Blaisdell Center
MASTER PLAN

PHASE 1: FEASIBILITY STUDY AND CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN

VISION

Springing from the ‘āina, the source that has sustained generations, Blaisdell Center is Honolulu’s iconic gathering place perpetuating community, entertainment, and culture, and reflecting the resilience of the people of our island home.

PRINCIPLES

CURATE a diverse collection of programming that engages all communities.

INTEGRATE the Blaisdell Center with the surrounding community as the focal point of a larger district.

ACTIVATE and shape spaces focused on creating memorable experiences.

CONNECT with the storied place of Kewalo kahako to reflect the unique environment and cultural traditions of the site.

SUSTAIN the Blaisdell Center through the innovative use of resources.
INTRODUCTION

Since 1964, the Blaisdell Center has welcomed locals and visitors to the 22-acre campus with the Concert Hall, Arena, and Exhibition Hall. First built as state-of-the-art facilities, the 50+ year old campus is in significant need of repair and renovation. Following a recommendation from the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Daniel Rose Center for Public Leadership in Land Use, Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell initiated a feasibility study as the first step in a master plan process to ensure that the Blaisdell Center can continue to meet the needs of the people of O’ahu and Hawai‘i. The following information describes the feasibility study process and recommendations for this iconic landmark, with the goal of continuing to serve as Honolulu’s premier cultural/performing arts venue and gathering place.

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process for the Blaisdell Center feasibility study began with understanding existing conditions, followed by a site assessment, community outreach, market analysis, development of a vision statement and guiding principles, a study of similar facilities in other cities (San Francisco, Seattle, and Kansas City), generation of alternatives, selection of a preferred alternative, and a financial analysis.

At a public workshop in February 2015, approximately 170 participants articulated their past and current experiences at the Blaisdell Center, as well as their vision for its future. Participants recalled some of their best memories from graduations, concerts, basketball games, and Broadway shows. All three facilities (the Concert Hall, Arena, and Exhibition Hall) were identified as important for hosting events for both locals and visitors.

CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVES

Based on the analysis of existing conditions, community input, and market research, three alternatives for the future of Blaisdell Center were created to review the range of potential financial analysis. The City then selected a preferred alternative for additional refinement based on public input and meetings with stakeholders and community leaders, plus physical, financial and construction feasibility.

A variety of land uses were explored, including housing, institutional, hotel, retail, and enhanced parks, plazas, and people gathering places. The preferred alternative was refined, and a high-level financial analysis was completed, including exploration of various funding mechanisms to pay for improvements to Blaisdell Center facilities.

PREFERRED LAND USE PROGRAM

The preferred plan’s land use program includes the following:

- A new multipurpose venue and education studios that provide a mixture of practice and learning spaces to the existing performance hall. This allows greater scheduling flexibility for the Concert Hall, promotes more innovative types of events, and extends periods of active use.
- Retail space along the front of the Exhibition Hall serves to activate the central open space and create an additional draw on non-performance days. Commercial and retail space extends along Kap'olani Boulevard to not only activate the urban edge but to also encourage longer patron visitation before and after events.
- Trades, warehouse and administration support space will be provided in the meeting and event space facilities. Trash and recycling areas are also proposed in the reconfigured loading zones.
- The new parking structures (behind the Exhibition Hall and Arena) will be more efficient (with approximately 2,000+ spaces), provide direct access to the Exhibition Hall and Arena, consolidate loading zones, and provide 500+ more parking spaces than is currently configured on site.
- The design of the open spaces around the facilities will provide a cost-effective approach to transforming the Blaisdell Center into a park-like setting as a destination and neighborhood amenity—increasing the opportunity for public programming and provides additional rentable areas.

CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVES

Based on the analysis of existing conditions, community input, and market research, three alternatives for the future of Blaisdell Center were created to review the range of potential development, from maintaining the current configuration of facilities to constructing all new venues with additional uses. The City then selected a preferred alternative for additional refinement based on public input and meetings with stakeholders and community leaders, plus physical, financial and construction feasibility.

A variety of land uses were explored, including housing, institutional, hotel, retail, and enhanced parks, plazas, and people gathering places. The preferred alternative was refined, and a high-level financial analysis was completed, including exploration of various funding mechanisms to pay for improvements to Blaisdell Center facilities.
IMPLEMENTATION

Following this feasibility study, the next steps in the master plan process include development of a detailed site plan and supporting studies. This plan will include the following components:

- Refined conceptual site plan
- Conceptual architectural plans
- Traffic analysis / circulation plan
- Utility and geotechnical studies
- Structural analysis of retained facilities
- Phasing plans for construction and operations
- Cost estimates
- Sustainability plan
- Analysis of potential private management alternatives
- Financing mechanisms for construction and long-term maintenance
- Supplemental environmental documentation
- Permitting requirements
- Public engagement

NEXT STEPS

Following completion of the master plan and associated scope of work items, construction documentation for on- and off-site utilities, site plans, architectural plans, and transit / road improvements should occur. Supporting program management and construction management for a project of this scale is also recommended. In addition, funding mechanisms will need to be executed in concert with the site preparation and detailed phasing plans.

The last 50 years of the Blaisdell Center has left a legacy for locals and visitors alike. The next 50 years of the Blaisdell Center will only be possible with significant reinvestment in the existing facilities and construction of new facilities. This reinvestment will ensure that future generations of locals and visitors will continue to enjoy the Blaisdell Center as a true gathering place.

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