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## HAWAII NEWS

### **Aloha Stadium plan shift may extend timeline for completion**

By [Dave Reardon](#)

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**The previous plan — reflected in the existing RFPs that have been in the works since 2018 — called for a private-sector partner to build the new stadium and another to develop the area around the Halawa site with mixed-use private real estate.**

State planners, under the new administration of Gov. Josh Green, had hoped to send out requests for proposals by the end of January for the New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District. That was later pushed to the end of the first quarter on March 31.

The date came and went Friday, but the RFPs still are not out and, in fact, may need to be revised significantly because of a change in the project designed to keep taxpayer costs within the \$400 million allocated for the new stadium by the state Legislature last year.

Green announced a switch two weeks ago from having a private partner design, build, finance and maintain — or DBFM — the stadium to having the partner design, build, operate and maintain it, or DBOM.

The previous plan — reflected in the existing RFPs that have been in the works since 2018 — called for a private-sector partner to build the new stadium and another to develop the area around the Halawa site with mixed-use private real estate.

The state's most recent estimate would see the stadium completed in time for the 2027 football season, but now that's at risk with the new delay in the RFP process.

“The RFP was essentially built around DBFM, so we’re going to have to go back and redesign the RFPs (for a DBOM plan), if that’s what the administration wants to do,” State Comptroller Keith Regan told state senators Tuesday.

One key remaining question is the extent of private real estate development to be connected to the stadium project under the new plan. The original private-public partnership model included extensive development around the stadium with housing, retail, restaurants, stadium parking and other features.

“We are in a holding pattern until we get more definitive direction,” said Chris Kinimaka, the lead public works administrator for the project, at a Stadium Authority meeting Thursday.

That direction might come soon, as Green met later Thursday with other state officials regarding the stadium, including the leaders of the House, Senate and Stadium Authority.

“It was a very productive meeting and everyone’s moving in the same direction,” said Chris Sadayasu, who attended in his role as interim director of the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism.

(Sadayasu’s continued involvement in the stadium project may be short-lived since his appointment by Green was rejected by the state Senate March 24.)

The governor’s plan is for a private partner to operate and maintain the stadium for 30 years after building it at state expense using the \$400 million allocated by the Legislature.

Stadium Authority board member Michael Yadao expressed optimism in Green’s plan.

“The DBOM methodology is new to the state but provides incentives needed to ensure a timely build and puts the onus on the development team to maximize stadium usage and upkeep,” Yadao said.

Prior to the 2022 election, Green said he supported the New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District plan, as long as it included a significant amount of affordable housing.

That would be regardless of whether the project was part of a public-private partnership involving a stadium and real estate component or a stand-alone stadium developed via the state’s traditional design-build model, as Green’s predecessor, Gov. David Ige preferred.

Green changed course after state Budget and Finance Director Luis Salaveria analyzed a report saying taxpayers could be at risk of having to pay up to double the \$400 million cost for the stadium under the so-called P3 plan.

On Tuesday, the state Senate issued a resolution endorsing the governor’s DBOM plan.

“The Senate and administration are on board,” said Sen. Glenn Wakai (D, Kalihi-Salt Lake-Pearl Harbor) at the Stadium Authority meeting Thursday. “We’re waiting for the House to come on board. We’re all anxiously awaiting the (new) RFP.”

Wakai, a longtime NASED proponent, represents communities surrounding the stadium.

One remaining area of contention is seating capacity. Originally, the new stadium was planned for 30,000. The old Aloha Stadium, opened in 1975 and closed for spectator events in 2020 due to safety concerns, seated 50,000.

“Whatever form the stadium takes, the foundation will be built to allow (capacity) to be expanded,” Stadium Authority Vice Chair Brennon Morioka said when asked about reports of a 25,000-seat plan.

The University of Hawaii football team will continue to play its games in Manoa until the new stadium is built. The Clarence T.C. Ching Athletics Complex stadium on the lower campus is undergoing expansion from 9,000 to 15,000 seats before the 2023 season.

Time is also an issue because of rising costs for building materials. The longer it takes to build, the less \$400 million will buy, and the new stadium might end up less of a multipurpose venue than planners envisioned.

NASED planners estimated that with its original P3 plan, the state could make an annual profit after eight years from the contributions of the private builders, based on ground leases around the stadium for new housing, restaurants, shops and other attractions.

The state has invested around \$25 million since 2018 to develop NASED plans; more than half of that figure might not be transferable should there be a change in course. Much of this would depend on the degree to which the RFPs would have to be changed to accommodate the proposed design-build-operate-maintain model.

“Everyone agrees don’t spend more money,” Wakai said. “It’s getting way too complicated. It needs to be simple and someone has to make decisions. We gotta pull the trigger.”

The Stadium Authority’s next monthly meeting is April 27.

“Hopefully we have good news for everyone,” Morioka said at Thursday’s meeting.

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## **Building models**

Three types of plans have been considered for building the new Aloha Stadium in Halawa.

### **Design-build**

Under its traditional project model, the state would hire private contractors to design and build the stadium, who would no longer be involved once it’s built. This plan was preferred by former Gov. David Ige.

### **Design-build-finance-maintain (DBFM)**

Private contractors would design, build, finance and maintain the stadium while the state operates it. This type of arrangement is what New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District planners have worked on for five years and what the current request for proposals is geared toward.

### **Design-build-operate- maintain (DBOM)**

Private contractors design, build, operate and maintain the stadium, with the state funding most of the construction. This is Gov. Josh Green’s preferred plan.