

Future of the O'ahu Community Correctional Center

Vol. 58 - Dedication Ceremony Held at Hawai'i Community Correctional Center

April 2025



Hawai'i Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

The mission of the Hawai'i Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) is to provide a secure correctional environment for culturally based comprehensive rehabilitative, holistic and wraparound re-entry services for persons sentenced to custody and care with professionalism, integrity, respect and fairness. DCR's goal is to reduce recidivism and enhance the safety and security of Hawai'i's communities.

DCR carries out orders from the state courts to confine individuals in custody for a set period of time utilizing jails and prisons located within Hawai'i, at the Federal Detention Center in Honolulu and in private contracted facilities on the continent. Jails, known in Hawai'i as Community Correctional Centers (CCCs), are located on the islands of Kaua'i, Maui, Hawai'i and O'ahu and house pre-trial detainees, misdemeanor offenders, and others with a sentence of one year or less. CCCs also provide a pre-release transition function for prison inmates who are less than a year from their scheduled release. While some individuals in custody will remain confined for life, over 95 percent will serve their sentences and be released to the community.

DCR envisions a future when all its facilities provide safe, secure, healthy and humane environments for those in custody and staff. A future based on better understanding the differing needs of offender populations, using therapeutic rather than punitive management techniques, ensuring racial equity and by promoting positive change so that fewer individuals are incarcerated in Hawai'i. However, aged and obsolete jails undermine DCR's ability to deliver such a vision and improving some facilities and replacing others are high priorities. Chief among those priorities is development of a new O'ahu jail on state-owned lands comprising the Animal Quarantine Station in 'Aiea. Assisting DCR with O'ahu jail planning and development is the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) and a team of experts and advisors (the "New O'ahu Jail Project Team").

The new O'ahu Community Correctional Center project has been referred to as either "OCCC" or by its full name. The project is also being referred to as the "New O'ahu Jail" or the "New O'ahu Jail Project" to make clear that DCR is planning to develop a new jail and not a prison and to better position the project while efforts are underway and anticipated in the months ahead.

New Housing Unit Dedicated at Hawai'i Community Correctional Center

DCR celebrated the completion of the new Kaūmana Housing Unit at the Hawai'i Community Correctional Center (HCCC) with a blessing and dedication ceremony on December 19, 2024. More than 50 people attended the event under an open canopy tent next to the new building in Hilo. Attendees included DCR Director Tommy Johnson, Deputy Director Pamela Sturz (Correctional Institutions Division), Deputy Director Sanna Muñoz (Rehabilitation Services and Programs Division), Michael Hoffman (Institutions Division Administrator) and HCCC Warden Cramer Mahoe. Also attending were honored guests and supporters including Sen. Lorraine Inouye, Comptroller Keith Regan, Retired Third Circuit Judge Robert Kim, Third Circuit Court Judge Peter Kubota, Family Court Judge Darien Nagata, Hawai'i Police Chief Ben Moszkowicz and Hawai'i County Prosecutor Kelden Waltjen.

Planning for the 48-bed medium security housing unit began in 2017 with groundbreaking in January 2022. The 10,550 square-foot building was designed with a rehabilitative environment that includes maximum use of daylight, a viewing garden, an indoor/outdoor recreation yard and modern security systems. DCR Director Tommy Johnson thanked Governor Josh Green, M.D. and legislators for their support as well as DAGS and the contractors. *"This project was critically needed to address severe overcrowding that has plagued HCCC for decades,"* Director Johnson said during the ceremony. In addition to the new housing unit, HCCC recently completed renovations to its administration building including improvements to the intake area, visitation room, records room and administrative offices.



DCR leadership (left to right): Deputy Director Sanna Muñoz, Institutions Division Administrator Michael Hoffman, Director Tommy Johnson, HCCC Warden Cramer Mahoe, and Deputy Director Pamela Sturz

HCCC Warden Mahoe echoed Director Johnson's sentiment concerning the new housing unit. *"This is a long time coming,"* Mahoe said as he addressed attendees. *"We are grateful for having such a building like this to help ease some of the overcrowding."* As of February 24, 2025, there were 308 individuals held at HCCC; 36 percent over its operating capacity and 50 percent over its design capacity. In addition to alleviating overcrowding, Warden Mahoe noted that the new unit was designed to include space for programs and training.

Sen. Lorraine Inouye, one of the guest speakers, said *"This is one of the best Christmas presents. We can say that we finally got something that has been done to make sure that we address the needs for the (corrections) system."* Like Sen. Inouye, Prosecutor Waltjen said the new Kaūmana Housing Unit is *"a large step in the right direction,"* but more resources and services are still needed on the island such as a correctional facility in West Hawai'i. *"It's important to prioritize investments into our correctional facilities, rehabilitation and services here on our island,"* Waltjen said at the ceremony.



Attendees hear from HCCC Warden Cramer Mahoe



Among the attendees (left to right): HCCC Warden Cramer Mahoe, HCCC Acting Chief of Security John Mahoe, Kahuna Ikaika Dombrigues, Sen. Lorraine Inouye and Terry Visperas who emceed the event.

Fact Sheet – New Kaūmana Housing Unit at HCCC

- Project size: 10,550 square feet of floor space with 48 total beds
- Contractor: Nan, Inc.
- Architect: DLR Group
- Construction start date: January 2022
- Project cost: \$19.8 million



Interior and exterior of new Kaūmana Housing Unit at HCCC



Industry turns out at American Correctional Association Conference to learn about New O'ahu Jail

From January 10-14, 2025, DCR officials and members of its project team shared plans for the new O'ahu Jail at the 154th Congress of Corrections sponsored by the American Correctional Association (ACA) in Nashville, Tennessee. Attending ACA offered a unique occasion to share information about DCR and the transformation taking place to Hawai'i's correctional system. It was also an opportunity to share information about plans for the new O'ahu Jail and DCR's efforts to create a healing facility that is grounded in the values of the island culture.

Team members spent the time attending workshops and panel discussions relevant to developing and managing the new O'ahu Jail. The state of Hawai'i was also represented in the exhibition hall where designers, constructors, financiers, product vendors and service providers could meet with DCR officials and team members and discuss plans for the new jail. Many conference attendees stopped by to inquire about the new jail project and to share their own experiences and lessons learned in developing new facilities. Much was learned from the experiences of others who have developed or are engaged in developing modern correctional facilities.

Attending the conference was an opportunity to reiterate the efforts to transform Hawai'i's correctional system and share the progress that has been made since DCR was established in January 2024. It was also a chance to demonstrate the support by key Hawai'i officials for replacing OCCC with a new jail that reduces recidivism and promotes safer communities. A message of support and encouragement for developing the new O'ahu Jail was expressed by Governor Josh Green, M.D., and others in a video which was presented throughout the conference. Use the link to view the video:

<https://vimeo.com/1045449500/084849550b?share=copy>.



New O'ahu Jail team attends ACA Conference



Governor Josh Green, M.D. addresses ACA attendees via a video message.

DCR hosts ACA workshop: “Sustaining a Culture of Collaboration and Community”

To emphasize and reinforce Hawai‘i’s vision for the new O‘ahu Jail, Director Johnson, Christine Kinimaka (Special Projects Manager, DAGS) and Mark Polston (P3 Advisor, WSP) hosted a workshop “Sustaining a Culture of Collaboration and Community.” During the hour-long session, held during the ACA conference, the leadership of the jail planning team, headed by Director Johnson, shared the development journey of unprecedented milestones, discussed the balance being achieved between commitment to vision while remaining flexible for an evolving model, and how alternative project delivery (Design, Build, Finance and Maintain) was identified as the best solution for the new O‘ahu Jail. Use the link to view the ACA workshop recording of *“Sustaining a Culture of Collaboration and Community”*: [OCCC Presentation.mp4](#).



Top to Bottom: Director Tommy Johnson, Christine Kinimaka and Mark Polston addressing the audience during the workshop



Attendees at “Sustaining a Culture of Collaboration and Community” workshop

DCR Director Tommy Johnson Offers Opinion: New Correctional Facility Long Overdue

(Honolulu Star-Advertiser, December 29, 2024)

Giving every individual who serves time at Oahu Community Correctional Center (OCCC) the opportunity to reset and establish a new life is the foremost goal of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR). In the state's correctional system, the majority of those in our jails, such as OCCC, are in our custody for a year or less. They include pre-trial detainees and misdemeanor offenders. Time is of the essence to help make a difference in their lives.

Many of the inmates come to us burdened by difficult circumstances and wrong choices. We help them accept responsibility for their situation and to realize their time with us can be a turning point in their lives. Our team of adult corrections officers, social workers, nurses, counselors and other professionals create the most conducive environment to grow personally and professionally.

At OCCC, we prepare individuals to be reintegrated into the community. We offer a diverse range of support services, including substance abuse treatment, technical training and other life-changing therapeutic programs. Our programs are designed to reduce recidivism and reinforce a more humane, culturally sensitive and effective rehabilitative model.

One of the hallmarks of OCCC is the Laumaka Work Furlough Center. Inmates assigned to this program actively seek outside employment or are already working in the community. However, OCCC's physical appearance and out-dated operational design do not express our values or uphold the dignity of humans entrusted to our care. As the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission continually points out, our aging physical facilities are subpar and deplorable.

Now 50 years old, many of OCCC's buildings have seen better days, including the portion that is over 110 years old. Over time, deferred maintenance — a polite, politically correct way of saying a lack of budget to maintain our facilities — has severely compromised the quality and integrity of our facilities. They are not only an eyesore, but also a hindrance to carrying out our mission. It is akin to living in a house that should be condemned. By being proactive, we can improve the facility and avoid possible federal intervention that could prove more costly.

Those opposed to investing in new correctional facilities often claim that we should instead invest in restorative justice programs to reduce the number of those who are incarcerated in our islands. This argument was valid generations ago when facilities were based on a punitive model of justice. This is no longer the case today. We need to stop the unnecessary polarization on this issue to avoid any further delays on this 20-year decision as well as increases in the cost of this badly needed new facility.

We often hear that some in jails or prisons do not belong there, but our current siloed ecosystem does not adequately accommodate these different needs. But this is changing. Those in the Judiciary, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, nonprofit social service programs and others have been collaborating to develop a shared vision and values and to re-imagine a new physical facility that reflects a rehabilitative and restorative model of justice. As an added benefit, a new facility can help attract qualified candidates to carry out our mission and implement our vital rehabilitative programs, while also addressing staffing shortages and substantial overtime costs.

It's time to think much more expansively about how we can impact lives. We must put aside our old arguments and collaboratively focus on putting our inmates on a path that gives them a new trajectory so they can realize their fullest potential.

We owe it to the people of Hawaii to get this right.

ISLAND VOICES



Tommy Johnson is director of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, which includes four prisons and four jails statewide.

Credit to the Honolulu Star-Advertiser which granted permission to reprint the above Op-Ed.

Proof of Concept Study of New O‘ahu Jail Completed

The University of Hawai‘i Community Design Center (UHCDC) recently completed its proof-of-concept study for *“Breaking Cycles: Alternative Models for Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice on O‘ahu.”* The much-anticipated report presents community visions and aspirations for the new jail and provides recommendations to improve Hawai‘i’s criminal justice system. The concepts are based on a multilayered collaboration with DCR, the Hawai‘i Correctional System Oversight Commission, Office of the Governor, along with residents, community organizations and stakeholders throughout O‘ahu. DCR had contracted UHCDC to conduct wide-reaching independent research, community engagement and a design study on the proposed new jail.

Originally constructed in 1916, OCCC is the state’s largest jail. However, the jail in Kalihi is outdated and was not designed to provide the programs and other services needed by the population held there. The facility is deteriorating, as parts of the jail are over 100 years old. Planning for a new jail started in 2016 and after multiple studies and valuable community input, the property where the Animal Quarantine Station is situated in Hālawā was selected as the location for the new OCCC.

Over a two-year period, UHCDC hosted numerous in-person and virtual community engagement events that included symposia, talk-story sessions, and listening and co-design workshops. UHCDC members also attended ‘Aiea Neighborhood Board and ‘Aiea Community Association meetings, hosted listening workshops at Hālawā Correctional Facility and participated in prison reform hui meetings.

UHCDC’s 268-page report is an in-depth study that includes key concepts on justice system reform along with facility planning and design elements to consider in planning the new jail. UHCDC’s extensive research included connecting with various counties in Arizona, California and Florida to gain insight into their reform processes to rehabilitate individuals, reduce recidivism, and provide a continuum of care inside and outside of corrections.

According to UHCDC, the report *“outlines aspirations and visions that are crucial for inspiring and enabling transformation. We present this work as a contribution to that change, with gratitude, hope, and a firm belief that such transformation is not only possible but essential to our collective well-being.”* Upon receipt of the report DCR Director Tommy Johnson said, *“We express our sincere gratitude to UHCDC for its excellent work on this report. The report will be an effective tool to help DCR complete the planning and design for the new OCCC, develop request for proposals and select a contractor to design the proposed new jail.”*

DCR envisions the new jail to have multipurpose rooms for programs, use of natural light, an outdoor recreation yard, wall murals and space for treatment rooms to support rehabilitative services for those held there. A new facility that includes a gym, courtyard, dining room and lounge for staff to promote health and wellness is also part of that vision. DCR will be engaging with the feedback in the report to further guide the rehabilitation aims of the new facility.

UHCDC Director Cathi Ho Schar said, *“We thank the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for sponsoring this work and inviting us to lead this effort. We also offer our heartfelt appreciation to everyone who linked elbows with us and who shared their time and mana‘o with our team.”* UHCDC’s work is an independent addition to the planning and design of the new OCCC. The purpose of the report is to help DCR with the development of the Request for Proposals (RFP) and to select a team to design and construct the new jail. Use the link to access the report: <https://www.breaking-cycles-symposium.org>.

Breaking Cycles: Alternative Models for Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice on O‘ahu

Proof of Concept Study
February 2025

Prepared for:
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

By:
The University of Hawai‘i Community Design Center



Difference Between Jails and Prisons

While the terms “jail” and “prison” are often used interchangeably, they actually refer to two very different types of facilities that serve different purposes and function in different ways. When someone is accused of a crime and arrested, jail is usually the first stop in the criminal justice system, serving as the booking and holding location. Jails provide the secure environment needed for the temporary detention of individuals accused of a crime but who have not completed the trial process. Persons may also remain in jail if they could not meet conditions for bail or may not have qualified for bail. While some individuals remain in jail for a short while, minutes or hours, before being released, others may be held longer before they are released or transferred to another facility.

Jails are also used to house individuals who have been convicted of a low-level crime and received a short sentence (typically less than one year). Individuals convicted of a serious crime and who received an extended sentence (more than one year) are incarcerated in a prison. Think “short-term” and “long-term” with jail applying to short-term misdemeanor convictions and prison applying to long-term felony convictions.

In Hawai‘i, the jail population is under the jurisdiction of the courts and individuals in jail can only be released, placed in outside programs or assigned to other alternatives to incarceration by the courts. In contrast, a prison facility houses inmates that have been convicted and classified. Jails may oversee work release programs and some offer services designed to help the individuals change their behavior so they stand a better chance of avoiding a return stay. The difference between a jail and a prison may seem relatively minor on the surface, but there is a significant impact on the types of services that must be provided and how they are operated.



Length of Stay: Jails are used primarily for short-term detention.



Jurisdiction: Jails are typically operated by local law enforcement agencies.



Type of Offense: Jails are commonly used to hold individuals who have been arrested and are awaiting trial or have been sentenced for minor crimes.



Programs and Services: Jails offer some programs and services aimed at helping individuals successfully re-enter society upon release.

We Want to Hear From You

DCR continually seeks input from community leaders and members about plans for the new O‘ahu jail and in response Project Team representatives attend meetings of the ‘Aiea Neighborhood Board #20, the ‘Aiea Community Association, and the Hawai‘i Correctional Systems Oversight Commission, as well as engaging with state and local officials, the media and others. In addition to reporting progress and accomplishments in advancing plans for the new O‘ahu jail, these forums are opportunities for DCR to seek input, advice and guidance from officials, stakeholders and the public. Contact the City and County of Honolulu, Neighborhood Commission Office for information about how to participate at an upcoming ‘Aiea Neighborhood Board meeting (Tel: 808-768-3710/email: nco@honolulu.gov); do the same for information about upcoming meetings of the ‘Aiea Community Association and how to participate (<http://www.aieacommunity.org>).

In addition to distributing newsletters to over 1,800 elected and appointed officials, government agencies, media outlets, volunteer groups and members of the public, DCR maintains the new O‘ahu jail website, NewOahuJail.hawaii.gov, providing access to project-related materials, documents outreach efforts, and facilitates the public’s ability to offer ideas and suggestions or ask questions. Interested parties can also request to receive future announcements and notifications by submitting your contact information (name, affiliation if any, and email address) to: robert.nardi@wsp.com.



Hawai'i State Capitol in Honolulu, location of 2025 legislative session.

Upcoming Activities

The following activities are anticipated in the months ahead.

April 2025	2025 Hawai'i Legislative session continues. Construction of new housing building continue at Maui CCC. Public outreach and engagement continues with attendance at 'Aiea Neighborhood Board, 'Aiea Community Association, and Hawai'i Correctional Systems Oversight Commission meetings.
May 2025	2025 Hawai'i Legislative session concludes (May 2, 2025). Construction of new housing building continue at Maui CCC. Public outreach and engagement continues with attendance at 'Aiea Neighborhood Board, 'Aiea Community Association and Hawai'i Correctional Systems Oversight Commission meetings.
June 2025	Construction of new housing building continue at Maui CCC. Public outreach and engagement continues with attendance at 'Aiea Neighborhood Board, 'Aiea Community Association and Hawai'i Correctional Systems Oversight Commission meetings.

Interested in Learning More?

DCR distributes newsletters to more than 1,800 elected and appointed officials, government agencies, media outlets, volunteer groups and members of the public. For the latest information about the new O'ahu jail project, including project-related materials and FAQs, go to: **NewOahuJail.hawaii.gov**. To receive (via email) future announcements, newsletters, and other notifications, please submit your contact information (name, affiliation if any, and email address) to: robert.nardi@wsp.com.

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