

Planning News – Sustainable Community Challenge Grants

**Ruby Edwards - Editorial Staff and
Planner with DBEDT**

The City and County of Honolulu has been selected for an award of \$2,383,424 under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) new Sustainable Community Challenge Grants. The Challenge Grants are intended to support local communities seeking to integrate housing, transportation, and environmental strategies that will enhance local economic development, provide greater housing and transportation choices, and develop long-range visions for how they want their community to grow.

The City plans to develop and implement a Transit-Oriented Housing Strategy around a new rail transit system in the urban core in order to maintain and promote housing for low- and moderate-income families. The project will bring together city, county and state officials and public, non-profit and private partners, including the Hawaii Housing Alliance, Kamehameha Schools, Trust for Public Land, Oahu Land Trust, Urban Land Institute, and the Hawaii Community Development Authority. The City will create a strategic plan to guide an analysis of existing and proposed policy tools, such as new zoning, parking, and development regulations that streamline the transit-oriented development process while incentivizing the production and preservation of affordable housing units. The intent is to create location-efficient, inclusive communities, and ensure that housing with access to transit is inclusive and accessible to a broad cross-section of the community.

The project group will study the need, feasibility, and mechanisms for creating a Transit-oriented Development housing fund with a new dedicated public revenue source. Project staff will draft and submit the requisite bills and resolutions for each recommended policy that requires legislative approval. The City will then lead a catalytic demonstration project using the newly adopted tools and in partnership with the private sector.

Anticipated benefits of the project include an increase in the number of affordable/workforce housing units proposed for development or rehabilitation within the Honolulu Rail Corridor and decrease in the time needed for the entitlement and permitting processes for housing projects; a decrease in the number of households spending more than 45% of income on combined housing and transportation costs; and an increase in infill development and investment along the rail corridor.