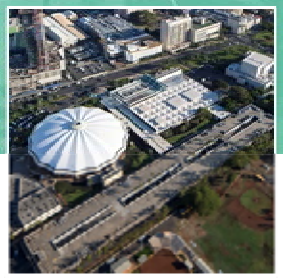
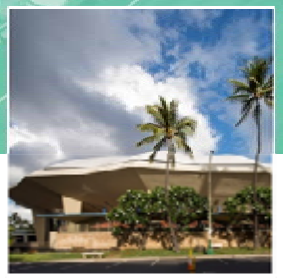
BLAISDELL CENTER MASTER PLAN

Phase 1: Feasibility Study and Conceptual Land Use Plan

Fall 2016





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Performing Arts/Media Facilities Planning and Design

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I

Introduction and Background

Introduction and Background

I

Since 1964, the Blaisdell Center has welcomed locals and visitors to the 22.4-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 facility, systems and infrastructure upgrades, and renovation.

Following a recommendation from the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Daniel Rose Center for Public Leadership in Land Use, Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell endorsed 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 chapters describe the feasibility study process and recommendations for this iconic landmark to continue to serve as Honolulu’s premier cultural and gathering place.

22.4 Acres of History at the Blaisdell Center: the Arena, Exhibition Hall, and Concert Hall
Source: AECOM

II

Planning Process

Planning Process

II

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 tour of similar facilities on the mainland (San Francisco, Seattle, and Kansas City), generation of alternatives, selection of a preferred alternative, and a financial analysis.

Existing Conditions

In December 2014, kick-off meetings for the feasibility study began with key staff representing the Office of the Mayor, Department of Enterprise Services, Department of Planning and Permitting, and the consultant team comprised of AECOM, WCIT Architecture, Auerbach Pollack Friedlander, and Lincoln Center Global. The team gathered and analyzed existing conditions at Blaisdell Center and published a summary document on the project website.

Site Assessment / Interviews

In February 2015, the team began assessing the site and initiated interviews with the Department of Enterprise Services, staff, tourism industry leaders, major landowners, developers, local institutions, competing venue operators, and users of the Blaisdell Center, including anchor tenants and vendors, and the Mayor's Leadership Committee. Workshops with the Neighborhood Alliance explored the Blaisdell Center's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Community Outreach

At the community workshop on February 10, 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. Community input was also solicited on an interactive project website at www.blaisdellcenter.mindmixer.com.

Neighborhood Alliance Meeting
Source: AECOM

Community Workshop Discussing the Blaisdell Center's Past, Present, and Future
Source: AECOM

Planning Process

II

Market Analysis

Following the community workshop and site assessment, a market analysis was performed to examine the feasibility of redeveloping any or all of the Blaisdell Center facilities. Usage trends for all three facilities—user groups and attendance, operating revenues and costs, historic capital costs and improvements, and deferred maintenance issues—were reviewed. The consultant team met with the City to understand key objectives, discuss evaluation criteria for possible uses, and review planning or policy factors that may affect potential uses. In addition to performing industry research, key stakeholders were interviewed in Hawai‘i and on the mainland. Relevant case studies were also reviewed for comparison.

Conceptual Alternatives

Based on the analysis of existing conditions, community input, and market research, three alternatives for the 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, additional interviews, meetings with stakeholders, the Mayor, and community leaders.

A variety of land uses were considered and explored, including housing, mixed-use commercial and retail, and enhanced, parks, plazas, and people gathering places.

Conceptual Plan

The preferred alternative was refined and a high-level financial analysis was completed, including exploring various funding mechanisms to pay for improvements to the Blaisdell Center facilities. Following review of the financial analysis by the City and local business leaders, additional refinement to the conceptual plan occurred.

Case Study: Maui Arts and Cultural Center
Source: Google Images

Case Study: New World Symphony, Miami, Florida
Source: Lincoln Center Global

III

Vision and Principles

Vision and Principles

III

Vision Statement

Based on early community input, the following vision statement was developed to guide the master planning and redevelopment of the Blaisdell Center:

Springing from the 'aina, 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

Using the vision statement as a foundation, the following principles were developed for the Blaisdell Center Master Plan:

- ***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.

Source: WCIT Architecture, Google Images

IV

History of Blaisdell Center

History of Blaisdell Center

IV

Beyond a celebrated history of performances and events, the historic and cultural significance of the Blaisdell Center can be traced back for centuries through the enduring presence of water on site. The following description is a brief summary of the site's history.

Natural Features and Historic Uses

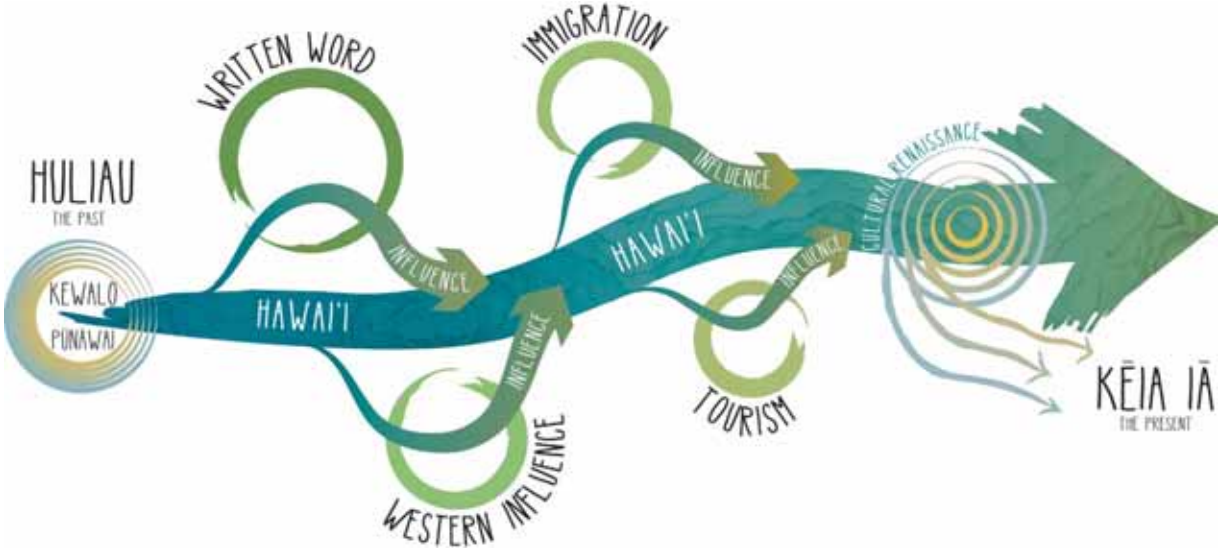
The site of what is now the Blaisdell Center is in the Kewalo ahupua'a. The location was the site of the Kewalo spring (pūnāwai). There were marshes and fishponds, as well as tall pili grass to gather. The site of the current Blaisdell Center shows the presence of an underlying stream, and it is believed that there was a sizable fishpond (loko i'a) and drainage channel ('auwai) that flowed to the sea. The fertile soil and the rich source of fresh water on the site were documented in *Victoria Ward and Her Family: Memories of Old Plantation*, written by Frank Ward Hustace III, the great-grandson of Curtis and Victoria Ward (2000).

The diagram to the right uses the metaphor of the stream (kahawai) to describe the diverse influences that have shaped contemporary art and culture in Hawai'i over time.

"The land was exceptional, with deep soil, fresh water bubbling from a spring, and sufficient acreage for pasturing many horses. An 'auwai connected a large fishpond on the property to the ocean. Small fish from the inner reef swam up the 'auwai, and a mākāhā (gate) trapped them in the pond so they could be fattened for harvesting."

Source: Victoria Ward and Her Family: Memories of Old Plantation, 2000

Ahupua'a Painting
Source: Marilyn Kahalewai, 1993



Kahawai Diagram
Source: WCIT Architecture

History of Blaisdell Center

IV

The Ward Estate

In 1870, Curtis and Victoria Ward purchased the land on which the Blaisdell Center now sits. Besides planting 6,000 coconut trees, kiawe for firewood, and grass for their horses and cattle, the Wards restored the fishponds and the ‘auwai (irrigation channel). A well was dug to provide water to the property. In 1875, an additional 77 acres was purchased to extend the property to the makai boundary. The Wards built their home—Old Plantation, and later *Ku‘u Home*—in 1881, just south of Thomas Square.

Urbanization crept up around the property. McKinley High School was constructed in 1923. Victoria Ward Limited was formed in 1930, five years before the passing of Victoria Ward, to manage the estate among the seven Ward daughters. The company owned and managed the lands, which came to be called Kukuluaeo. The City and County of Honolulu, long interested in Old Plantation as the site for a concert hall and sports arena, purchased the property in 1957. Thousands of people toured the estate during the Honolulu Academy of Arts open house following the City’s purchase.

Fishpond Systems
Source: WCIT Architecture, Google Images

The Ward Estate
Source: Google Images

History of Blaisdell Center

IV

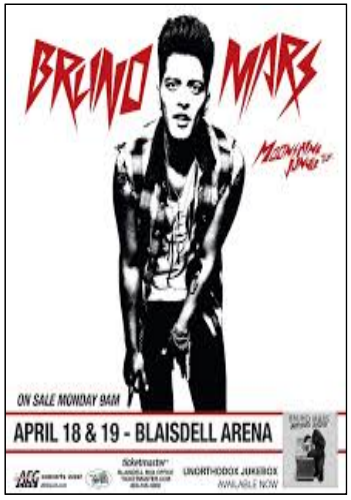
Blaisdell Center

Soon after the purchase of the Ward Estate property, the City began construction of the facilities. The City Council named the Arena the Honolulu International Center (or HIC) in 1963. It was later renamed as the Neal S. Blaisdell Center after the mayor who oversaw construction. The HIC was completed in 1964 at a cost of $14.4 million and dedicated at the opening ceremony as a living memorial to all of Hawai'i's war heroes.

Over the last 50 or so years, the Blaisdell Center has served as Hawai'i's premier gathering place for all ages. The Arena, Concert Hall, and Exhibition Hall continues to draw a wide audience to an even wider offering of entertainment, events, and enjoyment.

The Blaisdell Center Arena after Construction

Source: Google Images



Past performances at the Blaisdell Center

Source: City and County of Honolulu

V

Existing Conditions

Existing Conditions

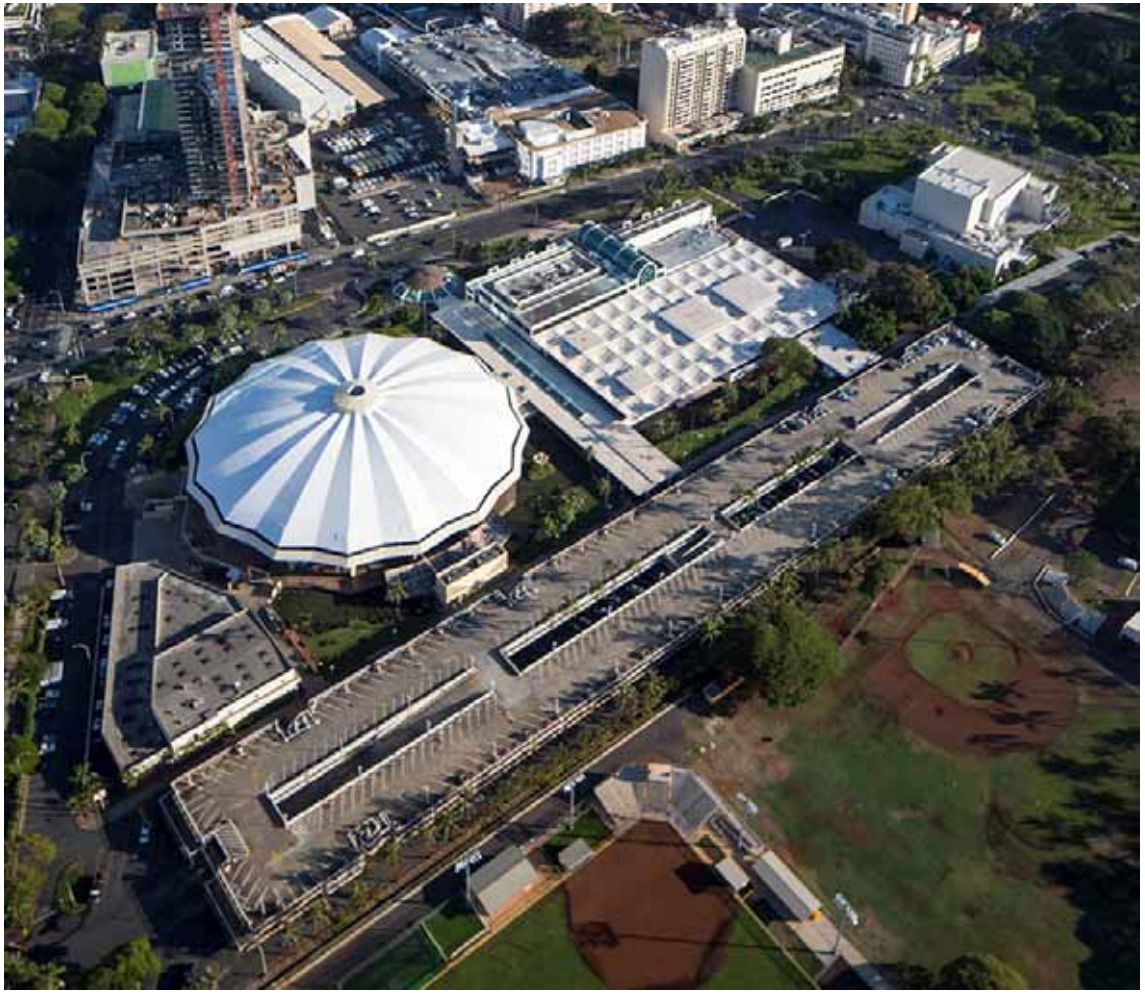
V

Overview

Blaisdell Center's 22.4-acre site is located in the heart of Honolulu. The campus includes the Arena, Exhibition Hall, Concert Hall, Pikake Room, meeting rooms on two levels, box office, trades / warehouse, building, parking structures, and parking lots. In 1994, the administration, offices, galleria, meeting rooms, and the box office were constructed. In 2015, the Arena dressing rooms were renovated.

Annually, over 800,000 visits are made to the Blaisdell Center. Parking makes up 60-70% of the concession revenue, and overflow parking is accommodated at McKinley High School. A prominent feature at Blaisdell Center are the ponds that surround the Arena.

The three major facilities at the Blaisdell Center—the Concert Hall, the Arena, and the Exhibition Hall, are described in more detail in the following pages.



Blaisdell Center's 22.4-Acre Campus
Source: AECOM

Existing Conditions

V

Regional Context

The Blaisdell Center is located in urban Honolulu within Kaka'ako Mauka. The site is surrounded by major arterial roads that include King Street, Ward Avenue, and Kapi'olani Boulevard.

As shown on Figure 1, the Blaisdell Center is surrounded by important cultural and educational venues, including McKinley High School, Honolulu Museum of Art, and Thomas Square Park.

Major landowners in the area include Howard Hughes and Kamehameha Schools—who own 60 and 40 acres, respectively. They are engaged in redevelopment efforts with a series of new high-rise, mixed-use residential-commercial developments. The Office of Hawai'ian Affairs recently became a major landowner in Kaka'ako Makai in 2012 with the acquisition of 25 acres adjacent to Kewalo basin.

High-density mixed-use development is anticipated at the three planned Honolulu Rail Transit stations nearby: Civic Center Station (Halekauwila and South Streets), Kaka'ako Station (Halekauwila Street and Ward Avenue), and Ala Moana Center Station (Kona and Kona Iki Streets mauka of Ala Moana Center).

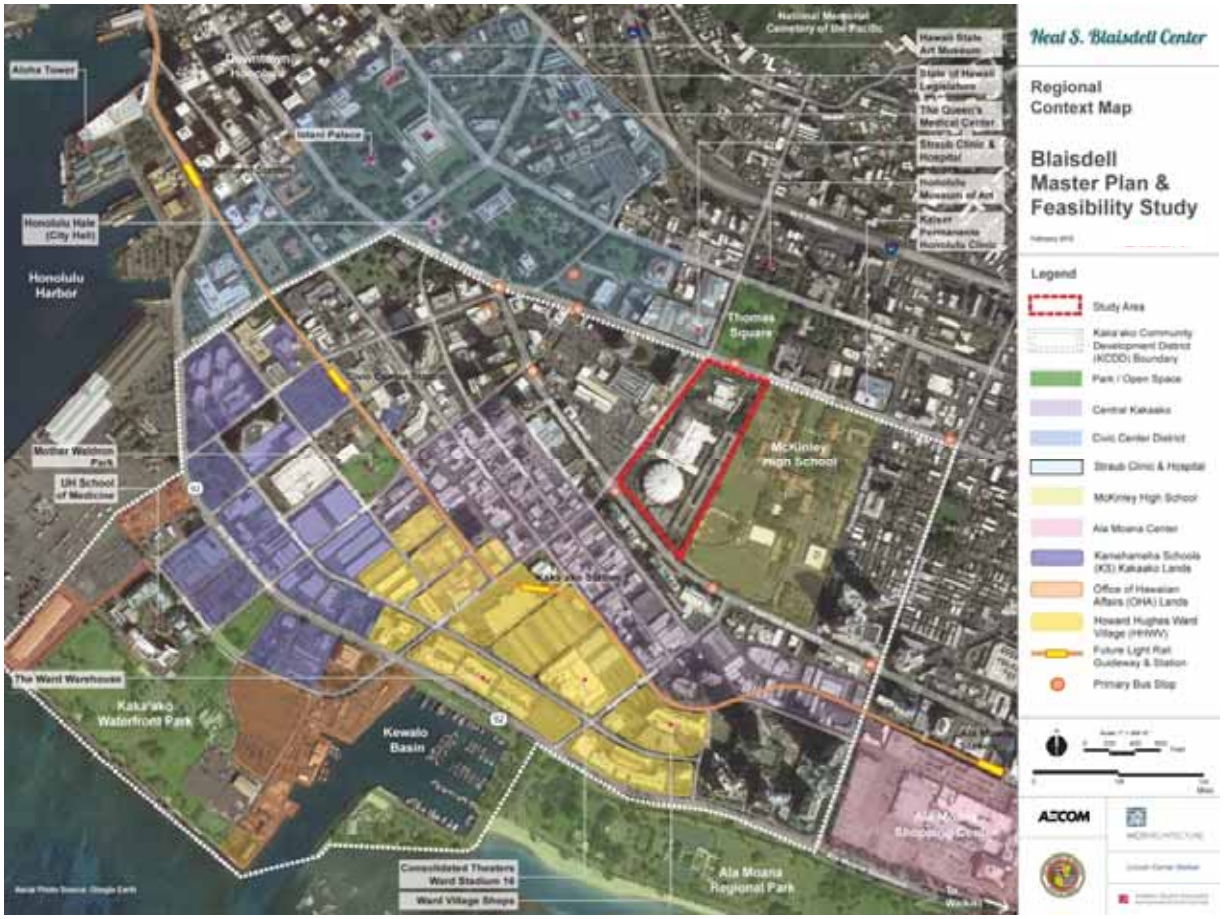


Figure 1. Regional Context Map
Source: AECOM

Existing Conditions

V

Concert Hall

The Concert Hall is the home of the Hawai'i Symphony, Hawai'i Opera Theatre, and Ballet Hawai'i. Besides local productions, Broadway shows are also hosted. The average number of rental days is approximately 125-200 per year. The Concert Hall has 2,174 seats, and features include live acoustics, large stage and wings, large sliding loading doors, lanai areas, and grand lawns.

Preliminary observations show that the Concert Hall structure is generally in an acceptable condition and size. Therefore, upgrading some of its features may be the most cost-effective option. Major constraints / issues at the Concert Hall include:

- Safety issues, such as limited lighting and fall protection
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) issues, such as accessible seating being limited to ends of aisles, temporary ramps used for wheelchairs, no wheelchair access to the balcony, platforms must be installed to accommodate disabled patrons, etc.
- Acoustic issues
- Maintenance challenges that include lighting and air conditioning, and replacement for decorative glass in lobby walls is not available
- Inadequate infrastructure, such as storage, staging rooms, loading docks, rigging points, lighting, etc.

The Concert Hall
Source: AECOM

- Inadequate space for rehearsals, VIP / reception / autograph meeting places, and limited concession spaces
- The lobby is not air conditioned

Existing Conditions

V

Arena

The multipurpose indoor Arena is a circular performance facility that measures 190 feet in diameter with unobstructed sightlines. The Arena is used for concerts, sporting events, large meetings, conventions, consumer shows, family shows, and other special events. The average number of rental days is approximately 100-130 per year. The Arena seats 8,800 for stage shows with seating in the round, and 7,700 for courtside events.

Preliminary observations show that the Arena structure is generally in an acceptable condition and size. Therefore, upgrading some of its features may be the most cost-effective option. Major constraints / issues at the Arena include:

- Safety issues, such as railings at balcony stairs, some stairs are outside and slippery when wet, no fall protection, etc.
- ADA issues and limited wheelchair access; no access to upper level seating
- Insufficient family and women's restrooms
- More floor space and production infrastructure needed:
  - Insufficient loading area outside and capacity inside
  - Insufficient support rooms
  - Insufficient storage (concourse / public spaces used for storage)
- Water feature and concourse configuration restrict service points causing congestion

The Arena
Source: AECOM

- Inadequate house sound system, house lighting, high-intensity discharge (HID) lights, rigging points, ceiling obstructs, etc.
- Antiquated power distribution systems
- Parking:
  - Insufficient parking capacity for patrons
  - Conflict between loading zone and parking lot
- Seating:
  - No vertical circulation from floor to upper fixed seating in the Arena
  - Retractable seating units are stored outside the Arena
  - Seating in balcony needs refurbishment
- Water damage and roof leaks:
  - Downspouts and roof gutter system corroded
  - Water laterals corroded
- Maintenance:
  - Difficult to maintain lighting / electrical systems
  - Wiring is approaching end of useful life
  - Lighting / dimmer system is outdated
- Concessions:
  - Limited in diversity and quality, difficult to serve, and isolated around concourse
  - Outdoor concourse problematic when it rains
  - Supplying food to the Exhibition Hall is difficult and intrudes on other events
  - Concessions only on ground level

Existing Conditions

V

Exhibition Hall

The Exhibition Hall is one of Honolulu's main exhibition venues. Comprised of 65,000 square feet of exhibit space, which can be expanded to 85,000 square feet, the facility hosts community trade shows, consumer shows, large parties, and fundraising events. The facility can be configured into one room or multiple rooms. The Exhibition Hall averages 45 commercial exhibit shows / expos per year, with between 175-210 rental days per year. The 1994 renovation added offices / individual rooms and meeting rooms. Other facilities include box office / ticket booth, meeting rooms and structured parking.

Preliminary observations indicate that the Exhibition Hall needs substantial renovation to the extent to which demolition and new construction is recommended. Major constraints / issues at the Exhibition Hall include:

- Shared concourse with the Arena
- Columns: located every 30 feet and lack of HVAC supply between column bays
- Aging mobile walls need to be updated
- Ceiling height varies with pyramid roof shape and is too short
- Inadequate lighting controls
- Poor acoustics due to roof design
- Inadequate food and beverage space
- Storage space is limited (needed for banquets and Building Services)

The Exhibition Hall
Source: AECOM

- Need business center or lobby area and supply closets for event supplies
- Need ability to subdivide space to host more than one event at a time

VI

Operations and Market Analysis

Operations and Market Analysis

VI

After the existing conditions analysis, site assessment, and community workshop, the team conducted a market analysis. Following are highlights from the market analysis.

- Public assembly facilities, such as those at the Blaisdell Center, have a unique business model that relies on a combination of earned revenues associated with events and public funding. On an operating basis, some public assembly facilities generate positive net income, many break even, and some require an ongoing operating subsidy. Almost all require public support or subsidy for initial capital costs and major capital improvements.
- The Blaisdell Center generally breaks even on an operating basis, and if administrative costs for the Department of Enterprise Services are allocated across all of its facilities (i.e., including golf courses, the zoo, etc.), the Blaisdell Center generates a modest amount of positive net revenue on an operating basis that reverts to the General Fund.
- However, it is important to note that the facilities are aged and face significant deferred maintenance issues due to inadequate resources. The revenue generated, as is typical with public assembly facilities, is not enough to cover major replacement or capital improvement costs for substantial renovation, systems upgrades, or rebuilding.
- The Blaisdell Center benefits from a position of market strength as one of the only options in the Honolulu market for major concerts, shows, and exhibitions. Figures 2 and 3 show that in 2014, there were nearly 500 rental days with approximately 650,000 attendees for the three major facilities.
- However, the facilities also face challenges attracting national concerts, events, and performers due to Honolulu's isolated location relative to typical national concert and other event tour patterns.
- The Blaisdell Center has been able to attract a significant percentage of market share despite its antiquated facilities due to the limited supply of other comparable venues in the market and strong customer service and partnerships. Over time, however, a lack of reinvestment will likely lead to a decline in events, attendance, and revenue; a much impaired visitor experience; and life safety issues.

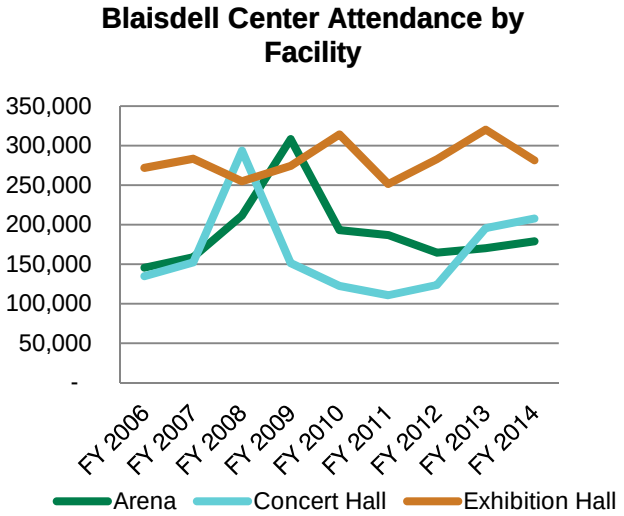


Figure 2. Blaisdell Center Attendance by Facility
Source: AECOM

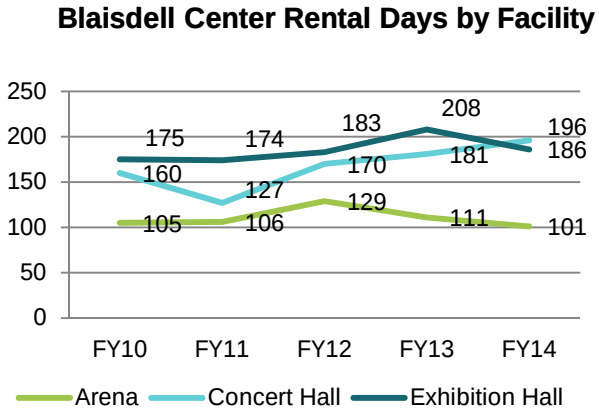


Figure 3. Blaisdell Center Rental Days by Facility
Source: AECOM

Operations and Market Analysis

VI

Concert Hall Market Analysis

The following market analysis highlights apply specifically to the Concert Hall.

- National and international artists enjoy touring to the Blaisdell Center Concert Hall to perform, but cost, time, and the limited market size present challenges to growth.
- The Concert Hall currently averages approximately one Broadway show per year, generating relatively little demand from Broadway presenters, promoters,
- and tour operators. Broadway shows historically have attracted large
- attendance numbers and revenue for the Blaisdell Center. An opportunity exists to capture additional Broadway tours, as approximately 20-30 Broadway shows are on tour in the United States in a given season.
- There are significant barriers, as bringing a Broadway tour to Honolulu costs over 50% more than locations on the mainland due to transportation costs and time. Strategies to overcome this include strategic partnerships with hotels and airlines, subsidies, collaboration with outer island venues, and sponsorships.
- Solo artists may be more viable in the short term, as they can generally be more flexible to travel to different markets and have fewer costs.
- With strategic investments in both facility enhancements and programmatic and organizational changes, over time the Blaisdell Center could potentially increase demand from Broadway tours to more closely resemble comparably sized markets around the United States.
- The development of a mission-driven organization with the ability to present and produce, in addition to a private management model, needs to be considered to maximize market opportunities. Public agencies generally face challenges in this area due to government regulations and requirements.
- Currently, the state of the facilities is not a major decision factor for attracting Broadway and similar-scale tours. While the facility does need some physical improvements, they alone, without the implementation of other strategies, will not result in significantly increased market share.
- There has been a significant issue related to local performing arts organizations utilizing significant event days for rehearsals and performances, which has become a challenge for scheduling touring productions—particularly Broadway tours that require consecutive weeks. A second
- smaller-scale venue would help support the local arts community while creating more market and revenue opportunity for the Blaisdell Center.

Elton John in concert
Source: Google Images

Wicked, a Broadway Production
Source: Google Images

Operations and Market Analysis

VI

Strategies for mitigating some of the Blaisdell Center Concert Hall challenges are shown below in Figure 4.

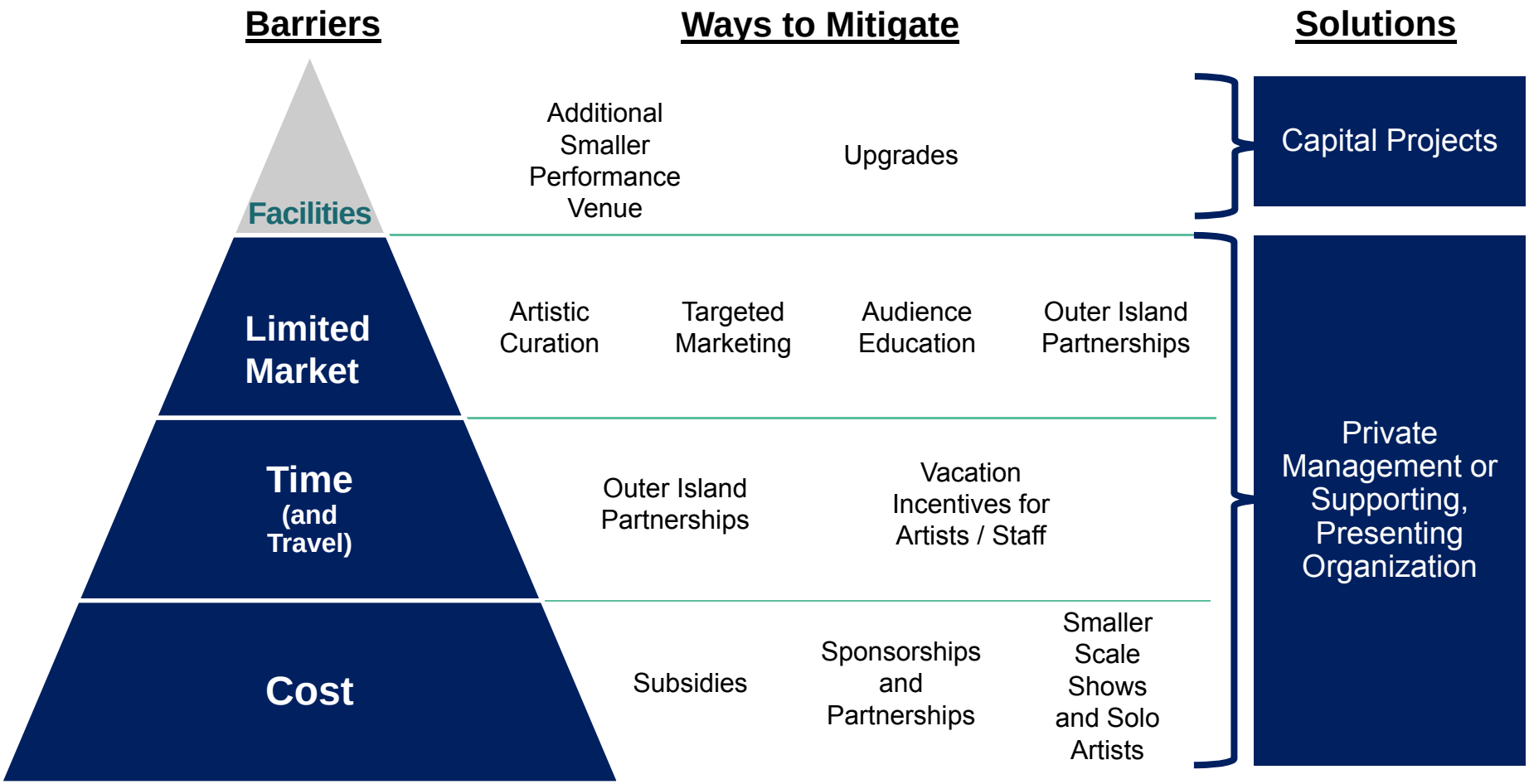


Figure 4. Blaisdell Center Barriers to Success
Source: AECOM

Operations and Market Analysis

VI

Exhibition Hall Market Analysis

The following market analysis highlights apply specifically to the Exhibition Hall.

- The Exhibition Hall is the most widely used venue at the Blaisdell Center, attracting approximately 300,000 people annually, which accounts for the greatest percentage of the three major venues. It drives significant use days and revenue. Many events use the majority of the existing space and are growing in size.
- The facility is used for consumer shows, exhibitions, graduations, and a variety of community events. There is a strong community need and market demand for the Exhibition Hall with its central location.
- The Exhibition Hall's market position is as a large floor plate (area), low-cost facility, which is typical for the industry.
- The facility is dated and needs substantial improvements and upgrades. Out of the three facilities, it is likely the cheapest to rebuild.
- The Hawai'i Convention Center is the only other facility that can handle very large events, but it is not suitable for many events due to its higher price point, level of amenities that is more suitable for convention groups, and lack of parking.
- Other uses such as administration space and meeting rooms are well used and planned in the preferred alternative.

Exhibition Hall, Made In Hawai'i Festival
Source: Google images

Exhibition Hall. Senior's Valentine's Day Dance
Source: AECOM

Operations and Market Analysis

VI

Arena Market Analysis

The following market analysis highlights apply specifically to the Arena.

- There are four major categories of arenas in the United States, and the Blaisdell Center Arena is considered a “civic arena.” Civic arenas are typically owned by a public body and can vary in size, from fewer than 5,000 seats to over 20,000. Virtually all have significant professional and / or major collegiate sports, tenants, although most are multipurpose facilities. Civic arenas can be managed publicly or privately, and can be profitable or lose money; they are not expected to cover full capital costs.
- Civic arenas typically rely heavily on public sources for capital and operating subsidies, including local taxes, visitor taxes, other public contributions, on-site taxes, district / tax increment financing (TIF) revenues, facility / ticket fees, and / or project partners.
- The Blaisdell Center was developed in one of the earlier waves of arena construction; subsequent arena development across the country was largely supported by the proliferation of minor league hockey teams. The Blaisdell Center differs from most civic arenas in its absence of a major sports tenant, which has implications for attendance and revenue.
- Overall, the number of concerts at the Blaisdell Center is within industry standards, but overall venue attendance and revenues are lower due to the absence of a major sports tenant. The Arena is used for a wide variety of events (approximately 20 events per year).
- The Arena facility is old, dated, and requires substantial renovation to address basic operational and visitor issues. However, a new or substantially renovated arena would not significantly increase market share without other changes. It is the only facility that has sufficient availability in Hawai‘i that can host arena concerts.
- Strategies for increasing market and revenue performance include partnerships to lower air / travel costs, investment in equipment, subsidies, and physical changes to enhance revenue.
- Private management should be strongly considered given the remote geographic location of Hawai‘i and the resources, relationships, and efficiencies a private manager could bring to the Blaisdell Center.

Kamehameha Song Contest
Source: Google Images

Bruno Mars in Concert
Source: Google Images

Operations and Market Analysis

VI

Key Findings and Recommendations

The three major venues at the Blaisdell Center are all important to meeting the needs of the community. Without these venues, many events would not be accommodated in the Honolulu market. It is committed staff that has allowed the facilities to perform so well despite extensive deferred maintenance and antiquated systems and amenities, but at some point the lack of reinvestment will affect the financial performance and future of the facilities.

After completing the market analysis, alternatives from minor renovation to substantial renovation, to demolishing and rebuilding were considered. Based on the market potential and existing conditions of each facility, a series of strategies were developed to address the future sustainability of the Blaisdell Center. As described earlier in this report, public assembly facilities such as performing arts venues, exhibition halls, and civic arenas can sometimes break even on an operating basis or generate a modest net income, but they are not expected to generate enough revenue to cover the cost of major reinvestment.

Therefore, the redevelopment strategies were developed with the goals of ensuring the future operating sustainability of the three facilities, providing greater support to the local arts community, and developing mechanisms for funding regular public programming outside of the three major venues in the open space / plaza areas.

The Arena

- Currently the Arena is the only suitable venue for large, indoor concerts in the Honolulu market.
- It is currently about the right size – increasing the size would not enhance market share significantly.
- Preliminary studies indicate that the best strategy for the Arena is a substantial renovation, focusing on creating a visitor experience that is more in line with industry standards and on the development of revenue enhancing spaces. The consultant team does not believe it is necessary to tear down and rebuild the Arena. A new Arena would have a very high capital cost, and while we think there would be some modest potential for capturing additional concert tours, a new facility would not substantially increase market share.
- Private management by a facility operator,
- particularly if they have industry partnerships, could make a notable difference in expanding operating revenue and should be explored, particularly given the challenging geographic location of Hawai‘i.

The Concert Hall

- The Concert Hall is well utilized and is home to local performing arts “resident” organizations as well as the venue for the highly successful Broadway performances. Local groups use the Concert Hall for both rehearsals and performances, which often makes scheduling national touring Broadway productions challenging. This has created some scheduling tension as a result of the need to both support local arts organizations and to bring in national touring productions that provide financial support to the facilities. Therefore, a separate, multi-purpose venue to accommodate rehearsals is recommended.
- The physical condition of the Concert Hall is relatively good, particularly compared to other facilities, and is not currently a limiting factor in capturing national and international market share. A number of improvements and upgrades should be made related to life safety and visitor experience.
- The development of a second, smaller venue that can be used for rehearsals and smaller performances should be considered. This would alleviate the current scheduling challenges and allow for growth of touring productions in the future.

Operations and Market Analysis

VI

Exhibition Hall and Meeting Rooms

- The Exhibition Hall and meeting rooms are the most heavily utilized venues at the Blaisdell Center. It currently serves the market for very large, low-cost space, and does not need to have expensive amenities.
- However, of all the facilities at the Blaisdell Center, the Exhibition Hall is the one facility recommended to be demolished and rebuilt for three reasons. First, it occupies a large space in the center of the site. Relocating it with a more efficient layout could allow for the development of enhanced outdoor spaces and improved loading and access. Second, of the three venues, this type of space is the least expensive to rebuild. Finally, its current physical condition is very poor, and the level of improvements required likely warrant a new construction.

The Exhibition Hall and the Arena
Source: AECOM

VII

Land Use Alternatives

Land Use Alternatives

VII

Based on the existing conditions, analysis, public outreach, stakeholder interviews, market analysis, vision, and principles, three land use alternatives were developed for the future of the Blaisdell Center (as illustrated on the following pages).

Alternative 1

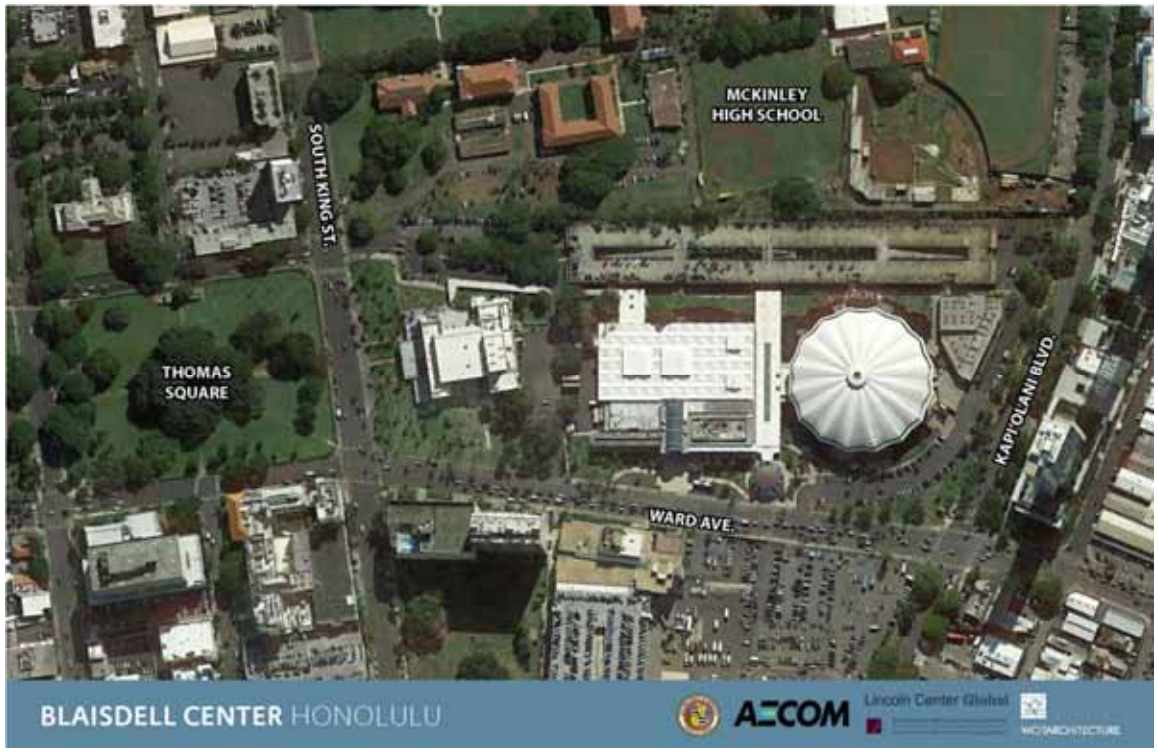
Alternative 1 is the “status quo” plan. It retains all three major buildings (with renovations) including the Concert Hall, Exhibition Hall, and Arena, as well as the parking structures in the current configuration.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 retains the existing Concert Hall and Arena with renovations, and proposes a new Exhibition Hall with meeting rooms and a new parking structure (designed with more efficiency and truck access to all the facilities).

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 proposes the most change of all the alternatives. Alternative 3 retains the existing Concert Hall with renovations, but proposes the following new facilities: Exhibition Hall, Arena, and parking structure (designed with improved efficiency and truck access to all the facilities).



Blaisdell Center and Surroundings
Source: Google Images

Land Use Alternatives

VII

Alternative 1 is the least aggressive alternative by retaining all major venues and structures including parking with renovation as seen below.

Figure 5. Alternative 1

Land Use Alternatives

VII

Alternative 2 is the second most aggressive alternative by proposing a new Exhibition Hall, meeting rooms, and efficient parking structures. The Concert Hall and Arena are retained with renovation.

Figure 6. Alternative 2

Land Use Alternatives

VII

Alternative 3 is the most aggressive alternative by proposing a new Exhibition Hall, meeting rooms, Arena, and efficient parking structures. The Concert Hall is retained with renovation.

Figure 7. Alternative 3

VIII

Preferred Land Use Plan

Preferred Land Use Plan

VIII

Summary of Preferred Alternative

Land use Alternative 2 was identified as the preferred alternative for a number of reasons, as follows:

- Early input from the public, stakeholders, City staff, and market research indicated that all three venues are heavily used and needed.
- Market research and existing conditions analysis of the current Arena did not support the construction of a new facility. Renovation was the most cost effective approach to addressing current and future needs.
- Eligible historic status of both the Arena and Concert Hall contributed to the desire to preserve significant portions of the original structures.
- Exhibition Hall space has the lowest replacement cost and the largest potential to consolidate the building footprint by utilizing a stacking program, justifying the decision to rebuild this component.

Alternate 2 is further illustrated in the following diagrams.

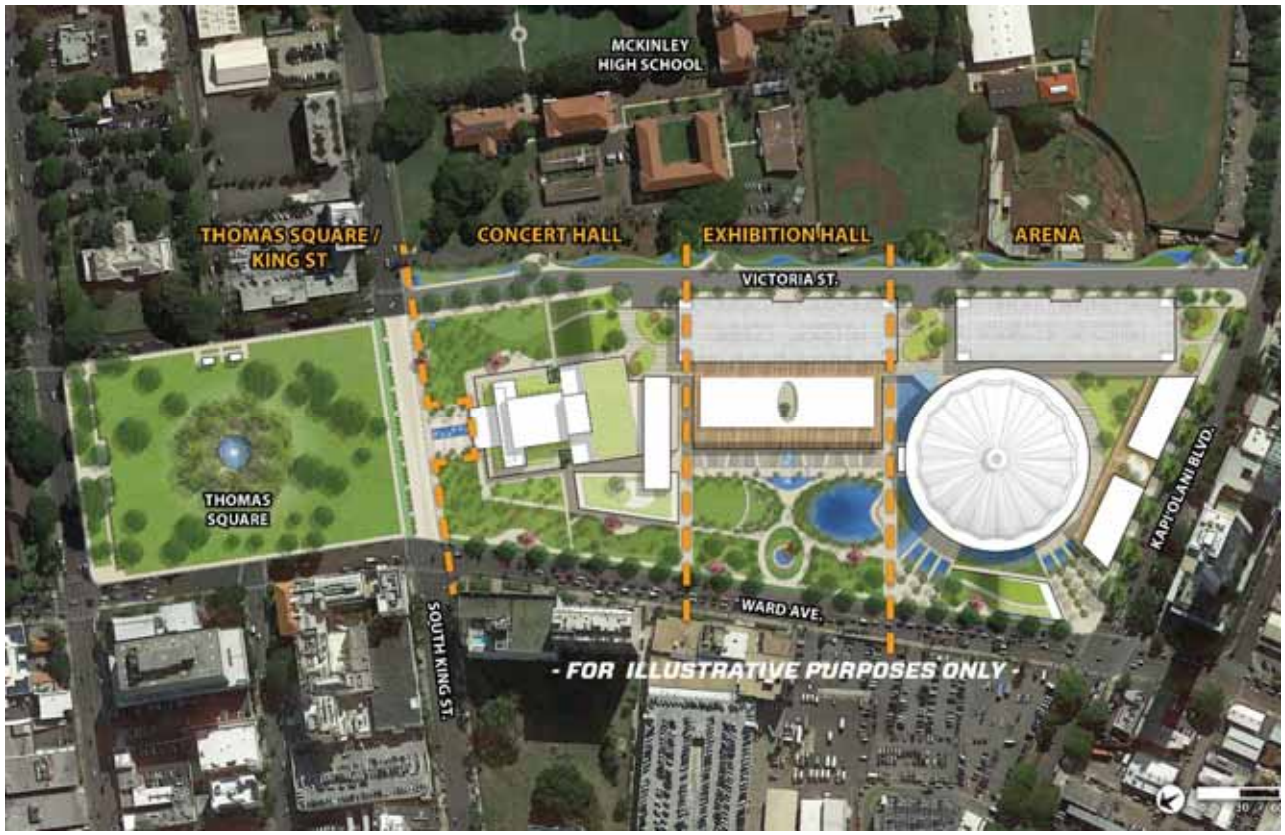


Figure 8. Preferred Land Use Plan

Preferred Land Use Plan

VIII

Diverse Land Use Program

Although market research indicates that each of the three core venues is well-used and contributes to the Blaisdell Center's ongoing success, studies also show potential benefits of providing additional program space on site. Beyond the economic benefit of additional rentable area, increasing the diversity of the Blaisdell Center's space offerings would welcome a broader range of audiences, encourage more daily activity, enable a greater variety of events, and enhance the overall patron experience.

A new multipurpose venue and education studios 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. Similarly, commercial / retail space extends along Kapi'olani Boulevard to not only activate the urban edge, but to also encourage longer patron visitation before and after events.

In addition, trades / warehouse and administration support space is needed in the meeting / event space facilities. Trash / recycling areas are also proposed in the reconfigured loading zones.

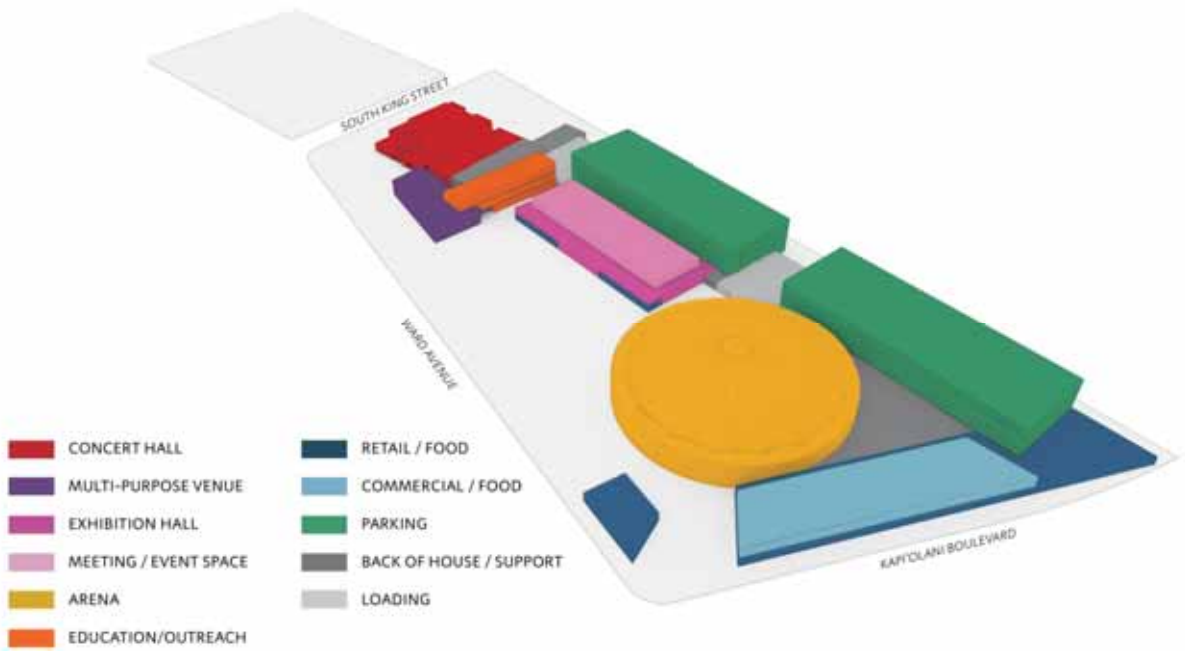


Figure 9. Land Use Program of the Preferred Land Use Plan

Preferred Land Use Plan

VIII

Open Space

Although the 22.4-acre Blaisdell Center campus contains a significant amount of ground floor open space, its current configuration limits potential use. To address existing issues and make better use of the available area, the overall land use plan incorporates the following strategies:

- Stacking programmatic uses to consolidate venues and limit building footprint while increasing usable area.
- Stacking the Exhibition Hall program in a two-story building to create a new open space at the heart of the Blaisdell Center and allow for a porous landscaped edge along Ward Avenue.
- Utilizing the roof area of expanded ground floor program to create a continuous terrace linking venues at the second floor and provide exterior courtyards to activate upper levels of the Center.
- Increasing efficiency and capacity of structured parking to reduce surface parking and allow for larger contiguous open space.
- Relocating service entries to Victoria Street to limit conflicts between vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

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Figure 10. Open Space Diagram of the Preferred Land Use Plan

- Reconfiguring venue placement around a central open space as the identifiable focal point of the site.

Focusing on the design of the open spaces provides a cost-effective approach to transforming the Blaisdell Center into a park-like setting as a destination and neighborhood amenity, increases opportunity for public programming, and provides additional rentable area.

Preferred Land Use Plan

VIII

Connectivity

With its centralized location between downtown Honolulu, Kaka‘ako, and Waikīkī, enhancing the connectivity of the Blaisdell Center is a key component in bolstering the Blaisdell Center’s role as the island’s center for arts, culture, and entertainment.

Improvements to the King Street crossing and planned enhancements to Thomas Square Park help to support increased activity and programming possibilities across both sites to strengthen the relationship of the Blaisdell Center and the surrounding neighborhood as a catalyst for further development of the district.

Additionally, reconfiguring the on-site structured parking would open up the potential to extend Victoria Street through to Kapi‘olani Boulevard and to create the opportunity for improved connectivity with McKinley High School. A new plaza at the corner of Ward Avenue and Kapi‘olani Boulevard expands the entry to the Arena in support of increased urban retail use and pedestrian flow expected from the Kaka‘ako light rail station and Kaka‘ako residences.

To support pedestrian circulation and increased daily use of the Blaisdell Center, street trees, engaging open space, and main venue entries have been consolidated along Ward Avenue.

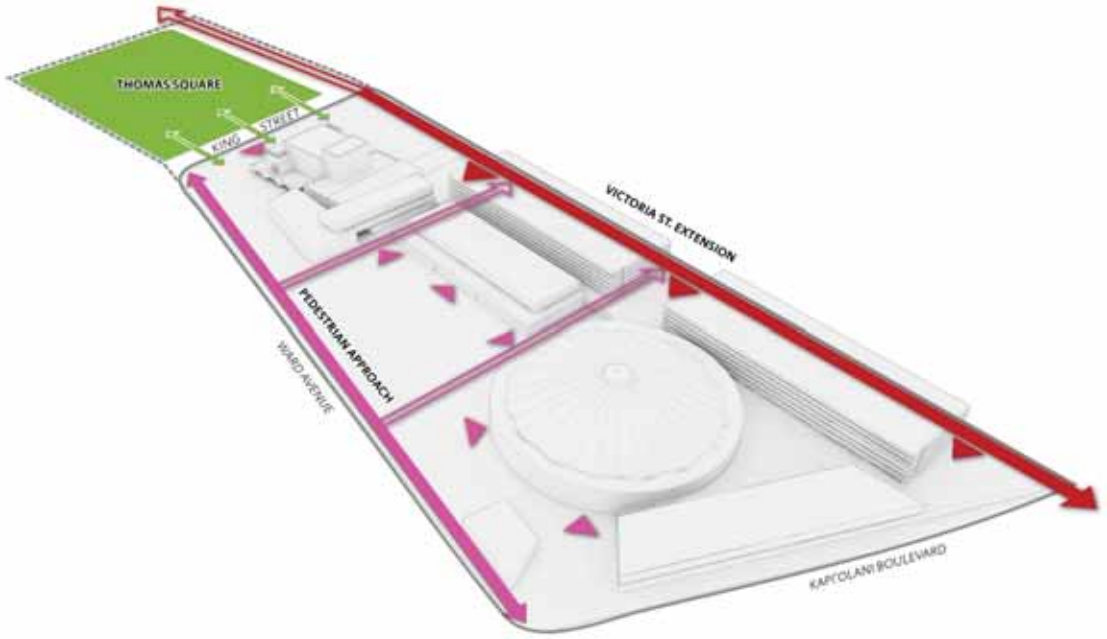

Figure 11. Circulation Diagram of the Preferred Land Use Plan

Building massing has been configured to allow for cross-site circulation between the major venue components between Ward Avenue and the Victoria Street extension.

The new parking structures 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 reconfiguration of parking will improve queuing for events and improve walkability.

By relocating surface parking and re-organizing service access, the plan consolidates public open space into large, contiguous areas better suited for public programming and daily use. Additional off-site parking on other city-controlled property should also be considered.

Preferred Land Use Plan

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The preferred Land Use Plan is broken down in a series of projects that could be built all at once or in a logical phasing sequence. Following are descriptions of each area of the Plan.

Thomas Square / King Street

Thomas Square is envisioned as being heavily programed with public events in the future. To further strengthen the connections between the Blaisdell Center, Thomas Square, and the surrounding community, improvements along King Street are suggested to address pedestrian crossing concerns and enhance the arrival experience.

Recommended actions include the incorporation of a block-wide crossing with coordinated signaling, upgraded treatment of the street surface, replacing parallel parking with planting areas / bioswales, relocation of bus shelters and conversion of the bus drop-off lane, and expansion or upgrade of the Concert Hall entry plaza.

Figure 12. Thomas Square / King Street Conceptual Plan

Preferred Land Use Plan

VIII

Arena

In reviewing the potential of the existing Arena structure, opportunities were explored that propose raising the concourse to the second level for direct access to the main seating bowl area. This approach allows for expansion of retail and support spaces on the ground floor without significantly increasing the building footprint.

Other recommended improvements to the Arena include enclosing the façade in glass, ADA and safety improvements, a moderate increase of food and beverage opportunities, mechanical upgrades and modernization, retail / commercial development, incorporating complete street elements along Kapiʻolani Boulevard, the Victoria Street extension, a new café / ticketing building, and new and improved plazas / open space. Pedestrian connections occur at the ground level and the second level. Providing retail / commercial users and pre-show hangout opportunities on the ground floor strengthens the existing connection to Kapiʻolani Boulevard, which has experienced new mixed-use development with residential, commercial,
and retail uses on the makai side, as well as Kakaʻako.

Preliminary concepts and illustrative sketches for the Arena and surrounding open spaces are shown in Figures 13, 14, and 15.

Figure 13. Arena Conceptual Plan

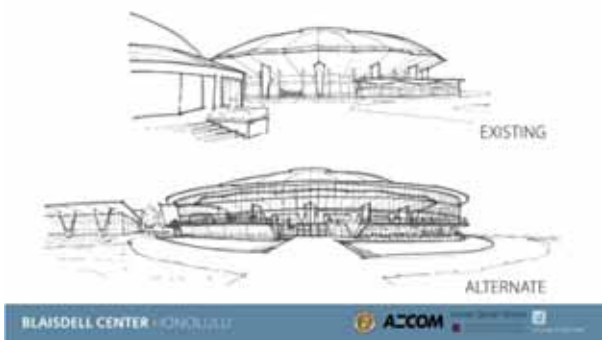

Figure 14. Arena Sketch

Figure 15. Arena Rendering

Preferred Land Use Plan

VIII

Exhibition Hall

To minimize the overall footprint, meeting rooms and offices have been placed on top of ground-floor exhibition space. The overall mass of the building was relocated for direct connection to parking, as well as the ability to increase available open space. An entry and event plaza fronting the exhibit space provides the opportunity for exhibitions to spill outside and engage the landscape. This space is envisioned to be lined with active uses like coffee shops, galleries, and civic uses such as a satellite city hall.

Recommended improvements for the Exhibition Hall include developing a new Exhibition Hall, parking structures with approximately 500+ additional parking spaces and improved access, covered pre-function terraces, open space, and water features. Additionally, with new frontage along the Victoria Street extension, there is the potential for ground floor program space below the parking garage to further activate the streetscape. This street should be designed as a shared street between pedestrians, bicycles, and cars.

Preliminary concepts and illustrative sketches for the Exhibition Hall and surrounding open spaces are shown in Figures 16, 17, and 18.

Figure 16. Exhibition Hall Conceptual Plan

Figure 17. Victoria Street Extension Sketch

Figure 18. Exhibition Hall Imagery

Preferred Land Use Plan

VIII

Concert Hall

Although the physical condition of the Concert Hall necessitates less action than other venues and the facility is eligible for historic status, modifications to this facility do present the potential to reduce scheduling conflicts, increase revenue, bolster outreach and educational offerings, provide needed support space, and improve patron experience.

Recommended improvements to the Concert Hall include expanding and enclosing the lobby to provide air conditioned pre-function space, renovated bathrooms, and improved concessions. A new roof terrace at the balcony level was suggested as a unique indoor / outdoor experience and to reduce congestion during intermission. Renovations would also address ADA and safety concerns to provide access to the balcony and upper seating.

Adding a new flexible theater looking over an event lawn creates a dynamic performance space that embraces the landscape and offers new opportunity for public / patron engagement. New studios and classrooms will help extend the reach of the Blaisdell Center to further serve the community.

Preliminary concepts and illustrative sketches for the Concert Hall and surrounding open spaces are shown in Figures 19, 20, and 21.

Figure 19. Concert Hall Conceptual Plan

Figure 20. Concert Hall Sketch

Figure 21. Concert Hall Rendering

IX

Implementation Recommendations and Next Steps

Implementation Recommendations and Next Steps

IX

Implementation Recommendations

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

- Refined conceptual site plan with all open spaces, plazas, site amenities, water features, Victoria Street extension, etc.
- Conceptual architectural plans for the:
  - Concert Hall renovation
  - New rehearsal / performance facility
  - New Exhibition Hall with meeting rooms
  - New parking structure with truck access
  - Arena renovation
  - New commercial space along Kapi'olani Boulevard and the Victoria Street extension
  - New café / ticketing building
- Traffic analysis / road improvements
- Utility and geotechnical studies
- Structural analysis of retained facilities
- Phasing plans
- Cost estimates
- Sustainability plan
- Analysis of implications of potential private management alternative
- Financing mechanisms for construction and long term maintenance
- Supplemental environmental documentation
- Permitting requirements
- Public engagement

Under the current effort, a high-level cost estimate was prepared for the preferred alternative. The estimate includes geotechnical investigation, site preparation, on-site utilities, renovation of the Concert Hall and Arena**,** and construction of the new Exhibition Hall, Multi-purpose Venue, meeting rooms, Box Office/Café and parking structures. The approximate construction cost is $300-$400 million. This estimate will be updated in the master planning process.

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 / 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.

Jake Shimabukuro
Source: Google Images

Figure 22. New Rehearsal / Performance Facility Rendering