

Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program  
**Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation**  
Special Achievement

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# Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program

*Arising from the Ashes of the Lahaina Wildfires  
Special Achievement Category*



Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation  
Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism

**State of Hawai'i**



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## **Responding to a Tragedy Unlike Any Other**

On Tuesday, August 8, 2023, an incomprehensible wildfire tore through Maui's historic town of Lahaina. Traveling at speeds estimated at 60 miles per hour, the wildfire left in its wake over 100 people dead and an estimated 4,000 homes either destroyed or uninhabitable.

The following day, Hawai'i's Governor, Josh Green, tasked the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC or Corporation) and its 60 employees with creating a program to find shelter for as many of those left without a home as quickly as possible. With no playbook to guide the agency in such a situation and without any additional resources, HHFDC Executive Director, Dean Minakami, and top staff gathered quickly to determine what could be done to carry out the Governor's mandate.

By August 10, the blueprint for the Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program was conceived and HHFDC employees were asked to work evenings and weekends to help staff what essentially became a nimble, technologically savvy matching service that connected wildfire survivors with those willing to house them temporarily.

By the end of the year, the program had helped approximately 600 households find shelter from a list with about 1,400 properties, about two-third of the properties being on Maui.

## **How It Was Done and What Made It Different?**

On one hand, the Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program (Program) used a basic and traditional approach – it urged empathetic property owners with a spare house, bedroom, or even a spare bed to show aloha (love and care) to their Lahaina neighbors by offering up space in their homes as temporary housing for wildfire victims.

But without any additional resources, the Program also had to rely on a more modern approach using Information Technology (IT). HHFDC's IT staff took advantage of the Corporation's existing tools to create an in-house software solution that featured an intuitive database allowing wildfire survivors to electronically search through available offerings and create lists that best met their unique household's needs.

Making it more user-friendly – and adding to its visual appeal – the website included a highly popular interactive map that was developed in partnership with the State of Hawai'i's ARC GIS office. This tool allowed users to see exactly where available properties were located with a simple click of a computer key.

The Program was launched on August 13, 2023, five days after the fire. In the days following the Program's launch, nearly all of HHFDC's staff worked into the night actively contacting landowners, landlords and management companies in an effort to secure an estimated 2,000 rooms, and to vet both landlords and tenants.

In the days and weeks following the disaster, the online database of available properties was updated continuously with downloadable lists being published twice a day.

Timely publication of the downloadable lists of available housing was essential because cell phone and internet service was spotty in West Maui so some survivors were not able to access HHFDC's website and interactive database. The American Red Cross and non-profit organizations downloaded HHFDC's list of units to help survivors find housing.

To further help program participants, both an online portal and a telephone hotline were established to assist survivors, landlords, property managers, and homeowners with program-related inquiries and concerns.



To simplify the program and hasten its effectiveness, HHFDC leaders made a conscious choice to impose as few restrictions for either the landlords or tenants as possible, leaving the negotiation of rental arrangements to the parties involved.

The program offered no compensation to the landlords, although many were later eligible to receive assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Without any marketing resources at its disposal, HHFDC spread the word about the program through unpaid earned media and through the State's major news outlets. Staff also reached out to landlords and survivors through the distribution of fliers and by word of mouth and unpaid earned media that asked interested parties to visit HHFDC's website for more details.

### **Technical Features**

HHFDC used the Microsoft Power Automate software in the State of Hawai'i's SharePoint application to incorporate data collected online to build a database. This database served as a shared repository for the Fire Relief Housing team and other state agencies for the information necessary to run the program. Among those entities were the Office of the Governor and the Hawai'i Department of Human Services, which later became involved in the relief efforts.

Requests for housing varied widely. Larger-sized displaced families sought to stay together and requested multiple bedrooms. Other survivors asked for arrangements that allowed them to keep their pets indoors. Once the public was able to submit information online using automated forms, the data entered through these forms seamlessly auto-populated a centralized database hosted on SharePoint.

Through SharePoint's permissions management system, HHFDC could control access to the database, ensuring sensitive information remained secure while facilitating collaboration among stakeholders.

### **Conclusion**

In the wake of one of the State's greatest crises, HHFDC was able to fulfill the Governor's mandate to quickly set up a program that would assist survivors of Maui's devastating wildfires in their time of need. With no additional funding, staffing or other resources, in less than six months, the Hawaii Fire Relief Housing Program was able to place about 600 survivor households into temporary housing.

In December 2023, to allow HHFDC to devote more attention to permanent housing recovery on Maui, the Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program merged its operations with a similar program that was being established by the nonprofit Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement.



# Attachments

## Attachment 1: Timeline of the Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program



### **2023**

**August 8:** Wildfires tear through the historic town of Lahaina and other parts of Maui. A State of Emergency is declared.

**August 10:** Governor Josh Green asks HHFDC Executive Director Dean Minakami to stand up a program with an inventory of available homes, vacation rentals, accessory dwelling units and rooms that could be used to assist survivors of the Maui wildfires.

Minakami begins meeting with HHFDC branch chiefs to discuss possible options. Early in the afternoon, while these discussions take place, HHFDC employees begin to log queries from property owners offering to help.

Minakami meets with the rest of HHFDC staff to begin orientation and scheduling.

**August 11:** A housing availability inventory form is placed on the HHFDC website and submissions begin to be accepted.

**August 13:** The Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program launches and a news release regarding its availability is issued to media throughout the State. The website includes a program FAQ.

**August 19:** The Program records 911 listed offerings, 688 of which had been verified by HHFDC staff. The inventory is continuously updated and downloadable lists are published twice a day.

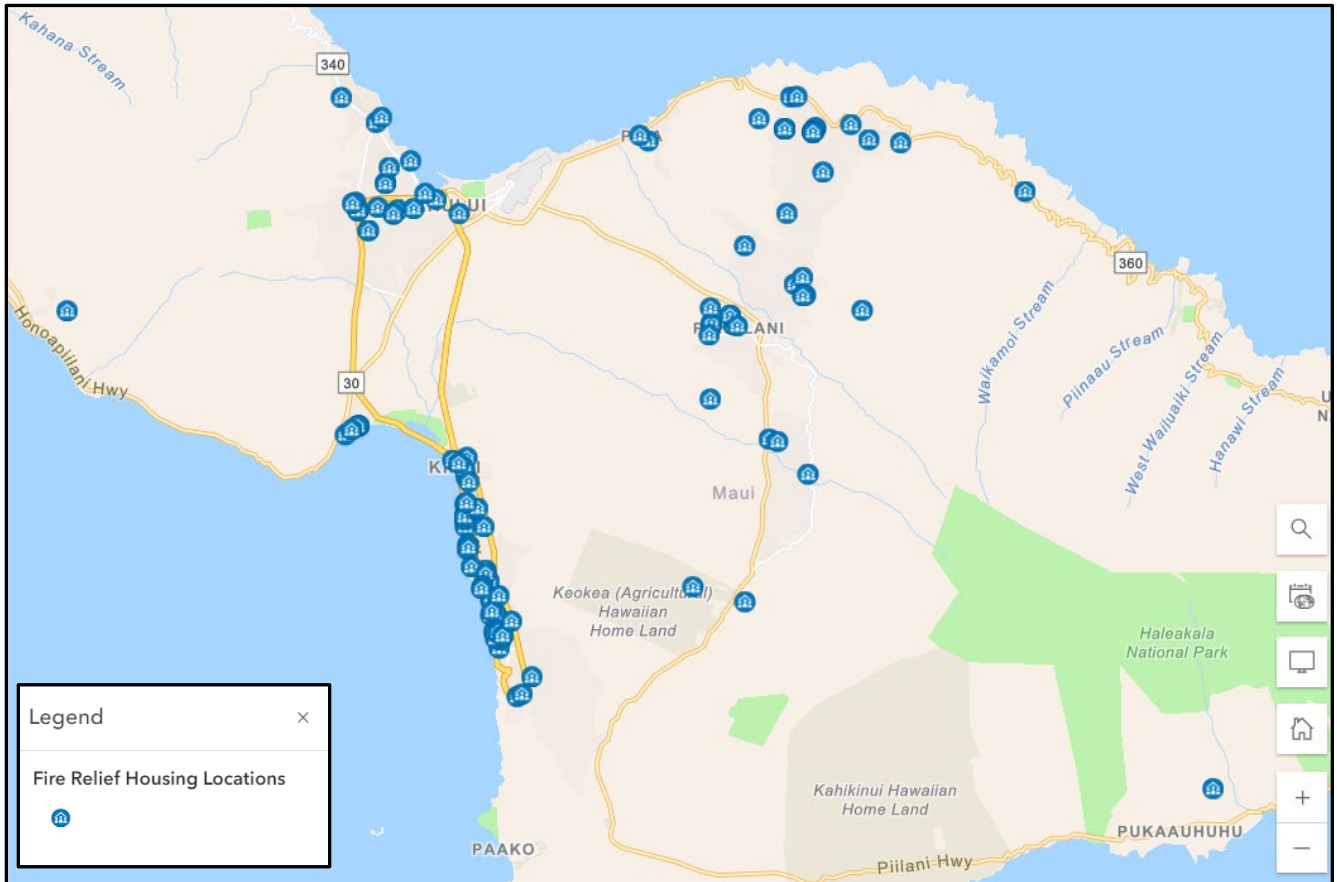
**November 21:** Green and HHFDC renews the call for homeowners to join the Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program, and note that the emphasis is now on longer-term rental arrangements. Through this date, 575 survivor households had been housed through the Program.

**December 27:** The Program is merged with a similar program being established by the non-profit Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement.

## [Attachment 2: Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program Website](#)

### (Screenshot of interactive map)

An interactive map displaying the location each of the available rental locations played an essential role for survivors in search of immediate shelter.



## Attachment 3: Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program Website

### (Screenshot of inventory list)

The available housing inventory list was set up in a way that allowed for easy management by HHFDC staff. Staff was easily able to remove the telephone contact information of property owners who wished to provide only email addresses for public inquiries.

Hawai'i Fire Relief Program - December 21, 2023 Available Housing Inventory List											Highlighted rows = New or Modified entries	
Asset Type	# of Bedrooms	Bathrooms in Unit	Neighborhood Location	County	Pets Allowed	Parking	Rent per month	Utilities Included	Length of Availability (In Months)	Property Owner Email	Property Owner Phone Number	Date of Availability
Vacation Rental	1	2	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	No	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	1	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	8/25/2023
Vacation Rental	1	1	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	No	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	1	@gmail.com	484- [REDACTED]	9/21/2023
Vacation Rental	1	1	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	No	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	2	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	4/29/2024
Vacation Rental	1	2	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	Yes	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	2	[REDACTED]	808- [REDACTED]	8/17/2023
Vacation Rental	1	2	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	Yes	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	2	@yahoo.com	[REDACTED]	8/15/2023
Vacation Rental	2	2	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	Yes	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	2	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	11/27/2023
Vacation Rental	2	2	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	No	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	2	hotmail.com	Undisclosed	9/2/2023
Vacation Rental	2	1	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	No	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	2	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	8/15/2023
Vacation Rental	1	1	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	No	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	3	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	8/22/2023
Vacation Rental	3	3	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	Yes	3	\$3001 and above	Yes	3	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	9/30/2023
Vacation Rental	1	1	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	No	1	\$3001 and above	No	4	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	10/12/2023
Vacation Rental	2	2	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	No	1	\$3001 and above	No	9	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	12/15/2023
Vacation Rental	1	1	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	No	1	\$3001 and above	No	12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	3/1/2024
Vacation Rental	1	2	Kihei-Mākena	Maui	No	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	>12	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	8/18/2023
Accessory Dwelling Unit	1	1	Lāna'i	Maui	Yes	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	>12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	11/27/2023
Condominium	1	2	Moloka'i	Maui	No	1	Between \$0 and \$500	Yes	2	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	8/18/2023
Condominium	1	1	Moloka'i	Maui	No	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	Yes	12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	8/17/2023
Condominium	1	1	Moloka'i	Maui	No	1	Between \$2001 and \$3000	Yes	3	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	9/8/2023
Condominium	1	1	Moloka'i	Maui	No	1	Between \$2001 and \$3000	Yes	>12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	8/22/2023
Condominium	1	1	Moloka'i	Maui	No	1	Between \$2001 and \$3000	Yes	>12	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	8/20/2023
Condominium	1	1	Moloka'i	Maui	Yes	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	>12	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	9/1/2023
Single Family Home	2	1	Moloka'i	Maui	No	2	Between \$1001 and \$2000	No	4	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	10/1/2023
Single Family Home	3	2	Moloka'i	Maui	No	4	Between \$2001 and \$3000	No	2	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	8/16/2023
Vacation Rental	1	2	Moloka'i	Maui	Yes	1	Between \$2001 and \$3000	Yes	>12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	8/20/2023
Vacation Rental	2	2	Moloka'i	Maui	No	2	\$3001 and above	No	12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	1/2/2024
Vacation Rental	1	1	Other	Maui	No	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	<1	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	8/23/2023
Vacation Rental	2	2	Other	Maui	No	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	2	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	8/25/2023
Accessory Dwelling Unit	1	1	Upcountry	Maui	Yes	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	Yes	6	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	9/1/2023
Accessory Dwelling Unit	2	1	Upcountry	Maui	Yes	2	Between \$2001 and \$3000	No	>12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	9/15/2023
Apartment	1	1	Upcountry	Maui	No	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	No	>12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	8/18/2023
Apartment	2	2	Upcountry	Maui	No	1	Between \$2001 and \$3000	No	>12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	8/18/2023
Apartment	3	3	Upcountry	Maui	No	3	\$3001 and above	No	>12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	8/18/2023
Attached Dwelling Unit	1	1	Upcountry	Maui	Yes	2	Between \$0 and \$500	Yes	6	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	8/14/2023
Attached Dwelling Unit	1	1	Upcountry	Maui	No	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	Yes	12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	9/15/2023
Attached Dwelling Unit	1	1	Upcountry	Maui	No	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	Yes	>12	[REDACTED]	Undisclosed	8/21/2023
Attached Dwelling Unit	1	1	Upcountry	Maui	No	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	Yes	>12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	8/21/2023
Attached Dwelling Unit	1	1	Upcountry	Maui	No	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	Yes	>12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	8/17/2023
Attached Dwelling Unit	2	1	Upcountry	Maui	No	3	Between \$2001 and \$3000	No	>12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2/1/2024
Attached Dwelling Unit	3	3	Upcountry	Maui	Yes	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	>12	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2/1/2024

## [Attachment 4: Press Release Announcing Start of Program](#)



### HAWAI'I HOUSING FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR / KE KIA'ĀINA

DEAN MINAKAMI  
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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For Release: August 13, 2023

## **Emergency housing relief program by HHFDC to assist wildfire-displaced Maui residents**

**For immediate release**

**August 13, 2023**

HONOLULU -- Governor Josh Green, M.D., and the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC) today announced the launch of the Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing program aimed at connecting Maui residents affected by the recent wildfires, with property owners who wish to provide them with rooms, dwelling units, houses and other accommodations immediately.

Program application forms will go live on HHFDC's website, <https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/hhfdc/>, at 8 a.m. tomorrow, Monday, August 14, 2023. A list of available properties should be online by Tuesday, August 15, 2023. The program will remain active indefinitely.

HHFDC staff is in the process of contacting landowners, landlords and management companies to encourage them to participate, in order to create a base inventory of available units on Maui and other islands across the state.

Governor Green is urging individual homeowners to consider joining the program by opening up their unoccupied living spaces as well.

"This is a critical situation and time is of the essence," Governor Green said. "I am asking the people of Hawai'i to consider making this significant sacrifice to help our neighbors, many of whom have lost everything they owned in a matter of minutes. Let's show the rest of the world the meaning of aloha."

## Attachment 4: Press Release Announcing Start of Program

More than 1,000 families and individuals lost their homes due to this week's tragedy. "We are going to need to house thousands of people," Governor Green said. "It's our intent to initially seek 2,000 rooms so that we can quickly get housing for those who are displaced and in need of a home. We are asking folks in the community to rent out those extra rooms, the 'ohana units or accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in their homes, vacation rentals, or whatever safe and secure rooms they have available," he said.

HHFDC Interim Executive Director Dean Minakami said his staff will continue to gather information and make it available to the public as needed.

"The program website will feature an online portal form for landlords to list any available units they may have," Minakami said. "Once staff verifies the validity of the units, the information for those units is being placed in a database which will be available to those who have lost their homes or been displaced from their houses due to damage."

For those without access to the internet, a telephone hotline (808-587-0469) has been established where landlords, property managers, homeowners or displaced residents may contact HHFDC staff for assistance or questions about the program. Staff will be available 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, including weekends. The public may also email staff at [hhfdcfirereliefhousing@hawaii.gov](mailto:hhfdcfirereliefhousing@hawaii.gov).

A list of responses to frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the program will also be available on the HHFDC website.

The program is designed to act as a referral service only. It is up to the landlords and rental agents and the displaced residents to reach terms on rental arrangements and there is no obligation for any party to accept an arrangement. Landlords who rent units to eligible residents displaced by the fires may be eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency and/or state funds. More details will be released as they become available.

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808-341-4069

## Ua Mau ke Ea o ka 'Āina i ka Pono

*"The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness." (Hawai'i state motto)*

