

# New North Shore First Responder Center Receives Overwhelming Support!

By Denise Antolini & Larry McElheny

In the last issue of the North Shore News, we highlighted the efforts over the past year by the City and County of Honolulu and North Shore community leaders -- including the North Shore Neighborhood Board and the Sunset Beach Community Association -- to add desperately needed new Emergency Management Services (EMS) (ambulance), a new Ocean Safety Division (OSD) District office, and upgraded satellite lifeguard facilities across the North Shore.

Our community is painfully aware that the North Shore has seen exponential resident and visitor growth over the past decades, significantly outpacing the investment by the State and County in support services, infrastructure, and cultural and natural resources protection.

The article also explained why the three parcels (2.71 acres) next to Foodland and directly across the highway from the Sunset Fire Station are an "ideal location" for a new City and County of Honolulu North Shore First Responder Center (NSFRC). The new integrated EMS-OSD facility would provide support for other first responders (Honolulu Police Department and the State DOCARE officers), support emergency/disaster resilience services to serve urgent community needs, and preserve open space as a buffer for neighbors and the environmentally sensitive Pūpūkea Marine Life Conservation District.

## Overwhelming Survey and Petition Responses!

At the end of that article, we invited the community to weigh in on the future use of the site -- should the parcels now owned by the private developer who is planning to build a 34,500 sf tourist mall with 126 parking spaces and five stationary food trucks, instead be acquired by the City for the new North Shore First Responder Center? The survey rapidly went viral -- even global -- and the response from North Shore and O'ahu residents has been overwhelming!

Within three weeks, the survey had over 6,500 responses with 99% against the tourist mall and 91% in support of the new North Shore First Responder Center at the Sharks Cove/Pūpūkea location! The number of responses from North Shore zip codes 96712 (Hale'iwa), 96791 (Waiialua), and 96731 (Kahuku) was an impressive 1,559 responses with a 99.8% voting "No!" on the tourist mall and 91% "Yes!" to the First Responder Center. Across O'ahu, the results from 4,139 residents was -- 99.8% No! 91% Yes!

Heartfelt comments poured in from our community and across the globe. Here are just a few of the 200 statements from the North Shore alone: "I live a street away from the proposed site and it's already littered with traffic and tourists turning around and crossing the road in undesignated areas. For the love of god please don't do this. No one that has grown up and lived here would want this to happen." "A disaster response center is very much needed for the NS." "I think the proposition of a mall at Sharks Cove is absolutely disgraceful." "The North Shore lacks infrastructure to support a development project of the size. We are already inundated with traffic that is a huge barrier to residents getting to, and from work, emergency services, and every day needs." "Too much traffic in this area. Wrong place for more tourist shops." "Our Emergency Responders need more support here; less tourist traffic to clog up our main and only road."



Councilmember Matt Weyer and North Shore Neighborhood Board members Denise Antolini and Racquel Achiu visit the Waipi'o EMS Station with Honolulu Emergency Services Director Dr. Jim Ireland and Paramedic Supervisor Sunny Johnson

5,618 total respondents took the additional step of adding their name to a Petition to the Mayor and the City Council. By the time of this printing, that Petition has been delivered. Watch here for future updates.

## What Does the NSFRC Look Like?

Once the City acquires the land, the NSFRC would be a compact, low-impact, first-class facility. Based on a concept developed by community leaders with input from local first responders, we envision two phases.

Phase 1 (or "no build") would use the existing small buildings on the site and allow an immediate "move in" by EMS and OSD. With a few additional covered areas for vehicles and added security, the Center could be up and running quickly allowing the Ocean Safety North Shore District Office to relocate from the unsafe and decrepit "Rock Piles" house. Phase 2 would occur once funds are obtained for planning, design, and construction.

The "Northern" half of the area -- nearest the Pahoe Road neighbors -- would be a well-managed buffer zone of open space/conservation to mitigate impacts to nearby residents and to minimize environmental impacts to the MLCD. The perimeter of the area would be beautifully planted with native/canoe plants and trees, while allowing flat open space in the center for set up of temporary response services in the event of a disaster, such as tents to distribute food, water, and supplies, and emergency medevac/helipad. Landscaped frontage and swales with rocks and native plants would provide an attractive low border facing Kamehameha Highway. To minimize noise for neighbors, when the ambulances or lifeguards are ready to "roll out," sirens could be delay-activated, that is started only after the vehicles exit onto the highway when traffic is cleared by warning lights.

The other half nearest to the Foodland parking lot would have the buildings with separate but coordinated operations for one or two ambulances (EMS), a new "world class" Ocean Safety (Lifeguard) District base station, and areas for occasional "drive up" use by other first responders. The NSFRC would have a dedicated exit for the emergency vehicles, efficient "roll-in, roll-out" garages for the ambulance and several lifeguard trucks/jet skis; "back of the house" gravel parking areas for employee, supervisor, and guest parking; containment pads for vehicle maintenance, washdown, and fuel; and high capacity generators for emergencies.

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Under the community plan, at least 50% of the land would be preserved in open space to provide a buffer for the neighborhood and the sensitive environment of the nearby Pūpukea Marine Life Conservation District (MLCD). The NSFRC would also provide career opportunities for local youth as new EMS and OSD supervisors, staff, and trainees are hired, and popular first responder training and outreach programs are expanded on the North Shore.

The ambulance station would be staffed by Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) (trained in basic life support) and the Mobile Intensive Care Technician (MICT) or Paramedic (trained in basic and advanced life support and invasive medical techniques) who work 12-hour shifts and stay overnight in “dorms” while connected to 911 dispatch. This station would be a vital supplement (and about mid-point between) the other two existing EMS stations – Hale‘iwa and Kahuku.

The Ocean Safety Center would provide “world class” space for the “world class” Lifeguards of the North Shore District (from the Kāne‘ohe side of the Mōkapu Peninsula around Kahuku Point all the way to Ka‘ena Point). The design could feature a second floor observation deck that allows lifeguards clear views to the ocean across the highway. Each of Ocean Safety’s five operational districts is staffed by a Captain, five Lieutenants, and between 21 and 85 Ocean Safety Officers, or Lifeguards. In addition to supporting the various “satellite” facilities across the district, such as Lifeguards of the Hale‘iwa Surf Center, the new Center would provide centralized space for two trucks, jet skis, UTVs, and ATVs.

EMS and Lifeguards would have secure separate restrooms, showers, kitchen, and rest areas; and temperature-controlled locked storage for office, specialized equipment, and medical supplies. They could share training, fitness, and meeting facilities, which could also be used by the Sunset Fire Station firefighters. Space would be available for the City Emergency Management Division (DEM), which coordinates preparedness and response plans, programs, and initiatives with city, state, federal, private, corporate, and non-government entities. HPD and DOCARE would have highly visible parking areas, access to secure restrooms, a break area, and meeting facilities.

The site would be securely fenced and overseen by a security system and caretaker/manager. Limited public access would be on the North side driveway (ingress) for first-aid and emergency visits.

We hope this provides our community a clearer vision of the North Shore First Responder Center and the vital services it will provide across the North Shore. If you support this concept, please weigh in! The survey/petition will stay open for responses – please go to:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9FMGMBP> or use the QR code:



Share this link with your friends and neighbors  
More information at: [www.SaveSharksCoveAlliance.org](http://www.SaveSharksCoveAlliance.org) and our IG and FB pages. Mahalo!

## North Shore Lifeguard Association Letter to Mayor and City Council

Aloha All,

My name is Mike McHale I am an Ocean Safety Water Safety Officer II. I have been a lifeguard on the North Shore since 2004 and serve as the current President of the North Shore Lifeguard Association (“NSLA”).

I am writing to you today to show strong interest and support for the proposal of a potential EMS / Ocean Safety First Responder Center at Shark’s Cove.

The NSLA is a non-profit association created by Ocean Safety District 3 lifeguards over 25 years ago.

Our primary giveback to the North Shore community is the Junior Lifeguard program perpetuating ocean safety and awareness for our youth. The club has also for many years given scholarships for male and female athletes at both Waialua and Kahuku High Schools. In addition, our members provide CPR training to community members.

The NSLA has also been able to step in many times over the years and outfit our entire District 3 team with additional resources such as swim trunks and other safety and protective gear so that we can perform our life-saving duties to the best of our abilities.

A First Responder Center at the Shark’s Cove location will be an immense asset for both our lifeguards in the Ocean Safety Division (“OSD”) and Emergency Medical Services (“EMS”).

The community’s preferred location for the Center at Shark’s Cove will fill a much needed gap in the EMS coverage. As we all know, our community has grown rapidly over the last 15 years and is also increasingly a tourist destination year round.

I am compelled to write to you today using yesterday as a prime example. Ocean Safety and EMS had two significant near drowning cases yesterday that highlighted the importance of an additional EMS ambulance.

One drowning patient at Waimea Bay was left waiting for an EMS ambulance unit to arrive coming all the way from the Waipio ambulance station (23 miles - a 40 minute drive!). Response time is critical in ALL cases!

Having a centrally located EMS unit in our district would be of great service, especially during high surf season or other instances when Kahuku and/or Waialua ambulances may be on a call already.

In conclusion, as has been discussed in many community forums, it is widely recognized how badly OSD District 3 needs a new substation, but I’m sure many of you are aware of this. We are grateful that the Sunset Beach Community Association, the North Shore Neighborhood Board, various community organizations, and thousands of area residents have already expressed support for meeting the obvious needs of the community.

I have recently spoken with Chief Titchen on this matter and can assure you that both OSD and the NSLA are in full support and hope that this First Responder Center can one day soon become a reality.

This First Responder Center will be an invaluable asset to first responders such as lifeguards, the North Shore community residents, and the visiting tourists as well.

Thank you for your time and service.

Aloha,  
Mike McHale  
NSLA President