



AIA Honolulu Position Statement on the Waikiki Natatorium

As stated in its public policies, the American Institute of Architects Honolulu Chapter (AIA Honolulu) supports the preservation of Hawaii's significant historic buildings, sites and districts. Hawaii's rich cultural past is represented by the structures constructed by various populations over the course of the islands' habitation. These physical remains of the past act as landmarks of our history and anchors for our future. They are part of the soul of our state, transcending generations and conveying multi-sensory messages to current and future generations about our past. Based on this policy, AIA Honolulu supports the preservation and restoration of the Waikiki Natatorium in its present location.

The War Memorial Natatorium was built as a living and permanent memorial to honor the men and women of Hawaii who served in The Great War (WW I). After its opening, the Natatorium became an icon of the Waikiki shoreline and of Hawaii's ocean sports legacy. The pool was a training venue for local Olympians, including Duke Kahanamoku who swam the first lap in the Olympic sized pool and won gold medals in three separate Olympics. The pool is a place where generations of Hawaii's keiki have learned to swim. The ocean sunset-facing bleachers and broad pool deck created a popular public gathering place and promenade unique among war memorials of its era. Its arched entrance façade and sculpted plaster ornaments are among the few remaining examples of Beaux Arts architecture in Hawaii.

AIA Honolulu encourages the State of Hawaii, the City & County of Honolulu and private interests to work together to immediately stabilize the Natatorium in order to preserve as many possible options for returning the memorial to its intended use as a public access living memorial. By restoring the Natatorium, we will fulfill our original promise to honor those who served in The Great War, preserve an essential piece of our soul and allow the public to use and enjoy a unique ocean resource in Hawaii.

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