



**hickam**  
COMMUNITIES



# Hickam Air Force Base Historic Housing District

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A Guide For Hickam Communities' Residents



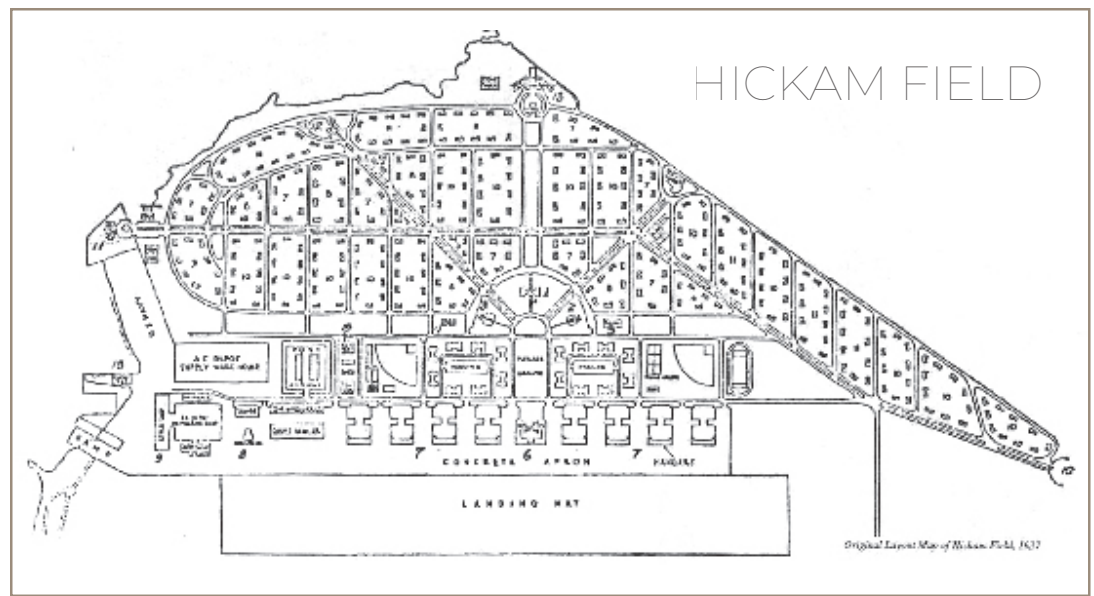
## Orientation

This brochure introduces residents of the Hickam Air Force Base Historic Housing District to the special qualities of their historic homes.

The Officers' and NCOs' historic housing at Hickam was an outstanding example of the best of modern design when it was built in the later 1930s and early 1940s. Today, these historic residences continue to be excellent homes for tropical living. The history of the housing and the former occupants provide a link between the resident's role today and the role the installation played in local and national history.

This brochure contains a brief history of the housing area, followed by a description of the homes' design characteristics and how they respond to Hawaii's climate and traditional lifestyle. Practical information on the care of the home is also included. Although occupants of the homes are not responsible for major maintenance, they are the day-to-day stewards of these special historic and cultural resources.

Residents should review this information on a regular basis. They should be aware of the special care needs of the character-defining features of their historic home as they undertake normal upkeep. However, for anything other than normal upkeep, Hickam Community Housing's Maintenance team should be contacted. A list of contact information is provided at the end of this brochure.



# History

In 1941, when most of the initial base construction was completed, the new Hickam Field was the Army’s largest airfield in the nation. The largest peacetime project the Quartermaster Corps had ever undertaken, this former scrubland site was transformed after five years of concentrated construction activity into a showcase of modern efficient planning. Captain Howard B. Nurse, the officer in charge of the construction, designed a master plan for the layout of the new base which followed the same principles as modern city planning, especially the “Garden City” concept. Housing, administration, and operations functions were arranged in a unified layout, organized around major and minor axes, with buildings surrounded by generous amounts of open space and landscaping, and connected by tree-lined boulevards.

The first phase of housing construction for Officers and Non-commissioned Officers began in 1937 with the second in 1939. Altogether, 603 Officer and NCO units were built by 1941. In the second phase, a large proportion of apartment units were built to accommodate officers with small families, often on short tours of duty. The multiple units were not only economically necessary but also popular housing among the personnel.

The history of Hickam Air Force Base, the part it has played in national history, and the various ways in which it has served is a significant and interesting story.



# Design & Construction of Housing



Type 4 - 1938 NCO Quarters



Type 5 - 1938 NCO Quarters



Type B - 1938 Officers Quarters



Type M - 1941 Officers Quarters



NCO Apartment Building 1938

The quarters designed for Officers and NCOs reflected the architectural style popular in the 1930s in Hawaii. Captain Nurse recognized that the Hawaiian Bungalow style responded well to the local climate and suited the typical island lifestyle.

Wide roof overhangs shade the large windows and grilles that allow plenty of natural ventilation in the houses. Screened lanais provide semi-outdoor living spaces where residents can relax and entertain comfortably. Landscaping was an important part of the design of the housing areas from the beginning and there are now many fine mature trees shading the houses and yards.

The design of the details for the houses links them to the design of the non-residential buildings constructed at Hickam Field during the same period. The horizontal banding between the first and second floors of the two-story units, the stepped pattern in the walls around some of the entrance doors, the horizontal divisions in the windows and geometric-shaped vents are examples showing the influence of the Moderne architectural style.

The exterior walls are built of concrete blocks with concrete slab ground floors. In some of the two-story houses, the exterior walls are masonry on the first story and wood frame construction with plaster finish on the second story. Although masonry construction is unusual in Hawaiian houses as it is generally more expensive, it follows a tradition in military housing and has advantages over wood in durability and thermal performance.



## Care of Your Historic Home

Most of the maintenance recommendations that follow are common sense, though some are unique to the historic materials and features of these special homes. Regular household cleaning will go a long way towards keeping the houses in good condition. Residents can help preserve the historic homes by being aware of maintenance problems and checking their residences periodically. Early detection of problems can prevent damage that is expensive to repair or may result in the loss of historic features or character.

Maintaining historic buildings requires a special approach different from regular building care and maintenance. Older materials and methods of construction differ from those used in current buildings and may need unusual methods. It is very important that the historic integrity of the building be preserved. This means that in a historic building certain materials, features or elements give the building its visual character (character-defining features), from large-scale elements such as roof shapes to details such as door knobs. Inevitably even the highest quality materials need to be repaired or replaced. When original materials have to be repaired or replaced great care is needed to do it in a way that the historic integrity of the home is not compromised.

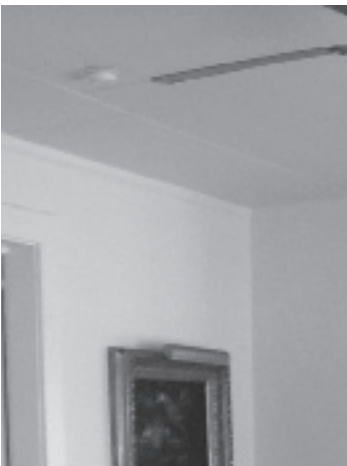
Some maintenance issues are briefly described below. For other than every day cleaning, maintenance problems should be immediately reported to the Hickam Communities Maintenance Management office. Contact information for this office is provided later in this brochure.

# Special Features of the Historic Housing & Recommendations



## Paint Finishes, Molding & Details

- Paint has to be renewed periodically. Repeated painting causes a thick buildup that can obscure building details. Painting of any kind should not be undertaken without prior approval by the Hickam Communities Maintenance Management office.
- Do not remove any historic wood moldings, trims, or other features. These are important elements that contribute to the visual character of our historic houses. Some houses have unique interior features that were designed-in when the house was originally constructed. These include telephone and ironing board recesses, corner cabinets, metal stair handrails, and wood wainscot paneling.
- Walls and molding should be able to be cleaned with mild household products, or just a simple solution of soap and water. If paint is in a deteriorated condition or no longer able to be cleaned in this manner, please report this to the Hickam Communities Maintenance Management office.



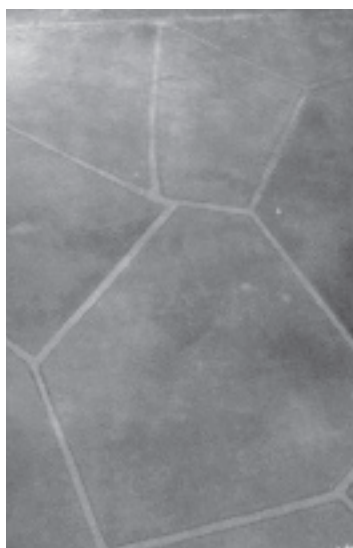
## Ceilings

- Most historic homes ceilings are made of canec, while ceilings in the bathrooms and occasionally ceilings in kitchens of these homes are made of plaster. Canec is a fiberboard made of sugar cane bagasse, a by-product of Hawaii's sugar industry. The V-groove joints between the panels of canec were laid out to form patterns related to the size and shape of the rooms.
- Canec is very difficult to repair and the canec made today does not match the texture of that which was made in the 1930s. Care should be taken to avoid damaging ceilings.



## Ceramic Tile

- The intricate ceramic tile patterns in the bathrooms of many of the historic houses are very unique to this housing type and construction period.
- Tiles should be cleaned with mild cleaning solutions and never an abrasive cleaner. Check the tile periodically for loose or missing grout. If any tiles become loose, please gently remove and safely store them until the Hickam Communities Maintenance Management staff can respond to your request for assistance.



## Concrete Floors

- Many houses have acid-stained concrete floors with patterns scored into the surface. This process was developed in Hawaii by Robert LeMons in the 1920s. These special finishes are a lost art in Hawaii and should be preserved.
- The finish should be maintained with periodic applications of a light wax. Please contact the Hickam Communities Maintenance Management office when the floors appear to be in need of this attention.
- Do not paint these floors nor nail carpet to the surface. If floor coverings are desired, use loose rugs with a rubber under-pad to prevent slipping.



## Wood Floors

- Wood floors are made of tongue-and-groove pine boards.
- The only maintenance required for varnished wood floors is occasional cleaning with a slightly damp, cloth-pad-type mop or sponge. Water should be used very sparingly and immediately wiped dry.
- Floors should not be sanded and refinished, as this changes their appearance.





## Windows

- Keep glass clean. Dirt allowed to collect on the glass will cause it to become etched and difficult to see through.
- On the outside of the windows, if there is loose or missing putty at the edges of the glass, report this as soon as possible.
- If cracks or breaks in the exterior paint film or any signs of the wood swelling and splitting are observed, report this also. This includes gaps in the sealant joints between the window frame and the walls of the house.
- Sash cords should be checked every six months for signs or wear. If one of the sash cords fails it will make the window hard to operate. Failure of both cords could cause serious damage to the window or anyone trying to operate the window.
- Do not use excessive force to open any window. This can cause permanent damage. As with any observed deficiency, please contact the Hickam Communities Maintenance Management office as soon as possible.



## Doors

- The distinctive decorative patterns on the doors of some of these homes are important historical elements.
- Similar maintenance procedures should be followed as for windows. Keep doors clean and the paint coatings maintained is important to the care of these elements. As painting in historic homes will be undertaken by Hickam Community Housing, report any deficiencies to the contact number listed at the end of this brochure.
- Do not add extra hardware such as deadbolts to the doors without prior approval from Hickam Community Housing. This not only changes the historic appearance but also damages the door. Existing hardware should be cleaned with appropriate materials and locks and hinges lubricated regularly.
- If a door begins to bind or jam against the frame it should never be forced. Report the problem to the Hickam Communities Maintenance Management office.





## Window Air Conditioners

- If a window air conditioner or conditioners have been installed, you should watch closely and often for any water leaking or any other problems that may cause damage to the home. Any problems should be immediately reported to the Hickam Communities Maintenance Management office to ensure further damage does not result.



## Exterior Walls

- The exterior walls are made of concrete blocks. In the two-story historic homes the walls of the upper floors are sometimes wood frame with stucco finish.
- The masonry materials are durable and regular painting is all the maintenance that should be needed (and all painting will be undertaken by Hickam Community Housing.) Cracks may occur if there are root problems from trees or other vegetation. Significant damage can occur if water penetrates the interior of the wall. This can cause the steel reinforcing to corrode and expand. If residents notice any significant cracks they should report this as soon as possible.



## Termite Damage to Wood

- Termite infestation of wood is a major problem in Hawaii.
- At the time these houses were built, wood was not treated with preservative, as it is today, nor was the termite problem as severe. Hawaii is burdened with two different types of voracious termites: ground (subterranean) and flying (dry wood) termites. Both types can cause tremendous damage to wood and other materials. Periodic tenting of the houses is sometimes needed to treat the home for termites.
- Termite damage can often be hard to spot because termites can be eating away inside the wood while the outside is undisturbed. Lightly tapping on wood elements can expose areas that have been hollowed by termites. Small piles of what resembles sawdust are also indications that termites may be at work. Residents should immediately report any signs of apparent termite damage in or around their home to the Hickam Communities Maintenance Management office.



## Roofs

- The roof coverings are either clay tile or asphalt shingle.
- Leaves and other debris falling on the roof can build up in the gutters, eventually blocking the outlets and causing gutter overflow. This situation promotes rotting of wood elements at the eaves. Hickam CommunitiesMaintenance teams will conduct periodic inspections of roofs. However, should you notice any build up of debris, report it immediately to the Hickam CommunitiesMaintenance Management office. Additionally, any leaking or overflowing gutters and cracked or dislodged roofing materials should be reported as soon as observed.



## Landscaping

- The trees and lush tropical landscaping at Hickam are among the most attractive features of the base. They contribute to what is now considered the Cultural Landscape of Hickam Historic Housing District.
- Shrubs against the side of the house should not be allowed to become overgrown as dense vegetation in contact with the materials at the base of the house can trap moisture. This can lead to decay and also provide a route for insects to enter the building.
- Sweep and wash paths and driveways periodically to remove fallen leaves and debris. If paths in shady areas are prone to being slippery with algae growth, they can be washed with a mild solution of one cup household bleach in a five-gallon bucket of water.
- Residents should report any over-hanging branches that seem to be in danger of falling or any other landscape maintenance issue to the Hickam CommunitiesMaintenance office as soon as detected.

# Sources for Further Information

Contacts for Maintenance Management advice  
and to report problems

Hickam Communities General Number:

**423.2300**

Hickam Community Housing  
Maintenance Management office:

**423.1650**



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