

Developers WHO MAKE A Difference

New projects are changing Hawaii's future—and some building industry playbooks

BY BRETT ALEXANDER-ESTES

Hawaii's economy is soaring in 2019. But so are housing and environmental concerns, as well as the price of land, labor and building materials. So leading Hawaii developers—who are finding new ways to craft public-spirited, sustainable projects and make them pencil out—are also inventing effective new building strategies.

A Vertical Neighborhood

Jon Wallenstrom and Cayenne Pe'a, principals at Alaka'i Development, expect to break ground soon on 690

Pohukaina, a Honolulu residential complex that will also house a state Department of Education (DOE) elementary school.

Alaka'i Development is building the project as a public-private partnership with the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation and the DOE, following an HHFDC and DOE 2017 memorandum of agreement.

The agreement designates Alaka'i Development as developer of "a mixed-use project at 690 Pohukaina" containing a school, two residential towers and a parking garage.

Rochelle M. Nagata-Wu, an associate at WRNS Studio, a national design firm, says WRNS is the DOE's architect for



Cayenne Pe'a





The cantilevered glass pool at Anaha, a Howard Hughes Corporation tower
PHOTO COURTESY THE HOWARD HUGHES CORPORATION

the school, adding that the project “is in the early conceptual design phase.”

Wallenstrom’s vision for 690 Pohukaina is clear. “The school will be organized vertically, with different grades and functions occurring on different floors, a first for the DOE,” says the former Forest City Hawaii president. “Having a public school in a

mixed-use development is too compelling to ignore. We are thrilled to be advancing this project.”

The DOE tower will include approximately 200 residential units priced lower than market rate, says Pe’a, a former director of finance at Forest City Hawaii, adding that the units will be designated as LIHTC

(low-income housing tax credit).

Wallenstrom and Pe’a plan to break ground on the DOE school in 2020, with build-out expected to take about a year and a half.

690 Pohukaina’s second tower “will be within existing height limits in the area and will be developed by Alaka’i Development,” with about 400 market-rate residential units, Wallenstrom says. The project “will have elements of a public-private venture simply by the nature of the surrounding uses. The exact structure of the deal is still to be determined.”

Terms will likely include sustainability. “We have not yet determined how



Plans for Alaka’i Development’s new 690 Pohukaina tower include a DOE elementary school and approximately 200 residential units.

RENDERING COURTESY WRNS STUDIO



When Kapolei Lofts opened in 2015, it was the “first class-A apartment community that had been delivered in 30 years.”

PHOTO COURTESY ALAKA’I DEVELOPMENT

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Park Lane Ala Moana

PHOTO BY NIC LEHOUX & SOLOMON CORDWELL & BUENZ

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Kapolei Sustainable Energy Park was built over a remediated and capped waste pile formerly used to dispose of steel byproduct.
PHOTO COURTESY ALAKA'I DEVELOPMENT

our focus on sustainability and resilience will influence this design,” Pe’a says, but “sustainability is at the forefront of everything that we have developed.”

As owners of large rental apartment communities at Forest City Hawaii, “we quickly got into photovoltaic (PV) development as a means to reduce electricity costs, which were

our single-largest operating expense,” Wallenstrom says. “Rooftop PV then led to several standalone ground-mounted installations, such as the Kapolei Sustainable Energy Park”—and to Kapolei Lofts, “the first class-A apartment community that had been delivered in 30 years.”

Like the duo’s earlier projects,

Kapolei Lofts is energy-efficient. The 499-unit complex features a 2.5 megawatt solar system that powers common areas, as well as electric vehicle charging stations, recycled asphalt pavement, reclaimed water for irrigation and energy-smart fixtures.

“We are currently the only active development team in the state that has

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Ko'ula will adjoin Victoria Ward Park.
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developed, operated and completed the lease-up of a market-oriented rental community,” says Pe‘a. “Although other rental apartments have been built since, Kapolei Lofts is the only community to have reached stabilization.

“Important initiatives that have benefitted our developments have also benefitted the state of Hawaii.”

Technology is Key

Gentry Homes at Coral Ridge and SEABridge feature solar water heaters, open-cell foam insulation in attics and living room walls, LED lighting, dual-pane low-E windows, a digital thermostat, 20-SEER air conditioning with a MERV 8 filter, CAT-5 computer-grade cable for high-speed networking and a Home Electronics Protective Device (HEPD80) that provides surge protection for sensitive electronics.



Rick Hobson

Gentry has delivered affordable Hawaii residences for more than 50 years.

“As the first production builder on Oahu to include solar hot water and the first to include photovoltaic panels, Gentry Homes continues to look at technology as the ‘key’ value proposition in new home



Victoria Ward Park in Ward Village
PHOTO COURTESY THE HOWARD HUGHES CORPORATION



HHC is installing expansive sidewalks and green space along Auahi Street.
RENDERING COURTESY THE HOWARD HUGHES CORPORATION

construction,” says Rick Hobson, vice president of sales and marketing at Gentry Homes.

Future-Proofing

Ko‘ula, a sleek residential tower slated to break ground in Ward Village later this year, points to The Howard Hughes Corporation’s focus on sustainability and the future.

Ko‘ula’s “cool” design “works for both the operation of the building as well as individual residences,” says Todd Apo, senior vice president for community development at HHC.

“The way the exterior of the building was designed, some of those (design) elements move what was normally on the interior of the building to the exterior, to provide additional shade and reduce the solar heat gain that happens across the building from morning to night.”

If HHC was following Hawaii’s usual



Todd Apo



An elevated walkway may link Ward Village with Kewalo Harbor.

RENDERING COURTESY THE HOWARD HUGHES CORPORATION

development rules, Ko‘ula and Ward Village would be encased in concrete—laterally as well as vertically. But HHC has shelved two nearby luxury towers so that Victoria Ward Park extends towards Kewalo Harbor, Apo says.

Eventually, Ward Village will provide 4,500 homes in 60 acres, and was recently named “Master Planned Community of the Year” by the National Association of Home Builders and “Best Planned Community in the United States” by *Architectural Digest*.

HHC may create even more green space through proposed elevated

walkways that are “just a really nice peaceful escape,” Apo says. People can “walk and stroll and enjoy the family, and a safer environment for the kids to run around.”

At street level, Apo says, Ward Village features higher and wider sidewalks. “So if you look at any of our new buildings, the (adjacent) sidewalks are all raised. It looks like it’s just aesthetics, but it’s really so that if and when the city comes and raises Auahi Street and the streets around us, the integration will work together.

“They’re ready for the future.” 🏠



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