

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Mother Waldron Playground

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: Bounded by Coral, Halekauwila, Pohukaina, and Cooke streets

City or town: Honolulu State: Hawaii County: Honolulu

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_ statewide      \_\_\_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_ A      \_\_\_ B      \_\_\_ C      \_\_\_ D

<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Title :</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	sites
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	structures
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/outdoor recreation

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/outdoor recreation

LANDSCAPE/park

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Moderne

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE, ASPHALT, STONE

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Mother Waldron Playground is located between Halekauwila, Cooke, Pohukaina, and Coral streets. It is a modest park constructed in 1937 as a 1.76 acre (77,000 square feet) playground; it has been substantially altered from its original design since its initial construction, most recently in the 1990s. Built elements within the park include a comfort station and remaining portions of a low wall that encompasses the original park. The built components contain reserved design elements of the Art Moderne style, including a horizontal emphasis, rounded corners and piers, and streamlined appearance. Mother Waldron Playground has undergone several major alterations since its initial construction, including removal and replacement of some of the park's original features, and subsequent large expansions to compensate for other changes. The playground's setting just Diamond Head (southeast) of downtown Honolulu has transitioned from a mixed residential, commercial, and industrial area at the time of the park's construction into a major light industrial area now redeveloping into a mixed-use district.

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## **Narrative Description**

### Architectural and Landscape Description

The playground has an essentially rectangular footprint and is divided into two halves: a large, Diamond Head (southeastern) grassy area and an Ewa (northwestern) paved area with an oval grassy center surrounded by a perimeter wall. A centrally located comfort station and low wall divides the two halves. Additional green space adjacent to the park is created by Coral Street's closure to vehicular traffic.

### Ewa, Paved Area

The paved area is the original section of the park. It contains low walls, benches, a comfort station, and covered walkways all constructed of concrete brick. The brick has been painted tan throughout the park.

The paved area's landscaping consists largely of asphalt. Sandstone flagstone is used below the covered walkways and in the area in front of the comfort station's Ewa (northwest, Coral Street) elevation. The round elevated platform on the Ewa elevation is paved with the same flagstone. Ewa of this comfort station is an oval, grassy area. At the opening to Coral Street, the same sandstone flagstone is used and surrounded on either side by asphalt. Monkeypod and Royal Poinciana trees are found within the paved area as well as along the Coral Street perimeter wall. The paved area on the park's makai (southwest, Pohukaina Street) end contains two volleyball courts and one basketball court. The paved area on the park's mauka (northeast, Halekauwila Street) end contains small playground equipment. Clay brick, rather than the pervasive concrete brick, is used to border the sidewalk outside and around the paved park as well as provide paving at each convex curve entrance to the park.

### *Walls*

Mother Waldron Playground's paved area is surrounded by an approximately three foot high perimeter wall. The wall is roughly nine inches thick. Along Coral Street, this wall zig-zags forming triangular points and provides a wide opening into the park. This wall is original. On the park's mauka and makai sides, the walls form rectangular zig-zags. Of these wall sections, neither are in their original locations nor contain original materials. The entire perimeter wall on Coral, Halekauwila, and Pohukaina streets is divided into three sections separated by two rows of recessed brick. The middle section of wall is perforated with alternating vertical and horizontal openings. Concrete coping on top of the wall consists of alternating zig-zag and straight edges and is slightly recessed from the wall's edges. These zig-zags hint at modest Art Deco stylistic influences, though the low wall expresses heavy influence from the streamlined, Art Moderne style. Three of the wall's four corners are convex curves with entrances into the park from the sidewalk. These entrances are anchored on either side by rounded piers. Rounded piers are also found on the park side of Coral Street's zig-zag wall junctures. The perimeter wall's Diamond

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Head corner at Halekauwila Street is squared, does not allow access into the park, and is not original.

A lower, one foot high wall topped with terracotta tile runs along the paved area's Diamond Head border. This low wall connects to the higher wall at Halekauwila Street, connects to benches at the comfort station, then continues on the makai side of the comfort station before turning toward the open grassy area of the park and coming to an end.

### *Benches*

Benches within Mother Waldron Playground are found in the alcoves created by the perimeter wall as well as in the middle of the park. These seating areas are fixed, permanent, built-in park fixtures. Along Coral Street, the triangular alcoves are filled with curved benches, whereas straight benches are found along Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets and the low wall separating the paved and grassy areas. The curved benches are original while the straight benches along Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets are not original. Two straight benches are found in the middle of the paved area and are original to the playground. Curved benches also follow beneath the comfort station's curved covered walkways, separating the paved area from the grassy area. All benches are narrower at the base than at the top, forming a triangular profile. The benches are topped with the same terracotta tile found on the park's low wall.

### *Comfort Station*

The comfort station consists of a rectangular building flanked on either side by a curved covered walkway. The covered walkways' curves follow along the paved area's central grassy oval. The comfort station is single-story, low and horizontal, with a flat roof lined with zig-zag coping identical to that found on the perimeter walls. It is built of concrete bricks. Two rows of recessed concrete brick form horizontal lines across all of the building's facades near the water table and roofline. The comfort station displays influences of the streamlined, Art Moderne form and style.

At the comfort station's Ewa elevation, a central alcove lined with vertical pilasters forms the backdrop of a round, elevated platform. On either side of this alcove are open-air windows with vertical concrete grilles. The recessed row near the roofline intersects with the covered walkways' curved, flat roof. These covered walkways are supported by round columns with a horizontal band of recessed brick at the same level as the recessed brick at the comfort station's water table. The covered walkways' flat roofs project slightly over the piers. Where the covered walkways intersect with the Ewa elevation, a rounded wall the width of the covered walkway columns supports the walkway's roof and attaches to the building facade. These walls also help shield the entrances to the restrooms.

At the comfort station's mauka and makai elevations are open entrances to men's and women's restrooms. Drinking fountains are found in small oval alcoves near the entrances. Above the restroom entrances, the covered walkways' roofs intersect with the recessed row of brick near the roofline. On both the mauka and makai elevations, covered walkway columns abut the

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comfort station. Diamond Head of each abutting covered walkway column is one small window identical to those found on the comfort station's Ewa elevation.

At the building's Diamond Head elevation, a small room projects from the center of the building. A small semi-circular roof projects from the top row of recessed brick to cover the entrance to the small room. The entrance is found on the makai side and is shielded from view by a short wall resembling the park's perimeter wall. This wall shares the same coping as the perimeter walls but is not perforated and contains no rows of recessed concrete brick. The projecting room's Diamond Head elevation also contains no recessed brick at the water table level. On the projecting room's mauka and Diamond Head elevations are two large vent openings covered by a metal grate. Four windows identical to those on the comfort station's Ewa elevation are found on the Diamond Head elevation, two on either side of the projecting room.

The comfort station's interior consists of two nearly-identical restrooms. Both contain one sink, several stalls, and a partially-enclosed changing area. The men's room contains a single urinal. The concrete walls and stall dividers are clad with white tile to the height of the stall walls. Above the tile the walls are painted. The stall doors are wood. The restroom floors are concrete. Although no plans for the comfort station interior were found, these interiors likely coincide with the comfort station's 1968 renovations.

#### Diamond Head, Grassy Area

Mother Waldron Playground's Diamond Head, rectangular grassy area was added to the park following Halekauwila Street's realignment in 1991-1992. Bound by Halekauwila Street, Cooke Street, Pohukaina Street and the original 1937 playground, this area contains no buildings, walls, benches, paving, or playground equipment. A brick, almond-shaped marker topped by a cast iron fence sits at the grassy area's corner at Halekauwila and Cooke streets. This marker is labeled *kapu*. *Kapu* means "forbidden" or "sacred," and the marker encircles an area where human remains were reinterred following Kakaako improvement projects in the 1990s. Royal Poinciana trees line the grassy area along Cooke Street with monkeypod trees clustered at the tree line's ends.

#### Former Coral Street Area

Mother Waldron Playground's Ewa area was added to the park around 1994-1995.<sup>1</sup> The area, formerly a portion of Coral Street, was closed between Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets following the completion of the 1991-1992 street realignment project. At both the mauka and makai ends of the former Coral Street area, trees were planted. Grass replaced the street pavement, but a small rectangular section of pavement remains near the former Coral Street entrance to Mother Waldron Playground.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Michael N. Scarfone, Executive Director, Hawaii Community Development Authority, to Dona L. Hanaike, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation, December 14, 1994.

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Alterations

Mother Waldron Playground has undergone major changes since its original construction. According to its Hawaii Register of Historic Places nomination form, completed in 1988, initial changes included renovations to the comfort station in 1968 and resurfacing the area in 1978. At that time, the park was bounded by Lana Lane on its Diamond Head border. The large grassy area now a part of the park contained commercial, residential, and industrial buildings for the majority of the playground's history.

In the 1980s, the Hawaii Community Development Authority (HCDA) began plans to help revitalize the industrial Kakaako area. Included in these community development plans were road reconfigurations aimed at improving Kakaako traffic patterns. In 1991-1992, the HCDA undertook street improvements along Halekauwila Street, among others. This realignment of Halekauwila Street required a taking of approximately 12,700 square feet of Mother Waldron Playground on the playground's mauka end; this represents approximately 17% of the original park that is no longer included in the present park.<sup>2</sup> To mitigate the taking and the subsequent diminished park size, the developed area Diamond Head of Lana Lane was removed. Lana Lane, separating the playground from the developed area, was also removed. Mother Waldron Playground was subsequently enlarged by approximately 54,000 square feet Diamond Head.<sup>3</sup> Although this 54,000 square foot area was officially designated for future use as part of Mother Waldron Playground, Coral Street's closure on the park's Ewa side was never officially considered part of the park until the mid-1990s when improvements were made to the former Coral Street area. This final change to Mother Waldron Playground's boundaries grew the park by an additional 25,800 square feet.

As a result of the taking, the mauka end of the playground lost its basketball court, perimeter wall, and benches. A perimeter wall and benches nearly identical to the original were reconstructed along Halekauwila Street, but the wall now connects to the original low wall topped by terracotta tile that remains extant; the tile was not used on the replacement wall. There is no longer a convex curved entrance at the original playground's Halekauwila Street and Lana Lane corner due to the alterations. The original court and play area was replaced with modern playground equipment.

Along Pohukaina Street, road widening related to district improvements forced the perimeter wall and benches to be removed and reconstructed approximately five to ten feet inside the playground's original boundary. To open Mother Waldron Playground to its newly-acquired 54,000 square feet Diamond Head, a higher wall running along Lana Lane and intersecting with the rear of the comfort station was removed and never replaced. The original handball court was also removed and never replaced.

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<sup>2</sup> Documentation completed in 1985 stated that 8,400 square feet of Mother Waldron Playground would be removed due to Halekauwila Street's realignment; however, following realignment, plat maps indicate approximately 12,700 square feet was removed.

<sup>3</sup> State of Hawaii, et al., *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Kakaako Community Development District Plan* (Honolulu: Hawaii Community Development Authority, 1985), IV-45.



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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY  
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION  
ARCHITECTURE  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1937 – 1945  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1937  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Bent, Harry Sims  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Mother Waldron Playground in Honolulu, Hawaii, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. It is significant under Criterion A in the area of social history and entertainment/recreation for its association with the organized play and playground movement in the United States during the early twentieth century, and under Criterion C in the areas of architecture and landscape architecture for its Art Moderne playground design. The period of significance spans from 1937, when construction commenced, until 1945, when the playground movement that supported supervised play largely ceased and Honolulu's Board of Parks and Recreation was formed to rehabilitate Oahu's parks following World War II.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Historical Narrative

Hawaii History

*Early History*

Polynesian settlers arrived in the isolated and uninhabited Hawaiian Islands as early as 300 A.D., with subsequent migrations taking place from the eleventh century through fourteenth century. Traversing the Pacific Ocean, these settlers brought with them a traditional land-based management system comprised of chiefs and commoners, as well as staple crops like wild ginger, gourds, taro, sugarcane, coconut, and sweet potato. A distinct Hawaiian culture evolved over time, celebrating unique stories and deities, and keeping order through a *kapu* governance system based on a strict code of conduct. By the time English Captain James Cook came to the islands in 1778, the islands' population was estimated as high as 300,000. Captain Cook named the islands the Sandwich Islands in honor of the Earl of Sandwich.<sup>4</sup>

*Hawaiian Kingdom*

Originally existing as a collection of independently ruled districts, the Hawaiian Islands were united as a single kingdom in 1810 by King Kamehameha I. Contact with Western sailing vessels gave the king access to weaponry enabling him to defeat his rivals. The king's death in 1819 led to the *kapu* system's demise, and Protestant missionaries, whalers, and traders arrived

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Joesting, *Hawaii: An Uncommon History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1972), 13, 15, 27.

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in the islands bringing Christianity and spreading disease that decimated the local population. The Hawaiian Kingdom, recognized as a sovereign nation, entered into treaties with foreign nations; the first such treaty with the United States took place in 1826. In 1840 Hawaii signed its first constitution, creating a government structure that included a representative body. Westerners continued flocking to the islands, bringing changes to Hawaii's economic structure and profiting from its lands and ideal trade route location. Sugarcane's rise as Hawaii's staple crop increased demand for labor, bringing immigrant workers from across the world to Hawaii.

### *Annexation*

By 1885, a group of non-native businessmen formed the Hawaiian League and began discussing Hawaii annexation. The group pressured King Kalakaua to sign the Bayonet Constitution, stripping much of the king's authority and transferring it to a legislature comprised of a Hawaiian League majority. The king relented and signed the Bayonet Constitution on July 6, 1887. In 1891, Queen Liliuokalani assumed the throne and unsuccessfully attempted to repeal the Bayonet Constitution. This power struggle resulted in the Hawaiian League's overthrow of the monarchy; this coup was aided by United States Minister to Hawaii John L. Stevens and United States troops. Hearing of the overthrow, President Grover Cleveland ordered an investigation and called for the reestablishment of Hawaii's monarchy. Hawaii's Provisional Government instead pushed for United States annexation but failed to receive the required two-thirds vote in the United States Senate.

When William McKinley became president in 1897, Hawaii's annexation became a priority. The 1898 Joint Resolution annexed Hawaii and the 1900 Hawaiian Organic Act officially made Hawaii a United States territory. Hawaii became the fiftieth state in 1959.

### Kakaako

The Kakaako district is situated between Honolulu and Waikiki on Oahu. The area long existed as swampland, and under the rule of King Kamehameha I, was used for fishing, canoe landings, salt production, cultivating taro, and religious practices. Although Honolulu Harbor experienced rapid growth through the 1800s, few lived in Kakaako during this time. In 1848, much of Hawaii's lands were turned over to private ownership in what was called the Great Mahele; the land in Kakaako became part of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop estate. By 1876, however, a government map of Oahu labeled the area as the "Kakaako Salt Works" with no major roads passing through the area. Roads between Honolulu and Waikiki bypassed Kakaako to the north. A decade later, Kakaako obtained an "Immigration Depot" and was the location of a battery, but otherwise little development occurred in the area.<sup>5</sup>

Continued growth in Honolulu eventually forced Kakaako's transition from a sparsely populated industrial area into a densely populated residential and commercial district. Demand for land near Honolulu Harbor led to the shallow reef adjacent to Kakaako being filled in and developed,

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<sup>5</sup> Oahu Government Survey 1876, Registered Map No. 1380 (Hawaii Land Survey Division); Wall, W. A., Honolulu and Vicinity 1887, Hawaiian Government Survey (Library of Congress).

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expanding the land comprising Kakaako. Now-defunct Fort Armstrong was constructed on this infill near the mouth of Honolulu Harbor. Eventually, large tracts of Kakaako land held by the Bishop and Curtis Perry Ward estates were subdivided. With the Honolulu Iron Works and Hawaiian Tuna Packers establishing businesses in Kakaako, other small enterprises soon followed. Residents quickly arrived: Hawaiian, Japanese, Portuguese, Filipino, and Puerto Rican families all found a home in Kakaako. Largely residing within their own housing “camps,” these varying cultural groups lived and worked side-by-side in Kakaako, creating what has been referred to as a microcosm of Hawaii.<sup>6</sup>

By the mid-twentieth century, Kakaako’s population began to decline as residential areas slowly yielded to Kakaako’s current industrial uses. The area also fell into disrepair, and efforts were made by the HCDA to improve roadway infrastructure within Kakaako, including realignment of Halekauwila Street.<sup>7</sup> Future plans for Kakaako include increased residential housing units, repopulating an area that was once a thriving community.

### The Playground Movement

Playgrounds developed out of concern for the poor, aiming to help mold children and young adults into law-abiding citizens. Directors were hired to organize activities at the playgrounds, instilling a sense of order to the parks. This early urban reform movement was also seen as a means to help recent immigrants assimilate into American culture. The earliest playgrounds were developed by private investors who built these spaces for public use in the 1880s. In the following decades, cities took a greater role in providing public playgrounds and recreation areas for their residents. The 1906 Playground Association of America aimed to promote physical and mental well-being through playgrounds across the country and sent members to assess select cities’ particular recreational needs. By the 1930s, many cities had created full-fledged recreation departments to deal with recreation management and operations.

Honolulu’s public playground development followed the national pattern and was promoted early on by the women leaders of the Free Kindergarten and Children’s Aid Association. The group established the first public playground in Chinatown at Beretania and Smith streets in 1911. Over the years, the organization functioned as Honolulu’s recreation department until the city’s Recreation Commission was created in 1922 through the efforts of Henry Stoddard Curtis. Curtis, a former secretary of the Playground Association of America, surveyed Honolulu and urged the city to create new parks and playgrounds. Honolulu established a park board in 1931, hired Harry Sims Bent as park architect in 1933, and by 1936, forty playgrounds and social centers were supervised by the Recreation Commission.

Much of Honolulu’s growth in park, playground, and recreational facilities, including Mother Waldron Playground, can be attributed to increased federal assistance from New Deal programs in response to the Great Depression. Both the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA)

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<sup>6</sup> Marsha Gibson, *Kaka’ako As We Knew It* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> State of Hawaii, et al., *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Kakaako Community Development District Plan* (Honolulu: Hawaii Community Development Authority, 1985); Austin, Tsutsumi, and Associates, Inc., *Kakaako Traffic Study* (Honolulu: Hawaii Community Development Authority, 1991).

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and the Civil Works Administration (CWA) provided manpower for Honolulu's park construction initiative. Additional manpower came by way of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the National Youth Administration (NYA), which allowed Honolulu to employ playground directors.

Playgrounds did not exist as places where children were free to play on their own. Play existed not only for healthy development, but also as an educational tool that required organization and supervision. Thus, playground directors were employed to monitor the children's activities and act as a role model. The director helped organize team games, schedule activities, and restrict playground access to bullies. Through their various activities, playgrounds and recreation centers were seen as alternative choices to youth gangs, delinquency, or wasted time.<sup>8</sup>

Following World War II, the playground movement largely ceased, as child development experts began supporting unstructured play as more beneficial to children's development. Supervised play at parks and playgrounds as it existed prior to the war largely ceased. Honolulu's Parks Board merged with the Recreation Commission to form the Board of Public Parks and Recreation in 1946. The new board was tasked to rehabilitate Oahu's damaged parks.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the 1940s, American playgrounds began turning their focus to playground equipment aimed to allow free play and imagination rather than supervised play supported by recreation leaders.<sup>10</sup>

### Harry Sims Bent

Harry Sims Bent, Mother Waldron Playground's architect, was born in Socorro, New Mexico, in 1896. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, Harry Sims Bent began his career working for prominent New York architectural firm Bertram Goodhue Associates. Bent's early work consisted primarily of building projects in the Los Angeles, California area, including the Los Angeles Central Library and several buildings at the California Institute of Technology.

In the late 1920s, Bent arrived in Honolulu assigned with supervising construction of the Academy of Arts as a representative and "resident architect" of Bertram Goodhue Associates. Following the Academy of Art's completion, Bent remained in Hawaii, first acquiring work through Bertram Goodhue Associates but later for his own independent practice.

Bent originally volunteered his time working on plans for the Honolulu Park Board in the 1930s, but ultimately worked on nearly all projects undertaken by the Board up through 1939. He was considered one of the most talented architects in Hawaii in the late 1920s-30s, with prominent Bertram Goodhue Associates and independent works including the C. Brewer Building,

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<sup>8</sup> Robert R Weyeneth and Ann K. Yoklavich, *1930s Parks and Playgrounds in Honolulu: an Historical and Architectural Assessment* (Honolulu: Department of Parks and Recreation, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Ann K. Yoklavich, *Overview of Historic Honolulu Parks* (Honolulu: Department of Parks and Recreation, 1987), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Susan G. Solomon, *American Playgrounds: Revitalizing Community Space* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 22.

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Hanahauoli School, the Pineapple Research Institute at the University of Hawaii, and several residences.<sup>11</sup>

Bent's first task for the Honolulu Park Board was the Ala Moana Park project in 1933. The park's designed features included the canal bridge, entrance portals, sports pavilion, banyan court, and lawn bowling green. Other Bent park projects included Mother Waldron Playground, Kawanakoa Playground, Ala Wai Clubhouse, the Haleiwa Beach Park structures, and the Lanakila Park comfort station. Utilizing popular Art Moderne and Art Deco design elements, he aimed to create a modern look for his park work, a break from typical park and playground design. Bent incorporated contemporary design aesthetics into his park plans, while earlier playground examples addressed only functionality.

Bent returned to the mainland around 1940, and settled in Pasadena, California, where he continued his landscape design work. Major works during his post-Hawaii period included the landscape plan for Hancock Park in Los Angeles and the master plan for the Los Angeles County Arboretum. Bent died in Pasadena on March 19, 1959.

Margaret "Mother" Waldron

Margaret "Mother" Waldron was born on August 12, 1873, in Honolulu of mixed Hawaiian and Irish heritage. Her career began at Pohukaina School where she taught the fourth grade. Mother Waldron's time outside of school was spent as a volunteer playground director at Atkinson Park and welfare worker in Kakaako. Her duties included coaching boys' football and baseball and teaching girls and women household duties and jam-making.

For her fiftieth birthday, the boys and girls of Kakaako gave Mother Waldron a pin bearing the word "mother." The pin became Mother Waldron's most prized possession. Mother Waldron was credited with nearly single-handedly ridding Kakaako of its gangs and turning their members into law-abiding citizens. She helped transform the district's unpleasant reputation and would be greeted with "Aloha Mother" throughout Kakaako.<sup>12</sup>

Margaret Waldron died at St. Francis Hospital on May 8, 1936, and was buried on May 10, Mother's Day that year.<sup>13</sup>

Mother Waldron Playground

Mother Waldron Playground was originally a 1.76 acre site bounded by Coral, Halekauwila, and Pohukaina streets and Lana Lane on a parcel that the 1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance map noted contained the City and County Stables. Honolulu acquired the parkland in 1930 and 1931 through purchases and deeds from the territory of Hawaii. After several years, the Park Board

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<sup>11</sup> Steve Salis, "Playful Architecture," *Hawaii Architect* (June 1985): 12-13.

<sup>12</sup> "Guava Class at Kakaako is Waldron Plan," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, February 27, 1930, 4.

<sup>13</sup> "Death Claims Mrs. Waldron, Friend of Poor," *Honolulu Advertiser*, May 8, 1936, 1.

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approved and implemented Harry Sims Bent's plans for the playground in 1936. WPA labor was used to construct the park.

The site of the future playground was proposed to be named in 1930 for Margaret "Mother" Waldron, but she refused the honor.<sup>14</sup> Her name was given to the park following her death in 1936. Costing approximately \$50,000 to construct, Mother Waldron Playground opened September 20, 1937 to much fanfare, including a performance by the Royal Hawaiian Band.<sup>15</sup>

### *Original Appearance of Mother Waldron Playground*

Bent planned the playground following his successful design features at Ala Moana Park, implementing contemporary design elements reflecting the Art Moderne style. The symmetrical playground, situated in a dense residential, commercial, and industrial area, was designed to emphasize utility as well as beauty. Bent used concrete bricks to construct Mother Waldron Playground's walls, benches, and comfort station.

A perimeter wall delineated the playground boundaries along Coral, Pohukaina, and Halekauwila streets and Lana Lane. The wall contained horizontal and vertical perforated openings and was comprised of several brick courses, with some courses recessed to create horizontal bands. Each of the park's corners contained a convex curve entry with rounded piers anchoring the walls' ends. Along Coral Street, the wall was executed in a triangular zig-zag form and opened to Coral Street, while Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets provided squared zig-zag walls. Lana Lane's wall was straight, did not zig-zag, and contained no horizontal bands or perforations. The entire perimeter wall was topped by recessed concrete coping with alternating straight and zig-zag edges.

Laid out symmetrically, the park's mauka end was to be used by younger children while the makai end was to be used by older children. An oval, grassy area and comfort station divided the two halves at the playground's center. The park utilized an Art Moderne style that was increasing in popularity during the time, yet seldom used for parks and playgrounds. Both sides contained volleyball, basketball, and shuffleboard courts. The mauka end contained swings and seesaws, while the makai end contained handball courts.

Bent's central Art Moderne feature was a comfort station that employed a streamlined and unornamented facade, rounded corners and columns, and covered walkways curving away from the comfort station. The comfort station contained men's and women's restrooms, drinking fountains at the entrances of both restrooms, and changing areas inside. At the comfort station's center, a raised and rounded platform provided an outdoor stage area with a pilaster-lined alcove backdrop. The stage, its surrounding area, and floor beneath the covered walkway were paved with the same sandstone flagstone found at the park's Coral Street entrance.

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<sup>14</sup> "Playground Given Name of Pioneer," *Honolulu Advertiser*, February 19, 1930, 1.

<sup>15</sup> "Waldron Playground—Kakaako Beauty Spot," *Honolulu Advertiser*, September 20, 1937, 5; "Playground to Open Monday," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, September 13, 1937, 12; "\$50,000 Mother Waldron Park Officially Opened," *Honolulu Advertiser*, September 21, 1937, 1.



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Park benches topped with terracotta tile were found within the perimeter wall in alcoves created by the wall's zig-zag as well as in the middle of each play area. Most benches were straight, but the benches along the Coral Street wall curved to fit their spaces. An additional low wall topped with terracotta was located beneath the comfort station's covered walkway, running parallel to the higher wall along Lana Lane. Trees were planted in openings created by the perimeter wall's zig-zag shape, providing shade to the park's users.<sup>16</sup>

### *Mother Waldron Playground's Use of Contemporary Architectural Styles*

Harry Sims Bent's design for Mother Waldron Playground reflected heavy influence from the streamlined Art Moderne style popular at the time. Art Moderne emphasized horizontal lines, flat roofs, smooth surfaces, and curvilinear edges. Art Moderne and its counterpart, Art Deco, which utilized vertical lines and geometric patterns, were seen as a rejection of classical architectural themes. Both design motifs embraced architectural elements deemed appropriate for the modern era. Bent was inspired by these national architectural trends, and desired to create a playground that was viewed as a contemporary design expression, moving beyond mere playground utility.<sup>17</sup>

### *Changes to Mother Waldron Playground*

According to the 1988 Hawaii Register of Historic Places nomination form that included Mother Waldron Playground, renovations were made to Mother Waldron Playground's comfort station in 1968. The form does not state the extent of the renovations; a visual inspection indicated that no substantial alterations occurred, as many original features and finishes remained intact. Additionally, the Department of Parks and Recreation resurfaced the playground in 1978.<sup>18</sup> In 1991-1992, Halekauwila Street was realigned through Mother Waldron Playground, removing approximately 12,700 square feet of the original park's mauka end and a small portion along Pohukaina Street. To mitigate this taking, the city added approximately 54,000 square feet of Mother Waldron Playground and removed Lana Lane greatly enlarging the park. The expansion included extending the park Diamond Head, removing the park's bordering wall along Lana Lane, and reconstructing the park's perimeter walls along Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets.<sup>19</sup> In 1994-1995, Coral Street was closed between Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets and included in the expansion of Mother Waldron Playground, adding approximately 25,800 square feet to the park. These additions are now considered non-contributing sites within the greater Mother Waldron Playground site.

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<sup>16</sup> Research did not provide the specific varieties of trees originally planted at Mother Waldron Playground.

<sup>17</sup> Weyeneth and Yoklavich, *1930s Parks and Playgrounds in Honolulu*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Mother Waldron Playground, City & County of Honolulu Art Deco Parks Hawaii Register of Historic Places nomination form, April 20, 1988.

<sup>19</sup> See above Architectural and Landscape Description: Alterations.

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### *Prior Documentation of Mother Waldron Playground*

Mother Waldron Playground was listed in the Hawaii Register of Historic Places on June 9, 1988, as an element of the thematic group “City & County of Honolulu Art Deco Parks,” prior to the extensive 1990s changes.

The playground was documented on a Determination of Eligibility form by Mason Architects, Inc. in 2008. This documentation assessed the property as eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C; the Hawaii State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) concurred with this finding.

This nomination exists as part of the legal requirements in the *Programmatic Agreement Among the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, The Hawaii State Historic Preservation Officer, The United States Navy, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project in the City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii*.<sup>20</sup>

Information discovered while performing research for this nomination revealed substantial changes that occurred in the playground in the 1990s that were not described in the 2008 Determination of Eligibility form. This nomination considers those changes.

### Significance Evaluation

Mother Waldron Playground is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the national playground movement, which aimed to provide supervised play and character-molding opportunities. The property correlates with the rise of playground construction in urban areas throughout the United States.

Mother Waldron Playground is not eligible under Criterion B. Although the park is named in honor of Margaret “Mother” Waldron, the property is not associated with her productive life or her lasting contributions to the Kakaako community.

This property is also eligible under Criterion C for its architectural and landscape design by Harry Sims Bent. The property displays a streamlined Art Moderne appearance with some Art Deco elements, a modern approach and a display of Harry Sims Bent’s desire to create a pleasing environment for the park’s users. Contributing features to Mother Waldron Playground include the remaining original Art Moderne playground site and the streamlined comfort station building. Non-contributing features include an approximately 1.5 acre site nearly doubling the size of the remaining Mother Waldron Playground original site as well as the former Coral Street area. These non-contributing sites became an extension of Mother Waldron Playground

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<sup>20</sup> *Programmatic Agreement Among the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, The Hawaii State Historic Preservation Officer, The United States Navy, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project in the City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii*, (January 2011).

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following Halekauwila Street improvements in 1991-1992 and continued Kakaako district improvements through 1994-1995. Still, the retention of the playground's prominent Harry Sims Bent designed features, including the zig-zag wall and comfort station, allows Mother Waldron Park to be eligible under Criterion C.

The property retains its original historic function; thus, its period of significance for Mother Waldron Playground spans from its construction date in 1937 until 1945, when supervised play largely ceased and Honolulu's Board of Parks and Recreation was formed to rehabilitate Oahu's parks following World War II.

### *Social History*

Mother Waldron Playground is associated with the playground movement across the United States and Honolulu's need for recreational facilities within urban areas. Playgrounds were viewed as a means to reform urban youth and help create law-abiding citizens through structured play.

### *Entertainment/Recreation*

Mother Waldron Playground provided recreational facilities for urban-dwelling youth. The park did not allow children to play freely; instead, belief systems at the time required organized play for children overseen by a playground director.

### *Architecture and Landscape Architecture*

Mother Waldron Playground is an example of Harry Sims Bent's architecture and landscape architecture work. At the time, Bent acted as the Honolulu Park Board's chief designer, planning parks and playgrounds throughout the 1930s. His Art Moderne with Art Deco design represented a modern approach for Mother Waldron Playground. Bent's design fulfilled the needs required by "organized play" by dividing the park into two halves for different age groups and also providing a comfort station for users. The park demonstrates Bent's desire to create a functional yet aesthetically pleasing urban playground.

### Period of Significance

The period of significance for Mother Waldron Playground spans from 1937, when construction commenced, until 1945, when the playground movement that supported supervised play largely ceased and Honolulu's Board of Parks and Recreation was formed to rehabilitate Oahu's parks following World War II.

### Integrity Evaluation

Mother Waldron Playground retains a moderate level of integrity of location. Original portions of the playground remain in place, but other areas originally associated with the playground are no longer part of the site, and other areas not historically part of the playground have been added.

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The playground has a low level of integrity of materials, design, and workmanship. Halekauwila Street's realignment and the widening of Pohukaina Street have compromised the park's design, removing over 12,700 square feet of the original park boundaries and demolishing and replacing original features, diminishing the integrity of workmanship and materials. However, although many original features of the park have been removed and replaced, the playground retains a modest amount of original features, including most of the zig-zag wall and the comfort station, to demonstrate a low integrity of materials and workmanship. Mother Waldron Playground does not retain integrity of setting outside of the park; within the park open spaces and a general playground appeal contribute to a moderate level of integrity of setting. The Kakaako area has transitioned over time from a mix-use commercial and residential district to a largely industrial area. Mother Waldron Playground is now surrounded by these industrial buildings. Mother Waldron Playground retains its integrity of feeling as an Art Moderne-designed playground and its integrity of association with the early-1900s playground movement. Therefore, the playground retains integrity of feeling and association.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

“\$50,000 Mother Waldron Park Officially Opened.” *Honolulu Advertiser*, September 21, 1937.

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“Playground Given Name of Pioneer.” *Honolulu Advertiser*, February 19, 1930.

“Playground to Open Monday.” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, September 13, 1937.

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Salis, Steve. "Playful Architecture." *Hawaii Architect* (June 1985): 12-13.

State of Hawaii. Oahu Government Survey 1876, Registered Map No. 1380. Hawaii Land Survey Division, 1876.

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"Waldron Playground-Kakaako Beauty Spot." *Honolulu Advertiser*, September 20, 1937.

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Yoklavich, Ann K. *Overview of Historic Honolulu Parks*. Honolulu: Department of Parks and Recreation, 1987.

Weyeneth, Robert R., and Ann K. Yoklavich. *1930s Parks and Playgrounds in Honolulu: an Historical and Architectural Assessment*. Honolulu: Department of Parks and Recreation, 1987.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

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Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 3.76

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 21.299251 | Longitude: -157.858407 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |

**Or**

### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

See Map Attachment

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**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Mother Waldron Playground's boundary includes the entire area presently called Mother Waldron Playground. This footprint includes a portion of the original playground, its Diamond Head expansion, and the former Coral Street area between Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets. Although the playground's size was altered in the 1990s, these changes did not affect the playground's use as a public playground. This boundary corresponds to the boundary concurred to by the Hawaii State Historic Preservation Division in an earlier 2008 eligibility assessment, despite 1990s changes to the playground.

The boundary encompasses all of the remaining original resources and features that comprise the property, as well as more recent additions. The National Register boundary has been prepared in accordance with guidelines established by the National Register Bulletin, "Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties."<sup>21</sup>

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Cultural Resources Team  
organization: Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation  
street & number: 1099 Alakea Street, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
city or town: Honolulu state: Hawaii zip code: 96813  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
telephone: (808) 566-2299  
date: 2/1/2013 (Boundary maps updated February 11, 2022)

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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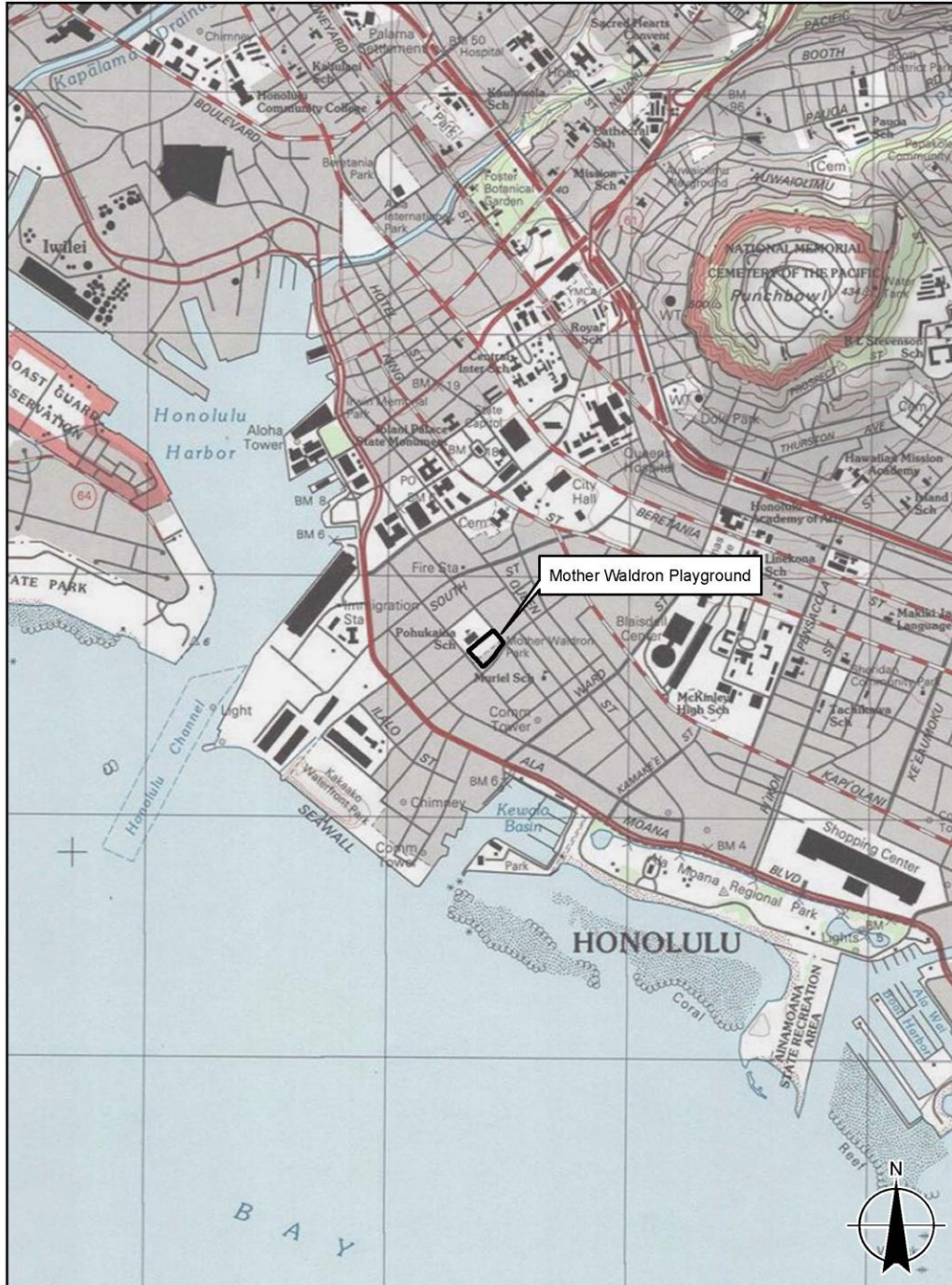
<sup>21</sup> National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin: Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 1997).

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Mother Waldron Playground  
Bounded by Coral Street, Halekauwila Street, Pohukaina Street, and Cooke Street  
City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii  
Hawaii Register of Historic Places, No. 80-14-1388

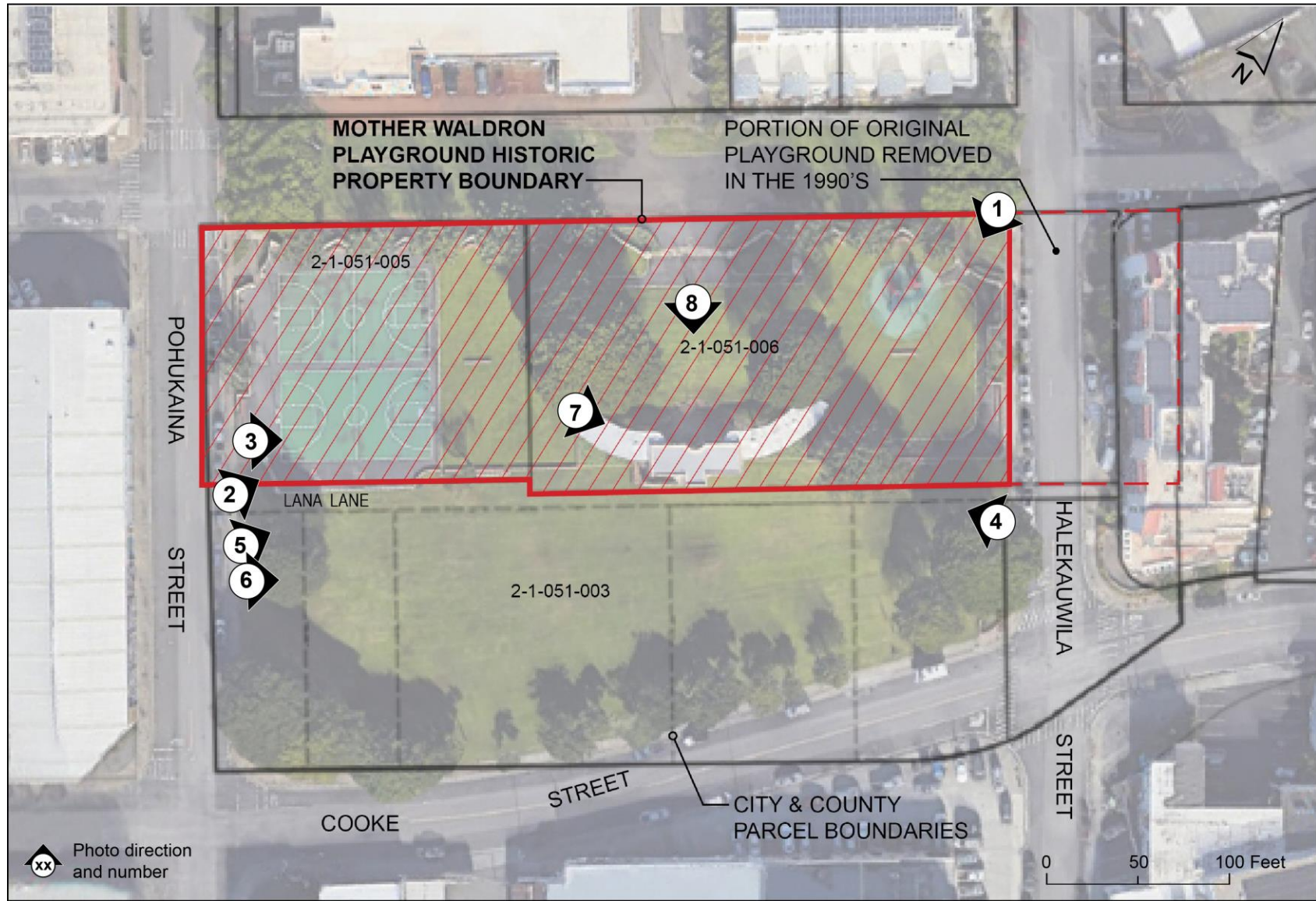
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### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Mother Waldron Playground

City or Vicinity: Honolulu

County: Honolulu

State: Hawaii

Photographer: Charles Greenleaf

Date Photographed: 11/17/2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 8. View south toward Mother Waldron Playground from Halekauwila Street and Coral Street into original playground area
- 2 of 8. View north from Pohukaina Street and the former Lana Lane into original playground area
- 3 of 8. View northeast from wall along Pohukaina Street into original playground area
- 4 of 8. View southwest from Halekauwila Street and 1991-1992 expansion area toward original playground area
- 5 of 8. View north from Pohukaina Street toward original playground area and its former handball court
- 6 of 8. View northeast from Pohukaina Street toward original playground area and 1991-1992 expansion area
- 7 of 8. View northeast toward comfort station
- 8 of 8. View east toward comfort station from original playground entrance at Coral Street

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Photo 1.



Photo 2.



Photo 3.



Photo 4.





Photo 5.



Photo 6.



Photo 7.



Photo 8.