



# *Hawaii Modernism Context Study*

## 2. Introduction

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## 2 Introduction

Historic resources built prior to the 1930s throughout the State have been fairly well documented and inventoried. However, as tens of thousands of resources mature into the legal definition of “historic,” preservationists are faced with a deluge of undocumented resources that need to be considered. It is important to note that while the legal definition of “historic” has been 50-years or older, this is an arbitrary time frame established to ensure that enough time has passed in order to evaluate the property’s significance. Age may not be relevant while looking at the historic resources of the recent past.

Most of Hawaii’s built environment dates from the study period and the increase of population and density throughout that period had a major impact on what kinds of architecture were practiced. As the population grew and the concepts of highest and best use were introduced, density impacted lot sizes thus the movement from courts to walk up apartments to high rise apartments. Nationally, as well as in Hawaii suburbanization and the consequential support for commercial establishments, schools and other infrastructure necessities developed in vast numbers at this time.

A National Trust publication titled “Preserving Resources from the Recent Past” by Jeanne Lambin cites the following as the greatest threats to the preservation of recent past resources:

- Lack of Appreciation. Victorian era or plantation worker housing was once disparaged, and preservationists continue to debate the worthiness of recent past resources. Some of these resources replaced what preservationists fought to keep. Also, because it is familiar to all, it does not seem special and is often poorly understood.
- Alteration, Demolition and Development Pressure. Changing times and tastes have been the demise of many Modernist masterpieces especially in conjunction with the lack of appreciation. “Highest and best use” is often the dominant concept of a developer, which “necessitates” the demolition of a small walk up structure for a high rise or the replacement of a 900 sf single wall constructed ranch house with a two-story 3000 sf Spanish-Mission McMansion.
- The “50-year rule” and other local age restrictions. This is a guideline includes provisions for exceptional significance, most people disregard any property younger than 50-years simply because it is a clear boundary.

This project collected historical research on the built environment in Hawaii roughly during the “Modern” period of 1939 to 1979, with an emphasis on the years between 1947 to 1967. The report contains summary information about the architectural history, leading practitioners, urban planning, significant historic and cultural influences, and relationship to national and international movements specific to the resources of the Hawaiian Islands.

- As the focus is on the built environment, discussion on the following will be included: Principal types, styles, time periods and methods of construction
- Principal architects, landscape architects, artist, builders, craftsmen or designers.
- Impact of the architectural characteristics
- Relationship of cultural influences
- Relationship to environment

## 2.1 Background

As early as 1978, preservationists expressed concern about the multitude of resources that were constructed after World War II. Though there has been some progress with efforts to preserve resources built in the 1950s, there is still much concern over the enormous number of properties and their rate of attrition.

A 1989 article on “Preserving What’s New” noted that “There were approximately fifteen hundred McDonald’s restaurants constructed to the original design between the early 1950s and late 1960s, and fewer than five survive today [1989].” The author also believes that “there is an inverse relationship between the rate of change and the time it takes for something to be considered historic.”

The historic context for recent past resources was identified as a need in Hawaii through a series of meetings conducted by Historic Hawaii Foundation. Historic Hawaii Foundation was the lead organization for this project and the National Trust for Historic Preservation was the cooperating organization providing project funding as well as project assistance. The National Trust has established a program targeting mid-century Modernism known as “Modernism + Recent Past Program” in an effort to increase awareness of the recent past.

## 2.2 Objectives

The purpose of a Modern context statement is to provide a framework for the identification and evaluation of buildings, structures and landscapes associated with the modern movement and recent past in Hawaii. Although this is not a survey or inventory of these numerous properties, a few examples are identified in the report.

An important goal of this project is to use this report as a reference and a guide to assist Hawaii’s preservation professionals in the identification, evaluation and preservation of significant buildings, districts, sites and structures associated with this time period; and will initiate a dialogue with the community about preservation goals that will affect what the future Hawaii should look like.

The information specific to property types and styles will provide future reviewers and surveyors with a consistent framework to contextually identify and evaluate resources from this period. Another objective of the report is to provide recommendations for future efforts for the preservation of modern era resources.

## **2.3 Methodology**

A historic context statement is a document used in planning for a community's historic resources and their preservation and integration into the future physical and cultural fabric. It identifies the broad patterns of historic development of the community and identifies historic property types such as buildings, sites, structures, objects or districts, which may represent these patterns of development and provides the framework for evaluating historic significance and integrity. It is a technical document with guidelines set forth in *National Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys* and *NRB 16B: How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form* which describes the unifying thematic framework by grouping information around a common theme, geography and time period.

### **2.3.1 Scope of Project**

The methodology of work for this project falls into three major categories: background research, data analysis, and community input as discussed below.

#### **2.3.1.1 Background Research/Data Collection**

The first phase of the project involved the collection and review of documentation including the following.

- Review of existing information including documents and publications by team members and surveys done for other projects provided by Mason Architects.
- Archival research at the Hawaii State Archives, Hawaii State Library, Department of Accounting and General Services plan files, Department of Permitting and Planning plan files and records, City and County Municipal Reference Library and Archives was done to determine dates, names of architects, owners and other factual information.
- Research to understand the broader national and regional historic context of Modernism.
- Review of national standards and other modern context studies such as context statements from Aspen, Colorado; San Francisco, California; and Riverside, California.

### 2.3.1.2 Data Analysis

Though the team is familiar with resources in Hawaii, some field work was done for the purposes of identification, historic assessment, and documentation of basic character defining architectural features, as well as identification of unique features. It also served as a way for the team to put the resources in context.

- Photographs were taken from previous studies as well as the current field work. Research data was compiled and analyzed against national standards such as National Register criteria for eligibility and integrity, taking local schools of thought and local resources into consideration.
- The team consulted with a larger preservation group of experts and stakeholders organized by Historic Hawaii Foundation to have input on the analysis, as well as the input of Christine Madrid French director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Modernism Program Initiative.

### 2.3.1.3 Limitations

This context study is not intended to be a comprehensive history of Hawaii during this period, but rather a framework for determining the relative significance of properties and for evaluating their eligibility. While the team has made an effort to be as comprehensive as possible, it should be noted that the scope of work called for a "fifty-page" narrative and thus there were items discussed and noted to be possible future projects. The following were excluded by mutual agreement:

- Military history of Hawaii, though briefly noted, will be left to federal agencies to compile.
- Previous studies are mentioned as resources and not summarized, unless part of an overall summary.
- Comprehensive inventories are not included in this study, but critical ones are mentioned as recommended future studies.
- Neighbor Island travel was not included, however, census studies in the time period indicate that Honolulu's population was growing while the neighbor islands lost population and did not regain their 1940 population numbers until well into the 1970s. Thus the majority of development and built environment was on Oahu in this time period.
- This context study is focused on architectural or design significance rather than cultural significance.

## 2.4 Project team:

- **Louis Fung**  
Mr. Louis Fung, a Historic Architect, is the Principal of Fung Associates, Inc. (FAI). He has been a design professional since 1986 with comprehensive experience in architecture, historic preservation, and planning. He is responsible for all projects under Section 106/110 and Historic American Building Survey Historic American Engineering Record and meets the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards as a Historic Architect. His experience in architecture includes design, construction documents, construction inspection and management of multi-disciplinary designs. He has participated in a wide range of private, military, commercial and government projects.
- **Don Hibbard**  
Prior to coming to FAI in 2004, Dr. Don Hibbard was the administrator of the Hawaii State Historic Preservation Office and served as Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer. He is the author of several books on Hawaii's architectural history, and is most recently completing *The Buildings of Hawaii*, an architectural guidebook and history of Hawaii's built environment, which is part of the Society of Architectural Historians' Buildings of the United States series. During the past two years Dr. Hibbard has been heavily involved with architectural inventory surveys, the nomination of properties to the National Register of Historic Places, and preparation of Historic American Building Survey (HABS) and Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) reports. He has also coordinated consultation and written Memorandum of Agreements (MOA) and Programmatic Memorandum of Agreements (PMOA) for agency compliance with Section 106. Dr. Hibbard is completely familiar with historic preservation procedures and various environmental agencies/groups, having over thirty years of field experience in Hawaii. Dr. Hibbard meets the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualification Standards as an Architectural Historian.
- **William Chapman**  
Dr. William Chapman is Professor and Director of the Historic Preservation Program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (D.Phil, Oxford; M.S., Historic Preservation, Columbia) and a member of Historic Places Review Board. He is an anthropologist and historic preservationist with considerable research and teaching experience in international preservation. A former Fulbright scholar (Italy 1985, Thailand 1999, Cambodia 2002), Dr. Chapman has worked in England, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, the Caribbean, India, and throughout the continental United States. He was formerly Historian, Mid-Atlantic Region, National Park Service, and a faculty member at the School of Environmental Design, the University of Georgia. He has received numerous historic preservation awards and recognitions. Dr. Chapman authored several books and many articles on historic preservation-related topics, which have appeared in the Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology, Winterthur Portfolio, Places, Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, Archaeology, and numerous other journals.

- **Tonia Moy**  
Before joining FAI in January 2004, Ms. Tonia Moy was the Architecture Branch Chief of the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD). Ms. Moy was previously a Trustee of The Historic Hawaii Foundation. She is knowledgeable in applicable building codes, land use ordinance and other related rules and regulations, especially those that pertain to historic preservation. Ms. Moy meets the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualification Standards as an Architectural Historian. Her experience with historic preservation procedures and various environmental agencies/groups is a tremendous asset for projects of this nature. Ms. Moy was appointed an Associate in 2006 at FAI and has managed all historic projects and many of the residential projects.
- **Mayu Ohama**  
Ms. Mayu Ohama joined FAI in 2005 as an intern architect and historic preservation specialist. Ms. Ohama's previous experiences include working for other historic architects in Hawaii and on the mainland. She brings fresh insight and global perspective to historic preservation in Hawaii.