



YMCA OF HONOLULU

YMCA of Honolulu Announces Walter Thoemmes III as Next President and CEO



(February 2, 2026 | Honolulu, Hawai'i): The YMCA of Honolulu announced today that Walter F. Thoemmes III has been selected as the organization's next President and Chief Executive Officer, effective March 3, 2026. Thoemmes was selected following a comprehensive national search that drew more than 340 applicants.

Thoemmes brings 31 years of operational and strategic leadership experience at Kamehameha Schools, including over the past decade leading commercial real estate development and master community planning efforts across Hawai'i.

As Managing Director of Kamehameha Schools Planning, Development, and Commercial Real Estate Division, Thoemmes provided vision and leadership for a \$6.08 billion real estate portfolio. His work supported Kamehameha Schools' long-term sustainability and advancing the Trust's mission of empowering Native Hawaiians in perpetuity by improving their well-being through education and creating vibrant communities where kama'āina have every opportunity to live, work, and thrive.

His planning and development work includes major projects such as SALT at Our Kaka'ako, the Flats at Pu'unui rental housing project; current redevelopment efforts at Keawalau at Waipahū, Waianuenue Mō'ili'ili, and 'Ōlauniu/Dillingham Plaza; and community master plans in Kaka'ako, Kapālama Kai, Waiawa, Mō'ili'ili, Haleiwa, He'eia, and Hawaii Kai.

Prior to serving as Managing Director, Thoemmes also served as Chief of Staff in the Office of the CEO and as Director of Facilities Development & Support, helping lead enterprise-wide priorities, legislative advocacy, and complex capital programs, including the \$450 million development of the Kamehameha Schools Maui and Hawai'i Island campuses.

Thoemmes began his career as an architect with Kimura/Ybl & Associates, where his work included notable projects such as the Kauhale Kaka'ako high-rise rental housing project and the Neal S. Blaisdell Center Exhibition Hall expansion.

Thoemmes' community work includes serving as Board Chair of the Aloha Stadium Authority, the state agency overseeing the development of the 98-acre New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District in Hālawā. He also serves on the board of INPEACE (Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture).

"Walter is the right leader for this chapter in the YMCA of Honolulu's history," said Arnold Martines, Board Chair of the YMCA of Honolulu and Chairman, President, and CEO of Central Pacific Bank. "He brings the rare combination of large-scale operational leadership, major development experience, and the ability to turn complex assets into community-serving projects that expand impact and strengthen long-term sustainability. Just as importantly, Walter is grounded in Hawai'i, trusted across sectors, and shares the YMCA's commitment to strengthening community well-being for all."

A Kalihi YMCA Connection

For Thoemmes, the YMCA's mission is also personal. Raised in Kalihi Valley, he participated in youth programs at the Kalihi YMCA, later serving as a Junior Leader and swim instructor.

"I am deeply honored to be selected to lead the YMCA of Honolulu," said Thoemmes. "I loved going to the Kalihi YMCA as a kid. It was so much fun, and it helped establish many of the core values I hold today. The YMCA has meant so much to me personally, and to our State for generations. The Y's

impact today is extensive, and the opportunities ahead are significant. I'm inspired by everyone who makes this possible, and I look forward to working with our staff, volunteers, supporters, and community partners to expand the Y's reach and impact."

Thoemmes to Lead Complex and Expanded YMCA of Honolulu

The Y operates ten YMCA locations across O'ahu: Atherton, Kaimukī-Wai'alae, Kalihi, Leeward, Mililani, Nu'uaniu, Windward, Wai'anae Coast, Central (with short-term accommodations), and Camp H.R. Erdman, a 20-acre camp on the North Shore. Its reach extends to more than 115 community sites, including afterschool programs at 60 schools, preschools, and mental and behavioral health services delivered in middle and high schools.

Thoemmes' appointment comes at a pivotal time for the YMCA of Honolulu as the organization advances key initiatives across the Association.

The YMCA is advancing the redevelopment of the historic Nu'uaniu YMCA. Plans include a new multi-story YMCA with modern fitness and wellness spaces, aquatics, expanded programs for all ages, and flexible community meeting and multipurpose spaces, along with affordable housing and space for health partners.

Key priorities across the Association also include expanding preschools, youth development, teen mental and behavioral health and leadership pathways, and well-being initiatives for all ages.

Lisa Ontai Interim CEO Leadership and Transition

Thoemmes succeeds Interim President and Chief Executive Officer Lisa Ontai, who has served in the role since July 2025. During her interim tenure, Ontai focused on organizational continuity and maintaining momentum across key strategic initiatives, including the reimagined Nu'uaniu YMCA redevelopment and related donor engagement.

Ontai will resume her position as Vice President of Mission Advancement and Marketing as part of the YMCA's senior leadership team, leading community engagement and partnerships, advocacy, and strategic communications and marketing in support of the YMCA's long-term growth.

“I am excited to welcome Walter as our next CEO,” said Ontai. “He brings not only the extraordinary expertise and experience needed to steward a complex and mission-driven organization, but also the heart of someone who grew up with the YMCA, understands its impact firsthand, and is deeply rooted in a passion for service.”

Ontai followed Greg Waibel, who served as President and CEO from 2021 until departing to assume the role of Chief Operating Officer of YMCA of the USA.

About the YMCA of Honolulu

The YMCA of Honolulu is one of Hawai‘i’s leading nonprofits, dedicated to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Serving O‘ahu since 1869, the Y ensures that people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds have opportunities to learn, grow, and thrive.

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The YMCA of Honolulu holds a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for strong fiscal management, accountability, and transparency. Learn more at www.ymcahonolulu.org.

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