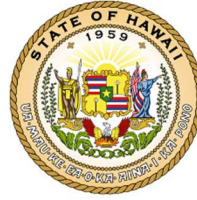


# HAWAI'I FIRE RELIEF HOUSING PROGRAM



Connecting Maui wildfire survivors with property owners and accommodations



*Figure 1: Gov. Josh Green, M.D. and U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz walked through the fire-destroyed streets of Lahaina*

**Award Category:** Digital Services: Government to Citizen  
**State:** State of Hawai'i  
**Agency:** Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism /  
Hawai'i Housing Finance & Development Corporation  
**Project Title:** Connecting Maui Wildfire Survivors with Property Owners and Accommodations  
**Project Dates:** August 2023 through December 2023  
**Contact:** **Doug Murdock**  
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# Executive Summary: Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program

On August 8, 2023, wind-driven wildfires on the island of Maui caused the fifth deadliest wildland fire in U.S. history and the worst natural disaster in Hawai'i's history. More than 100 lives were lost along with the destruction of more than 2,200 structures and estimated damages in excess of \$5.5 billion.<sup>1</sup> Governor Josh Green, M.D., in collaboration with the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC), launched the Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program to aid Maui residents affected by the horrific wildfires that tore through Lahaina and other parts of the island.

The program's goal was to connect those survivors in immediate need of short-term housing with property owners who were willing to provide immediate accommodation such as rooms, dwelling units, and houses. HHFDC integrated existing technology and tools from other state agencies to effectively connect displaced families with tenants resulting in over 600 residential placements.

## Major Achievements

- Accomplished the Governor's mandate to create an immediate solution to the housing needs of survivors of the devastating fire.
- The dedicated members of the HHFDC IT staff developed this solution and was able to stand it up less than a week after the disaster. This was done with no additional resources and no playbook to guide them.
- Other members of HHFDC's staff, utilizing departmental and community contacts, reached out to property owners on Maui and across the state who had properties or otherwise unoccupied living spaces and asked them to consider making these units available either for free or at minimal cost.
- No money or time was available for a strong marketing campaign, so HHFDC relied on unpaid media coverage to urge those interested in participating in the program -- either as property owners or those in need of housing -- to visit HHFDC's website for more information.

## Idea

### The Need

Facing a critical need for immediate response, HHFDC's IT staff got creative and used existing technical resources available at their fingertips to implement a solution that allowed those affected by the wildfires to get information about support programs and housing relief. HHFDC turned to Microsoft SharePoint, a versatile platform that allows for rapid creation of forms and database integration, for a solution. The state needed an online platform as well as telephony services to assist affected survivors.

### Why Does It Matter?

Several thousand residents saw their home destroyed and had no place to stay. There was an immense shortage of housing supply to house all survivors. Critical infrastructure was destroyed by the wildfires. There was no existing system or process for this unprecedented event in Hawai'i. The state government had an inherent responsibility to provide relief to impacted survivors.

"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."

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/blog/preliminary-after-action-report-2023-maui-wildfire/>

# Implementation

## What Was the Roadmap?

Hawai'i rolled out the fundamentals of this project within the first week following the Maui wildfires. The success led state leaders to realize that HHFDC is needed for assistance with other responsibilities and merged the Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program into a similar program that was being established by the nonprofit Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA).

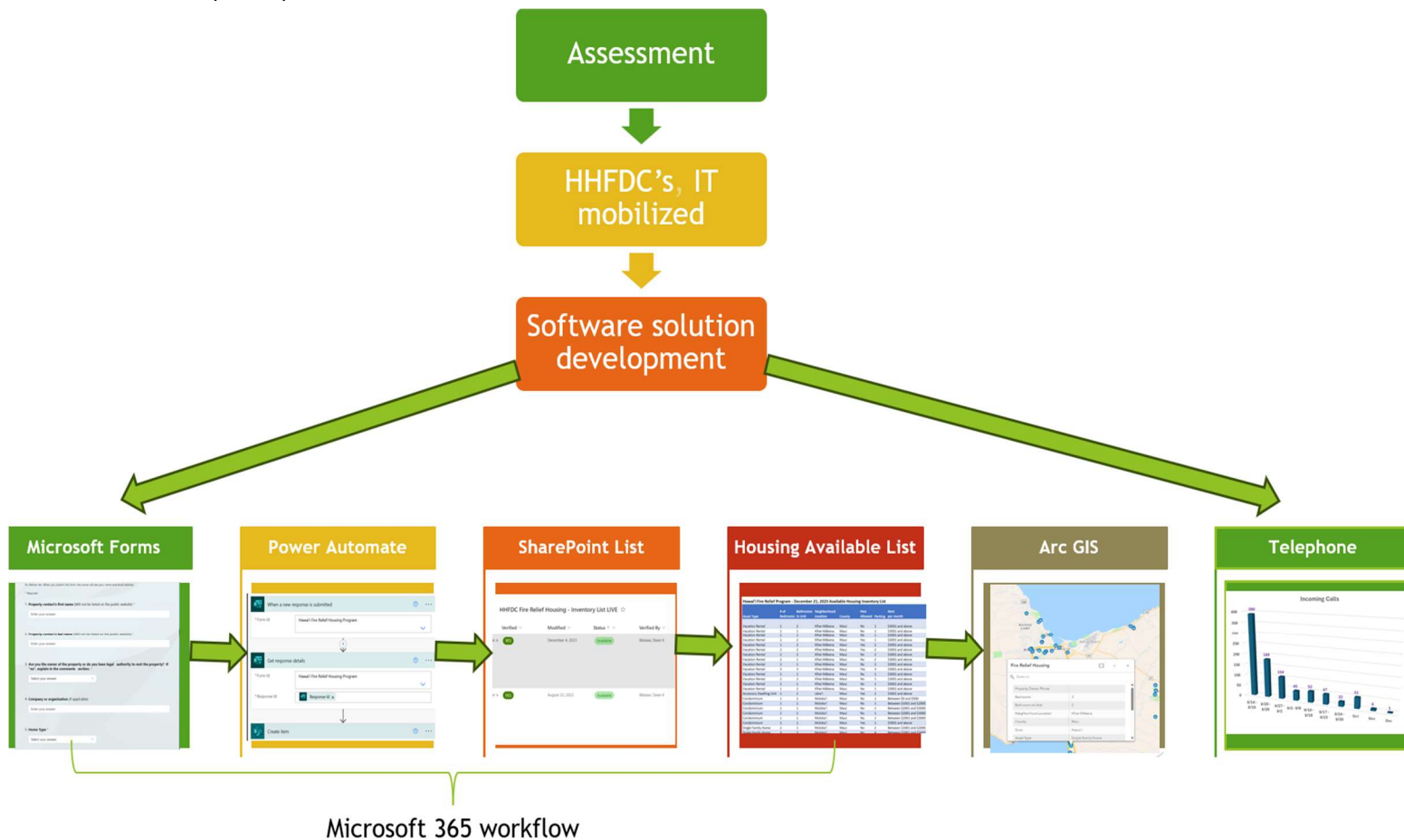
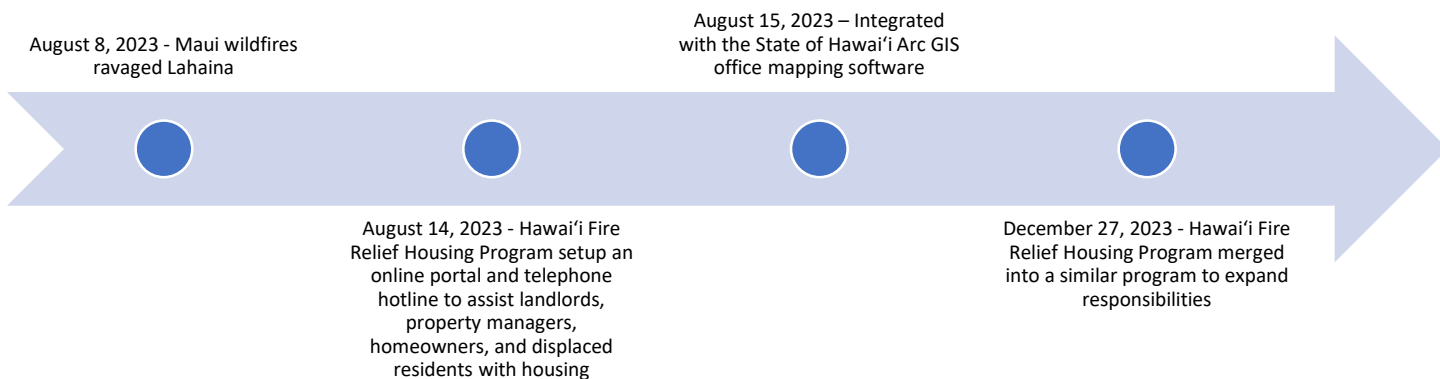


Figure 22: Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program Roadmap

## Timeline



## **Who Was Involved?**

The success of the Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program was a collaborative effort between HHFDC's IT's staff, the remainder of the HHFDC staff, the Office of the Enterprise Technology Services, and the State of Hawai'i Arc GIS office. Other state agencies later became involved in the relief efforts.

## **How Did We Do It?**

HHFDC utilized SharePoint, a cloud-based collaborative web platform that integrates with Microsoft 365. HHFDC IT developed application forms tailored to gathering essential information from both landlords and displaced residents. These forms were designed to capture details about available housing units and a partner form to gather detailed information about the specific needs of those seeking housing and published online.

The Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing program website went live on August 14, 2023, and residents accessed the site with 611 residential placements. While a majority of survivors accessed the website through their mobile devices, access was also available through computers set up at disaster assistance centers and public libraries.

Once the public was able to submit information, the data captured through these forms populated a centralized database hosted on SharePoint. This database served as a shared repository accessible to HHFDC's Fire Relief Team and subsequently other state entities. Through SharePoint's permissions management system, HHFDC controlled access to the database, ensuring sensitive information remained secure – while facilitating collaboration among stakeholders.

HHFDC not only expedited the collection and organization of critical data, but empowered staff to efficiently coordinate housing assistance for displaced individuals. By harnessing the platform's capabilities, HHFDC IT provided a scalable and responsive solution that played a vital role in addressing the immediate needs of the community during a time of crisis.

Other HHFDC personnel staffed a telephone hotline that was established to assist landlords, property managers, homeowners, and displaced residents with program-related inquiries and related assistance.

HHFDC staff also actively contacted landowners, landlords, and management companies to encourage participation and build an inventory of available units across Maui and the other islands.

The program served as a referral service, leaving the negotiation of rental arrangements to landlords and displaced residents. HHFDC staff worked to vet both applicants and landlords. Many landlords who rented units to eligible displaced residents were later eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance.

## **Program Interface**

Utilizing Microsoft Forms, forms were created and made available online for both housing providers and the wildfire survivors in need of housing. A workflow was established using Microsoft's Power Automate to link the forms to a SharePoint List. SharePoint Lists are a fundamental building block in Microsoft SharePoint. Lists in SharePoint are collections of data that can be used to create, manage, and share with others. They provide a structured way to organize information, similar to a database table or a spreadsheet.

HHFDC created respective SharePoint lists for both landlords who wished to make their units available and for fire survivors in need. When a user submitted a form, SharePoint's Power Automate function captured the information and organized it into the appropriate columns within the corresponding SharePoint List.

In SharePoint, data collected through the respective forms was systematically organized using Power Automate. Specifically, columns were created based on the questions posed in the forms. The columns varied depending on which form was submitted.

HHFDC employees reached out to the property owner or submitter to collect additional information and validate the housing unit. When verified HHFDC included the unit in the Hawai'i Fire Relief's Available Housing Inventory List for displaced individuals to access.



When the verification process was completed, HHFDC staff marked it as “Verified” and added their offerings to the list of available housing. These verified home listings were exported as an Excel file and only the relevant information was kept and then made public.

This included details such as the type of rental property, the numbers of bedrooms and bathrooms, general location, rent amount and contact information. If property owners chose not to make their phone numbers public, those numbers were masked and labeled as ‘Undisclosed.’ The Excel files were uploaded and published on HHFDC’s website twice a day during the early days of the fire relief program, and then uploaded once a day after the initial month.

The HHFDC IT team successfully implemented the Hawai’i Fire Relief Program using Microsoft’s applications. The Power Automation tool played a crucial role in connecting displaced families with property owners who were willing to offer their homes. It was utilized to collect and organize data from two separate forms—one for property owners and another for renters. The information gathered through Power Automate was then integrated into a Hawai’i Fire Relief Housing List on SharePoint, depending on which form was submitted.

HHFDC employees carefully reviewed the newly submitted listings, verified the information, and exported all verified listings as an Excel file containing only relevant details for public viewing. This Excel file was subsequently posted on HHFDC’s website for individuals seeking homes to access daily.

**Hawai’i Fire Relief Program - December 21, 2023 Available Housing Inventory List** Highlighted rows = New or Modified entries

Asset Type	# of Bedrooms in Unit	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	Mau	No	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	1		Undisclosed	8/25/2023
Vacation Rental	1	1	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	No	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	1	@gmail.com	484-XXXX-XXXX	9/21/2023
Vacation Rental	1	1	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	No	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	2		Undisclosed	4/29/2024
Vacation Rental	1	2	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	Yes	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	2		808-XXXX-XXXX	8/17/2023
Vacation Rental	1	2	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	Yes	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	2	@yahoo.com		8/15/2023
Vacation Rental	2	2	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	Yes	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	2			11/27/2023
Vacation Rental	2	2	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	No	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	2	hotmail.com	Undisclosed	9/2/2023
Vacation Rental	2	1	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	No	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	2		Undisclosed	8/15/2023
Vacation Rental	1	1	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	No	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	3		Undisclosed	8/22/2023
Vacation Rental	3	3	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	Yes	3	\$3001 and above	Yes	3			9/30/2023
Vacation Rental	1	1	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	No	1	\$3001 and above	No	4			10/12/2023
Vacation Rental	2	2	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	No	1	\$3001 and above	No	9		Undisclosed	12/15/2023
Vacation Rental	1	1	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	No	1	\$3001 and above	No	12			3/1/2024
Vacation Rental	1	2	Kihei-Mākena	Mau	No	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	>12		Undisclosed	8/18/2023
Accessory Dwelling Unit	1	1	Lāna’i	Mau	Yes	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	>12			11/27/2023
Condominium	1	2	Moloka’i	Mau	No	1	Between \$0 and \$500	Yes	2			8/18/2023
Condominium	1	1	Moloka’i	Mau	No	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	Yes	12			8/17/2023
Condominium	1	1	Moloka’i	Mau	No	1	Between \$2001 and \$3000	Yes	3		Undisclosed	9/8/2023
Condominium	1	1	Moloka’i	Mau	No	1	Between \$2001 and \$3000	Yes	>12			8/22/2023
Condominium	1	1	Moloka’i	Mau	No	1	Between \$2001 and \$3000	Yes	>12		Undisclosed	8/20/2023
Condominium	1	1	Moloka’i	Mau	Yes	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	>12		Undisclosed	9/1/2023
Single Family Home	2	1	Moloka’i	Mau	No	2	Between \$1001 and \$2000	No	4			10/1/2023
Single Family Home	3	2	Moloka’i	Mau	No	4	Between \$2001 and \$3000	No	2			8/16/2023
Vacation Rental	1	2	Moloka’i	Mau	Yes	1	Between \$2001 and \$3000	Yes	>12			8/20/2023
Vacation Rental	2	2	Moloka’i	Mau	No	2	\$3001 and above	No	12			1/2/2024
Vacation Rental	1	1	Other	Mau	No	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	<1		Undisclosed	8/23/2023
Vacation Rental	2	2	Other	Mau	No	1	\$3001 and above	Yes	2		Undisclosed	8/25/2023
Accessory Dwelling Unit	1	1	Upcountry	Mau	Yes	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	Yes	6			9/1/2023
Accessory Dwelling Unit	2	1	Upcountry	Mau	Yes	2	Between \$2001 and \$3000	No	>12			9/15/2023
Apartment	1	1	Upcountry	Mau	No	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	No	>12			8/18/2023
Apartment	2	2	Upcountry	Mau	No	1	Between \$2001 and \$3000	No	>12			8/18/2023
Apartment	3	3	Upcountry	Mau	No	3	\$3001 and above	No	>12			8/18/2023
Attached Dwelling Unit	1	1	Upcountry	Mau	Yes	2	Between \$0 and \$500	Yes	6		Undisclosed	8/14/2023
Attached Dwelling Unit	1	1	Upcountry	Mau	No	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	Yes	12			9/15/2023
Attached Dwelling Unit	1	1	Upcountry	Mau	No	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	Yes	>12		Undisclosed	8/21/2023
Attached Dwelling Unit	1	1	Upcountry	Mau	No	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	Yes	>12			8/21/2023
Attached Dwelling Unit	1	1	Upcountry	Mau	No	1	Between \$1001 and \$2000	Yes	>12			8/17/2023
Attached Dwelling Unit	2	1	Upcountry	Mau	No	3	Between \$2001 and \$3000	No	>12			2/1/2024
Attached Dwelling Unit	3	3	Upcountry	Mau	Yes	2	\$3001 and above	Yes	>12			2/1/2024

Figure 3: Exported available housing inventory list

In addition to offering a downloadable PDF of the complete list, the HHFDC IT team worked with the State of Hawai’i Arc GIS office to implement an interactive map. This map pinpointed the location of each property with precise GPS coordinates. Visitors could click on the map markers to access more information about the available units. This feature enhanced user engagement by providing a visually intuitive way to explore the listings in detail.

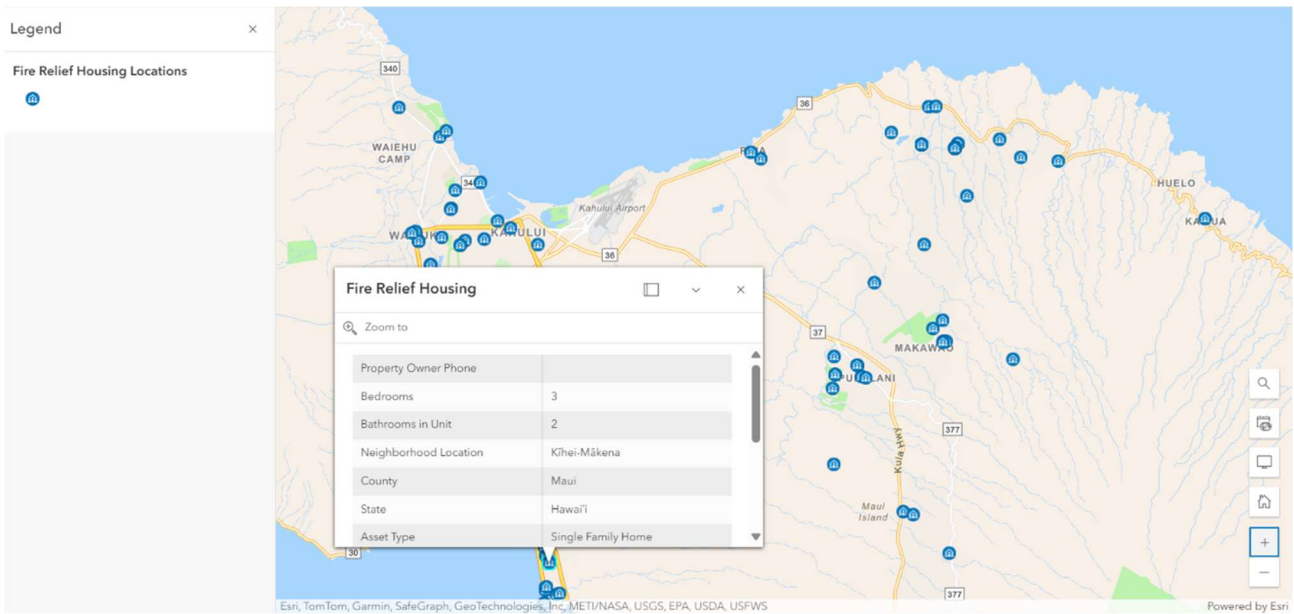


Figure 4: Use of the State of Hawai'i Arc GIS software

## Impact

By leveraging existing software tools and technologies, Hawai'i effectively created a reliable and trusted source to connect housing providers with survivors. Statistics and valuable information were made available to those needed to support the relief efforts. The state could track the verified housing availability listing and statistics on housing placement for displaced residents to monitor progress on recovery.



Figure 5: Total & Verified Listings of available housing

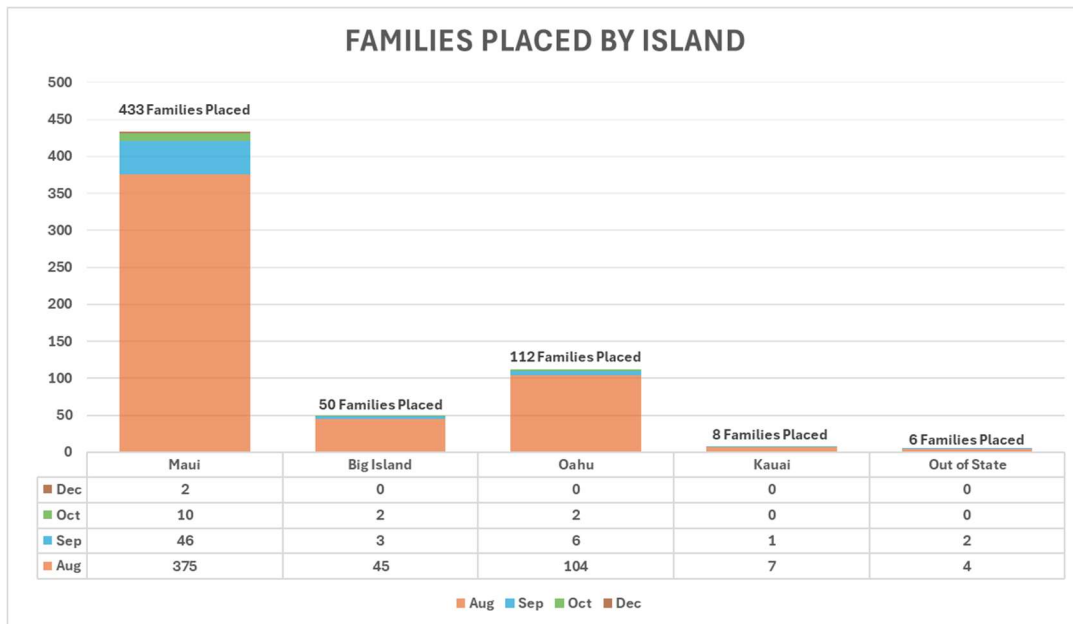


Figure 6: Statistics on families placed by island

### Next steps

In December, due largely to the program’s success and the realization by state leaders that HHFDC needed to assist with other responsibilities, HHFDCs Hawai’i Fire Relief Housing Program was merged into a similar program that was being established by the nonprofit Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA).

## Conclusion

The Hawai’i Fire Relief Housing program, coupled with HHFDC’s software solution, emerged as a quintessential tool in facilitating swift and effective assistance to Maui residents impacted by the wildfires. Through the seamless integration of technology, this initiative provided a solution for individuals to connect with landlords and their available accommodations.

Using only the tools in its existing toolbox, HHFDC's IT staff managed to pull together an effective integration of technology and information that played a critical and essential role in the first few days, weeks and months following the Maui wildfire tragedy. The program helped those that lost their housing and homes – and gave them hope.



Photo taken September 9, 2023 by Kevin Allen, Hawai’i Department of Land and Natural Resources

*Recovery is slow and rebuilding will take a few years but like the Banyan tree Maui will regain strength and recover.*

**Maui Strong**