

Idea to replace Blaisdell Center advances

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Mayor Kirk Caldwell is advancing an idea to redevelop Honolulu's aging Neal S. Blaisdell Center through a panel of consultants slated to share preliminary findings and recommendations at a presentation on March 7.

The panel was arranged by the Daniel Rose Center for Public Leadership, which is part of the Urban Land Institute.

Rose Center selected the Blaisdell project as an initiative under Caldwell's leadership, and has come up with a preliminary strategy and ideas for a redevelopment plan.

The Land Institute announced that Rose Center will continue working with the city to help refine and enact a plan through a final report expected to be issued by the end of the year.

The city intends to commission a consulting team to help craft a vision for "a cultural and entertainment venue" on the site that is financially self sustaining, and then seek out potential development partners, ULI said.

Work by the Rose Center panel comes about nine months after the Hawaii Community Development Authority, a state agency governing development in the Kakaako area that includes the Blaisdell, suggested potential redevelopment of the 22-acre city site as part of a draft plan for transit-oriented development near two planned city rail stations in Kakaako.

The agency suggested the city could partner with a private developer to replace Blaisdell facilities, most of which were built in 1964, with uses that might include a new performing arts complex, a 700-foot residential tower, a business hotel, multiplex cinema, parking and a large park.

Since then, Caldwell has touted the potential to enhance the site as the core of a revitalized culture and arts district in Honolulu.

The Rose Center panel includes private and public sector consultants representing planning, development, art, transportation and finance fields from several mainland cities and Honolulu.

The panel's presentation will be at the city's Mission Memorial Auditorium at 9 a.m. The presentation is free and open to the public.

- Caption: STAR-ADVERTISER ARCHIVE A panel of experts is studying options to redevelop the Neal Blaisdell Center.

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