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YMCA of Honolulu to to put prime site near Ala Moana Center back on the market

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The YMCA of Honolulu said Friday it will put the 1.77-acre Central YMCA property across from Ala Moana Center on the market for sale, following a failed attempt to redevelop the site that ended in a confidential settlement with a private development group.

The YMCA said it will solicit proposals soon from commercial real estate companies to market the property at 401 Atkinson Drive for sale, and does not plan to keep a facility on the site.

“The decision to sell the entire Central property was a difficult one and one that the board made only after extensive research and deliberation,” Wayne Hamano, chairperson of the YMCA of Honolulu Metropolitan board of directors, said in a statement. “The decision to sell is based on the high costs associated with the continued operations and maintenance, and unaffordable renovations of a Central Y building originally built in 1951.”

Hamano also cited changes to the neighborhood around Ala Moana Center — since 2012, the ONE Ala Moana and Park Lane Ala Moana luxury condominiums have opened nearby and work has started on The Mandarin Oriental Honolulu hotel and condos across Atkinson Drive — as influencing the board’s decision, since those buildings have their own fitness centers.

The board of directors is also considering where to move the Central Y’s facilities, and said the options could include an expansion or relocation of the Y’s Kaimuki-Waiialae branch, located on 1.5 acres at 4835 Kilauea Ave., whose ground lease with Kamehameha Schools will expire in May 2026.

“Our Central YMCA facility has been such a mainstay for our community, and we are extremely grateful for the tremendous support we have received from our members over the past decades,” Michael Broderick, president and CEO of the YMCA of Honolulu, said in a statement. “While we know that some people will be disappointed that we will not build a new Central YMCA on this site, we are excited and looking forward to reallocating our assets to better serve our community as a whole.”

The YMCA of Honolulu had put the property on the market with Colliers International Hawaii in late 2010, and in April 2012 announced that Aloha Kai Development LLC and California-based MB Property Acquisitions had agreed to purchase the property for an undisclosed amount and redevelop it into a 37-



TINA YUEN

The YMCA of Honolulu said it will solicit proposals soon from commercial real estate companies to market the property at 401 Atkinson Drive, seen in this undated file photo, for sale.

story condominium tower with 117 units and a new, smaller facility for the YMCA. But the project never moved forward, and the YMCA was later awarded \$1.9 million by an arbitrator in March 2018 after years of failed negotiations with the developers.

The nonprofit organization then filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Honolulu in June to collect the money. That case was settled and dismissed in November, and the YMCA is now free to market and sell the property.

The Central Y closed its fitness center in February 2015 but has maintained the facility's low-income residential units, some of which have been used for transitional housing for homeless families and individuals.

"It has been a long and frustrating journey for our organization and our Y members, but the bright spot during these years, has been our ability to provide otherwise unsheltered children, families and individuals with a safe place to live while they are building better futures," Broderick said.

Broderick also said the YMCA will "do our best to accommodate" the Central Y's eight full- and three part-time employees after the sale is completed.

"For those who are not able to relocate to other Y branches, we will offer a financial package to eligible employees," he said.

Meanwhile, the YMCA of Honolulu said it has completed more than 50 percent of its \$15 million capital campaign, which will be used to renovate aging cabins at Camp Erdman on the North Shore, replace a trailer with a permanent building and activity court at the Waianae YMCA program center for at-risk teens and to renovate and reconfigure space at the Nuuanu Y.

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