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# Maui wildfire survivors gain path to homeownership through \$6.34M donation



There are still thousands of families waiting to rebuild or find long-term housing in Lahaina, seen here a year after the August 2023 Maui wildfires.

STEPHANIE SALMONS | PBN



By Nichole Villegas – Reporter, Pacific Business News  
Feb 12, 2026

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### Story Highlights

- Hawaii Community Foundation and House Maui donated \$6.34 million to expand rent-to-own homeownership program.
- Five families already transitioned from renters to homeowners since program launch in late 2025.
- Program will provide 17 units and financial planning to 45 wildfire survivors by April 2028.

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The Hawaii Community Foundation's Maui Strong Fund and House Maui program have donated a joint \$6.34 million to Hawaii Community Assets to expand its [rent-with-option-to-purchase program](#) called the Ua Hale Aela program, which helps families impacted by the Maui wildfires achieve homeownership.

The program works by HCA purchasing a home or unit for a family to rent. Over two years, HCA works with the resident to secure their financing to purchase the home from the organization once the two years are up. With the purchase funds, HCA reinvests into buying another unit for the program.

The [rent-to-own program](#) began at the end of 2025, and since then, five families have transitioned from renters to homeowners through the program.

"This investment represents our commitment to creating sustainable pathways to homeownership and long-term community stability for our wildfire survivors," Terry George, president and CEO of Hawaii Community Foundation, said in a statement. "The Ua Hale Aela program has already demonstrated remarkable success, and this funding will allow HCA to expand their proven model when families need it most. By combining resources from both the Maui Strong Fund and House Maui, we are able to provide comprehensive support that addresses both immediate housing needs and long-term financial stability."

The majority of the donation, \$6.3 million, to HCA comes through HCF's Maui Strong fund, while House Maui provided a \$40,000 grant to cover remaining operational expenses, which will allow HCA to purchase and lease homes for the rent-to-own program across Maui.

The program will make 17 units available on Maui by April 2028. It will also provide personalized financial planning following settlement payouts to 45 wildfire survivors, and conduct 12 financial education workshops focused on settlement planning and homeownership readiness.

The program is focused on providing homeownership opportunities for low-to-moderate-income renters impacted by the wildfires, including those on [waiting lists for Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recover programs](#), which are funded by Congress and allocated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to rebuild disaster-impacted areas with a focus on the long-term recovery process.

There are still thousands of families waiting to rebuild or find long-term housing that are utilizing temporary housing assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency - assistance that was set to expire at the end of February but was extended last month for another year to Feb. 28, 2027. HCA's rent-to-own program is one of those long-term solutions to offer wildfire survivors a road to recovery.

ONEI WIKIHE SURVIVORS A ROAD TO RECOVERY.

“Many programs are helping survivors recover, but renters still face the greatest risk of displacement. This partnership creates a true path to ownership so families can rebuild and remain in Hawaii, not be forced to leave,” Chelsie Evans Enos, CEO of Hawaiian Community Assets said in a statement.