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By Star-Advertiser Staff and News Services

Council clears way for air conditioning plan

Developers of a project that will use cold ocean water to produce air conditioning for buildings in downtown Honolulu said Thursday they have received from the City Council three easements needed to run pipes underground in the area.

Honolulu Seawater Air Conditioning is expected to break ground on the project before June and have it completed sometime next year.

"We are grateful for the continuous support from the various city agencies and the utility companies and look forward to our continued cooperation, together leading downtown Honolulu towards a greener future," said Bill Mahlum, company president and chief executive officer.

The company estimates that the electricity saved with the system will eliminate the need to burn 178,000 barrels of oil a year.

The system is projected to cut electricity consumption for cooling downtown buildings by 75 percent.