



Hawaii Modernism Context Study

6. Recommended Future Studies

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6. Recommendations for Future Activities

This study has made a first step in trying to understand the historic and architectural significance of the period 1939-1979. It contains cursory information along with broader perspectives, if available. This study is by no means comprehensive since it serves as a guide for future explorations into the multiple facets of the period and its resources. Further work can be undertaken in a number of areas.

6.1 Inventory

No comprehensive inventories of the period's different types of buildings were undertaken for this report. These studies need to be accomplished, if a complete understanding of various property types is to be gained. In prioritizing the order in which surveys shall be undertaken, several factors need to be considered:

1. which resources are most highly threatened;
2. which resources can be best protected;
3. which resources require a more comprehensive compendium of information in order to accurately evaluate their historic preservation value.

The primary mechanism in Hawaii for the protection of historic properties is through the review and compliance process as articulated in Sections 6E-8 and 6E-42, HRS, and in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. To better assist consultants and staff making evaluations on the effects projects may have on individual sites, structures, objects, buildings or districts, it would be beneficial if sufficient information was available about the context of the property to make a knowledgeable decision concerning its treatment.

The inventory and registration of state and county owned properties should be given a high priority. Section 6E-8, HRS requires state and county agencies who propose to undertake a project that could effect an historic property to obtain the concurrence of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). This means the DLNR has more direct ability to influence the preservation of government owned properties than privately owned properties. Identifying in advance the properties that should be given high preservation value, would allow the agencies administering these properties to better plan for their preservation, and allows the agencies to know where less attention to historic preservation concerns needs to occur. Inventories of government owned buildings such as City and County park restrooms, public school buildings, libraries, public housing, and government office buildings should receive high priority.

When government projects will have a broad effect upon privately held properties, the SHPD should ensure that these agencies develop historic contexts to enable the evaluation of the significance of the properties specific building type(s). The associations that the properties may have with regards to their communities' development also need to be addressed.

Of all the privately owned property types, low rise commercial buildings, including banks, shopping centers and malls, appear to be the most endangered. A priority should be given to develop an inventory of this property type, with special attention paid to the best examples in

Honolulu and elsewhere on Oahu and on the neighbor islands. A high priority should be placed on the development of an inventory of places of entertainment.

Because of their ubiquitous presence, it is difficult to readily assess the significance and preservation value of individual buildings located within post-World War II subdivisions and within entire subdivisions in general. Inventories should be undertaken to assess the integrity of subdivisions and the individual buildings within a subdivision. These inventories most likely should occur at the community level, i.e., undertake an inventory of Hawaii Kai and its development through various subdivision episodes as a whole. Buildings, and perhaps subdivision districts, which retain sufficient integrity, should be identified and evaluated in terms of the community's development and also within the larger context of real estate development in the post-war period.

Architectural significance will also need to be assessed. Due to the scale of this endeavor, it might be prudent to undertake several case studies. The information generated from such studies may form the basis for developing historic contexts for post-World War II subdivisions, which can then be extrapolated to address other areas. With this in mind, it might be useful to give a high priority to surveying and inventorying:

1. A community such as Aiea, Pearl City, Waipahu, or Kailua, all of which constituted the fastest growing areas during the 1940s-1950s period. All were developed incrementally with a variety of developers involved in the process.
2. A community such as Hawaii Kai or Mililani, which differed from the above by being developed by one owner.
3. A community developed in a tract style with limited housing designs to choose from, as compared to a community with more flexible and varied design considerations.

An inventory of low-rise walk-up apartments should be given a high priority in order to determine the extent of this resource, and to determine which buildings should be considered to have high preservation value.

High rise buildings, religious structures, and hotels appear to be less threatened than other modern period buildings, and their preservation value is easier to assess despite the absence of a comprehensive inventory. The development of inventories for these building types may be given a lower priority.

Similarly, the significance and preservation value of custom residential design is fairly easy to assess, and by its one-of-a-kind character does not significantly benefit from its placement in a larger building type context. This building type may be given a lower priority for a comprehensive inventory. Rather than inventory and it might be more enlightening to prepare inventories within the context of the work of a specific architect, which would provide a better understanding as to how a specific building embodies the characteristics associated with the architect's design proclivities.

Industrial buildings, including Butler buildings, Armstrong buildings, and tilt-ups, were not examined in this study due to time constructions. These need to be addressed, and a

comprehensive inventory should be undertaken to determine the significance and preservation value of structures within this property type.

6.2 Expanded Contexts and Documentation

As this study tried to cover a broad number of contexts, each resource type or each context can be looked at in greater depth. For example, the transportation section can be expanded to look into the effect of the H-1 bisecting neighborhoods such as Bingham Tract.

Not only should significant resources be identified and historic contexts developed to facilitate evaluation, but high integrity examples of ubiquitous forms such as tract housing and low rise apartments, whose numbers will diminish and be modified with the ensuing years, should be documented. The State Historic Preservation Office requires property owners to provide an inventory form, digital photographs (usually taken with a point and click camera) of exteriors and interiors, and a floor plan for houses which owners intend to demolish. While this information is better than no information, the buildings are recorded at the least favorable moment of their existence, when they have already been abandoned. Plus the documentation is often performed by people who are not versed in architecture and architectural history, leading to frequently conscientious, but often uneven recordation.

Professional photographic documentation projects, following large format HABS standards, should be initiated to record typical, intact houses in the Islands' various post-war neighborhoods and subdivisions, and similar projects should be pursued to record low rise apartment buildings. This will provide a record for future generations about the character of houses in which people in Hawaii dwelt during the period 1945-1979, and it may relieve some of the workload in the State Historic Preservation Division, as more post-war dwelling units are recorded prior to their demolition will be reduced.

6.3 Oral Histories

The study of the recent past is unique when compared to other periods, as some people are still alive who recall the period and may have even played a major role in its development. These first-hand sources of information are becoming scarce. Both Ed Aotani and Clifford Young died while this report was being researched and written.

A very high priority should be given to conducting oral histories with such persons as: Frank Haines, Sid Snyder, Al Rowland, Peter Hsi, Alfred Yee, Don Goo, Mitts Aruga, Hachiro Ishizu, Anson Chong, Warner Boone, Bob Fox, David Springer, members of Group 70 and Media Five, John Hara, etc. Developers and contractors should also be identified and interviewed. These people can provide critical insights into the period and better flesh out information that can not be uncovered simply through documentary research. The AIA oral history project of 1930s architects is now proving to be an invaluable resource, and a similar project of 1950s-1970s architects will have the same importance to future researchers.

6.4 Education

Education of the general public, design professionals and public officials is a crucial component. Public policy makers should be aware of the incredible extent and sheer number of resources that will need assessment. Owners and developers should be made aware of the significance of these resources. Though Mid-Century Modern has become vogue with the clientele of places such as Design Within Reach, there are numerous resources that are not high design, but tell the stories of the era that continue to be under appreciated.

Activities need to be undertaken and publications supported which make the public more aware of the historic significance of buildings from the recent past. An appreciation and understanding of these properties needs to be instilled within the general public and governmental decision makers, and the importance of protecting and preserving this most recent legacy of earlier times needs to be communicated.