



PRESERVATION MATTERS

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California Modern: Preserving the Not So Distant Past

A few months ago the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) was asked to participate in the annual meeting of the County Planning Directors Association in Sacramento. When we asked if there were preservation issues they would like us to address, they responded that one of most difficult issues they are dealing with is Modernist architecture and other post-World War II resources. Questions included how to deal with the recent past at the local level when confronted with requests for demolition permits, remodel applications, and other project approvals and environmental reviews that affect post-WWII historical resources. The planners noted that decision-makers and the general public are often unaware of many of these resources, and that local code provisions often allow for approvals without any consideration of historical significance.

Unless a city or county preservation ordinance requires a review of all demolition permits, or a review of permits to demolish buildings that have reached a particular age, the action will be ministerial and no review will occur. It is only after the wrecking ball has removed a familiar office building or a favorite Google diner that a community may recognize that it has lost something of value. Some forward-

looking communities have undertaken surveys of post-WWII resources, but they remain few and far between. The sheer volume of post-war suburban growth and housing developments is a daunting challenge (six million houses were built in California



Hope International University, Fullerton (Courtesy Sicoats/Creative Commons)

between 1945 and 1975). How do we separate the truly significant from legions of imitators in this massive inventory?

Modernism has a perception problem. Modernist architecture is not always so lovable, and

may even, to some, appear laughable. While many people quickly respond to a classical library building or a Queen Anne house with an intuitive understanding that it is historic, more recent buildings do not evoke such a

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“A part of the perception problem may lie with the widely used definition of ‘historic’ as a building at least 50 years of age. As time moves forward. . .more and more resources meet that test.”

clear response. “That is historic?!?” is an often heard phrase when people confront a steel and glass high-rise apartment, a shopping mall with a squiggly roof line or prominent neon signage, or a ranch-style house on a curving suburban street. Baby Boomers grew up in such houses—does that mean they also are “history”? Millennials may see the recent past as just part of a world they grew up with, not something special or “old.”

A part of this perception problem may lie with the widely used definition of “historic” as a building or site that is at least 50 years of age. As time moves forward, we are finding more and more resources that meet that test. Right now, the 50-year criteria takes us to 1965; already a full twenty years removed from World War II. In California, the California Register establishes an even more forgiving timeline, requiring only that there is enough information available to make a reasonable judgment regarding the significance of the resource. If it meets that threshold it needn’t even be 50 years old or meet the “exceptional significance” standard established for the National Register.

At the state level we also are seeing a greater reliance on Criterion A/1 as justifying significance. There is increased recognition that broad cultural trends fit within the definition of “events.” Cultural trends, as much as anything,

have shaped the national perception of California in the 20th century: surfing, 1960s counterculture, political activism, minority and gay rights, and rock and roll, just to mention a few. Some recent national and California sites that illustrate this cultural emphasis include the Trestles surf site in San Diego County, which many consider to be the birthplace of California surfing not only the sport but the associated beach lifestyle. The Fender Guitar Shop, a modest Fullerton store front, was listed on the National Register for its significance as the site where Leo Fender developed the first solid electric guitar and amplifiers, which altered the look, sound, and personality of popular music.



Site of the Fender Guitar Shop

While most local resources are less exotic than these, many are associated with social and economic post-war trends such as urban renewal, relocation from traditional downtown shopping areas to suburban shopping malls and business parks, development of freeways and interstate highways, and perhaps most

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significant of all, the vast expansion of suburban housing developments. Others are eligible under Criterion C as examples of modernist architectural principles in office and commercial spaces and, very importantly, in domestic architecture. More and more studies of modernist architects and their work come out every year, and events like the Palm Springs Modernism Week focus attention on the post-war period and are playing a role in changing perceptions.

What is all too often missing at the local level is the identification of architects, landscape architects, and builders who modernized the look of cities and towns. Young architects who graduated just before WWII or used the GI bill to go to school after the war often came out of school deeply imbued with the spirit of modernism. Many California communities had firms founded by these young architects, who exerted considerable influence within their regional localities, architects such as Milton Caughey in Riverside and Albert Frey in Palm Springs. Research in local history from 1945 through the 1970s can help identify these individuals, and establish a context for local post-war development.

It is important to remember that designed landscapes played an especially prominent role in many modern post-war developments and should always be considered in evaluating such properties. Some good examples of these architectural and landscape combinations include Fulton Mall, designed by Garrett Eckbo, in Fresno and the focus of a recent preservation controversy. Large scale residential



Palm Springs Visitor Center, designed by Albert Frey, 1965 (© Sarah Scheideman)

developments such as Park Merced in San Francisco (landscape design by Thomas Church) or the Sea Ranch development on the Sonoma Coast (architectural design by Charles Moore and landscape by Lawrence Halprin), illustrate the important role of landscape in many housing complexes, resort developments, and garden apartments.

Although modern resources are still underappreciated and under-researched, they are drawing an increasing amount of attention as witnessed by urban planners who are asking how to incorporate the recent past into their planning efforts. The most effective way to save modern post-war resources is to get out ahead of the curve by developing contexts, surveying, landmarking, and, if needed, amending local ordinances. Communities that have taken this approach include the cities of San Jose, San Francisco and San Diego. Their Modernism surveys offer approaches that other communities can follow in developing a contemporary history, context and local inventory.

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Because the massive development of residential suburbs closely followed the path of the new freeways and

interstates built after the war, Caltrans and other

transportation agencies have taken a lead in addressing the issues of identifying and evaluating residential developments.

Caltrans was one of the first entities to publish a study of post-war California housing that focuses on

identifying and evaluating properties for the National Register. The study establishes standards and criteria to separate the significant from the ordinary, including establishing that a subdivision is early or prototypical, is an unusually large example of its type, or

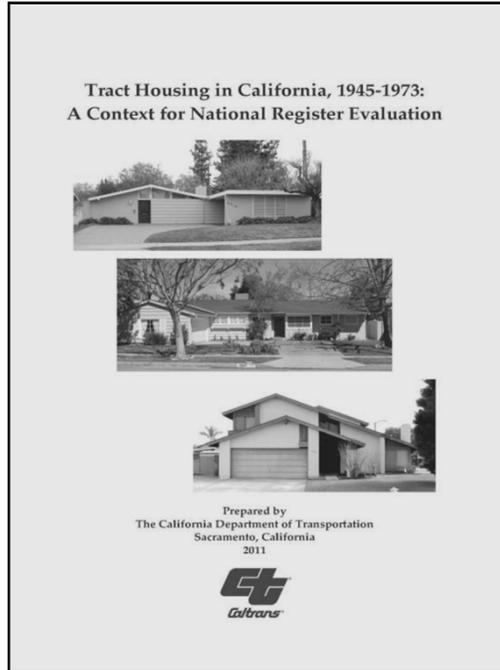
possesses innovative design qualities. A similar study was completed by the Transportation Research Board (TRB)

that examines the same issues on a national scale.

As one of the fastest growing areas in the country in the 1950s and '60s, California has many noteworthy examples of post-war social, economic, and cultural trends of national import. California's Modern heritage is represented in the work of nationally recognized architects and landscape architects such as Neutra and Eckbo, as well as in the work of less well-known regional and local "masters." It is a rich and varied legacy

which is all too often at risk. By focusing this issue of *Preservation Matters* on this important era we hope to encourage advocates, assist planners, and provide some "food for thought" that can help turn that earlier stated question into an affirmative statement: "That *is* historic!"

Download copies of the studies conducted by Caltrans (http://www.ca.gov/ser/downloads/cultural/tract-housing_in_ca_194501973.pdf) and the Transportation Research Board (http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_723.pdf)



This article marks the last contribution to our newsletter by Carol Roland-Nawi in her capacity as State Historic Preservation Officer. Carol retired as SHPO on July 1, 2015, to spend some well-deserved time traveling and enjoying family. Our best wishes and appreciation go with her.

Public support is critical to the success of any cause, and no less so for efforts to recognize and preserve California's modern resources. The following article gives a peek into Palm Springs' annual Modernism Week event, one of the more visible and successful public outreach efforts on behalf of all things Modern.

All Things Mod: Modernism Week in Palm Springs

By Cindy Duffy, O'Bayley Communications

Modernism Week, a singular event celebrating midcentury modern design, architecture, art, fashion and culture in the Palm Springs area of southern California, has grown significantly in its ten-year history. The idea for the event grew out of a 2005 discussion between William Kopelk and Stewart Weiner, then President and Vice President, respectively, of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation. The two men felt there needed to be a way to keep visitors in the city during the week between the Modernism Show—the three day event typically held on President's Holiday weekend—and the Art Museum's Design Symposium held the following Saturday. Kopelk and Weiner decided on Modernism Week, an event that would emphasize the city's mid-century modern history. The two men contacted

and coordinated the other preservation organizations in town and launched the first Week that same year. As William Kopelk recalls, "We were quite excited we had six events and 300 people



House Tour during Modernism Week (© David A. Lee)

participating that first year. We figured we would try it out again the next year."

Since that inaugural year, Modernism Week's scope and importance

has grown in step with the increasing recognition of and appreciation for mid-century modern resources. Organizers estimate that attendance at this year's festival, which took place February 12-22, 2015, reached nearly 60,000, an increase of more than thirty percent over 2014. Besides being a cultural and financial boon to the community (the week generates an estimated \$22 million in tourism revenue into the local economy), Modernism Week is a non-

"Attendance at this year's festival reached nearly 60,000, an increase of more than thirty percent over 2014"

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Kaufmann House by Richard Neutra (© David A. Lee)

profit organization whose mission is to foster appreciation of mid-century architecture and design, and to support education and preservation in those fields. That mission was evident this year, as in years past, in the numerous lectures and events offered during the 11-day festival.

To address the question “Why Isn’t the 1947 Neutra Kaufmann House on the National Register?”, a working panel hosted by the California State Historical Resources Commission’s (SHRC) Modernism Committee led a discussion on Sunday, February 15, during which the integrity standards, and interpretations of them, standing between many mid-century modern structures and the coveted National

Register designation were addressed. The panel included Beth Edwards Harris, Ph.D., SHRC Commissioner and Modernism Committee Chair; Alan Hess, San Jose Mercury News architecture critic and SHRC Modernism Committee member; William Menking, Founder and Editor-In-Chief of The Architect’s Newspaper; Brian Conway, State Historic Preservation Officer for the State of Michigan; Adrian Scott Fine, Director of Advocacy, Los Angeles Conservancy; Katie Horak, Senior Associate, Architectural Resources Group and founding member Docomomo US/SoCal; and Christine Lazzaretto, Principal, Historic Resources Group and founding member Docomomo US/SoCal.

The distinguished group of architectural preservationists discussed the Kaufmann House and other case studies in which the integrity standards used to evaluate National Register nominations are in conflict with the material realities of mid-century modern structures. Built with mass-produced, vulnerable, and easily replaced materials, significant mid-century buildings are often deemed



Panel discussion during Modernism Week (© David A. Lee)

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ineligible by the very design concepts that define them.

Later the same day, Modernism Week attendees joined local preservationists and historians to celebrate the City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Designation of the Town & Desert Apartments. Currently known as the Hideaway, these “apartments of tomorrow” were

designed by Palm Springs architectural designer Herbert W. Burns in 1947. Receiving national attention in the May 1948 issue of *Architectural Record*, the article was lavishly illustrated with beautiful photographs by renowned architectural photographer Julius Shulman. Ron and Barbara Marshall

prepared the nomination application for the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, and o2 Architecture sponsored the event.

Modernism Week broadened its focus beyond Palm Springs with “Michigan Modern Monday” on February 16. Michigan Modern is more than a design movement—it is also a cultural phenomenon, an intersection of indigenous, imported, and exported design, and a newly defined epoch. The series offered six lectures, one film, lunch, and an opportunity for attendees to immerse themselves in fascinating

Michigan-centric topics including Eero Saarinen's General Motors Technical Center, the work of legendary Herman Miller designers Charles and Ray Eames and George Nelson, and the pioneering industrial architecture of Albert Kahn, among others. The day devoted to Michigan’s significant, yet often under appreciated, contribution to modern architecture and design throughout the



General Motors Technical Center by Eero Saarinen
(© James Haefner)

twentieth century was one of the most well-attended lecture series during Modernism Week.

A free lecture titled “Lost, Saved & Endangered: Modernist Architecture in Palm Springs” was presented by the Palm Springs

Preservation Foundation (PSPF) on Wednesday, February 18. The entertaining, informative, and wildly popular talk, delivered by Modernism Week and PSPF board member Gary Johns, was replete with amusing anecdotes and rarely seen vintage photos.

More than twenty local neighborhood organizations offered tours featuring homes that have been lovingly purchased, restored, and landscaped—often by past attendees of Modernism Week. The tours generated more than \$463,000 for the neighborhoods to fund

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“Built with mass-produced ... and easily replaced materials, significant mid-century buildings are often deemed ineligible by the very design concepts that define them.”

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Modernism Week’s Double-Decker Bus Tour (© David A. Lee)

Committee, whose Education Committee provided in-class curriculum and arranged for a donation of educational tools on the topic of Modernism. Renowned midcentury architect William Cody designed part of the school in 1968.

Partner events co-produced during Modernism Week proved to be effective fundraising tools, bringing in more than \$900,000 to fortify other preservation groups including Palm Springs Modern Committee, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, and Palm Springs Historical Society, as well as Palm Springs Art Museum, and additional collaborators. Modernism Week’s sustaining popularity is due to a number of important factors: a stable and visionary all-volunteer Chairman and Board of Directors; a dedicated Executive Director and staff; a strong and transparent financial foundation; an abundant financial return to the neighborhood, and partner organizations; and a diverse and timely variety of events that capture the interest of both the initiated and uninitiated public.

As William Kopelk observes, “we successfully created and established Modernism Week as a brand that is synonymous with California’s mid-century modern architecture. This celebration of style seems to resonate with all who are sincerely interested in architectural preservation. While we still have a long way to go in Palm Springs to preserve its pertinent architectural resources, Modernism Week can continue to be an example of how to showcase its significance.”



improvements such as landscaping, signage, restoration, and charitable contributions. Modernism Week also conducted a special edition of its iconic Premier Double-Decker Architectural Bus Tour for area high school and college students, and provided opportunities for students to attend lectures and participate in other activities.

An exhibition of projects by grade school students inspired by local and international architecture was on display at St. Theresa Catholic School’s art classroom from Tuesday, February 17 through Thursday, February 19. The exhibit included models of significant Palm Springs Modern architecture by the school’s sixth grade class, alongside modern artworks by seventh graders derived from iconic modern architecture in Palm Springs and throughout the world. The St. Theresa Catholic School student projects were supported by a partnership with Palm Springs Modern

To learn more about Modernism Week Fall Preview (October 9-12, 2015), and about the 11th annual Modernism Week (February 11-21, 2016), visit the Modernism Week website: <http://www.modernismweek.com/>

Cindy Duffy is a publicist with O’Bayley Communications in Palm Springs, and since 2013, has crafted messaging and generated publicity for Modernism Week.

Those who seek to preserve California’s modern heritage are faced with unique challenges, not the least of which is convincing people that “modern” is the new “historic”! In this article, adapted from an article originally written for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Adrian Scott Fine of the LA Conservancy discusses some of the top challenges encountered in the struggle to save our not so distant past.

Challenges for Saving Modernism and the Recent Past

By Adrian Scott Fine, Director of Advocacy, LA Conservancy

Age is a touchy subject it seems for both people and buildings. When we are young and new, we are viewed as fresh, promising and perhaps even innovative. By the time we reach our later years, we are called distinguished and maybe deemed historic. It is the middle years, then, when we are no longer young and not quite old enough, that we struggle the most. Somewhere around age 35 to 60 we start lying about our true age and are referred to as “looking a little tired,” “in need of freshening,” or simply derided as “dated.”



Oh, the indignity people and buildings have to go through during this challenging mid-life period, prone to

crisis and desperate attempts to look younger and in-step with the times. Sometimes this leads to bad dye jobs to cover up the gray hair, trading in the sensible car for a new red convertible, or an unfortunate building remodel that alters and removes features not yet valued. Most people get through these middle years okay and age gracefully, but for buildings, that is not always the case. Saving a building or landscape—especially one that is between 35 and 60 years old—is all too often caught up in issues of public taste, preferences, and personal bias, in addition to the usual arguments over private property rights and economics. For many, mid-century places are considered too new, too many, and too “everyday,” which leaves a lot of 1950-1970s places unnoticed, unloved, and under threat.

Part of the problem, to put it simply, is us. Many of us are still not ready to accept that something built in our lifetime is historic, let alone significant. Our prejudices, much like those manifested within the general public, make saving Modernist and recent-past places a hard sell. So, what

“Many of us are still not ready to accept that something built in our lifetime is historic, let alone significant.”

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are we doing about this, and how do we decide, prioritize, and build popular support to intervene and save these places before it is too late? We can start by understanding how saving a Modernist and recent-past place is different from other eras. The following list illustrates some of the inherent and unique challenges we are facing:

One of These Things Does Not Belong Here

The mid-century modern era and its built environment reflect important developments in style, design,



Lever House, New York (Courtesy BeyondMyKen/
Creative commons)

technology, and innovations that, at the time, swept across a newly consumer-oriented America. The challenge with this from a preservation perspective is that we often lack a complete context in which to evaluate, understand, and judge places in terms of uniqueness and significance. For instance, we may not know how an innovative bank branch in Phoenix, Arizona, stacks up against others

statewide, let alone nationally in terms of context and importance. This is an immense challenge as preservationists attempt to make a compelling case for saving a threatened mid-century place,

not knowing enough about what else is out there and how truly unique a resource is versus being one of many.

“You Lack Integrity” Quandary

Preservation generally favors places that have few alterations and a high degree of integrity, especially when talking about historic fabric and materials. For traditional historic buildings, this approach has worked pretty well. However, for Modernist places, many structures were built with mass-produced products and experimental materials that may not be easily replicated and, in some cases, are now failing. Because some replacement materials are no longer in production, there are better-performing options available today. If we replace using entirely new products that resemble the look of originals, is that preservation?

This calls into question the overall definition of integrity when talking about Modernist places. Lever House in New York City is a good example. When built in 1951-52, the 24-story tower was distinctive for its blue-green heat resistant glass and stainless steel curtain wall. By the 1980s and 90s, the glass-façade was failing and deteriorated due to harsh weather conditions, with corrosion bowing and breaking the spandrel glass panels. By the time Lever House changed ownership in the late 1990s, an estimated one percent of the original glass remained, leaving a façade characterized by mismatched replacement greenish glass. Ultimately, a thoughtful renovation of Lever House removed individual elements of the façade and all glass and replaced them with new materials that are nearly identical to the original.

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The Favorite Child Syndrome

There is a bias toward placing a priority on Modernist icons, saying that only great places are worthy of preservation. In the preservation movement, we have a history of doing so, starting out by primarily saving the architectural specimens of homes and mansions of wealthy industrialists. Only later did we expand our reach and focus on vernacular architectural styles and more modest homes, industrial landmarks, and places rich in cultural significance.



Brutalism at Louis Salk Institute, La Jolla (Courtesy Jason Taellious/ Creative commons)

The nomenclature “Modernism” and the “recent past,” is intentional and strategic, distinguishing between the wide varieties of places that exist within the catch-all categorization otherwise known as Mid-Century Modern. This era produced phenomenal icons and great buildings and landscapes, rich in significance and without question worthy of preservation: Philip Johnson’s Glass House, the Case Study Houses of California, and Seattle’s Freeway Park by Lawrence Halprin, to name only a few.

While we may focus on the icons and work to ensure their preservation initially, we cannot arbitrarily pick and choose which Modern places to give preferential treatment as our favorites. In preservation, it is not always about being “good,” “better,” or “best.” Otherwise, we are left with a piecemeal approach, lacking an authentic look and

ensemble for how mid-century community and place really is and feels.

No Beauty Pageant

We often say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. That is not always true, especially in terms of architecture. There seem to be patterns in design—scale, proportion, and elements—that are inherently pleasing to people. This is the decidedly unscientific “lovable” or “huggable” factor that we often see with earlier eras of architecture and design.

In contrast, mid-century buildings and landscapes are sometimes criticized as being sterile, soulless, aesthetically challenged, and even outright ugly. Take Brutalism, for instance, an architectural style during this period that favors poured concrete, bold geometric shapes, and stark landscape settings. Even the name, Brutalism, does not exactly evoke warm and fuzzy feelings. The realization that Modernist places may not be loved through traditional notions of beauty

“While we are not trying to save everything built during this era, how much do we save and how do we decide what is a worthy, best, or last remaining example?”

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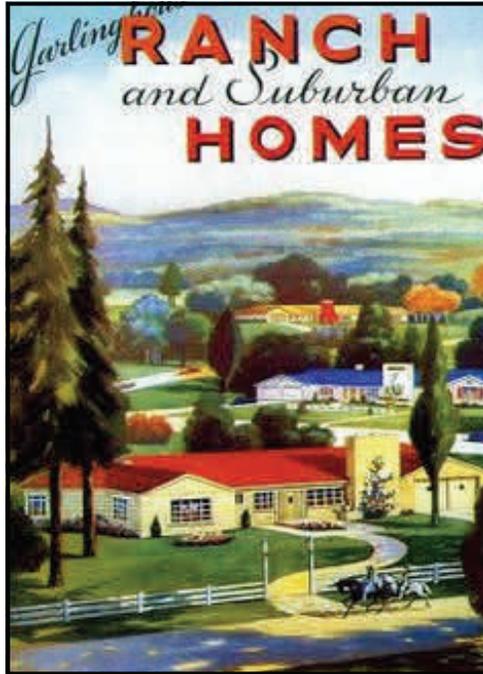
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requires us to dig further in order to fully understand these buildings and landscapes and their role in history.

the built environment—challenges the methods that previously have been used to focus our preservation efforts. In many communities, less than 25 percent

The Bunny Dilemma

There are a lot of Modernist and recent-past places out there, with this era representing a prolific and massive boom period of construction. While we are not trying to save everything built during this era, how much *do* we save and how do we decide what is a worthy, best, or last remaining example?



(Courtesy raftertales.com)

Scale is a big issue. Large developments and sometimes entire communities came online during this period. With limited manpower and resources at our disposal, how do we evaluate significance from an economy of scale perspective? The sheer volume of buildings from this era—80 percent of

of the historic resources have even been surveyed. It is not uncommon for existing inventories to date to the 1970s or 1980s without recent updates, and so rarely identify any resources from the 1950s or beyond. In Philadelphia, a city rich in 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th century history, only about 4 percent of its buildings have been surveyed.

You have to understand enough about the resources at hand to know when to tear down and when to preserve. Until we fix this problem and the other challenges facing Modernism, we and the modern resources we seek to preserve are left exposed and constantly playing catch up—with a lot to save and lose.



This article is adapted from *Top 13 Challenges for Saving Modernism and the Recent Past*, originally written by Mr. Fine for the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Forum News Blog and later reprinted for the LA Conservancy. We encourage you to read the complete article and list of challenges: <https://www.laconservancy.org/node/914>

Adrian Scott Fine is Director of Advocacy for the Los Angeles Conservancy. He also worked for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and writes and speaks extensively on modernism and preservation.

One of the signature characteristics of the mid-century modern era was the active integration of indoor and outdoor spaces, whether in individual homes, or in the era's many urban garden apartment projects. In her article about Capitol Towers, Flora Chou looks at one such project in California's capital city, and the challenges faced in preserving these resources.

Modernist Treasure in California's Capital

By Flora Chou, Cultural Resources Planner, Los Angeles

Sacramento's Capitol Towers is a little-known but excellent example of modernist urban housing. Built between 1959 and 1965 as the residential element of Sacramento's first realized urban redevelopment project, its all-star design team emphasized human-scaled urban living that mixed low-rise garden

mature tree canopy, created a well-scaled, well-planned, and highly livable community.

An important work for all the architects involved, Capitol Towers is also a key work by master landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. It was among Halprin's

earliest urban plazas and shows early exploration of themes that became Halprin signatures in the years that followed: the collaborative design process, the way people move through public spaces, and, most importantly, the civic plaza integrated with art and the built environment.

Capitol Towers was

Halprin's first exploration of this design trademark, which he would further develop at places like Ghirardelli Square and Embarcadero Plaza in San Francisco.



Capitol Towers features both high-rise and low-scale residential buildings (Courtesy Page & Turnbull)

apartments in a park-like setting with a modern high rise and a public plaza at the heart. The resulting assembly of vertical and horizontal building elements, linked by landscaped spaces and a now-

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Captiol Towers has stood for over 50 years as a respected example of an urban garden apartment complex designed by a stellar group of the most talented designers of their time.

reason why redevelopment projects cannot be exciting and attractive. Why must all buildings in a project be identical?”²

“In the years following World War II, ambitious urban renewal projects sought to revitalize deteriorating city centers by replacing ‘blighted’ downtowns with modern urban cores.”

In the years following World War II, ambitious urban renewal projects sought to revitalize deteriorating city centers by replacing “blighted” downtowns with modern urban cores. By the mid-1950s when California had the tools in place for urban renewal, a backlash was mounting against the “bleak towers” and “box-like buildings, no better than the slums they replaced,” that branded redevelopment projects elsewhere.¹ In 1958, the same year New York developer James Scheuer was selected to develop Capitol Towers, he wrote:

“We have now been warned that unless urban renewal is radically improved it will die aborning through lack of public support. The public will simply refuse to make the necessary capital investment, not only in terms of money but in terms of the inconvenience and dislocation which are unavoidable costs of redevelopment...there is no



Sculptural wall and swimming pool (Courtesy Page & Turnbull)

Capitol Towers was Scheuer’s and his design team’s response. Designed and constructed in phases between 1958 and 1965, Capitol Towers is a unique collaboration by some of the most distinguished modern designers of the period. Leading the team was Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons, whose principals William Wurster, Theodore Bernardi, and Donn Emmons were instrumental in defining the look and feel of Bay Region Modernism. Joining them was the architectural team of Vernon DeMars and Donald Reay, fellow San Francisco architects also influential in the Bay Region Modernism movement and Edward Larrabee Barnes, a New York-based architect and former Wurster employee who would go on to a distinguished design career.

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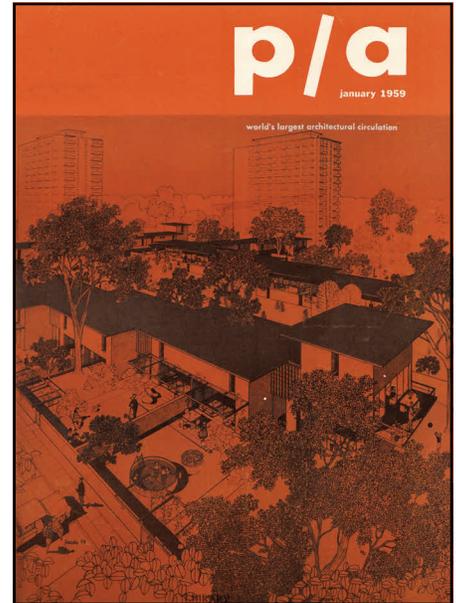
Combining Garden City planning principles with Le Corbusier's "ideal city" high-rise planning from earlier in the twentieth century, Capitol Towers is on a 10-acre superblock (equaling four city blocks) just south of Sacramento's Capitol Mall. Eight two- and three-story garden apartment buildings and one 15-story tower house 409 rental units. The pedestrian-only interior extends the existing street grid into the site along walkways with shared open space. Automobiles are confined to the perimeter parking courts and a parking structure. At the core of the site, the walkways intersect and open into a central plaza at the heart of the community. A striking sculptural wall by artist Jacques Overhoff anchors the plaza and divides it from the complex's swimming pool. Toward the center is the tower, which houses restaurants and retail at its ground floor.³

The design of the low-rise garden buildings is deliberately simple, as is typical for Bay Region Modernism. Staggered unit modules, deep overhangs, and open breezeways vary the design. Each apartment has a private outdoor space in either an upper-floor balcony or an enclosed ground-floor patio to balance the public open spaces. To maximize privacy, the garden building balconies typically overlook shared lawns, while the enclosed patios are at the building's opposite side. Each tower unit also has a balcony.

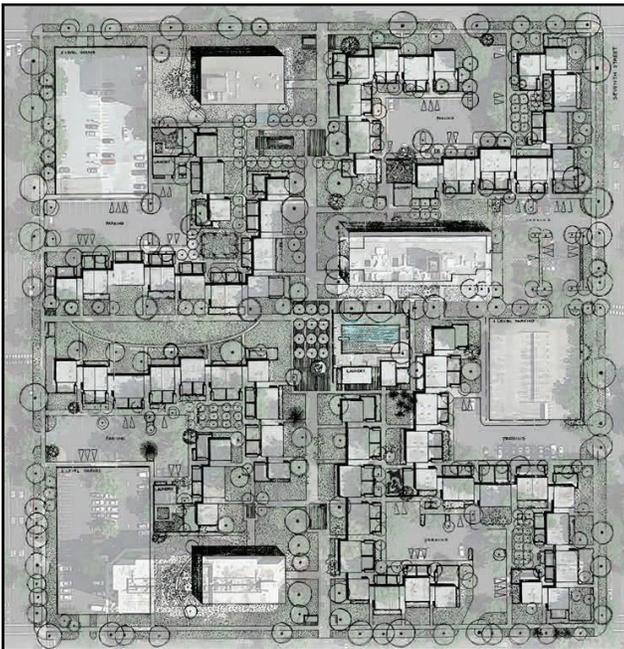
Lawrence Halprin (1916-2009) was one of the most prolific American landscape architects of the postwar years. His work exhibits an attention to human scale, user experience, and social impact. Capitol

Towers was designed during a transitional period in Halprin's career when he moved from private residential and shopping mall projects to the larger campus and urban plaza commissions for which he is best known. As Halprin recalled:

"I was now working closely with some world-class architects and...getting a great deal of experience. I designed my first urban plaza at the center of the Sacramento project [Capitol Towers], and brought in the sculptor Jacques Overhoff to work on an enclosing cast concrete wall. I was developing great street details for these larger commissions and I was learning



Capitol Towers was the featured story in Progressive Architecture, January 1959. (Courtesy California Garden & Landscape Historical Society)



Capitol Towers master plan, circa 1964, overlaid with 2014 satellite view (Courtesy Dane Henas, Sacramento Modern)

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“As with other garden apartment complexes, the low-scale and open spaces that make Capitol Towers such a unique, livable place also make it vulnerable.”

about graphics from the great graphic designer Saul Bass.”⁴

The project’s collaborative design process resulted in integrated buildings and landscape. The garden buildings, with their shared lawns, front city streets and the main walkways as if along a street. They also enclose intimate courtyards in less trafficked areas. Landscaped courts with grids of trees or low plantings are found at each parking court, marking the transition into the site’s pedestrian interior.

Capitol Towers shows Halprin exploring early iterations of themes that would later become his design signatures. With a grid of London plane trees and a low circular fountain, the central plaza is a quiet gathering place enlivened by Overhoff’s robust sculptural wall. In his 1963 book *Cities*, Halprin uses Capital Towers to illustrate his views on minor plazas:

“At the confluence of streets there are often small spaces which should be developed as handsome and colorful incidents in the heart of the city. A small plaza can contain, in a relatively casual way, sculpture, fountain, art exhibits, cafes, and benches which are human in scale,

intimate, and usable. A local plaza gives a sense of place and becomes a focus for its neighborhood. It can be a rallying place for neighborhood activities and establish a quality and character for its inhabitants.”⁵



Garden spaces at Capitol Towers (Courtesy Page & Turnbull)

Capitol Towers appears frequently throughout *Cities* as Halprin examines the elements of successful urban spaces. He includes a detailed notational system of walking through Capitol Towers to demonstrate his study of “the kinesthetic experience.”⁶ Halprin later expanded the notation system as part of his RSVP Cycle and his constant fascination with movement through space.

Capitol Towers was recognized early on with awards from Progressive Architecture, the Northern California Chapter of the AIA, and the Governor’s Design Awards Program.⁷ Some changes have occurred over the last 50 years,

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including the loss of Halprin-designed light standards and a kiosk. Overall, Capitol Tower's primary spatial relationships, residential buildings, and key landscape features remain intact.

As with other garden apartment complexes, the low scale and open spaces that make Capitol Towers such a unique, livable place also make it vulnerable. The large sites and open spaces, moderate-to-low density, and valuable real estate of garden apartment complexes put them at risk for demolition and redevelopment. Like a number of garden apartments in Los Angeles and other California cities, Capitol Towers has fallen victim to this new round of "urban renewal," with the Sacramento City Council about to consider a project proposal that would

demolish the smaller units and most of the landscaped park of the historic complex.

Believing it an important part of the city's history, Sacramento Modern nominated Capitol Towers to the National Register of Historic Places with support from residents, preservationists, and the City of Sacramento Preservation Commission. Capitol Towers was formally determined eligible for the National Register in 2014. The project's Draft Environmental Impact Report released in March 2015 recognized Capitol Towers as a historic resource but did not include feasible preservation alternatives that would retain its historic status. The future remains uncertain for this signature mid-century Sacramento resource.



Flora Chou is a cultural resources planner for Page & Turnbull in Los Angeles. Previously, she worked as a preservation advocate for the LA Conservancy, and since 2012, has served on the national board of Docomomo US.

This article is adapted from an article originally published in the winter 2015 issue of *Eden*, the journal of the California Garden & Landscape History Society:
www.cglhs.org

¹James H. Scheuer, "Letters to the Times: to Beautify Housing," *New York Times*, July 8, 1958.

²Scheuer, "Letters to the Times."

³Two additional towers at the superblock's corners are located where towers were planned, but they were constructed in the 1970s and 80s by different developers and design teams, and are not part of Capitol Towers.

⁴Lawrence Halprin, *A Life Spent Changing Places* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 108.

⁵Lawrence Halprin, *Citites*, revised edition (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), 27.

⁶Halprin, *Citites*, 212-213.

⁷Wurster, Bernardi, and Emmons, *Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons, Inc., Architects* (San Francisco, CA: Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons, Inc., 1967), 30.

As SHPO Roland-Nawi observed in her opening article, California has benefited both from some of the iconic names and works in modernism, and from less well-known modernist masters working at the local and regional level. From the city of Riverside we get a look at one modernist master who helped shape Riverside’s urban landscape in the post-war years.

Modernism, and the Growth of Riverside, California

By Gayat Adame, Assistant Planner, City of Riverside

Following World War II, the Modernist Movement that grew in early twentieth century American society gained a heavy foothold in Riverside. The movement changed the social, political, and economic environment into one that was more fitting with the rapid growth the city was experiencing. People were moving west in search of sunshine and

industries represented by Rohr Aircraft Company, Bourns Incorporated, and Lily-Tulip. Between 1890 and 1940, Riverside’s population grew from 4,683 to 34,696 residents, a 740 percent population growth rate. However, it was during the decade of the 1950s that Riverside experienced the largest growth spurt. The burgeoning population

stimulated growth in all sectors of Riverside. Roads were expanded, freeways developed, the number of tract housing projects increased significantly, and new schools began to be constructed.

A new phase in architectural design emerged that encapsulated many forms of design, including the “machine aesthetic,” a structure that was quickly produced, simple and free of embellishments, and efficient in construction. It was during this period that architect Milton H. Caughey became known for designing many of Riverside’s schools.



Victoria Elementary School, designed in 1953 (© Steve Jacobs, City of Riverside)

riches. Others associated with the war industries and military bases decided to remain in southern California to take advantage of job opportunities in large

Milton Hazeltine Caughey, a native of Pennsylvania, was born on December 11, 1911 to Francis and Grace Caughey. A

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scholar from an early age, Caughey graduated from Amherst College in 1934 and received a Master of Fine Arts in architecture from Yale in 1938. Following graduation, he held short-term positions as a draftsman with prominent architecture firms in New York and Georgia. He moved to Los Angeles with his wife in 1940 and went to work for architect

Gordon Kaufman. A few years later he was pulled away to World War II where he was commissioned a lieutenant and did not return to Los Angeles until 1946.

In the years after World War II, Riverside and Alvord Unified School Districts doubled in size, aided by eight bond issues for the construction of new schools between 1945 and 1968. Public schools in Riverside reflected national postwar trends in campus planning and architecture. The rapid growth and quick demand for new schools shifted architectural designs away from authoritarian designs known for symmetry, and towards more informal arrangements that sought to create fluid connections between the outdoors and design.

Caughey became one of the most noted architects who contributed to the design of Riverside's public schools and embraced the aesthetics of mid-century modernism. Some of Caughey's noteworthy school designs that were identified in the 2013 City of Riverside



Large windows and overhanging eaves, Victoria Elementary School
(© Steve Jacobs, City of Riverside)

Citywide Modernism Intensive Survey include Victoria Elementary School (1953), Pachappa Elementary School (1953), and Monroe Elementary School (1957), all of which will be discussed briefly below. Some additional designs include the Riverside Juvenile Hall (1952), Mountain View Elementary School (1954), and Highland Elementary School (1959).

Victoria Elementary School at 2910 Arlington Avenue is an example of Riverside's mid-century modern architecture. While there have been some additions to the school over time, original elements of the campus plan remain intact. Exteriors display smooth stucco cladding with details in running bond brick. Fenestration consists of large, wood-framed windows. Buildings are connected by covered walkways, composed of flat canopies set on slender metal poles also known as *pilotis*. The school retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance, making it eligible as a local landmark.

“The rapid ... demand for schools shifted architectural designs ... towards more informal arrangements that sought to create fluid connections between the outdoors and design.”

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Horizontal, metal louvers, at Pachappa Elementary School (© Steve Jacobs, City of Riverside)

Pachappa Elementary School located at 6200 Riverside Avenue is another example of a mid-century modern school designed in partnership by Caughey and Bolton Moise, Jr. The design won the 1954 Merit Award in Design Excellence for Design and Execution from the Southern California chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Original structures that remain are one story in height, with low-pitched shed roofs and overhanging eaves. Some eaves display suspended metal horizontal louvers. Exterior walls are clad in stucco, and windows are wood sash. Buildings are linked by covered walkways composed of flat canopies set on *pilotis*. Since its construction, the original school plan has changed, and two

original structures have been demolished. An unfortunate consequence of the alterations is the loss of the school's architectural integrity, making it ineligible for local designation.

Monroe Elementary School located at 8535 Garfield Street has also had some additions, but original elements of the campus plan still remain. Original structures are one story in height, with low-pitched side-gable roofs and wide overhanging eaves. Some eaves display exposed steel truss work. One building is octagonal in plan with a distinctive roofline composed of exaggerated gablets at the apex. Exteriors display running bond brick and smooth stucco cladding. Fenestration appears to consist of wood-frame windows. Similar to Victoria Elementary, the school has experienced changes over the years, although it does retain sufficient historic integrity to be designated a local landmark.

Modifications to the original designs have unfortunately diminished the integrity of several of the schools Milton



Octagonal design at Monroe Elementary School (© Steve Jacobs, City of Riverside)

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Flat canopies and *pilotis*, Monroe Elementary School (© Steve Jacobs, City of Riverside)

Caughey designed. Population growth pressure and the fact that schools are exempt from local government preservation regulations present challenges to preserving integrity. Efforts by the City of Riverside to recognize these schools began with the Certified Local Government (CLG) grant-funded Modernism Historic Context Statement in

younger than themselves can be considered “historic.” Architecture from the mid-century is often a victim of this misperception. This presents challenges for the preservation of Riverside’s Modern resources, and only concerted outreach efforts and time will enable people to embrace our more recent past.

2009 and the Citywide Modernism Intensive Survey conducted in 2013.

Although Riverside may be best known for its Mission Inn, it also has over 200 eligible Modernist resources that contribute to its diverse architectural styles. Some members of the public find it surprising and hard to believe that buildings

“Population growth and the fact that schools are exempt from local government preservation regulations present challenges to preserving integrity.”



Gayat “Gaby” Adame is an Assistant Planner for the City of Riverside in the Community and Economic Development Department.

Visit the City of Riverside’s website to learn more about the city’s historic resources surveys and other preservation efforts: <https://www.riversideca.gov/historic/>

Mid-century modernism with its innovative and new approaches to architecture and design, not surprisingly, came at a time of changing and new social norms, and civil rights. Sometimes modernism and social change intersected as chronicled in this article adapted from the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Intercultural Council Houses of Claremont, California.

Mid-Century Modern in the Age of Civil Rights

By Molly Iker, Architectural Historian, Pasadena

“The modern, visionary spirit of the Intercultural Council Houses experiment was reflected in the equally modern architectural design and communal character of the Houses.”

The Intercultural Council Houses of Claremont, California, are a district of one-story, single-family homes located on a single residential block in Claremont’s Arbol Verde neighborhood.¹ Built between 1947 and 1952, the houses are historically and culturally significant for their unique role in Latino civil rights and anti-segregation movements in southern California. Shortly after the end of World War II, a group of Claremont citizens formed the Intercultural Council with the intent of desegregating the city’s housing. They planned to mix Anglo students from Claremont Graduate School, with Mexican families who applied and qualified to own houses in the community, thus building “bridges of friendship and

neighborliness.”² As explained at the time by Millard Sheets, a noted California artist and Council member, “It is time people in America learn to live together without respect to color, race, nationality and creed—we hope our efforts may help to bring about this fundamental achievement.”³ Their



Intercultural Council House with flat, cantilevered roof and plain plywood siding (All Photos courtesy of Molly Iker)

project came to be known as the Intercultural Council Houses or “Neighbors, Inc.” experiment.

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The Houses were built beginning in 1947, when some of the Intercultural Council's founding members purchased twelve lots on the southern portion of the Arbol Verde tract. At the time, Mexicans could not own land within the then boundaries of Claremont, so the Arbol Verde tract was one of the only places where the Intercultural Council Houses experiment could take place. Individual lots cost \$450, or \$600 for corner lots. Construction of the Houses was heavily subsidized by the Council. Lewis Crutcher, a Claremont Graduate School attendee and student of Millard Sheets, drew up plans for one-story, two-bedroom, one-bath homes. Homeowners could purchase the plans for \$35. Six out of the twelve homes were built according to the plans, and Crutcher "also gave individual help in some specific cases."⁴ Many homeowners hired a local contractor, Roger Curtis, to build their homes while other owners chose to do the construction themselves to save costs.⁵

The modern, visionary spirit of the Intercultural Council Houses experiment was reflected in the equally modern architectural design and communal character of the Houses. The houses were angled on their individual lots to give each house a mountain view. Most homes were post-and-beam, constructed of marine plywood walls with 2x4 and 4x4 beams acting as supports. One home was constructed of concrete blocks, and three others were a combination of post-and-beam and concrete blocks (several now have stucco or clapboard over their original plywood exteriors).⁶ Roofs were flat, cantilevered, front- or side-gabled, and clad in asphalt or rubber shingles.



Former community washhouse and Well Baby Clinic

The houses featured high transom windows above large plate glass windows, though some houses have side-sliding windows. Because of their unique single-board plywood construction and their mid-century modern design, the Intercultural Council Houses were easily distinguished from the Colonial Revival, Craftsman, Ranch, or Spanish Revival style houses in the neighborhood around them.

The houses associated with the Intercultural Council's desegregation experiment took approximately five years to construct. Originally, the twelve Houses were arranged around a central yard that included the communal tot yard, drying yard, adult recreation area, child's play area, washing room (which also served as the Well Baby Clinic for several years), barbecue, incinerator, and phone. There were two parking lots for the use of all twelve Houses.⁷ The Intercultural Council Houses experiment was seen as an early example of condominium living, with a loosely

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“Cheaply made, and subject to hot summers and occasional flooding, the Houses nevertheless have lasted over sixty years ... the experiment ultimately led to the integration of all of Claremont.”



Intercultural Council House with exposed beam interior

formed Homeowner’s Association centered on the maintenance of the communal facilities, as well as the timely payment of the community’s telephone and water bills.

The experiment invited a diverse group of families to live in harmony with each other. As Lewis Crutcher and Council member Whitney Smith later recalled, “Each house has a story; like the Abundiz family who were brought from Mexico by the Garners to perform with the Mexican Players, and the Livingstons, who were the first African American students to be accepted to Pomona College, and artist Paul Darrow, a then graduate student, and his family who moved from Pasadena to join the neighborhood.”⁸ In the 1940s and 1950s, the Mexican American families living in the Houses threw fiestas for the neighborhood, introducing their Caucasian neighbors to Mexican culture. The spirit of community among the inhabitants of the Intercultural Council Houses was fostered by the communal

sharing of facilities in the open, unfenced land between the lots.

After the first ten years of the Intercultural Council Houses experiment, the “college-connected Anglos,” as well as some of the Latino families, moved on to bigger and better houses. John Dominguez, a long-

time Intercultural Council Houses resident, noted that the maintenance of the park began to waiver at that time.⁹ By 1960, the communal park land had been divided into separate lots for each House.

Cheaply made, and subject to hot summers and occasional flooding, the Intercultural Council Houses nevertheless have lasted over sixty years. Currently, all twelve Houses are situated on long narrow lots facing Brooks Avenue, Blanchard Place, or First Street. They each have separate, fenced backyards, though the communal barbecue still exists behind one of the Houses, and the washing room remains intact behind another. Some of the Houses are in their original condition, while others have been renovated or had additions made to them over the years. Most still retain their original building materials, though some Houses have covered the marine plywood and beams with stucco or siding. Roofs are still flat, cantilevered, front- or side-

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gabled, and are still covered in asphalt or rubber shingles. The transom windows and large plate glass windows still remain in most Houses.

Though the period of historic significance for the Intercultural Council Houses ended with the division of the communal parkland, the “Neighbors, Inc.”

experiment was ultimately successful in meeting its objectives. The community character is still evident among the Houses’ current residents who are extremely aware of their homes’ historic purpose and readily share their community’s history. The Intercultural Council Houses led to the integration of the rest of Claremont, and to the creation or conceptualization of several other integrated housing experiments



Intercultural Council Houses—still present after sixty years.

around southern California. All of this while showcasing an early and very California style of mid-century modern architecture.

On April 7, 2015, the Intercultural Council Houses were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in association with the Latinos in Twentieth Century California Multiple Property Submission.



Molly Iker works as an Associate Architectural Historian with Historic Resources Group, Pasadena. She wrote the Intercultural Council Houses nomination on behalf of Claremont Heritage and as part of her studies for the Masters of Arts in Historic Preservation at University of Delaware. Ms. Iker is a native of Los Angeles.

Read the full Houses nomination: <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1067/files/intercultural%20council%20houses%20nr%20draft.pdf>

and learn more about the Latinos in Twentieth Century California MPS, a collaborative effort of the OHP, Latino communities, and other partners to identify and nominate to the National Register, California resources associated with Latino history:

www.ohp.parks.ca.gov/preservelatinohistory

Visit the Claremont Heritage website to learn more about efforts to preserve the city’s history: <http://www.claremontheritage.org/>

¹Article text and references are adapted from the National Register of Historic Places nomination for Intercultural Council Houses, authored by Molly Iker, August, 2014.

²“Notes about Intercultural Council,” Claremont Heritage Special Collections, Claremont, CA, p. 7-2.

³Millard Sheets, “Long Term Goals,” *Icc Plans*, (1948). Quoted in Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 248.

⁴“History of the Intercultural Council Built Houses,” Claremont Heritage Special Collections, Claremont, CA, p. 2.

⁵“Notes from Henry Cooke’s Oral History on the Intercultural Council and the Barrio,” Claremont Heritage Special Collections.

⁶Ibid.

⁷“History of the Intercultural Council Built Houses,” p.2.

⁸“Lou Crutcher & Whitney Smith,” Claremont Heritage Special Collections, p. 2.

⁹John Dominguez, interview by author, Claremont, CA, April 3, 2014.

For all of the challenges involved in preserving California's modern resources, our modern heritage prevails and is making grounds in awareness and appreciation among the state's citizenry. We close this issue of the newsletter with a look at some modern resources that were successfully preserved and recognized, in two cases, with listings on the National Register of Historic Places, and for others, with the Governor's Historic Preservation Awards. And, as the last article in this set demonstrates, modernism encompasses more than just buildings.

Shiloh Baptist Church

By William Burg, Historian, Registration Program

Shiloh Baptist Church is a mid-century modern church in Sacramento constructed between 1958 and 1963, and designed by Sacramento's first licensed African American architect, James C. Dodd. The building is home to the Shiloh Baptist Church, a congregation formed as the Siloam Baptist Church in 1856 and a significant element of Sacramento's African American community from the Gold Rush era to the present day.

The main sanctuary plan is square, but oriented at a 45 degree angle to the street so the building appears diamond-shaped. The triangular roof rises to one

and one-half stories above the sanctuary, placed on a diagonal, which distinguishes it from the rest of the building. The wooden frame building has a stucco finish with redwood fascia and louver accents, and a composition shingle roof. Stained glass windows and an elevated cross are prominent features of the building front. The property is eligible under Criterion A for



its association with Sacramento's African American community during Sacramento's redevelopment era, relocating from the church's previous location in downtown Sacramento to the neighborhood of Oak Park. The property is also eligible under Criterion C as a

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skillful example of Mid-century modern church design, the first major commission of master architect James Dodd, FAIA.



James Dodd was born in 1923 in Texarkana, Texas. After serving in the United States Army, he entered the University of California at Berkeley, earning a bachelor's degree in architecture. He arrived in Sacramento in 1952 following graduation, working for the State of California and the firm of Barovetto and Thomas before starting his own architectural firm. Dodd's architectural work included such diverse projects as a chapel at Castle Air Force Base, preservation and restoration work at Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park and Sacramento High School, and development of a prefabricated housing construction system using recycled materials called "Urfab."

Due to financial hardships, completion of the church took five years, with much of the work being done by the church's pastor, Reverend Willie P. Cooke. His congregation was involved in all aspects of construction, including labor. Reverend Cooke was born in Brookhaven, Mississippi in 1916 and studied electrical engineering at the American School of Electricity in Chicago. After moving to Oregon, he became the first African

American to hold an Electrical Contractor's license in that state. He became affiliated with Shiloh Baptist Church in 1952, while the Reverend Joseph Williams was pastor. It was during this time that he became a minister, becoming pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in 1957.

Shiloh Baptist Church was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places through the combined efforts of the City of Sacramento's historic preservation department and Shiloh's church historian, Dorothy Randell. Ms. Randell provided historical background information about the church and acted as liaison to the church board regarding the nomination. The property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in July 2012. Reverend Cooke died on September 23, 2012, shortly after the property's listing. According to his wife, he learned of the listing before his death, and took great personal comfort in the news.



William Burg is a State Historian II in the OHP's Registration and Environmental Compliance Unit. He also serves as President of the non-profit Preservation Sacramento, and writes and speaks frequently on Sacramento history.

"Shiloh Baptist Church is a Mid-Century Modern church designed by Sacramento's first licensed African American architect, James C. Dodd"

Steel Development House Number 2

By Amy Crain, Historian, Registration Program



“Steel Development Houses represented ... homes for the middle class that were practical, stylish, and virtually indestructible”

Steel Development House Number 2 is one of seven all-steel homes—all clustered in the same neighborhood in Palm Springs—created by the architectural team of Donald Wexler and Ric Harrison, structural engineer Bernard Perlin, and builder Alexander Construction Company.

The house was built in 1962, its period of significance, and is primarily composed of steel and glass on a concrete foundation with no structural wood. It represents a unique synthesis of off-site prefabrication and on-site assembly. The house exemplifies simple yet elegant concepts in midcentury modern design plus the novel use of steel construction, demonstrating the possibilities for rapidly-assembled and affordable homes for the middle class that were designed to withstand the harsh desert environment. The property has excellent integrity in all aspects, and appears much as it did as built.

The property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 20,

2012, and was selected by National Park Service National Register staff as the Weekly Highlight for March 30 of that same year. The house was listed under Criterion C at the local level of significance because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of mid-century modernism as adapted for desert living. The Steel Development Houses represented environmentally sensitive, affordable, rapidly assembled homes for the middle class that were practical, stylish, and virtually indestructible.

The massing of the house is low and linear with a pinwheel-like layout, a central core from which radiate four distinct elements: living areas on the north and south sides, sleeping areas to the west (at the back), and the carport to the east (at the front). The structural elements of the house are exposed, reflecting its assembly. Long steel beams under the roofline stretch the length of the house, ending in vertical steel posts. These beams frame the outer steel panel walls and the floor-to-ceiling glass. The northeast corner of the house features a

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"spider-leg"—an upside-down L-shaped element that visually carries the line of the horizontal beam out from the house and down. This long horizontal line spanning living and carport areas visually lengthens what is actually a very compact house.

The roof is a flat plane laid across the central core and steel frame; the white color contrasts sharply with the dark brown trim, making the roof appear to "float" over the house. Notable to the house is the lack of decoration or trim. The roof has an imperceptible tilt enabling rainwater to be funneled through a system of channels and drains built into the roof panels and vertical framing. The lot is xeriscaped and there is no grass lawn; ground cover is either rock or decomposed granite. The pool is diagonally positioned on the lot to align

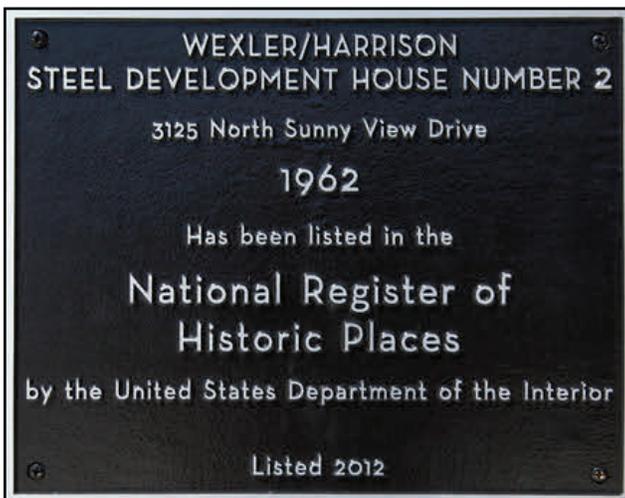


with the lights of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway cars that ascend and descend the face of the nearby mountain.

The property was nominated to the National Register by its owner, Brian McGuire, who is committed to preserving the home's unique character and history. Seven letters represented support from architects, scholars, museums, and preservation organizations.

Mr. McGuire honored the National Register listing with a plaque, commemorative booklet, and party that also celebrated the house's 50th anniversary. Retired architect Donald Wexler was a guest of honor.

Donald Wexler passed away on June 26, 2015, at the age of 89. The OHP joins with the greater preservation community in extending our sincere sympathies to his family.



Amy Crain is a State Historian II in the OHP's Registration and Environmental Compliance Unit. She holds an MS in Historic Preservation and Museum Studies Certificate from the University of Oregon, with a specialization in Western American Jewish history and culture.



Sign of the Times—Modern, That is

By Jenan Saunders, Deputy SHPO

Not to be left out of the Modernism conversation is the issue of signage. Signs are, of course, historical resources that were expressly created to capture attention, and therefore it's no surprise that they have a whole cadre of aficionados dedicated to their continued preservation. There are many cities,



towns, and rural highways that boast creative, historic signs. One such location is the Highland Park area of Los Angeles. The preservation of some of Highland Parks' most well-known signs was recognized in 2010 and 2012 through the Governor's Historic Preservation Awards program.

The 2010 awards paid homage to the resurrection of Chicken Boy, which

started life as a 22-foot-tall Paul Bunyan statue manufactured by the International Fiberglass Company in Venice, California. It was bought by the Chicken Boy Fried Chicken restaurant in the late 1960s and customized and installed atop the restaurant on Broadway in downtown Los Angeles. Chicken Boy would have gone the way of so many other signs in the 1980s when the restaurant closed were it not for the incredible efforts of graphic designer Amy Inouye. Ms. Inouye originally hoped to donate Chicken Boy to a sculpture garden, but when there were no takers, she took it upon herself to save him. Through a variety of funding sources—including very popular souvenir merchandise—Ms. Inouye was able to first store him for more than 20 years, and then to hire the “rock star of structural engineers,” Melvyn Green, to oversee Chicken Boy's installation atop her design offices in Highland Park. The unique rooftop fixture is now a regular feature in tourists' photos of the neighborhood.

In 2012 Highland Park was again the focus of a Governor's Award, this time for the restoration of two lighted rooftop signs—those of the Highland Theatre and Manning's Coffee Store. Both signs are along Figueroa Street, which served as Route 66 from 1931 to 1934, and Route 66A from 1936 to 1960. The restoration projects brought

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together many seemingly disparate elements: a community passionate about place; a business district's desire to create a more attractive, distinctive destination to generate retail interest; and a strong advocacy for Route 66, neon, old signs, and vernacular roadside architecture.

The Manning's Coffee Store sign, constructed in 1936, is the sole Manning's sign left in Los Angeles and uses a rare combination of neon and opal glass letters. The original 22 opal glass letters had been stolen but were recovered through the historic sign aficionado network via the Museum of Neon Art, Glendale, California.

The iconic Highland Theatre sign is perhaps Highland Park's most visible and



beloved symbol due to its size and commanding presence atop the tallest building on the street. Project leaders started fundraising by asking supporters to sponsor a single bulb, but instead community organizations wanted to participate on a grander scale and groups clamored to sponsor an entire letter—15 in all.



Neighborhood efforts such as those made for Chicken Boy, and the Manning's Coffee Store and Highland Theater signs, exemplify a new and innovative way that historic preservation—on a large or small scale—can be a vital strategy for community revitalization.



Jenan Saunders is Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer for the California Office of Historic Preservation. Prior to her position with the OHP, Jenan worked as a manager in the Interpretation and Education Division of California State Parks.

To learn more about the National Register nomination process, and the Governor's Historic Preservation Awards program, visit the OHP website:

National Register:
www.ohp.parks.ca.gov/nationalregister
 Governor's Historic Preservation Awards:
www.ohp.parks.ca.gov/governorsawards

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The mission of the **Office of Historic Preservation (OHP)** and the **State Historical Resources Commission** is to provide leadership and promote the preservation of California's irreplaceable and diverse cultural heritage.

To fulfill our mission we:

- ◆ Partner with local, state, federal, and tribal agencies, non-profit organizations, and the general public to help ensure cultural resources are appreciated and maintained as a matter of public interest and community pride;
- ◆ Carry out mandated responsibilities and administer programs under federal and state historic preservation laws;
- ◆ Promote a comprehensive preservation planning approach and urge the integration of historic preservation with broader land use planning efforts and decisions;
- ◆ Offer technical assistance and preservation training in order to create a better understanding of the programs OHP administers;
- ◆ Support sustainability and adaptive reuse of historic resources in ways that preserve historic character and provide economic benefits;
- ◆ Maintain the statewide Historical Resources Inventory and make available information about the state's historical and archaeological resources, and
- ◆ Encourage recognition of the vital legacy of cultural, educational, recreational, aesthetic, economic, social, and environmental benefits of historic preservation for the enrichment of present and future generations.

GET INVOLVED!

The [Modernism Committee \(Mod Com\)](#) of the State Historical Resources Commission was established to encourage awareness, scholarship, preservation, and the exchange of ideas on resources of the mid-century and recent past. Mod Com meets on a monthly basis, and public attendance and participation are welcomed. Currently, the Outreach Group of the committee is developing a database of preservation groups and individuals who are concerned about Modern resources in their communities. The database will include basic contact information as well as organizational affiliation and websites. The purpose of the database is to create a mechanism through which connectivity between individual preservationists and related organizations can facilitate communication and share vital questions, information, and strategies. Please consider becoming part of this online Modern community! Details on joining the database will be available in the Fall, on the Mod Com webpage: <http://www.ohp.parks.ca.gov/modcom>

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