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National Trust Forum Journal (ISSN 0893-9403) (USPS Publication Number 001-715) is published quarterly by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 as a benefit of National Trust Forum membership. Forum members also receive six issues of Forum News, and six issues of Preservation magazine. Annual dues are $115. Periodicals paid at Washington, D.C. and at additional mailing office. Postmaster: Send address changes to National Trust Forum, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright © 2000 National Trust for Historic Preservation. Support for the National Trust is provided by membership dues; endowment funds; individual, corporate, and foundation contributions; and grants from state and federal agencies. National Trust Forum Journal is a forum in which to express opinions, encourage debate, and convey information of importance and of general interest to Forum members of the National Trust. Inclusion of material or product references does not constitute an endorsement by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

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Wake County Office Building, Raleigh, N.C. Photo by Helen P. Ross
The Cathedral of Christ the King, Lexington, Ky. Photo by Bettie Kerr
Dorton Arena, Raleigh, N.C. Photo courtesy of the North Carolina Division of
Archives and History
When Sprawl Becomes Historic

Charlene Roise admits that the title of last fall’s conference session, “When Sprawl Becomes Historic,” was meant to grab the attention of attendees at the National Preservation Conference in Washington. Organized by the National Trust’s Board of Advisors, this session did attract attention. By starting time, the room was packed, and people were turned away at the doors. The standing-room only crowd listened for more than three and a half hours as eight speakers addressed the challenges of preserving sites from our recent past.

Charlene, a National Trust Advisor from Minnesota who helped organize this first-ever Advisor session, conceives that the focus of the discussion was much bigger than just how to preserve yesterday’s sprawl—tract houses, shopping centers, fast-food franchises and the like. It’s a fairly familiar lament: “That building can’t be historic. I remember when it was built! And besides, it’s ugly”—or “weird,” “unsightly,” “different-looking,” “strange,” or other less-than-complimentary terms. I’m sure you have heard these sentiments—and many others—in conversations about buildings that haven’t yet reached their half-century mark. In response to these attitudes, speakers discussed issues related to technology as well as techniques for surveying 20th-century resources, dealing with the vast numbers of sites that exist, and handling the public’s perception of buildings from the 1950s, 60s, and even 70s.

This issue of Forum evolved out of the presentations and discussions at the Advisors’ conference session. The first group of articles, written by Charlene Roise, Ted Ligibel, and Richard Longstreth, looks at the evolution of three different building types from the recent past—commercial, industrial, and residential.

We don’t often think about undertaking an archaeological dig for 20th-century artifacts, because, after all, the period is familiar and well documented. Yet, as Sue Henry Renaud’s article points out, archeology has a unique approach to studying the past and it provides a separate view of reality that is quite distinct from documents or personal recollections. As was evident from comments made during the advisors’ session, even if we preservationists appreciate International Style office buildings and Levittown houses, it is often hard to convince others that these buildings are worth saving. Dan Becker and Claudia Brown look at efforts by preservationists in Raleigh, N.C., to protect significant works by Raleigh’s “modernist visionaries.”

What shaped the architectural design process over the last 50 years? In his article, William Miller, FAIA, encourages us to look more closely at the process of creating architecture in order to close the gap between past and present and to prepare preservationists for the future and the challenges it will present.

Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, examines ways to preserve and interpret our “invisible” legacy—landscape architecture. Because of their very nature, parks, gardens, and even the plantings surrounding early shopping centers, are in danger of vanishing without a trace as they grow, mature and change.

The 1960s and 70s don’t seem that long ago to some of us. Yet to students fresh from university architecture or preservation programs, 1962 or 1972 is the past. The National Council for Preservation Education asked students in its graduate and undergraduate preservation programs to share their thoughts on the preservation of buildings from the recent past. Their suggestions and hopes reassure us that the next generation of preservationists is ready to take on the challenges of protecting the buildings that are our legacy from the not-so-distant past.

Richard Moe is president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

As part of our look at the recent past, scattered throughout this issue of Forum are reminders of the unique—and at times offbeat—developments that have shaped the nation since World War II.
Establishing Civilization on the Suburban Frontier

When soldiers came home from the War of 1812 and the Civil War, they were told “Go West, young man.” When they came home from World War II, the advice was “Get out of Dodge City”—and Detroit and Denver and Des Moines and the District of Columbia and every other urban area in America. And they went, millions of them, to the promised land. Suburbia was the new frontier.

The private sector was quick to provide immediate gratification in the form of the suburban house. But the house, although the most obvious physical manifestation of the suburban dream, was only the tip of the iceberg of what was needed to support the lifestyle that these 20th-century suburban immigrants sought. To start with the basics, the houses needed water, electricity, and other utilities. Septic systems and wells often sufficed for the first wave of settlers. As more of the frontier was claimed, however, Mother Nature’s ability to cope began to break down and municipal systems were required.

To get to their new homesteads, settlers on the suburban frontier needed roads for their wagons (station wagons, of course). Bringing two freeways together was a major challenge for engineers. One of the most impressive early freeway intersections is the junction of the Edsel Ford and John Lodge Expressways in the Motor City. While the freeways actually met in Detroit, both catered to the suburbanite who worked downtown. The intersection required 14 bridges. A Detroit Free Press writer, in awe of this immense undertaking, described the “salmon pink steel bridge work blooming like a maiden’s blush in the May sunshine.” The intersection witnessed its first traffic jam the day after it opened in 1955. As an important example of an early freeway design, the Ford-Lodge intersection has been determined eligible for the National Register even though it is not yet 50 years old.

Instead of the one-room schoolhouse, suburban schools offered a highly structured system of education from grade school to high school. Many schools, like Creekside Elementary in Bloomington, Minn., built in 1960 and now a community center, have nice detailing and are good examples of the era’s architectural preferences. Community colleges spared students from facing urban campuses. Public libraries were another sign of a maturing community.

Some forward-thinking suburbs planned extensive systems of parks and other amenities. Others did not, to their great discomfort later. An example is Richfield, Minn., which relied on leased airport property for its golf course, one of the most substantial works of landscape architecture in the community. Now the airport is expanding and there is no vacant land in Richfield, so golfers will have use of the already crowded courses in adjacent suburbs—or settle for mini-golf at the nearby Mall of America. Local golfers held a farewell party for the course before it was flattened by a fleet of bulldozers.

Religion also found a place in suburbia. Most denominations had “home mission” divisions that sent workers to organize new congregations just as they supplied missionaries to Africa, Asia, and other foreign locales. The American Lutheran Church, for example, managed a revolving fund from which young congregations could borrow for support until membership grew. According to the April 1951 issue of the Lutheran Herald, this revolving fund made “it possible for the newly organized congregation to go about its work without being concerned about borrowing money here and there, without conducting premature campaigns for funds, and without making the new church basement redolent with the odor of meat balls and lutefisk.” Another 1951 issue of the Herald had an article on Levittown and the church the Lutherans had established there. Other articles show that the Lutherans were clearly aware of the challenges and opportunities of suburbia. The Board of Home Missions offered standard plans for starter churches.

Other churches and other denominations made stronger architectural statements with designs that explored new construction techniques and materials, such as Chevy Chase Baptist Church and the Cathedral of Christ the King, both dating from the 1960s and located in Lexington, Kentucky. The construction cost of the cathedral was over $1 million.
God's justice was not always sufficient to maintain the peace on the modern frontier. Professional police and firefighters required facilities to house offices, police cars, and fire engines. They also needed jails for the outlaws who hadn't gotten the message that suburbia was supposed to be a safe, crime-free place. The center of law and order was city hall. Examples from Minneapolis suburbs illustrate two points. The first is from Bloomington, now the third-largest city in Minnesota and the proud home of the Mall of America. Just across the street from the current city hall is a humble two-story gable-roofed building, until 1964 the community's seat of government. Bloomington became a town in 1858, but it took more than a century for it to gain city status in 1960. The old town hall highlights a significant point: suburbs typically overtook small rural communities with generations of memories. While sprawl hit these communities with the subtlety of a steamroller, it did not usually quash the guardians of the lore and history that were its people's collective memory from the past that merited protection.

Another telling city-hall tale is that of Eden Prairie, Minn., where “McMansions” have gobbled up farmland at an incredible rate. Eden Prairie's population jumped from 1,400 in 1950 to 3,200 in 1960, but the old-timers who complained about the growth hadn't seen anything yet: today more than 50,000 people call the city home. A city hall built in the mid-1960s was found to be obsolete after about two decades of service. After expanding into temporary facilities, city hall moved three years ago to a complex with a variety of city functions, including the local historical society. The brief life of Eden Prairie's 1960s city hall epitomizes the rapid rate of change in suburbia, a phenomenon that may result in gaps in our cultural resource heritage from this period unless we selectively and thoughtfully identify buildings from the recent past that merit protection.

National Trust Advisors from around the country are beginning this identification process and have provided some interesting examples. Not all of these buildings are suburban. Some, indeed, are high-style urban landmarks designed by locally or nationally prominent architects. Examples include a classroom building from the University of Denver designed by Smith Hagner Moore in 1949 (now used for city offices), the Denver Art Museum by James Sudler with Gio Ponti from the 1960s, the delicate domes of the Denver Botanic Gardens (designated a local landmark), the Red Rocks Amphitheater near Denver (listed in the National Register), and the Minneapolis Public Library, built in 1959 as part of a major urban renewal project and now slated for demolition.

University campuses experienced an increase in post-war period building as their facilities were taxed by the GI bill and the baby boom. The Memorial Coliseum at the University of Kentucky in Lexington was designed by local architect John T. Gillig, a 1909 graduate of the School of Architecture at Ohio State. Mr. Gillig, who had worked in New York, Cleveland, and Washington before settling in Lexington, clearly kept up with modern architectural trends in designing this monumental structure, dedicated in 1950. And of course the chapel at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs by Walter Netsch with Skidmore, Owings and Merrill gained instant popular landmark status from the moment of its construction in the late 1950s. The Aspen Institute's Aspen Meadows, the product of Bauhaus architect Herbert Bayer, brought European design to the Rocky Mountains in the 1950s.

Other examples come from the National Park Service, which sometimes faces internal conflict because of its responsibilities to manage both natural and cultural resources. The visitors' centers at Rocky Mountain National Park and Mesa Verde National Parks are hardly one with nature. We probably wouldn't build anything like them today, but they are very telling of what the park service was up to in the 1960s. A number of the agency’s buildings from this period are now reaching the age where they require renovation or removal.

While many post-war buildings continue to serve their original functions or have been adapted to new uses, others are not so fortunate. Currigan Hall, Denver’s convention center dating from 1969, is now threatened and local preservationists are waging a battle to save it. In Minnesota, the Metropolitan Sports Center, once just across the road from the Mall of America, bit the dust a few years ago. The mall occupies the site of the 1960s Minnesota Twins baseball stadium. Home plate survives in its original location somewhere near Camp Snoopy.

The high-style buildings of the post-war era, like the more vernacular buildings typical in suburbia, are entering that vulnerable period where they are no longer new but are not yet old enough to be appreciated by the general public. As their boilers, windows, and roofs require expensive repairs, as their interiors look outdated, as
Convergence: Commercial Advertising, the Automobile, and Economic Freedom

Ted J. Ligibel

Like many post-war offspring, I vividly remember the hoopla surrounding the opening of our city’s first McDonald’s restaurant. It was a thrill to know Toledo was part of this nationwide phenomena. I couldn’t wait to experience that first 15¢ hamburger. I was fascinated, even then, by the bright yellow arches woven into the superstructure, the red and white tiling, the bevy of cars surrounding the building. I remember that a local DJ spun Top 40 hits of the day just outside the tiny order lobby, while inside, eager customers lined up for their first taste. I didn’t know it then, but that day would remain in my subconscious. Of late, the memory has served me well, especially because it enables me to serve as a firsthand observer for my students who are interested in this period and its resulting built environment.

Like my memory of the McDonald’s opening, memory of place and time is a powerful human experience. For each of us there are similar places and times. And there are “collective places,” landscapes that are clearly recognizable and deeply embedded in the American psyche: a pastoral landscape with rolling hills anchored by red and white barns; a New England townscape with white-steepled churches and modest town halls; the ubiquitous Main Street defined by linear brick streetscapes; the building-heavy streets of a large city; the adobe-lined central plaza of a southwestern town. These are dynamic images that help define who we are and what our values are—both spiritual and secular. They make up a set of ideal images that seem not to change in our minds. But in reality these places are constantly changing.

Case in point: Main Street America, a place both real and imagined. Our imagination conjures up brick and frame commercial structures hugging one another and the street, with occasional breaks and regular intersections; no vacant buildings; and myriad people shopping, visiting, and working. The reality is much more complicated, much more fluid. In the real world there is more architectural variation and less uniformity, there are vacancies and demolition scars, there are perhaps fewer people, and there are hordes of automobiles.

The auto embodies 20th-century technological reality and has literally invaded our life. Cars surround us, overtake us at times. They live with us, compete with us for space, cause radical change in our landscape. Love them or hate them, cars have changed the way we exist in and interact with the landscape, extending deep into our sense of place. How many of us do not own one, or two, or more?

The auto put technology at the forefront of our reality; it changed the way we construct and observe the built environment. For example, it made information dissemination, and its byproduct, commercial advertising, caricature-like in size and scale and message. Entire buildings became advertisements, either by sporting huge painted signs or by supporting massive billboards or by being constructed in distinctive shapes. Highways and roads, at first haphazardly, and then intentionally, sported a sea of...
...in 1948
Menlo Park, in Northern California, is the nation’s first research park. Today there are more than 130 in the U.S., with North Carolina’s Research Triangle Park (1958) the largest.

Philip Johnson’s rectangu-
lar, one-story Glass House is built in New Canaan, Conn. When the shades are up, the cylindrical utility stack—which contains the bathroom—offers the only refuge from passersby.

A condiment monument, the world’s largest catsup bottle is erected in Collinsville, Ill. Standing about 70 feet tall on a 100-foot base, the water tower at the former Brooks Catsup Plant can hold 640,000 bottles of catsup—or 100,000 gallons of water, depending on the need. It was saved from demolition and restored by concerned citizens in 1995.

...in 1949
Oversized advertising—colorful signs, mimetic icons, and billboards—the bigger the better and the easier to see from the highway.

Outdoor advertising evolved into an overt, not-to-be ignored fact of modern life. Efforts to control this phenomenon have been in place since at least the 1920’s, with varying degrees of success. The late 19th- and early 20th-century Good Roads Movement, for example, was concerned not only with improving the safety and quality of American roads but also with beautifying the country’s highways, including controlling roadside advertising. Those classic images of commercial strips from almost anywhere in the country clearly show the ubiquitous nature of this forest of advertising. The issue is that these “forests,” and the establishments they advertise, have obscured, and in many cases obliterated, the sense of uniqueness that gives a place its character.

Still for many, there is something intriguing and telling about earlier advertising, especially neon and early corporate signage (See Historic Preservation, July/August, 2000, p. 11). The discovery of a Pure Oil sign or Sinclair Dino, a lattice-enframed billboard, or a classic enameled Coca-Cola broadside sends many a preservation heart racing, so to speak—as do other artifacts of the car culture such as an early porte-cochere auto shop or a Phillips ‘66 station of the Frank Lloyd Wright design.

The impact of the auto permeates our recent history. Cars have led us to the suburbs and beyond, to the regional shopping mall, to places no one dreamed we would or could inhabit. They allowed us to flee the central city, the very heart of many regions, often leaving behind desolation. They allowed, and continue to facilitate, the loss of vast tracts of agricultural lands. Ignore them we cannot, and controlling their impact is usually difficult and controversial.

Yet many people have experienced memorable times as a result of the use of the automobile and the freedom it fostered. The impact of the automobile clearly has helped articulate the look, placement, and number of our commercial symbols. And while the auto is often thought to be a cause of our overly commercial society, this is really a byproduct of earlier processes.

The World’s Fairs
World’s fairs and other similar expositions around the turn of the 19th century, notably the Columbian Exposition (also known as the Chicago World’s Fair) of 1892-93 had much to do with shaping our commercial culture. The Columbian Exposition featured dozens of exotic shops placed along a strip known as the Midway Plaisance. This was nothing short of a multinational bazaar that offered food, curios, exotic souvenirs, and exhibits from countries around the world, laid out in a linear pattern along a colorful promenade.

To be sure, Americans were accustomed to shopping in a linear pattern as the classic American Main Street amply demonstrated. The Midway Plaisance however, moved linear shopping from a common, necessity-driven experience to a unique, adventure-laden event that was a large part of the excitement offered at the fair. Visitors, especially Americans, were enchanted with the midway—the crowds, the exotic forms, the unique shops, the overall experience. Meanwhile Main Street stayed the same, indeed was supposed to stay the same—it was home, it was familiar, it was safe, it was not new nor should it be, at least not all at once. Its strength was that it stayed the same. So these commercial idioms co-existed: one, a familiar, home-based permanent Main Street, the other a fleeting, ever-changing carnival of unique shops that made browsing and buying an adventure.

The Chicago World’s Fair was followed by several others throughout the country, including the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915 in San Francisco. This fair also had a major effect on advertising and its physical manifestations. Here the huge and towering advertising signs, which had begun to infiltrate American cities, were banned. In their place huge, three-dimensional mimetic icons lined the carnival-like midway. A massive seated Buddha
At the same time, other phenomena were at work that would add immensely to the commercial character of place. These roots can be found in Main Street America, that linear form that characterizes so many American places, both large and small. In cities, Main Street has usually expanded well beyond its original confines. Often this expansion followed the new trolley lines that began to radiate out from the central city like linear arteries. Along these routes, small-scale one- and two-story commercial blocks sprang up. My students refer to them as “taxpayer strips”—buildings designed to house small shops and services that would pay the taxes on the lot until a higher and better use presented itself. These served an increasingly mobile clientele who passed the myriad shops on their way to catch the trolley to and from work. This was before the vast majority of Americans owned their own cars.

The evolution of auto ownership just before and after World War II changed the look and function of these “strips.” No longer did patrons shop when walking to and from work; they drove their newly acquired cars, jockeying for a parking spot as near to the front of the shop as possible. This caused major traffic congestion, and within a few years the original taxpayer strip shops were either moved back to make room for auto parking in front or were demolished and replaced with a linear or L-shaped strip of shops set at the back of several lots, thereby allowing many more cars to park in spaces in front of the commercial center. This gave rise to the shopping centers that became so prevalent across the country in the years following the World War II. The concept of consolidating these centers around an open—and later enclosed—pedestrian mall emerged in the 1950s. The primary prototype of this form was designed by Victor Gruen Associates outside Detroit in 1954. This firm conceived and built the now famous Northland Mall in Southfield, Mich., reputedly the first enclosed regional shopping center in the country.

The evolution of this form and its rapid spread and acceptance across the country has defined much of the history of American retail commerce in the last half of the last century. The regional shopping mall in its own way offers a carnival-like atmosphere reminiscent of that found in the midways of nearly a century earlier. It has even become a cultural mecca of sorts appealing to both teens and their adult counterparts in many locations.

These commercial forms—iconic/logo-based advertising, shopping strips, and regional malls accessible only by automobile—have redefined how we respond to our landscape. Yet they are based on forms, both that we have shaped and that have shaped us throughout the last century. No wonder then that there is at least fascination, and yes, even celebration, of relic examples of these earlier forms. The roots of overt commercialism run so deep into the American persona that it might even be mistaken for one of our basic rights—the freedom to spend. The icons and landmarks of this freedom are many and varied, and our cultural landscape is filled with the icons of earlier commercial enterprises. That they have had a lasting impact on us is undeniable. They represent who we were and describe how we happened to arrive in the 21st century as we have.
The Extraordinary Post-War Suburb

Extraordinary is among the least likely adjectives that would come to most people’s minds in describing the vast residential subdivision tracts developed throughout the 1940s and the mid 1960s. Virtually from the start, the physical products of this epochal shift in the nation’s settlement patterns were castigated as oppressively ordinary and mundane. Architects, planners, journalists, and the intellectual community in general branded such developments as a despoilation of the landscape with cookie-cutter “boxes,” the whole exuding a monotony that was dehumanizing and capable of breeding social, even mental, dysfunction. The phenomenon, many observers charged, was a horrendous speculative free-for-all that was destined to become a wasteland in short order.

As with numerous forms of popular culture that emerged after World War II, a conspicuous disparity existed between the viewpoints of critics and consumers. Attacks on the burgeoning subdivisions tended to focus on appearances, expressing points of view that were to no small degree snobbish—revealing a lack of understanding of the forces that shaped these environments as well as of the concerns of the middle- and moderate-income families that flocked to them in droves.

But however off the mark, it is the criticism that nonetheless lingers in the minds of many preservationists who realize they may soon have to survey and evaluate such places. How can things once so vilified now be seriously earmarked for protection? The thought may linger, too, that preservation’s rise as a national movement in the 1960s is in part predicated on the assumption that it was rescuing older residential areas that were far superior in design and character to the ostensibly “tacky” suburbs then blanketing the countryside. How can the two now be considered on a more-or-less equal footing? Indeed, can the housing tracts of the 1950s ever be justifiably equated with the Georgtowns or Oak Parks of the nation? The new places possess none of the rich variety of architecture, or so it seems, and the distinctiveness of design present in many forebears.

Compounding the uneasiness many preservationists may feel in addressing the post-war suburb is the fact that the individuality absent at the inception has often been achieved in later years by remodeling. Maintaining this fabric, thus altered, flies in the face of traditional notions of integrity in preservation. Finding a house in Levittown, N.Y., for example, that retains most of its original features from just over 50 years ago is extremely difficult. With many examples, the character has been greatly modified; in numerous cases, too, it has been transformed beyond recognition. With this extent of change, what are the salient historical attributes that remain; just what is it that should be preserved? And if changes to date are pervasive, how does one assess proposed changes in the future?

But perhaps the biggest psychological barrier to the preservationist’s embrace of post-war suburbs is their size. Tracts frequently entail hundreds, sometimes thousands, of houses—an enormous quantity to single out for protection, particularly if that measure leads to ongoing review of proposed changes at the local level. When the components of a tract—street layout, yard size, and house models—are standardized, with only minor variation block after block, does all of the development have to be designated? Might not a sampling be sufficient?

The problem with all these reservations about preserving such properties is that they are based on a vague and unsubstantiated outlook rather than on the thorough historical analysis that must be the basis of any successful, long-term preservation effort. Preservationists have readily accepted the historical frameworks of the Civil Rights Movement and even the Cold War as a foundation for documenting, and in many cases preserving, sites. But, perhaps because of all the critical baggage from four-to-five decades ago, they have been much more reluctant to take a careful look at the post-war suburb on its own terms. The omission is the more unfortunate since there is now a respectable corpus of scholarly literature on the subject. When examined from a historical perspective, considering not only relationships to previous settlement patterns but also to subsequent ones, the post-war suburb is a far more significant phenomenon than is generally realized. Never before in the history of habitation in the United States or any other country was such a large share of the population able to afford quarters that were as convenient, as private, and as spacious—both indoors and out. The longstanding dream of owning a freestanding, single-family house set in a capacious yard, with ample space for individual pursuits, became reality for millions of Americans who theretofore had known much more limited possibilities. In the process, both living and landscape patterns were modified to a profound degree. The multiplicity of these developments is a major facet of their significance.

For persons of moderate-to-middle income, housing choices during the first half of the 20th century might include a single-family residence, but generally one of modest proportions. In urban areas, many of these dwellings were attached or semi-detached. When it existed, yard space was generally limited to a small area in front and a utili-
Perhaps the biggest psychological barrier to the preservationist's embrace of post-war suburbs is their size.

...
subdivision guidelines had a direct impact as well. Without the agency’s approval builders could not get their mortgages insured. But had the thrust of these guidelines substantially departed from patterns with which the real estate industry was familiar, it is likely they would have had markedly less influence. As it was, the fact that FHA planning models often correlated with key features of earlier elite enclaves probably did much to enhance their application. The new work that resulted accorded the automobile overwhelming dominance as the mode of transportation, for the tracts were either differentiated from contiguous parts of the metropolitan area or lay some distance removed from any built-up section. Most were given their own names and a layout that was inward-looking. Natural terrain was generally respected; on more than a few occasions, existing trees were selectively saved and open space preserved for recreational uses. Roadways tended to be curvilinear in response to topography, but also to enhance a sense of variety and to remove through traffic. Indeed, streets were generally configured to discourage vehicles that were not destined for a house in the immediate vicinity. The matrix fostered allusions to rural settings, particularly when landscaping grew, while furthering perceptual disassociation with urban precincts.

The most obvious difference between the large tracts of the post-war era and older ones developed for the affluent was the relatively small size and standardization of house design, which was the aspect that gave rise to so much derision among critics. The premise was faulty, however. Comparable shelter designed for persons of moderate-to-middle income in previous eras—the row houses and bungalows of the early 20th century, for example—were no less homogeneous. Yet post-war tracts proved more conducive to individuality in other, unanticipated ways that were not as easy to realize in the limited confines common to earlier middle-market dwellings. Many post-war house plans stressed openness and informality, with which came a new sense of flexibility in spatial use. Those attributes extended to the yard as well, where space was equally accommodating to passive and active uses. Enough room existed so that extra vehicles (including boats) could be stored, shop and yard equipment housed, gardens cultivated, play equipment installed, or terraces, decks, and porches extended. The backyard became a private domain to an extent previously known only to a relatively small percentage of the population. Indoors and out, the arrangement was conducive to additions and modifications based on fluctuating family size, personal interests, and increased means, among other factors. Far more than was found in earlier periods of building, the tract house and yard became malleable entities that could express the needs, tastes, and aspirations of its owners.

The distinguishing features of post-war suburban tracts, of course, establish the basis for priorities in any preservation effort. Since the multiplicity of the pattern, the scale of many of the developments, and an ambience of totality created through planning are foremost characteristics, the notion that saving this kind of resource can be achieved by retaining a token slice of the whole should be dismissed as being a poor solution, just as it is in any other case where a unified entity is parcelled into bits. This maxim holds especially true for the properties in question given that the open, verdant, informal setting is so important an attribute. Besides the assemblage of individually owned lots, parcels set aside for supporting uses—educational, religious, recreational, and commercial—are a key part of the equation. As in any historic district, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, but here the whole is a landscape, broadly defined, that includes, but is much more than, a collection of buildings.

As for the individual properties, when customizing has become an important mark of a development, it should continue as an ongoing process, yet within parameters that prevent the results from eroding the sense of the greater whole. Such an approach requires a serious rethinking of conventional notions of physical integrity in preservation, but it is—like more traditional preservation efforts—based on distinguishing characteristics of significance. Those characteristics must be carefully researched and clearly delineated before any guidelines for treatment are developed. This approach should also include raising the awareness of residents about the value of the original qualities of their houses and yards and inform them on how to make changes that are complementary to the original qualities, just as well-developed historic district guidelines do at present. Yet restrictions should not preclude property owners from electing to take another course if they so choose. In this way, a central trait of the post-war suburb would not be eliminated, while the basic features of the ensemble would be preserved.

Still the question remains, why should preservationists concern themselves with the post-war suburb at all? Why rush the process, particularly when it necessitates some changes in approach and when the extent of properties in question is so vast? The answer is simple. These settings demand our attention not just because they represent an extraordinary chapter in the history of the built environment, but also a finite one. By the late 1960s, new approaches were being taken.
Detached houses such as those constructed during the 1920s in the Borough of Queens, N.Y., represented an important advancement for many moderate-income families. Photo by Richard Longstreth

F.P.O.

in large-scale residential development, spurred by escalating land values and construction costs among other factors. Except for dwellings targeted at upper-income levels, tracts tended to have higher densities than their immediate precursors. The row house, rechristened the town house, was reintroduced, not so much as a dwelling of preference as one of economic necessity. The proliferation of interstate highways tended to induce a greater hierarchy of property values and also to bring greater levels of commercial development, some of which emerged as large business centers. The idea that the “average” American family could afford to live in sylvan repose was still perpetrated in real estate advertisements, but became increasingly less realistic. These trends have intensified during the 30 years that have elapsed since then. We cannot entertain the thought of building a post-war suburb today; it would be too expensive, especially for the middle market that made up the original clientele. What has long been taken for granted is now a non-renewable resource.

The post-war suburb is also a threatened resource, although it may not seem that way upon casual observation. Like earlier residential developments, these places tend to face a pivotal point in their lives after the generation that initially occupied them leaves. Assuming no circumstances exist to stimulate premature dispersal, that time span can run between 30 to 50 years. If a new generation of occupants buys into the community with the aim of long-term investment in their houses, then a new, constructive cycle is begun. If, however, perceptions of the community turn negative—a condition real estate appraisers refer to as “stigma,”—if newcomers see their purchases simply as hand-me-downs, the area can decline. This phenomenon has little to do with the caliber of the physical fabric. Hundreds of thousands of early 20th-century dwellings in cities today are decaying, sometime to an advanced degree, even though they are solidly built, have elegant details, commodious accommodations, and easy access to a variety of business and recreational locations.

The post-war suburb is an ideal staging ground for new initiatives that can broaden preservation’s agenda, because so many of these places are still well maintained and appreciated by their residents. The time is at hand to capitalize on this sentiment and take active steps with communities to ensure that the next wave of residents will understand the value of their acquisitions and invest fully in their future. The challenges are significant because now, like many times and places in the past, the next generation represents a demographic shift and may be led to believe they are only getting second or third best, that theirs is a “used” house whose economic life has become quite limited.

Substantial pressure also may soon exist for more intense development. The post-war suburb long ago ceased being on the urban periphery. Most remain intact, but the time may come when all that space consumed by yards could be seen as wasteful and pressures mount to put it to higher and purportedly better uses.

The post-war suburb is a resource that we cannot afford to squander. If we fail to address the issue, it will be tantamount to admitting that much of our residential fabric,
The post-war suburb is an ideal staging ground for new initiatives that can broaden preservation’s agenda, because so many of these places are still well maintained and appreciated by their residents.

Richard Longstreth is professor of American civilization and director of the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at George Washington University. The author is grateful to Nancy Miller, Eugene Payowski, de Teel Patterson Tilles, and Richard Wagner for reading a draft of this article and offering valuable suggestions for its improvement.

1. Throughout this article, “post-war suburb” is loosely defined to encompass a variety of particular forms. I use it to include large areas of new development in a metropolitan area to which a number of builders contributed—such as Wheaton in Montgomery County, Md., north of Washington, D.C.; or Southfield, in Oakland County, Mich., north of Detroit—and also individual developments, ranging from around one hundred to several thousand houses—erected during the two decades after the end of World War II.


5. The subject is discussed in relation to substantially different forms of housing stock in Deborah Marquis Kelly and Jennifer Goodman, “Conservation Districts as Alternatives to Historic Districts,” Historic Preservation Forum 7 (September-October 1993), 6-14. A premise for the authors’ argument, however, is that the fabric in question lacks sufficient historical significance for district designation, a point with which a number of historians of vernacular architecture and urbanism would disagree.

6. What real estate appraisers refer to as the “physical life” of a house—the period for which it will remain standing without significant repairs or improvements—is around 50 years. A house’s “economic life”—the period for which it can remain useful—can be extended over many times that period with proper maintenance and improvements, a process to which preservation has contributed in a very substantial way. I am grateful to Eugene Payowski, M.A.I., for his insights on the appraisal process.

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4. In recent years, several detailed case studies have been published: Barbara M. Kelly, Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown (Albany: State University of New York, 1993); Greg Hise, Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth-Century Metropolis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); and Gregory C. Randall, America’s Original GI Town: Park Forest, Illinois (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

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The National Register and the 20th Century—Is There Room for Archaeology?

Susan L. Henry Renaud

Author’s Note: This article is based on a longer manuscript that was published in 1999 as “Archaeology of Our Own Time: Is the 20th Century History?” in The Archaeology of 19th-Century Virginia, edited by John H. Sprinkle, Jr., pp. 345-372. The Archeological Society of Virginia and the Council of Virginia Archaeologists, Richmond. It also appeared in CRM Supplement, published by the National Park Service, Vol. 18, No. 6, 1995.

From the perspective of the new 21st century, I find this article even more relevant and timely than when it originally appeared, not only for archaeologists, but also perhaps for those of you who may be more interested in the above-ground than the underground. The article is intended to encourage readers to think differently about how we deal with historic and cultural resources of the more recent past, especially post-war properties that are becoming potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Some of the difficulties we experience in dealing with recent properties may result from our attempts to approach them the way we would 19th- or 18th-century properties; 20th-century properties may actually require a different approach. Faced with suburbs, strip malls, urban renewal, and other products of 20th-century development and “progress,” it is worth rethinking how we look at these properties, and what we look at. Looking at properties building by building, or as individual buildings of a particular architectural style within a district, may be the source of our difficulties. It may be more productive, instead, to look at historic properties as occupying a physical place, an area, a neighborhood, a cultural or historic landscape, if you will, that is made up of diverse features—buildings, streets, landscape, etc.—the entirety of which represents the historical, cultural, social, and economic development of the area of the years.

Archeology also has something to offer to our quest for understanding the recent past—the following article discusses how and offers an approach for examining 20th-century archeological properties.

As we enter the 21st century, it’s time to think about how we deal with 20th-century sites. Two events in my own past alerted me to some conflicts in how we deal with the recent past. In 1983, I was conducting archeological studies at a late-19th- and early-20th-century suburban neighborhood in Phoenix, Ariz. It was a typical urban site, with two exceptions. The first was a collection of automobile parts: a six-cylinder crankshaft, a radiator fan, valve gaskets, an exhaust pipe, and a fender. You don’t expect automobile fragments in an archeological site! The second exception was a dessert plate. On the bottom was a large, colorful maker’s mark with a date code. The plate was made in 1976!

Remember, this was only 1983. I felt like I was in a time warp! I had a conflict between my time and archeological time. I began thinking about time and how we deal with it. Several years later when I was working for the planning office in Fairfax County, Va., I reviewed a number of Section 106 survey reports. I was perplexed to read that some sites were evaluated as not important because they were vaguely interpreted as “recent” and “modern.” This bothered me. I’ve grown concerned about how we view the past—how we define legitimate archeological time—and how this affects the way we treat 20th-century archeological sites.

How have archeologists dealt with 20th-century sites? In 1993, I researched the files of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) to find out the extent to which 20th-century sites have been recognized and recorded during field surveys. I reviewed about 2,000 site forms from seven of Virginia’s 99 counties and municipalities. Fewer than 7 percent of the sites dated to the 20th century; of these, one-third were viewed as potentially important and worthy of additional work. Based on the DHR’s Section 106 report reviews, more sites from the late-19th and 20th centuries are reviewed than sites from any other historic period. However, during a recent one-year period, the DHR concluded that only one late 19th- to 20th-century site had enough integrity and research potential to be considered eligible for the National Register. In contrast, about half of the Archaic period sites were considered eligible.

DHR staff freely admit they are hesitant to evaluate 20th-century sites as significant because the extensive historical knowledge that allows for effective site evaluation does not exist for the 20th century. In other words, we don’t know enough about how archeology can contribute to our understanding of the 20th century, so we can’t tell how valuable any one site will be in helping us learn. This does not mean, however, that no 20th-century sites are considered important. The DHR has intentionally included 20th-century sites in three recent National Register nominations.

How do DHR figures compare with listings in the National Register? Fewer than one percent of all National Register listings are 20th-century archeological sites. I tiptoed through the files of a 10 percent sample of these listings to get a sense of what has been considered signifi-
Historic Places.

...in 1957
Elvis Presley purchases Graceland, a 1939 colonial-style mansion on a 14-acre estate in Memphis, Tenn. In 1991 it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

...in 1958
At their peak, more than 5,000 drive-in theaters dot the American landscape. The first opened in 1933 in Camden, N.J.; today there are 851.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS FOR 20TH-CENTURY SITES**
(Figures as of August 26, 1994)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total # NR listings</th>
<th>63,201</th>
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<td># Historical archeological sites</td>
<td>2,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 20th-century sites</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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cant and why. Listing dates range from 1971 to 1993, with more than half of the sample listed in the 1980s. There is a wide range of property types and functions, from urban to rural, from domestic and commercial to industrial. The research themes tend to be more simplistic and descriptive for the earlier listing dates. No research questions were posed that specifically address any of the major social, cultural, economic, technological, or political changes that occurred in the first half of the 20th century. Additionally, examples throughout of the 20th century are being ignored, or dismissed, in favor of earlier historic and/or prehistoric aspects of the property.

I can draw only one conclusion from this bit of unscientific research—we are neglecting 20th-century archeological sites. I suspect that our personal views of the past are intruding into our professional decisions about what is a valid period of study. For many of us, the 20th century is just not interesting enough to capture our attention, either personally or professionally. Many historians have no problem studying 20th-century topics. Nor are architectural historians reluctant to nominate 20th-century buildings and structures to the National Register. What is it about archeology that suggests 20th-century sites are not legitimate subjects of study?

Some may view the 20th century as not old enough for meaningful archeological study. Archeology is supposed to be about digging up old, buried things. The 20th century isn't really buried or that old. It is, however, old enough to have acquired negative connotations, especially in terms of physical objects. Poured concrete and cinder block foundations are seen only as dilapidated ruins. Ceramics, glass, and metal are seen as just so much junk and garbage. There is, however, the National Register’s 50-year threshold for achieving sufficient perspective for professional analysis. As our own birthdays reach this threshold, it becomes increasingly difficult for us to draw the line between our personal and professional approaches to the past.

Dramatic social, economic, technological, and political changes occurred during the first half of the 20th century that profoundly affected every aspect of daily life. Just as significant is the shift from hand-craft agrarianism to industrialism in the 19th century, these changes transformed America from a 19th-century agrarian, Victorian culture into a 20th-century urban, technological culture. These were significant trends in the development of the nation and of our local communities. The processes of change and their physical and social effects are etched upon the landscape and upon the patterns of material objects and sites.

We are, however, faced with some critical issues and challenges as we move into the 21st century. Our inadequate attention to 20th-century archeological sites means that we are not recognizing the very real significance of these sites, so they are not being properly considered in federal processes. These sites are not being recorded, or when they are, they tend to be evaluated, mistakenly, as not significant because we don’t know enough to evaluate them. With some notable exceptions, 20th-century sites are generally not being nominated to the National Register, and where they are, the approach tends to be somewhat simplistic, they are treated the same as prehistoric sites, or they’re not addressed at all. Are we, either by accident or design, opting out of the federal management and protection system? Are we saying that, for archeology, history stops at 1900? Rather than declare that 20th-century sites are not significant because we don’t know enough to evaluate them, let’s be bold and say they are significant, because at this point anything we could learn from them would be a major step forward.

Our lack of attention also means that we haven’t yet come to grips with the overwhelming quantities of 20th-century documents and sites. We’re faced with considerable site redundancy—what should we do with all those sites that seem to be everywhere? How can we distinguish the important ones? Well, if we don’t study them, we can’t make any professional decisions about redundancy, or distinguish the significant sites from the irrelevant background noise.

There’s also the perennial question, “We have all these documents, why do archeology?” If we declare that sites without documents are more important for research, then we’re denying the validity of historical archeology as a whole, and saying that prehistoric sites are more important than historic sites. We delude ourselves if we equate wealth of documentary information with lesser archeological value. If we ever think that an archeological site won’t tell us anything we couldn’t learn from the documents, either we’re asking the wrong questions of the site, or we’re foolishly asking the same questions of the site that we would of the documents.

Can archeology contribute to our understanding of the 20th century? Of course it can. Archeology has a unique approach to studying the past, and it provides a separate view of reality that is quite distinct from documents or informants. If archeology is to contribute in a meaningful way to understanding the 20th century, we need to seriously...
rethink how we approach archeology—the techniques we use and the research questions we ask.

Rethinking our techniques means looking at our data in different ways. The basic data of archeology is trash, garbage. During the 20th century, more and more cities established municipal trash collection and sewer systems. So if we’re unable to study the behavior of individual households because the archeological database has been removed, maybe we should turn our attention to municipal and rural garbage dumps and issues of group behavior. The ability to tease out information about group behavior out of garbage dumps has been thoroughly proven by 20 years of landfill studies by the University of Arizona’s Garbage Project. These studies provide “a fresh view of nutrition and health, consumer behavior, social inequality, and the differences between what we say and what we do.”

For 20th century sites, we have a source of information not available to archeologists studying earlier sites—the site occupants themselves. We have the opportunity to talk to people who created these sites about attitudes, ideas, beliefs, values, symbols, and the relationships among actions, objects, and place. But there’s a downside to this opportunity. Tension can build between archeology’s factual, scientific “search for truth,” if you will, and peoples’ preferred perceptions, myths, and legends about the past.

We should also be viewing the environment as an artifact, as a physical manifestation of culture. For most of this century, our environment has been not a “wild” or “natural” one, but one engineered and shaped by cultural and social behavior. We can do archeology without digging by looking at buildings, cemeteries, parks, townscapes, city plans, rural landscapes, and other environmental features as products of behavior.

The traditional focus on individual sites limits our ability to move beyond biography and idiosyncratic behavior to an examination of group behaviors. Refocusing our attention on the behavior of groups means that we need to look at “communities” of sites—groupings of related sites associated with particular aspects of group behavior. The National Register has even encouraged us to do this with the Multiple Property Documentation Form.

We also need to rethink the research questions we ask of 20th century sites. Five major sources of information are available in our quest to understand the 20th century: the archeological record, the written record, the photographic record, oral history, and the physical environment. This wealth of information means that we have the opportunity to do some very sophisticated archeology, to develop cutting-edge techniques and theories that could revolutionize the way archeology is done on older sites.

I encourage all of you to take a closer look at archeological sites which may, at first, seem to be “too recent.” They may have the potential to provide new insights into how Americans coped with the unprecedented changes of the 20th century.

Susan L. Henry Renaud, RPA, is senior resource planner and archeologist with Heritage Preservation Services in the National Center for Cultural Resources, National Park Service.

NOTES:
Hyperbole in Parabolas: Preserving the Fabled Future of Raleigh’s Modernist Visionaries

It may surprise many to learn that North Carolina moved into the realm of the architectural avant-garde in the late 1940s. North Carolina had earned the slogan “the Rip van Winkle state” in the mid-19th century because it was so undeveloped and backward. Despite such landmarks as the State Capitol, completed in 1840 and considered by many to be the country’s finest Greek Revival-style public building, with few exceptions new architectural styles did not enjoy wide acceptance in North Carolina until a decade or two after they caught on in more progressive regions. This pattern continued until the proliferation of mass communication in the late 19th century. Even during the early 20th century, when the state joined the national architectural mainstream by adopting the popular period revival and Craftsman styles, a characteristic conservativism remained in the predominance of the Colonial Revival style and restrained renditions of the Craftsman bungalow.

Just as North Carolina took a leadership role in the 1970s in recording and nominating vernacular buildings to the National Register of Historic Places, so too did the state become one of the first to begin documenting and nominating its modernist heritage. In the process, those involved have learned lessons that may help other communities as they grapple to understand and promote their own recent past.

An Architect in Private Practice and a New State School of Design

A brief overview of Raleigh’s 1930s and 1940s architectural history provides the context for the emergence of North Carolina’s modernist movement. William Henley Deitrick, a classically trained Raleigh architect, was most influential in spreading modernist tenets in North Carolina during the late 1930s and 1940s. Deitrick studied at Columbia University and worked as a draftsman with Raymond Hood in New York before coming to Raleigh in 1924.

He worked primarily in the classical revival styles until 1937, when he began to experiment with modern architecture in his design for the Raleigh Nehi Bottling Co.—a modest International Style building. The following year Deitrick began work on the Raleigh Little Theatre, which shows the influence of the International Style in its stripped down classicism with minimal ornament, in a composition of two painted brick oblong boxes set on high stone foundations. Over the next few years, several of his commissions were more distinctly modernist in their spare functionalism that recalls the work of Bauhaus architects. According to Raleigh architectural historian and intern architect David R. Black, by the late 1940s “Deitrick’s firm was the largest in Raleigh and the most committed to modern design.”

The building boom after World War II helped provide the impetus for the establishment of the School of Design (SOD) at North Carolina State College (now North Carolina State University), which propelled the city into the modernist mainstream. Henry L. Kamphoefner, a disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright and an ardent modernist, came from the University of Oklahoma to be the first dean of the new school. He brought with him several young modernist architects he had recruited to Oklahoma and attracted others with international reputations, such as emigre Polish architect Matthew Nowicki who became head of the architecture department. Over the years Kamphoefner enlisted dozens of renowned architects, designers, and planners as visiting professors, including Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Charles Eames, Eero Saarinen, Louis Kahn, Lewis Mumford, and Buckminster Fuller. Early on, he also forged a strong working relationship with Deitrick, who was head of the North Carolina AIA in the late 1940s and endorsed Kamphoefner’s selection.

Most of the faculty were not academics but professional architects whom Kamphoefner encouraged to maintain active practices. Professor Robert P. Burns Jr., former head of the school’s architecture department, has written that “the faculty not only trained many of the state’s mid- and late-20th century architects, but they also produced a body of adventurous new designs which for a decade rivaled the best modern work in America’s major cities.”

A Spate of Designs by Design School Faculty

In the first year of SOD classes, the new faculty already was busy designing a series of residences completed in 1950 that involved experimentation in such realms as structure, use of modern materials, organization of space, and the definition of roof, wall, and floor planes. In collaboration with George Matsumoto, Kamphoefner led the way with his own house, inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright’s small, efficient, and affordable “Usonian” houses. A few months later the Fadum House, another Usonian house by architect and painter James Fitzgibbon, was completed next door. A few blocks away, Fitzgibbon’s Paschal House again displays Wright’s organic approach to architecture but in a more expansive format. Also in 1950, Matsumoto saw his first independent commission completed: the Ritcher House, another Usonian dwelling.

Beginning with his own house finished in 1954, Matsumoto’s designs displayed a stronger influence of Mies
The Small Office, designed by Deitrick in 1948 to become lead designer in Deitrick’s architectural office, and later as a principal of their own firm in 1953. Deitrick’s successor at the SOD, Nowicki, completed the project, retaining the distinctive work by Cata
tone, but with certain modifications. Dorton Arena was dedicated in 1953, and opened for use in January 1954.

As Black points out, the initial appearance in Raleigh of this purist aspect of modernist architecture also had coincided with the SOD’s ratio- nalization of the importance of structural experimentation. SOD architecture department head Matthew Nowicki designed it in 1950, but died in an airplane crash before it was built. Deitrick completed the project, retaining the distinctive work by Nowicki’s concept but with certain amendments. Dorton Arena was North Carolina’s first large-scale, column-free living space. Most of the time it was built.

Visionary Commission, Supportive HPO, Interested Citizens

Raleigh was fortunate that even from the outset of its historic preservation program in the 1960s, there was a recognition of the importance of recent architecture. This would serve to build awareness not only among members of the general public, but also in future generations of preservationists. Beginning in the early 1990s, the cooperative efforts of property owners, the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission (RHDC), the Wake County Historic Preservation Commission, and the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) have led to successes as well as failures in the campaign to preserve Raleigh’s modernist architecture.

The first major project of RHDC’s predecessor organization was the publication in 1967 (with the Junior League of Raleigh) of North Carolina’s Capital, Raleigh by Elizabeth Culbertson Waugh. The book includes among its 29 illustrated entries a generous collection of what we today term properties from the recent past: 12 buildings and one shopping complex constructed between 1940 and 1964, among them the Raleigh Little Theatre (1940), the Paschal House (1950), the George Matsumoto House (1954). For the reader in 1967, these were new and nearly new buildings!

The inclusion of these properties is not coincidental. It is interesting to note that architect William Henley Deitrick served on the editorial committee, was a charter commission member, and the commission’s second chairman. The man that perhaps
With the support of Certified Local Government grant funds, in 1990-92 the RHDC hired consultant Helen P Ross to administer the review process for recommending designation of individual historic landmarks to the Raleigh City Council.

Thus the RHDC’s planning and research programs for landmarks have become a client of the Wake County commission’s administrative services. The result of this partnership has been the ability to bring the added weight of dual recommendations to city council regarding proposed designations, as well as the ability to toss the hot potatoes of certain political issues to the commission better insulated from the heat of controversy.

Modernist Mania

The addition of the modernist properties to the Study List in 1992 had the serendipitous effect of spurring several proud owners to seek National Register listing for their properties. The owner of the Fadum House commissioned an individual nomination. Following the June 1993 listing of the house, she submitted the property for consideration as a Raleigh Historic Landmark. The property was designated by the city council in December 1993 without controversy.

On the advice of RHDC staff following an inquiry about local landmark designation, owners of the Ritcher House and others followed suit by commissioning a National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) context study for modernist architecture associated with the School of Design. The five properties nominated to the National Register in conjunction with the study were listed in September 1994, and the owner-initiated listing of the Henry L. Kamphoefner House followed in March 1996. Owner requests for local landmark listing for four of the initial properties nominated to the register with the MPDF were approved by the city council in November 1995, again without controversy, but this time with a jesting comment from one councilor that considering as “historic” buildings younger than he was made him feel old.

All of these early designations were the subject of city press releases that yielded favorable media coverage. An additional public awareness-raising effort of note was the 1998 publication of 20th Century Architecture, A Guide...
Map to Raleigh, North Carolina, by the Raleigh Arts Commission and North Carolina AIA, Raleigh Section.

Modernist Mayhem

The first modern property designation initiated by the RHDC was for the Raleigh Nehi Bottling Co. (1937), Raleigh's first International Style building and the first clue of the central role William Henley Deitrick would play in promoting modernism in Raleigh. The austerity of the building's design surely was startling to Raleigh in 1937 and was equally startling to the city council during its designation deliberation in December 1996. While the RHDC was gratified by the council's acceptance of the two commissions' recommendations for designation, it came at a cost. Comments from the council table were more pointed and less jesting this time. It seemed that the council members had reached their saturation point for considering newer buildings. The RHDC made a tactical decision to delay further requests for local designation of modern properties until some traditional "old-looking buildings" could be processed that would return decision-makers to their comfort zone.

But research did not stop. In 1997 the RHDC engaged M. Ruth Little, Ph.D., to prepare a thematic context study entitled "The Architecture of William Henley Deitrick & Associates from 1926-1959."

Clearly, the major force driving the RHDC's efforts to identify and protect Raleigh's constellation of modern properties has been the strong potential for their alteration and demolition. Numerous factors come into play, including the buildings' recent age (i.e., if they're not "historic," they're not worth saving); aesthetic qualities currently out-of-fashion; lack of awareness of their significance; original, specific uses that are now obsolete; small size; location on prime real estate.

The fragility of modernist architecture was first made profoundly clear in Raleigh with the destruction in 1992 of the Carolina Country Club's clubhouse. This flat-roofed building of steel, glass, and stone designed by G. Milton Small in 1957 was not so lucky. The spacious steel, glass, and stone dwelling nestled naturalistically on a wooded hillside was purchased in 1996 for more than $500,000 and immediately replaced by a massive neo-Georgian style house.

It has become clear that the best way to preserve these structures, as it has been from the beginning of the preservation movement, is through ownership by sympathetic individuals. Such awareness by public officials also is necessary, and not just for the votes needed from elected officials to designate the structures as landmarks. Governmental buildings from this period are often designed in modernist styles and in many communities may be the most significant examples.

The demolition of Small's Wake County Office Building was a wrenching demonstration of the threat to modernist civic buildings, even in a community that has a higher than average awareness level. Vacant for several years, the building was among the group of modernist monuments placed on the Study List in 1992. Upon completion in 1950 the building was notable for its austere functionalism featuring an exposed steel structure, brick infill panels, and steel win-
 Lessons Learned
In addition to all the usual preservation strategies, the following apply especially to properties of the recent past:

- Make strong cases based on thorough research. Place the structures into a time continuum demonstrating how their relationship to national and international trends affected your community’s development. Use the National Register to your advantage where possible to add credibility to your case.
- Be serious about the significance of the aesthetic qualities of the properties. Relate them to their epoch, rather than joking about how they are “aesthetically challenged” according to today’s preferences. Draw parallels from your own community’s experience about changing tastes: how previous styles now adored were scorned at the critical point in their existence—out of favor, thus demolished, often to the regret of a future generation.

- Don’t push your recent past agenda too hard. Even though you may feel a tremendous sense of urgency, set a reasonable pace to prevent saturating community tolerance for designating these properties. Avoid a counterproductive backlash of ridicule for trying to landmark countless buildings.
- Stress the adaptive use potential of modernist designs. They use modern structural systems that are generally sound and capable of carrying the loads of contemporary uses. They do, however, use traditional materials in innovative ways, as well as adopting new materials (some no longer manufactured today) that were being developed by post-war industries to feed a booming construction economy. Familiarize yourself with the expanding body of literature on these materials and the solutions being developed for their preservation and/or replacement.
- Don’t let environmental concerns be used as a justification for demolition. Underground oil tanks, asbestos, and lead paint, common to buildings of this era, must be abated whether a building is adaptively used or torn down. It is a specious argument that a building must be demolished because it would cost too much to eliminate environmental hazards.
- Build partnerships; there is strength in numbers. Allied preservation organizations, governmental and non-profit, should all be involved in making the case for preservation of these buildings. Enlist to your cause the owners of your modern properties. We are at a unique and brief moment where you may find that the current owners are still the first owners; appeal to their pride, alert them to the threats, seek their cooperation for designation, and obtain preservation covenants where possible.

 Conclusion
The majority of the individual “monuments of modernism” in Raleigh that remain will likely be preserved thanks to our early efforts. However, the balance of the SOD designers’ work and that of numerous others who contributed to Raleigh’s body of modernist architecture has yet to be fully recorded; considerable work remains before all of their contributions are understood and recognized. We have only scratched the surface with the prototypes—most of the early SOD faculty had many commissions in the Raleigh area. Fortunately, the process is under way at the state and local levels.

The broader body of work inspired by these prototypes, and by extension the cultural continuity of the built fabric of our community, remains at great risk. The difficult challenge lies ahead of us to justify to the broader realm of the general public why these properties should be preserved and to devise strategies and tactics that can help assure their economic vitality. Cultivating awareness and appreciation within the general public—and among owners and local elected officials—remains the key.

Dan Becker is executive director of the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission.

Claudia Brown is supervisor of the Survey and Planning Branch of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

2 Robert P. Burns Jr., “Modern Architecture in North Carolina’s Capital City,” unpublished manuscript cited in Black, p. E-2. Burns’s careful nurture of the story of the SOD’s modernist roots, his collegial contacts with members of the preservation community, and the timeliness of his 1992 essay in the Raleigh Bicentennial publication on Raleigh’s mid- and late-20th century architecture provided great guidance toward bringing these properties to early notice.
“I’m Not Ugly...I Have International Flair.”

William C. Miller, FAIA

The title “I’m Not Ugly...I Have International Flair” appeared as the slogan on a button produced by the Utah Heritage Foundation to make the public aware that an important post-war building in Salt Lake City, the First Security Bank Building, might be vulnerable to demolition. That potential further sparked discussion among the Foundation’s board about the preservation of buildings from the recent past, as well as its own role in advocating for the preservation and restoration of such properties.

Salt Lake City is hardly alone in addressing this issue. A recent news item appearing in the periodical Architecture noted that still remaining from the bombing of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City is the eight-story YMCA Building. It is the only local example of International Style modernism, but efforts to renovate the bomb-damaged building have fallen though. Currently it is on the most endangered list of Preservation Oklahoma. The organization’s executive director, Robert Erwin, believes the greatest obstacle facing the building is residents accepting such a modern building as historic: “It’s a hard sell because people think of architecturally and historically significant buildings as being from the 19th century or before. They’re going to have a hard time swallowing the idea of this International Style building being significant.”

While much is obviously happening in this arena, how to identify and preserve the significant buildings, complexes, and landscapes of the immediate past are still vexing questions for many in preservation. “Significant” is used here rather than “historic,” because there is a need to expand the notion of what should be saved and/or preserved. While the term historic may have proved useful in the past, as we move into a new decade and century it is time to extend the breadth of preservation activities and widen the understanding of the potential of preservation to affect the environment. This is particularly important in assessing post-war American architecture and environmental design.

There is little question that the preservation community, and its followers, have no trouble in advocating for the preservation of important landmark structures and properties. Or those that have a connection to important 20th-century individuals or events. But what about those seemingly lesser environments that have contributed to the definition of our post-war condition? Defense housing projects, WPA projects, early post-war suburban developments, the ubiquitous commercial complexes in our city centers and suburbs, and landscapes of work and recreation. The suburbanization of America is captured in these seemingly less-than-landmark works—developments emblematic of our present condition and dilemmas. A major factor contributing to the debates about “significance” is that we live in a country where about 75 percent of our building stock has been constructed since World War II. This construction was generated in response to very different sets of environmental, cultural, and economic issues than were the buildings of the previous three centuries (those traditionally associated with the preservation movement). This results in very different kinds of architecture. It includes large shopping malls, suburban housing tracts, large multi-unit housing complexes, industrial plants, strip and big box commercial complexes, office parks, airports, and theme parks. It also includes drive-in movie theaters, roadside motels, drive-through markets, and other forms of buildings that symbolize America’s mobility and reliance on the automobile. And further, many buildings constructed during the 25 years following the war have been remodeled, reused, or demolished and replaced by newer complexes. Our post-war cultural environments and places are important pieces of our contemporary history and we need to embrace them within our preservation perspective. Generating greater concern for such places is not an easy task, for not only do many people in the preservation movement not recognize recent architecture as historic or significant, they find much of modern design mechanistic, abstract, and lacking in associative qualities. Coupled with an anti-modern aesthetic bias is the fact that many in the preservation movement fought against numerous recent building complexes and urban developments as part of their efforts to save historic structures or properties. This has created a schism between the architectural community and preservation movement. While there should be an appropriate tension between the two, in the long run such a schism is counterproductive.

Education activities can be used to address the general lack of knowledge about modern architectural ideals and values. The Utah Heritage Foundation recently had a wonderfully successful art moderne homes tour and is considering a tour of Salt Lake’s modern houses. UHF's
information campaign on behalf of the First Security Bank Building informs the public that the building is an important architectural work and urban structure. Further, it is a recent work that should be considered for preservation. These both are obvious examples of educational programs that parallel the normal activities of a preservation entity, yet inform about the recent past.

While many preservation organizations are involved in such activities, members of the preservation community might consider doing more. They can educate themselves and their public as to what architecture is about and how its processes of creation and production work. From the perspective of the practicing architect, there is a seeming lack of understanding on the part of the preservation community that architectural design is a process that transcends history and binds together all building and landscape design over the millennia. Architects are concerned that preservationists value historicism and history without understanding the design factors and forces that generate the work of architecture.

All buildings were new at one time in their lives, be that life 7,500 years or only 5 years. Every building had a client—be that person royalty, a religious eminence, a commercial magnate, or a homeowner—who had both the desire and resources to build. Depending on the circumstance, the intended building might well be grand or humble. It could be for domestic use, for religious or business purposes, or for civic or cultural functions. But all had a client with a specific need coupled with the necessary resources—for architecture is a tangible and functional art, demanding a use for the structure and the money to build it.

The clients with their purposeful use, be it the tomb of an Egyptian Pharaoh or the recently opened Experience Music Project in Seattle for Paul Allen, is the initiating ingredient of the architectural design process. Articulating and fulfilling the client’s need (the program for the building) is the first level of engagement in the design process. Understanding the resources the client has to devote to the project further determines the range of solutions an architect will generate.

All new buildings need a site, be it urban, suburban, or rural. All sites had something there before the new building was constructed, be they human-made or natural sites. The Uffizi Museum in Florence was built over existing fabric, while Washington’s Mount Vernon disturbed a natural site (and a commanding view of nature was an important factor). The location selected for the site of a new building is often part of the larger perspective, even motivations, the client has for the project. The Lever House or Seagram Building locations in New York City were as intentional as Weyerhauser’s bucolic location in the Northwest or Microsoft’s in Seattle. These locations speak of the vision held by each of the corporate clients and the culture they intended to create.

How an architect chooses to address the site is also important. The Villa Rotonda by Palladio, Washington’s Mount Vernon, Jefferson’s Monticello, and the National Art Schools in Cubanacan, Havana, Cuba. Photo courtesy of Warren K. Lloyd, AIA

Architects are concerned that preservationists value historicism and history without understanding the design factors and forces that generate the work of architecture.

Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoy, Mies van der Rohe’s Farnsworth House, and Richard Meier’s Smith House—to choose three historical and three modern works—all address their sites in the same way. They all speak of differentiating between that made by humans and that found in nature. All the formal design strategies used to achieve this end are the same in the six buildings: shape, color, position in the landscape, etc. The 400 years of history between them only points to the fact that architecture is a precedent-based discipline, using and reusing ideas.

One place where modernism differs from more traditional architecture and urbanism is in the “object” quality of buildings within the city. Modernism tore at the fabric of the existing, traditional city, often replacing it with buildings in individualistic, sculptural forms that seem to bear little relationship to the traditional street or plaza. Two issues come into play here: First, certainly, was the desire to create a new vision for the 20th-century city, with its mobility, its new institutions and functions, and its image of vitality and openness. But second, in this country, are the site and contextual issues associated with our zoning ordinances and private property laws. These often reinforce the autonomy of each building in the city fabric. The preservation movement forced us to re-evaluate both. The so-called new urbanism is a further response to reclaiming qualities found in the traditional city. Designing and constructing a building in Washington, D.C., today, given the zoning and building restrictions, is not a lot different than creating buildings in Paris one or two centuries ago. But the result should be very different.

Architecture is technically realized: A building is constructed of materials and by methods that reflect the time of its making. The use of stone in construction over 7,500 years ago was born of a desire to create a permanent architecture that would with-
stand time and the elements of nature. This desire went hand-in-hand with contemporaneous building techniques and capabilities (labor intensive though they were).

Modern construction techniques also make use of current materials and processes of production, which both limit and empower the designer. In an ironic way, today’s architect is just as limited, and just as creative, as those of the past. Just as yesterday’s designers did wondrous things with wood, stone, and brick, today we have works of steel, glass, and metals that will become the monuments of tomorrow’s preservation efforts.

Architecture is also realized through the creation of space and form. Space houses the activities the client desires in the building. Form expresses many things: the function of the building, its role in the larger fabric of its environment, or its social or cultural status. And buildings have always expressed these things in the language and technique of their time. As times changed and new languages of expression emerged, there was always, to use art critic Robert Hughes’ phrase, “the shock of the new.” New means change, new means something has superseded something known. Sometimes these changes are subtle and sometimes they are not. The Medici Palace, an innovative Renaissance work, was quite subtle in the way it formally expressed itself. This was because, within the political framework of the late medieval city, if the building called too much attention to itself or to the Medici’s growing fortune, the family could have been banished. This was a very different world from modern capitalist society, where individual expression is cultivated, expected, and rewarded. Form and space gain meaning over time and through association. What was yesterday’s outrageous new form is today’s symbol of a city, government, corporation, religion, or individual.

If more people were educated about the processes of doing and making architecture and were able to examine its continuities, there might be less of a disjuncture in understanding and valuing the past and the present. The tyrannical hand of historicism might well be minimized, and supplanted by a more rich appreciation of the full range of properties incorporated into the particular building or landscape being assessed. To dissolve the seemingly artificial division between the past and the present would prepare future preservationists for facing the future and the challenges it will present. And maybe, as a result, we will no longer need to produce buttons that say, “I’m not ugly.”

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Contemporary Landscape Architecture for Western Living: Preserving and Interpreting an “Invisible Legacy”

Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA

“Experiment-minded Westerners presented a fertile field to the landscape architect who understood them. What they were willing to take, the architects were more willing to give, and a new type of landscape architecture began to flourish in the West.”

Sunset Magazine

When we think about the preservation and management of historic designed landscapes in the West, specifically California, images of Golden Gate Park, Yosemite, Filoli, or even the Huntington Botanical Gardens come to mind. When we consider the contributions of pioneers of modern landscape architecture in California, the late practitioners Thomas D. Church (1902-1978), Geraldine Knight Scott (1904-1989), Harriet B. Wimmer (1900-1980), or Harriet B. Wimmer (1900-1980), or Garrett Eckbo (1910-2000) may also merit our interest. It is doubtful, however, that we would automatically think about preserving the legacy of these visionary designers from the recent past, let alone the contributions of other living California landscape architects such as Ted Osmundson, Lawrence Halprin, Robert Royston, or Ruth Shellhorn. In all cases we don’t often think of their landscape architectural contributions as historic resources requiring special protection. As a result, their nationally significant works not only remain invisible, but are rapidly vanishing—without a trace, or debate.

In their book Invisible Gardens: The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape (1994), Peter Walker and Melanie Simo set out to make visible the work of American landscape architects, from 1945 to the late 1970s. The authors suggest that during this period there occurs “one great surge of collective energies—the modern movement, an upheaval of traditional values, beliefs, and artistic forms that have evolved over centuries of the Western world.” (The authors find limited evidence of this work as early as before World War I, but within the discipline of landscape architecture, they note that this impact was “more gradual and often less striking than in other visual and spatial arts yet no less profound.”) Unfortunately, as Walker and Simo note, “Reasoned criticism did not follow, and modern landscapes slipped beyond even the peripheral vision of art historians.” To that I add most other academic communities and the general public.

Surveying the urban design projects of the period, Norman T. Newton in Design on the Land (1971), a standard text for the profession, reflects in the conclusion of his chapter on “Urban Open Spaces” that “all in all, this adds up to a heartening array of kinds of open space for landscape architects to work on in American cities. If Olmsted and Vaux could, indeed, return to inspect the labor of their inheritors on the urban scene today, one can safely guess that they would be happily surprised at their profession’s expanded role.” Included in this chapter is a survey of projects, among them a perspective rendering of the “outstanding design” for Copley Square in Boston by Sasaki, Dawson and Demay (dated 1966) with the caption, “the famous Copley Square redesigned at last.” Newton’s book remains in print today, but the redesigned Copley Square he celebrated has seen another design competition (1983) and complete reconstruction (1989). Newton’s classic reference book also serves as a catalog of such pioneering efforts of California landscape architecture as Foothill College, Los Altos, Calif., (Sasaki Walker and Associates) and Ghirardelli Square, San Francisco, Calif., (Lawrence Halprin and Associates). What fate awaits these cultural landscapes?

In 1995 A.E. Bye, FASLA recollected a conversation with Lawrence Halprin, FASLA. “Larry stated that we spend 30 to 40 years trying to get our projects built, and then the next 10 to 20 years trying to make sure that they don’t get knocked down.” When discussing this situation with Halprin, his frustrations are immediately evident. He states, “If a painting or sculpture is purchased, it is safe to assume that it will be respected. A house or landscape, however, may be brought down.”

At the time of this writing, a substantial number of California modern landscape architecture projects are currently at risk, have been altered, or have even been destroyed. The wide range of lost or endangered projects includes residential designs by Thomas Church (Church residence, San Francisco); roof gardens by Ted Osmundson (Kaiser Center Roof Garden, Oakland; Thoreau Hall Roof Garden, Davis); streetscapes, squares and plazas (Lawrence Halprin’s designs for the Embarcadero Fountain, San Francisco; and Eckbo, Dean, Austin & Williams design for the 18-block Fresno mall); nearly all of the Bullock’s shopping center designs by Ruth Shellhorn (Wilshire, Santa Ana, Pasadena, Sherman Oaks, San Fernando Valley); parks (Eagle Rock Park, Pasadena, by Eckbo, Dean, Austin & Williams with architect Richard Neutra; and Mitchell Park in Palo Alto by Royston, Hanamoto, Beck & Abey); campus plans (the residence halls and humanities buildings at the University of California at Riverside by Ruth Shellhorn; UCLA Campus, north end by Cornell, Bridges & Troller; and Ambassador College in Pasadena by Eckbo, Dean, Austin & Williams).

Some 83 years after it was first developed, air conditioning is included in 70 percent of all new homes in the United States.

Jim Reinders and three dozen of his relatives constructed Carhex, in Alliance, Neb., during a summer solstice family reunion. The sculpture comprises 38 old cars spray painted gray and positioned in an automotive replica of Stonehenge.

Our Post-War Past

...in 1982

The new Seven Mile Bridge, connecting Marathon, Fla., with the Lower Keys, opens as the longest segmental bridge in the world. Its railings are from the original railroad tracks that formed part of Henry Flagler’s old Seven Mile Bridge; the old bridge is now the world’s longest fishing pier.

...in 1985

Some 83 years after it was first developed, air conditioning is included in 70 percent of all new homes in the United States.

...in 1987

Jim Reinders and three dozen of his relatives construct Carhex, in Alliance, Neb., during a summer solstice family reunion. The sculpture comprises 38 old cars spray painted gray and positioned in an automotive replica of Stonehenge.
was forever altered following the earthquake of 1989. Lawrence Halprin, project designer of the Stanford University Plaza, both by Thomas Church; zoological collections or theme parks (Seaworld and Mission Bay Park by Wimmer, Yamada and Associates; and Main Street and the integrated monoral system at Disneyland in Anaheim by Ruth Shellhorn). Something must be done to shift this tide.

According to Lawrence Halprin, “The ideal situation is when a section of his central allee of eucalyptus trees. Not surprisingly, the landscape architecture community was up in arms about the impact of a new building proposal on Louis Kahn’s campus masterpiece and the obliteration of a section of this central allee of eucalyptus trees. Not surprisingly, the landscape architecture community was absent from this debate—ironic when considering that the landscape design was not by Kahn but by landscape architect Roland S. Hoyt (1890-1968). Although Hoyt’s Checklist for Ornamental Plants of Subtropical Regions, first published in 1933 and revised in 1958, is still considered a standard reference text by many California landscape architects and horticulturists, his work at Salk had faded from memory.

I again witnessed this invisibility of the original landscape architects’ design contributions during a visit to another Kahn project—the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Tex. As with the Salk Institute, there was a controversial expansion plan for the site, this time in the early 1990s. In this situation, however, a decision was made not to expand the museum building over the grounds, which would have affected a large section of George Patton’s (1920-1991) landscape design. The proposed expansion was thwarted by the national attention given the project by a community of architects and historians. Oddly enough, Patton’s landscape architectural contributions were never recognized during this debate. It remained, as Walker and Simonds have suggested “invisible.” How then do we change this situation to reveal and rediscover this legacy?

If we begin with the community of architectural and art historians, we can take a step toward reducing the “invisibility” of these landscapes with more landscape listings in the National Register of Historic Places. Up to now, recognition of landscapes has been inconsistent. Successful National Register nominations in the past have embraced buildings that are less than 50 years old, but have not included their associated landscapes. For example, in 1994 the Stuart Company Plant and Office Building in Pasadena was listed in the National Register, but only in the area of architecture (National Register Criterion C). The in-depth nomination noted that the office and manufacturing complex is “an excellent example of early Neo-Formalist design by master architect Edward Durell Stone.” Additionally, landscape architect Thomas Church’s contributions are discussed over three pages of text that place this work in the context of his executed works and writings.

However, in spite of these findings, the nomination states that “the garden in the courtyard does not possess exceptional significance on its own but may become eligible for the National Register in its own right once it reaches the 50-year mark.” Nevertheless, it goes on to suggest that Church’s legacy “survives in many intact projects” and notes that Church’s “best known large-scale projects include the Technical Center (1956) for General Motors in Warren, Mich., with Eero Saarinen, and the Stuart Company building in Pasadena, with Edward D. Stone (1958).”

These findings take on increased importance when considered in the context of recognizing the significance of Kiley’s landscape architectural design contributions, and even the
Integrity is defined by the National Register of Historic Places as “the authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s historic period.” Therefore, if features that are critical to the overall significance of the design are removed or altered, the integrity of the design will most likely be compromised. To illustrate this principle, let’s consider the implications of recent management decisions to several examples of modern landscape architecture in California:

1. The addition of a concrete timber-frame bridge where one never existed and the demise and failure to replace three olive trees in Ted Osmundson’s design at the Kaiser Center Roof Garden in Oakland.
2. The severe pruning of the historic allée of trees at the San Francisco Opera House Court, altering Thomas Church’s intended spatial and visual relationships.
3. Failure to replace items or resolve challenges posed by the death of two sentinel California Live Oaks that framed views from the Dewey Donnell Ranch out to Sonoma in Thomas Church’s original 1948-50 design.

The recent addition of a wooden pedestrian bridge over the biomorphic-shaped pond at the Kaiser Roof Center in Oakland erodes the landscape’s integrity. The impact of this strange structure diminishes the otherwise intact spatial and visual relationships of Ted Osmundson’s pioneering roofscape project. Photo by Charles Birnbaum

The greatest loss of integrity often occurs with the redesign of outdoor regional shopping centers and pedestrian malls—thus eradicating an important chapter in the profession’s evolution from the mid 1950s to the late 1960s. Usually not outright demolition, these projects are most often “upgrades” involving the removal and destruction of site-specific character-defining pavements, lights, and streetscape furnishings that are now difficult to maintain or are perceived to be out of fashion. For example, a cursory survey of alterations to Lawrence Halprin’s work includes the 1995 destruction of Old Orchard Shopping Center, in Skokie, Ill.—his first design in the semipublic realm (from the mid 1950s) and a 1990s overhaul of Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis (1967). Other examples of altered Halprin commissions include two projects from the 1960s: the Riveroaks Shopping Center outside of Chicago and Ghirardelli Square, San Francisco—Halprin’s first opportunity to “recycle” old structures for new uses.

In the case of Nicollet Mall, which was the first such streetscape project by Halprin, Lance Neckar, ASLA, states, “The mall was an experiment—designed using new, untested materials that were not durable or appropriate to Minnesota. It became costly to maintain over the long term (for example, the maintenance of the lights alone ran $100,000 annually). As a formal idea we regret its passing, yet the local group was adamant that it had to change.”

Recognizing a variety of limitations and both physical and natural pressures, what is the possibility of documenting, evaluating, and preserving works of modern landscape architecture—from parks and gardens to shopping malls and college campus designs? Based on the situation previously outlined, the following ideas could be endorsed:

1. Continue to nominate modern landscape architecture to the National Register of Historic Places.
2. Develop a greater context for modern landscape architecture through published books, monographs, and oral history projects.
3. Document threatened work in measured drawings, photography, and video.
4. Consult with the original landscape architect, client, and caretakers when possible.
5. Educate owners, public stewards, and the general public to make these landscapes less “invisible.”
6. Establish creative partnerships to ensure their ongoing preservation and management.
8. Apply the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes to all project work and all on-
going management projects in historically significant modern landscapes.

If the above stated goals and strategies are applied to modern landscape architecture, significant works from the recent past will have a better chance of being documented, preserved, and interpreted. This agenda should be multidisciplinary in approach and will require outreach, support, and education at a variety of professional levels. Today, this growing constituency includes practicing landscape architects, architects, geographers, and planners, in addition to art, architectural, landscape, and social historians—many whom recognize the benefits of the preservation and/or documentation of these nationally significant works.

Based on the recent successful National Register and National Historic Landmark nominations that include contributing landscape architecture and new initiatives to undertake Cultural Landscape Reports for landscapes from the recent past, how can we begin to share these success stories with a broader public? Why does the public so often disagree about the signifi-

What is beauty? Who defines it? And why is high art so unfamiliar and even unnerving? It’s no surprise that the “shelf life” for any of these projects has been less than 20 years and that they often become highly controversial.

In a 1995 New York Times article, columnist Anne Raver noted that “these invisible landscapes are being taken up by a growing number of landscape architects around the country, who are organizing to protect their work, both as works of art and as vessels of cultural history.”

Perhaps Ms. Raver’s statement, which echoes the sentiments of Walker and Simo, holds the key to this situation. The future of this irreplaceable legacy lies in the hands of the professional community of landscape architects, who are increasingly doing a better job of educating themselves and must now communicate with the historic preservation community—and the public—about the significance and uniqueness of these distinctive places. Such communication is essential if we are to preserve this distinctive body of landscape architecture. As illustrated by this account and echoed in the conclusion to Invisible Gardens, we must work together to safeguard this largely underalyzed legacy which “stands alongside the architecture of its age as a selection of useful and beautiful emblems.”

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This paper updates and expands two papers published by the author in Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture: Papers from the Wave Hill-National Park Service Conference (Cambridge, Mass.: Spacemaker Press, 1999).

NOTES
1 Published by “the editors of Sunset Magazine,” Sunset Landscaping for Western Living (Menlo Park, Calif., Lane Books.) See the discussion on “Landscaping for Western Living,” p. 7. First date of publication is not credited. Based on the photography and the fact that this is the twelfth printing from 1967, the initial date of publication is assumed to be in the early 1950s.
2 This comment was made during a follow-up conversation at the ASLA Annual Meeting in Boston in 1999.

1 This comment was made during a phone conversation between the author and A. E. Bye in April 1995 and reinforced again during a follow-up conversation at the ASLA Annual Meeting in Boston in 1999.

1 I visited the bookstore at the Kimbell Art Museum in April 2000. Although well stocked with a variety of monographs on Louis Kahn the architect and the design of the museum (including Noguchi’s contribution to a sunken sculpture court), no mention of Patton’s work can be found in any materials available on-site. After talking with a curator I learned that Pat- 

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Students’ Perspectives

The National Council for Preservation Education asked preservation students enrolled in graduate and undergraduate preservation programs to contribute their thoughts on the preservation of sites from the recent past. Essays were submitted anonymously, and the four essays that best address the preservation of the recent past were selected for publication.

Defining the Recent Past

The word “past” alone is a subject of many diverse definitions. When the word “recent” is added, it opens even more dimensions to the discussion. As years go by, the earliest time we consider to be “recent past” will eventually graduate to the category of “past,” but this line of separation is virtually impossible to draw. At what point does the recent past no longer qualify as recent and just become past?

My ideas of the recent past might seem a bit broad to some. When I think about the changes that created the world I live in, I think not only of the events that occurred in my lifetime, but also the events of my parents’ and even my grandparents’ time. The values and morals of the people of the past hundred years have formed my own personal ideas of right and wrong. The battles fought by my predecessors that changed a nation’s—even a world’s—views and attitudes toward the rights of individuals have not yet grown stale in my mind. What woman has not felt the frustration of Anthony and Stanton? What minority has not heard the jeers of segregation? I believe that the past is never as far away as one would think it is.

I appreciate the past and keep it alive in my heart. As a result, I consider all past recent.

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Preserving Our Recent Past

At first I thought “recent past” simply consisted of those years that have gone before me… just before me, say the 1950s. Then it struck me: it was my childhood, growing up in a small suburb in the 1960s, that had become the recent past. This
Our Post-War Past

..in 1989

The world’s smallest church, measuring 3.5 feet by 6 feet, is built in Oneida, N.Y. With services available on request, the church accommodates a minister, bride and groom.

..in 1992

Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore, Md., is completed. The Orioles’ new stadium popularizes retro sports architecture, drawing influences from classic ballparks, including the Polo Grounds, classic ballparks, includ-
ing influences from retro sports architecture, new stadium popularizes

..in 1992

The Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., opens as the largest indoor retail and family entertainment center in the country. The 4.2 million-square-foot mall (later expanded, with more than 520 shops and 50 restaurants) is built on a 78-acre parcel of land that had been the site of Met Stadium, home to the Minneso-
ta Twins and Vikings.

Fact saddened me as I realized that today’s children growing up in Avon Lake, Ohio, will never experience the close-knit community and simplicit-

Today, things have changed in Avon Lake. A high school classmate of mine recently told me that the association governing the life of residents in one of the ten or so high-priced developments now built in Avon Lake won’t allow cars to be washed in the homes’ driveways.

If that kind of Big Brother living is what Avon Lake’s city fathers intended for future residents, then we preservationists-in-the-making better worry about more than the rescue of cities and focus on protecting communities that embrace the aspects of recent past living, as I’ve defined here. Goodness knows, I no longer consider Avon Lake of the year 2000 to be my hometown. My hope is that other suburbs of the recent past can be saved so that some of us will be able to go home again.

A bike ride away, “Hell’s Hills” stood daring every kid to try its steep slopes. Little did we know that those hills were the result of sewer lines being dug for a new development planned for the site—a glimpse of things to come.

My friends and I rode our bikes to Avon Lake’s downtown, a square that hosted a five and dime, a pharmacy, a movie theater, a motel, a bank, a hair salon, and a bar. Whenever our family needed groceries or shoes, we would travel to the next suburb clos-
er to downtown Cleveland. There wasn’t a choice of four malls in driving distance from our home back then.

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Sharon K. Bair is in the Building Preservation Technology Program at Belmont Technical College.

When Vinyl Siding Becomes Acceptable

Looking at the recent past makes me think of the not-so-distant future. The time is fast approaching when preservationists will be faced with the responsibility of restoring a 1970s house. This event will undoubtedly cause a shift in the way many define “historic house.” It is ironic to think that so many architectural details that are currently frowned upon in the preservation community will soon perhaps become historically acceptable.

Consider vinyl siding. Regarded as Enemy Number One by many preservationists, vinyl siding will soon become a necessary evil. Proper techniques for repairing or replacing it will become part of the standard curriculum for students in the field. The demand for suitable replacement material will spur many companies to develop “authentic” vinyl siding. Also, for the first time ever, preservationists will be able to look at vinyl windows or aluminum storm windows without their blood beginning to boil.

Restoring the exterior will be a cinch compared with a host of new challenges on the inside. No period kitchen will be complete without a harvest gold or avocado green stove and refrigerator set. Any one with extra cash and storage space would be well advised to scour the appliance resale shops now for a future investment. Fuzzy wallpaper with psychedelic designs or a daisy motif will be the wallcovering of choice for kitchens and bathrooms. The club room will have imitation wood grain paneling attached to the wall with finish nails that match in color. Carpet companies will offer reproduction two-inch shag carpeting in a variety of colors. House museums will have to keep visitors off the carpets since 200,000 feet per year will flatten the carpet and change the historic integrity of the property. Furniture restorers will learn the “craft” of restuffing a bean bag chair.

Another challenge of 1970s preservation will be deciding which buildings are eligible for the National Register. Will it be someplace with historical significance, such as the Watergate Hotel? Maybe an infamous building, such as Studio 54? Perhaps the garage where Apple Computers got started? Any and all of these places may be considered eligible for the National Register in the near future. Only time will tell.

The future of technology and training is almost too immense a topic to speculate on right now. What is evident is that many changes and chal-
egg lies on the horizon. For those of us interested in the preserving “modern” struc-
tures, it is going to be a very exciting and interesting time.

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Bowling Alleys: From Kitsch to Community Resource

Traditionally, historic preservation programs attempt to pre-
serve elements of the built environment of which people are proud: works by great architects, aesthetically pleasing structures that are significant in form or history. Across the country, historic buildings and districts remind us of what soci-
ety considers culturally impor-
tant. Most preservation projects focus on the built environment that reflects current notions of “good” architecture.

In light of this, how can we encourage the preservation of the built environment that does not necessarily represent our desired image? This question is particularly challenging when talking about 1950s-style automobile-oriented architecture. Although these forms now dominate the environment, their preservation is sel-
dom given any consideration. This is partially due to their rela-
tive newness—preservation simply might not be an issue yet—and partially because of
their structural qualities: set off the street, primarily accessible by car, surrounded by parking, and characterized by a bland, big box form.

Bowling alleys present a particularly interesting example, since both form and function are products of their era. Bowling alleys generally lack architectural significance, their automobile-oriented big box forms are more frequently regarded as functional necessity as opposed to a style. While many sport an elaborate two-story sign to beckon drivers from a considerable distance, the structure itself is rather ordinary. Yet despite their relatively unremarkable forms, bowling alleys remain a vestige of 1950s America—a blue collar escape, a place for leisurely activity and competitive leagues.

Because bowling alleys are so large and possess such unique and uncompromising forms, adaptive use remains a challenge. And national and local preservation guidelines do not always apply to traditional bowling alley forms. The following suggestions, however, may help communities think about the preservation of these important icons of roadside architecture in a new light:

- Preserve the entire structure as a neighborhood icon and resource.
- Convert the structure into a community center, gym, or family service center.
- If demolition is unavoidable, think about preserving elements of the signage—traditionally the most visible aspect of the building.

Although historic preservation programs are not typically designed to protect automobile-oriented architecture, these structures hold a place in most Americans’ memories and they should not be demolished. It is important to develop strategies for preserving bowling alleys, or at least some aspect of them. Preserving these structures could be a first step in legitimizing these forms and establishing a framework for retaining important and social characteristics of 1950s roadside architecture in the United States.

Connie Walker is studying urban design and planning at the University of Washington.

—in 1995
The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum opens on the Lake Erie waterfront in Cleveland, Ohio. Architect I.M. Pei uses his signature glass pyramid forms in creating space for thousands of modern rock artifacts.