



On the calendar

May 7

The next HCDA Board meetings will be held. For more information about HCDA, the public hearings or board meetings visit <https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/hcda/>.

Historical Timeline

1930-31

City & County of Honolulu (City) acquired property of current Mother Waldron Park. Used as City stables.

1937

The City opened the new Mother Waldron Playground, originally situated between Coral Street, Lana Lane, Pohukaina and Halekauwila Streets.

1970s

Pohukaina Elementary located across Cooke Street was razed.

1978

City resurfaced Park playing courts.

1993

HCDA realigned Cooke Street and increased the Park size by nearly double.

1998

HCDA and the Kaka'ako community met to develop a masterplan for the redevelopment of Pohukaina School & Mother Waldron Park.

2008

HCDA approved a five-year plan and improvements for the Kaka'ako district. Mother Waldron Park is included as a key improvement project recognizing that it is the only active park in the Mauka area open space plan, at the time.

2014

The Park was renovated with a new basketball court, playground, and new landscaping and trees.

2020

HART has prepared a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) for Mother Waldron Park.

Mother Waldron Playground

A glimpse of Kaka'ako's history

Descendants of Margaret "Mother" Waldron received a special honor from Senator Sharon Moriwaki and HCDA Executive Director Craig Nakamoto during a visit to see special places in their family history around the islands. Sen. Moriwaki presented Mother Waldron's grandson, great-granddaughter and great-great-granddaughter with a framed, honorary certificate recognizing their ancestor, a chief organizing force in Kaka'ako from 1913 to 1934.



The certificate was signed by members of the 33rd state Senate. As we read the certificate we saw a glimpse of what Kaka'ako was like in that time period and wanted to share it here:

Margaret "Mother" Waldron was born on August 12, 1873, an orphan of Hawaiian-Irish descent. She was raised by the esteemed Judd and Castle families. Educated at the Kawaiaha'o Seminary boarding school, she became a pivotal figure in the development of Kaka'ako, a thriving residential community in early 20th-century Hawai'i.

Mother Waldron began teaching fourth grade in 1913 at Kaka'ako's Pohukaina School. Beyond the classroom, she dedicated countless hours to organizing football games, sewing classes and cooking clubs, guiding "tough" boys and girls to become positive, contribut-



ing members of the community.

Mother Waldron also assisted adults as a welfare volunteer. Her work included organizing community programs that promoted self-sufficiency and well-being, ensuring that both children and adults had access to basic necessities and skills training.

Mother Waldron was a friend of the poor and taught older girls how to sustain and manage a household, making clothes from flour and sugar sacks, and showing younger children how to make jellies and jams. On her 50th birthday, the boys and girls of Kaka'ako gave her a pin with the word "mother" on it, a tribute to her good nature, became her most-prized possession. Mother Waldron retired in 1934, marking 21 years of unwavering dedication and service to her students.

When Mother Waldron passed away on May 8, 1936, crowds gathered to pay their respects, honoring her as the "patron saint" of Kaka'ako. A year later, renowned landscape architect Harry Sims Bent designed the Mother Waldron Playground, blending functionality with a striking aesthetic. Opened on September 20, 1937, it was considered the most modern recreational facility of its time in the Territory of Hawai'i.

Now known simply as Mother Waldron Park, this vibrant community hub sits near the intersection of Coral and Pohukaina Streets, across from the former Pohukaina School. It features a newly designed playground, an off-leash dog park, and courts for basketball and pickleball, making it a lively gathering place for residents and visitors alike.



Why is it so hard to build affordable housing?

There are many, many reasons. One being that Hawai'i is an island state with limited land.

Only 4.9% of Hawai'i's land is designated as urban, which restricts the potential for expanding housing supply, according to the report titled: *Hawai'i Property Ownership: its history and potential future implications*, recently released by the state Dept. of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT).

Most land is classified as conservation (47.6%) or agricultural (47.2%), with very little land designated as rural (0.3%).

The state, federal and county governments are among the largest landowners, with the state owning over one-third of the land in Hawai'i. It is a logical source of land to be used for affordable housing development.

The federal government owns over 546,000 acres of land in Hawai'i, which is not typically available for residential development. There have been some transfers of federal land to the state and counties such as the Aloha Stadium site, of which a portion is slated for affordable housing development in the future.

Efforts are being made to increase the supply of affordable housing. In 2024, the legislature passed and Governor Josh Green, M.D., signed into law Act 39. It requires each county to adopt or amend an ordinance to allow accessory dwelling units, subject to certain restrictions, on all residentially zoned lots, no later than December 31, 2026.

In 2023, Act 97 established the 99-Year Leasehold Program under the HCDA, to facilitate the development of low-cost leasehold residential condominium units in one pilot project on non-ceded, state-owned land within urban redevelopment areas for sale to Hawai'i residents. This year the HCDA Board approved administrative rules to implement this program and they are with the governor for review and approval.

The DBEDT state property ownership report highlights

several challenges regarding land availability for affordable housing development:

Environmental and Cultural Considerations: Development is often constrained by the need to preserve Hawai'i's unique environmental and cultural resources, which can limit the areas available for new housing projects.

High Land Costs: The scarcity of available land drives up land costs, making it expensive to develop new housing. This contributes to the overall high cost of housing in the state.

Imported materials: The majority of the materials needed for housing development in Hawai'i is imported, often having long lead times and high shipping costs, which regularly delay and increase development expenses.

In addition, the state and counties have found that inadequate or no infrastructure (e.g. roads, water, sewer, electricity...) drive up the cost of development, further increasing the cost to construct housing and other projects in Hawai'i.

House Bill 1007 is advancing through the state Legislature. It proposes to streamline HCDA's Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) infrastructure improvements, which will allow HCDA to further develop infrastructure that will support affordable housing development, in TOD zones.

To see the full state report, Hawai'i property ownership: its history and potential future implications, visit <https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/reports/Hawaii%20Home%20Ownership%20Report%202-28-25.pdf>.

The Park

In March, a construction milestone was made as the tower of The Park Ward Village was topped off. Many of those involved attended and signed the last beam that was lifted onto the top of the mixed-use residential tower on Ward Avenue and Auahi Street. The HCDA Board approved the development permit in 2021, for this 546 residential unit project that will be adjacent to the mauka side of the Victoria Ward Park. This project was approved in conjunction with Ulana Ward Village, a 400-foot tower with approximately 697 affordable reserved housing units, parking, light industrial area, recreational space and a new neighborhood park, at the 'Ewa end of Auahi Street. 

