halting plans for the new OCCC will ensure that the problems resulting from the current work environment will continue or worsen.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the severe deficiencies and constraints of working within OCCC and the substantial personal cost faced daily by the occupants and the men and women who are responsible for its operation. OCCC's historical overcrowding further increased the demands and pressures under which offenders live and the staff function. Halting plans for the new OCCC will ensure a continuation of current conditions.

Costs

- Hawaii taxpayers will be funding operation of a continually deteriorating facility that requires large capital expenditures each year in order to maintain functionality. A portion of OCCC was built in 1912 and although there have been periodic renovations and upgrades, continuing to extend the

lifespan, security, and usability of this obsolete facility will be inefficient and costly.

- Over time, annual capital improvement costs will rise as mechanical, electrical, plumbing, structural and security systems further age and require continuous repair or complete replacement. The complexity of repairing or replacing such systems in a highly secure, operating jail will further add to the time and expense associated with such improvements.
- OCCC's antiquated design necessitates a higher level of staffing than modern facilities of comparable size. A recent analysis of current OCCC operation has found considerable manpower devoted to escorting offenders within the facility during routine operation. In comparison, newer jails are designed to minimize movement of offenders, which results in a more efficient and safer operation and better use of personnel resources.
- Continuing with the current OCCC will likely be more costly on a per bed basis than a new facility with a state-of-the-art design and modern operation and management model. With the need for a large number of correctional officers and continued use of antiquated mechanical, electrical, and plumbing equipment, operating the current facility will continue to be expensive and grow more expensive over time.

Future of Kalihi

- Halting plans for the new OCCC will ensure that the 16.6-acre Kalihi property remains the home of OCCC. Maintaining a land use inconsistent with the future growth of the area also prevents redeveloping the property for affordable housing, commercial uses, and/or other activities with broad community-wide benefits.



***Redevelopment of OCCC property as envisioned within 21st Century Kalihi Vision Report
(Credit: Hawaii Office of Planning)***

- The OCCC property is the focus of the 21st Century Kalihi Vision Plan, with relocation of OCCC viewed as a catalyst for future redevelopment of other state-controlled lands in the area.
- With plans for the new rail transit system extending to Kalihi, the value of the state-owned OCCC property is expected to climb above its current high worth. Maintaining OCCC at its current location would deprive the state of the financial benefits of its sale and redevelopment.
- Relocating OCCC and redevelopment of the Kalihi property would create hundreds of direct/indirect and temporary/permanent jobs for the benefit of Hawaii residents. Continuing to operate OCCC in Kalihi will eliminate those opportunities and benefits.
- Maintaining OCCC operation in Kalihi would also eliminate the opportunity to market and sell the property which would add a high value asset to the tax rolls. Without its eventual redevelopment, the additional tax revenues that could be generated would be lost to state and local government coffers.
- Continuing OCCC operation in Kalihi would eliminate the opportunity to relocate the facility to another state-owned property more suitable to its nature and operation. The planned OCCC location in Aiea/Halawa has the added benefit of close proximity to the Halawa Correctional Facility.

The current OCCC no longer provides a safe, secure, healthy, humane, or therapeutic environment for offenders and staff and for these and other reasons needs to be replaced.

Capital Improvement Funds Released for New Housing Units

Capital improvement funds have been released for much needed investments at both the Maui and Hawaii Community Correctional Centers:

- \$5.79 million has been made available for construction of a new medium-security housing unit at HCCC to help address overcrowding. The new housing unit, costing approximately \$20.8 million, will provide additional beds at HCCC. With the design complete, the new housing unit will be ready for occupancy in 2023.
- \$1.2 million has been made available to support the relocation of an on-grade chiller unit currently serving housing modules A, B, C and D at MCCC in order to make room for a new medium-security housing unit to help address overcrowding. Relocation of the chiller unit is scheduled for 2022 with construction of the new housing unit to be completed in 2023.

Since much discussion about Hawaii's correctional system focuses on the needs of the offender population, the needs of the staff who work in these facilities are often overlooked. The new housing units being developed by PSD have been designed to address the needs of the staff as well.

Little known fact: a correctional officer will spend over 50,000 hours of his/her life in the facility or over five years of his/her life out of a 25-year career before retirement, often significantly more time than the inmate populations serve in a jail.

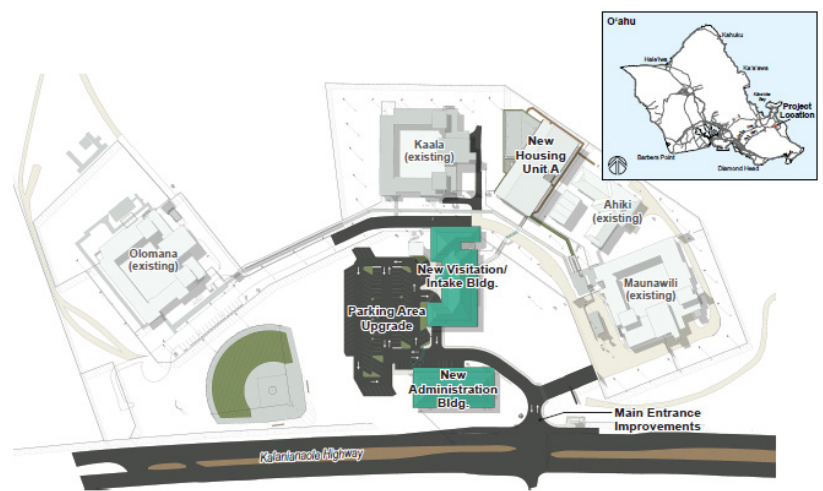
How Can I Stay Informed of Developments Involving the New OCCC?

Under normal circumstances, the OCCC team would be participating at in-person meetings with Neighborhood Board and Community Association members, elected officials, stakeholders and others to share information and answer questions about progress in planning for the new OCCC. However, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which has disrupted normal day-to-day activities since early 2020, has severely restricted such interactions. In response, interactions involving the OCCC team have been and will continue to be via virtual meeting services that allow individuals to participate from homes or other safe locations. OCCC outreach and engagement will, for the foreseeable future, continue with distribution of newsletters and other publications and by participating at meetings remotely to provide status reports and updates about on-going activities, progress, and milestones and to answer questions. Project information will continue to be posted regularly to the OCCC Future Plans website: (<http://dps.hawaii.gov/occc-future-plans>) and you are encouraged to visit the website for the latest updates.

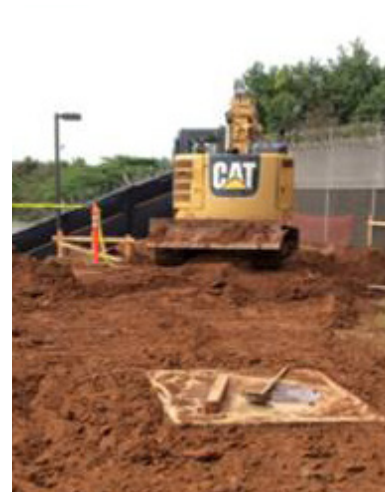
WCCC Construction Progressing

Each month PSD provides an update regarding progress in developing a new Housing Unit, new Administration Building, new Visitation/Intake Building and parking lot and access drive upgrades at the Women’s Community Correctional Center (WCCC).

Construction has been steadily progressing with site preparation activities, including installation of underground utilities, the primary focus during the month of October. The improvements under construction are part of PSD’s plan to relocate female pre-trial detainees housed at OCCC to WCCC in order to improve living conditions, expand treatment and rehabilitation services, and increase opportunities for family visitation. The long-awaited facilities at WCCC will provide the space and resources female offenders need to successfully return to their communities. Construction is expected to be completed in 2023.



Site plan showing locations of construction activities at WCCC.



Recent photos showing construction underway at WCCC (November 2021)

Ho'okipa Makai Cottage Renovations Begin

In addition to the construction currently underway, renovation of the vacant Ho'okipa Cottage at WCCC is also underway. Located southeast of the main WCCC campus, the Ho'okipa Cottage comprises a former Superintendent's residence and adjoining garage that were last used by PSD as a training facility. PSD is moving forward with renovations to the cottage that when completed, will house up to 66 female furlough and work line inmates. The renovated Ho'okipa Cottage will also accommodate training programs, including resume and interview preparation, as well as courses that help occupants to work toward secondary and tertiary degrees. With renovations scheduled for completion in 2022, look for renovation updates and photographs in future newsletters.



Ho'okipa Makai Cottage (before renovations)



Conceptual rendering of Ho'okipa Makai Cottage (after renovations)



Site work progressing along exterior of cottage building



Interior construction to create large dorm room underway



Interior construction progressing to create upper dayroom



Photos and Renderings Credit: DLR Group



Aloha Tower and Downtown Honolulu at sunset.

Upcoming Activities

The following activities are anticipated in the months ahead.

December 2021	<p>Continue preparing OCCC Request for Qualifications.</p> <p>Construction of new facilities continues at WCCC.</p> <p>Continue public outreach, information, and engagement by attending meetings of Aiea Neighborhood Board #20, Aiea Community Association, and Hawaii Correctional Systems Oversight Commission, publication of Newsletter Vol. 39, etc.</p>
January 2022	<p>Continue preparing OCCC Request for Qualifications.</p> <p>Construction of new facilities continues at WCCC.</p> <p>Continue public outreach, information, and engagement by attending meetings of Aiea Neighborhood Board #20, Aiea Community Association, and Hawaii Correctional Systems Oversight Commission, publication of Newsletter Vol. 40, etc.</p> <p>Hawaii's 2022 Legislative Session begins.</p>
February 2022	<p>Complete Draft OCCC Request for Qualifications.</p> <p>Construction of new facilities continues at WCCC.</p> <p>Continue public outreach, information, and engagement by attending meetings of Aiea Neighborhood Board #20, Aiea Community Association, and Hawaii Correctional Systems Oversight Commission, publication of Newsletter Vol. 41, etc.</p> <p>Hawaii's 2022 Legislative Session continues.</p>

Join OCCC Email List

Add your name to the OCCC email list to directly receive announcements, newsletters, and other project-related materials by sending your name, affiliation (if any), and email address to: robert.nardi@wsp.com.

Interested in Learning More?

For additional information visit <http://dps.hawaii.gov/occc-future-plans> or contact:

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