



111 Hawaiian families will get homes

The state breaks ground on a Kapolei homestead project

[By Pat Gee](#)

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More than 100 families who have waited decades to own homes on Hawaiian homestead lots are finally seeing the light at the end of a tunnel in East Kapolei.

The state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands yesterday broke ground on the construction of the Kanehili increment of the 403-unit East Kapolei I project. This first phase consists of 111 turnkey homes and 10 owner-builder lots on 15 acres.

"I didn't think we would ever get it," said Agnes Saranillio, who has waited since 1972 for a homestead. "We waited so long. I never dreamed this would come to fruition."

Saranillio's family will be among the first five families to have their homes completed around April. Her daughter, Arlette Duvernay, and another daughter from Australia, along with their families, will live in a five-bedroom home, she said.

Saranillio said owning a home will come as a huge relief after "renting all the time" and trying to find an affordable place to live.

Gemini Ward-Calpito signed up for a homestead in 1971, but said, "To be honest with you, I thought I'd be dead before I got it and have to leave it to my kids."

Husband Andrew Calpito said: "I thought we'd never get to own our own home, with the cost of everything so high and the economy the way it is. ... We've been blessed on this day."

The 111 homesteaders were "the first to be ready" to actually qualify for a mortgage and move into a home under the DHHL's Undivided Interest Awards program on Oahu, according to Robert Hall, executive assistant to department Director Micah Kane.

The UIA program, which provided homestead leases for an interest in a larger piece of property, was designed to give those who had been waiting the longest a way to qualify for a mortgage loan, which had been a major roadblock to getting a lease, Hall said. They had to participate in a Home Ownership Assistance Program, created two years ago by Hawaiian Homes, that gave them years instead of just months to improve their credit, create savings, pay off debts and get financial counseling to qualify for a loan, he said. It took about two years for the 111 to secure loans, Hall added.

Gentry Kapolei Development LLC is building the homes, which range from \$220,000 to \$300,000, he said.

Kanehili is the result of other pioneering "firsts," especially in cooperative efforts between government, unions and private organizations to provide homes as well as construction jobs, Hall said, applauding the Office of Hawaiian Affairs for its key role in "making this a reality."

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