

# THE RECENT PAST: HOW CAN I MISS YOU IF YOU WON'T GO AWAY?

by

KAY SUZANNE STANTON

(Under the Direction of Wayde Brown)

## ABSTRACT

How can the importance of preserving resources from a more recent era than those typically protected be determined? The field of historic preservation must confront these resources regularly, and as time passes, will do so more frequently due to the large number of buildings that were constructed immediately after World War Two. The research methodology for this thesis includes archival research, review of articles and papers pertaining to the subject, including current debates and case studies/issues as well as two case studies in the state of Georgia. In conclusion, preservationists must learn to regard recent past resources more objectively by learning to notice 'invisible' resources. They should also look beyond unfamiliar materials and construction methods, generate positive attitudes about these resources, use the newness to an advantage, and take an active role in preserving the recent past.

INDEX WORDS: Historic preservation, Recent past, Architecture, Modernism

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to H.S.T.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.<sup>1</sup>

As time passes, new buildings become old, old become renewed; both turn to dust. The brief span of time that an individual is alive represents but a blip on the infinite timeline, whether that line is considered linear, or circular. Time as a concept in historic preservation, and specifically preservation of the recent past, is a constantly fluctuating point in history. What is recent past today is historic tomorrow. For a field that often focuses on the passage of time, it is necessary to be able to look beyond its limitations to the potential resources that lie on the other side of time, the side that has not yet earned its due.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this thesis is to determine the importance of preserving resources from a more recent era than those typically protected. The recent past will be defined, and a brief history of the subject discussed, as well as current issues relating to its preservation. Separate issues, such as design concepts, material and construction methods, developmental pressures, and attitudes of preservationists and the public will be discussed as they pertain to the difficulties

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<sup>1</sup> T.S. Eliot. *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950*, "Four Quartets: Burnt Norton," (Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc: New York, 1962), 117.

of preserving resources from the recent past. What the passage of time has meant to earlier preservation, as well as current practices is the focus of this thesis. The topic of the recent past is a very current debate. While much interest in the field of historic preservation has been piqued by recent past issues, few, if any comprehensive volumes exist.

### **Introducing the Recent Past**

“The dictum that the passage of time is essential to gain the perspectives necessary to determine whether a structure is historic, and therefore worthy of preservation, is codified in the fifty-year rule of the National Register of Historic Places.”<sup>2</sup> But is it essential to the innate value of a structure? How does a non-historic forty-nine year old building suddenly become historic, and therefore more valuable, on its fiftieth birthday? Dates are arbitrary when it comes to many levels of significance. “Generally, our understanding of history does not advance a year at a time, but rather in periods of times which can logically be examined together.”<sup>3</sup> Investigating a significant era as a whole can open doors to a greater understanding of the recent past; for example the Post-World War II residential building boom, the Civil Rights Movement, the advent of the shopping plaza and the subsequent move of community activity from town center to suburban shopping mall. Even today, as malls from the 1960s, 70s and 80s are being torn down, history is being made with architecture inspired by the World Wide Web; and even more

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<sup>2</sup> Diane Wrey. “Organizing to Preserve Modern Architecture: The Modern Architecture Preservation League,” *Forum Journal* 10, (Fall 1995): 17.

<sup>3</sup> National Park Service. “Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years,” *National Register Bulletin* 22. US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1998.

recently, in Daniel Libeskind's memorial design for Ground Zero, as a result of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York City.<sup>4</sup>

What exactly is the recent past? "Until now, cultural resource professionals have relied on the passage of time to explain th[e] significance and to tell us what elements of the past are worthy of preservation."<sup>5</sup> Age as value derives directly from the observations of Alois Riegl. In 1903, Riegl completed a study on the 'cult of monuments' in which he specified two distinct types of monuments: intentional and unintentional. An intentional monument is one that is put into place for the specific reason of keeping the memory of a person or event alive in the context of history. Unintentional monuments, "which are much more numerous, are remains whose meaning is determined not by their makers, but by our modern perceptions of these monuments, i.e. by retrospective cultural memory."<sup>6</sup> Unintentional monuments acquire their value by history. It is the age-value that is relevant to preservation of the recent past.

It is probably fair to say that ruins appear more picturesque the more advanced their state of decay: as decay progresses, age-value becomes less extensive, that is to say, evoked less and less by fewer and fewer remains, but is therefore all the more intensive in its impact on the beholder... From the standpoint of age-value, one need not worry about the eternal preservation of monuments... Age-value manifests itself immediately through visual perception and appeals directly to our emotions.<sup>7</sup>

This concept of age-value, though having origins as early as the seventeenth century, is primarily a twentieth century, western concept that gives value to the aesthetically pleasing

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<sup>4</sup> Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. Selected Design for the World Trade Center Site. Document online. Accessed at: [http://www.renewnyc.com/plan\\_des\\_dev/wtc\\_site/new\\_design\\_plans/selected\\_design.asp](http://www.renewnyc.com/plan_des_dev/wtc_site/new_design_plans/selected_design.asp)

<sup>5</sup> Rebecca A Shiffer. "The Recent Past," *CRM*, Vol. 18, No. 8, (1995): 3.

<sup>6</sup> Cornelius Holtorf. "Monument Values." University of Toronto: CITD Press. Document online. Accessed at: <http://citdpress.utsc.utoronto.ca/Holtorf/6.9.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Alois Riegl. (1982) *The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin* [1903]. *Oppositions* 25, (Fall 1982), 21-51.

patina of age. (Some eastern nations, or countries undergoing economic and political change, as seen when visiting Croatia or Brazil for instance, hold aged buildings in contempt; or would at the least prefer the economy to allow for more new buildings.) The age-value is one that can immediately be visually identified, with little rationalization or research. The ‘fifty-year rule’ to which most preservationists adhere is an example of Riegl’s age-value. For obvious reasons, most recent past structures do not possess this idea of age-value. On the contrary, these buildings were built to be pristine and may not age in a pleasing manner. Unlike stone and wood, many new materials utilized in recent past architecture had not been in production long enough for designers to fully comprehend how well, or badly, they would age. In addition, the very nature of much modern architecture was based on technology and rationalization, thereby rendering Riegl’s theory inappropriate for placing value on recent past buildings.

In a more modern context, a recent past resource in the United States has a more specific definition. As determined by the guidelines of the National Register, with few exceptions, a building must be at least fifty years of age to be considered historic, implying that structures built primarily within our own generation, or that of our parents’ are not considered historic and therefore are not as valuable as those that are classified as historic. A dichotomy exists in that the general public and grassroots organizations, as well as professionals, retain this view but at the same time fight the demolition of recent past buildings they personally see as significant. The emerging movement in historic preservation is to value the ‘monuments’ of a given era, leaving out the vernacular, or commonplace. Scarcity also plays a role in a resource’s value. If only a few examples of a resource type or style remain, those tend automatically to achieve greater significance than a type that is extremely common. Often, the most recent generation of buildings are most easily brushed off as lacking in historic or social importance. We tend to find

the aesthetics old fashioned and somewhat distasteful. Lewis Mumford “suggested that each new adult generation of Americans rejects the world of its parents, while pining for the world of its grandparents.”<sup>8</sup> At this point in time, recent past structures are those that often fall into the category of “Modern” architecture (including styles such as International, Contemporary and Pop) specifically built in the latter half of the twentieth century. As the Post-World War II architecture quickly approaches the fifty-year mark, it is slowly becoming more accepted as ‘historic.’ Now preservationists turn to look at glass blocks of the sixties, low sprawling suburban architecture of the 1970s and vinyl clad creations of the 1980s with a wrinkled nose. This is what adults of today grew up with.

What does preserving the recent past mean? While the idea of the recent past or “underage buildings” (those aged fifty years or less) is no longer new in the field of historic preservation, it is still a controversial issue. It is difficult to place emotional or aesthetic bias aside, especially when dealing with a style or type that is currently out of vogue, and objectively evaluate what makes a particular building important. Buildings of the recent past are particularly difficult because so many incorporate untested design concepts, materials and methods of construction as well as presenting a larger and unfamiliar scale. “Eighty percent of everything built in America has been built since the end of World War II, much of it in American suburbia.”<sup>9</sup> Of course, not every recent building is significant and not every significant building will be saved. It is important, therefore to develop relevant and effective guidelines to evaluate significance, to select appropriate interventions, be it restoration, adaptive reuse, simple

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<sup>8</sup> Glenn Weiss. “Blown to Kingdom Come,” *Seattle Magazine*, March 2000. Document online. Accessed at: <http://glennweiss.com/blow.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Bertrand Goldberg. “Preserving a Recent Past,” *Preserving the Recent Past*, ed. Deborah Slaton and Rebecca A. Shiffer. Washington, D.C.: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 1995, I-12.

documentation or another; “It is time to expand the breadth of preservation activities and widen the understanding of the potential of preservation to affect the environment.”<sup>10</sup>

A few important questions must be answered regarding preservation of the recent past. First, what are the specific preservation challenges and issues posed by the recent past? What do the structures built today mean to society in the present? And more importantly, how do we identify values of buildings so close to us in time? Preservationists and members of the general public, individually and sometimes collectively, contribute to the overall attitude, both negative and positive, of what these structures mean to us. But how do preservationists then ensure that preservation of the recent past is appreciated by the general public as a valid part of historic preservation? How do we decide what buildings are worth saving? Finally, how should these resources be managed? What interventions are appropriate, and should these interventions be different from those used on buildings from other eras?

Advances in protecting the recent past have certainly been made on both professional and public levels. The Lever House in New York City was placed on the National Register in 1983 at the age of thirty-one years. In 2002, of the almost 76,000 listings on the National Register of Historic Places, 2,332 had been listed in the National Register under Criteria Consideration G.<sup>11</sup> Criteria Consideration G allows a property that is fewer than fifty years old to be listed on the National Register if it is of exceptional importance. In England, “by the end of 1995 the importance of the post-war period had been recognized by the listing of 189 separate items on 111 sites.”<sup>12</sup> A good deal of research has been done on the subject, primarily over the last ten

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<sup>10</sup> William C. Miller. “I’m Not Ugly...I Have International Flair,” *Forum Journal* 15, (Fall 2000): 42.

<sup>11</sup> Recent Past Preservation Network. Recent Past on the National Register, *RPPN Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Winter 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. “Something Worth Keeping?: Post-War Architecture in England,” *English Heritage, Built Heritage of the Modern Era*, Fall 1997.

years, however the issue of what to do with the architecture of the preceding fifty years has been at the forefront of debates since at least the eighteenth century. An article in the January 1958 issue of the British periodical *Architectural Review*, observed:

If the question be asked whether the time is ripe to treat the buildings and furnishings of so recent a period with the respect we accord to earlier ones, the answer surely is that examples are disappearing more quickly than we realize and that if we wait until [these] buildings are more widely studied and appreciated, it will then be found that the evidence on which scholarly studies should be based no longer exists.<sup>13</sup>

Web sites dedicated to recent past (primarily post-World War II) structures are growing, and groups such as The International Working Party for the DOcumentation and COnservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the MODern MOvement (DOCOMOMO International), the Recent Past Preservation Network (RPPN) and the Twentieth Century Society (U.K.), actively provide the latest issues and dialog pertaining to recent past preservation. Numerous papers and conferences support the suggestion that as preservationists are confronted with the recent past on a regular basis, more are accepting its importance in the field and accept it as a valid topic for debate. This implicitly gives it legitimacy, regardless of the position taken. Yet, many preservationists and most of the general public are not convinced.

### **Methodology**

The research methodology for this thesis includes archival research, review of articles and papers pertaining to the subject, including current debates and case studies/issues. Two case histories of recent past structures in Georgia are used to demonstrate different approaches and their respective consequences. Drayton Arms in Savannah, built in 1951, has not only been saved, but was officially named a local ‘historic building’ in 2002. On the other hand, Rio Mall

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<sup>13</sup> “Something Worth Keeping?: Post-War Architecture in England,” *English Heritage, Built Heritage of the Modern Era*, Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Fall 1997.

in Atlanta, built in 1989, was demolished in 1999 for a new shopping center, incorporating a chain grocery store and parking lot. These case studies include preliminary archival research, site visits and discussions with involved parties. Identifying professional and public opinion about these cases is a key element of the research. Finally, materials gathered will be examined and analyzed in relation to the questions previously posed. Conclusions and recommendations for preservation of the recent past will be presented, based upon this analysis.



## CHAPTER 2

### PRECEDENTS FOR PRESERVING THE RECENT PAST

In my beginning is my end. In succession  
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,  
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place  
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.  
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,  
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth...<sup>14</sup>

#### History of the Concept

Although most of the literature and research on the recent past has emerged in the last ten years, the issue is of much longer standing. The recent past does not mean simply ‘twentieth century architecture.’ It is represented by any architecture created within the last fifty years from any given point of time. For preservationists today, it does mean buildings from the latter half of the twentieth century, many of which fall into a variety of Modern styles. The next generation will examine architecture that is being produced today, in the early part of the twenty-first century. “As years go by, the earliest time we consider to be ‘recent past’ will eventually graduate to the category of ‘past.’”<sup>15</sup>

One of the early examples of preserving the recent past on record involves the famed advocate of the anti-scrape theory, John Ruskin. In the mid-nineteenth century, Ruskin was adamantly opposed to Eugène Emmanuel Viollet le Duc’s idea of preservation; that buildings should be returned to a state of aesthetic ‘perfection,’ which may have never historically

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<sup>14</sup> T.S. Eliot. *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950*, “Four Quartets: East Coker,” (Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc: New York, 1962), 123.

<sup>15</sup> Cristina R. Alexander. “Students’ Perspectives,” *Forum Journal* 15 (Fall 2000): 49.

occurred. Ruskin believed that “the falsification of history is one side of the matter; the other is the ethical and religiously inclined attitude where the responsibility to the past becomes evident in relation to the coming generations.”<sup>16</sup> Thereby introducing the concept that today the past and the present are both to become the past in the future. “It is again no question of expediency or feeling whether we shall preserve the buildings of past times or not. *We have no right whatever to touch them.* They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us. The dead have still their right in them.”<sup>17</sup> Even though we may not always appreciate the architecture of our generation or that of our parents’, Ruskin believed that it is not our right to decide if it should be allowed to survive into the next.

Shunning the previous generation’s architecture has been common since Ruskin’s writings. “European medieval gothic cathedrals were generally disparaged in the seventeenth century, regarded as interesting curiosities in the eighteenth, studied for spiritual and design inspiration in the nineteenth, and effectively deconsecrated and reframed as sites of heritage and tourism in the twentieth.”<sup>18</sup> Recently, Queen Anne Revival and other Victorian styles were thought to be gaudy aesthetic disasters of overindulgence. “Fashionable people in the 1920s hated anything Victorian. In the 1950s, many thought Art Deco was ugly.”<sup>19</sup> One of the major complaints of suburban ranch neighborhoods of the fifties is that all of the houses look alike. The same objection was brought against Craftsman bungalows just a few decades earlier. In

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<sup>16</sup> John Ruskin quoted in Stephan Tschudi-Madsen. Quote: John Ruskin. *Restoration and Anti-Restoration: A study in English restoration philosophy.* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1976, 48.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> David Dolan. ““The first stage of aging: modern heritage places get old,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy.* Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 430.

<sup>19</sup> Charlene Roise. “Establishing Civilization on the Suburban Frontier,” *Forum Journal* 15, (Fall 2000): 10.

addition, architectural themes and connections are often only recognized with the passage of time. Ada Louise Huxtable, a critic of American architecture, suggests: “In our haste to move on to another century, we often fail to understand our own.”<sup>20</sup>

Fortunately, the tide is turning. The 1990s saw an exponentially increased interest in preserving the recent past. “By 1993, cultural resource professionals were beginning to define the recent past and to formulate arguments for the preservation of its buildings and landscapes.”<sup>21</sup> In March of 1995, the National Park Service held a conference in Chicago entitled *Preserving the Recent Past* in which over 800 people participated. A follow-up to this conference, *Preserving the Recent Past II* was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 2000, sponsored by the National Park Service, the Association for Preservation Technology International, and other preservationist organizations. The 2003 Conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) (held in Denver, Colorado) included sessions on topics such as ‘Recent Past Advocacy,’ ‘Post-World War II Modernity,’ and a video entitled *Lustron: The House America’s Been Waiting For*. The 2001 International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) National Conference in Adelaide, Australia was entitled *20<sup>th</sup> Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. DoCoMoMo (DOcumentation and COnservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the MODern MOvement) US, formed in 1995 at the Recent Past conference in Chicago, will hold their 2004 conference, *International Postwar Modernism and the Conjunction of Preservation and Design* in New York City. In 2002, two of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Eleven Most Endangered Buildings were recent past buildings—the Gold Dome Bank (1958) in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and the Guthrie Theater

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<sup>20</sup> Wayne Curtis. “No Clear Solution,” *Preservation*. September/October 2002, 118.

<sup>21</sup> Rebecca A. Shiffer. “The Recent Past,” *CRM*, Vol. 18, No. 8, (1995): 3.

(opened 1963) in Minneapolis, Minnesota.<sup>22</sup> In Athens, Georgia, the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation has expressed interest in preserving a circa 1940 hangar at Ben Epps Airport that was used during World War Two.<sup>23</sup> Internationally, nationally, statewide, and even locally, progress is being made to accept the buildings of the recent past as an integral part of our history.

### **The Current Debate**

“Today with the rapid expansion of our economy and considerable development pressures, many recently-constructed buildings are threatened with demolition before they have been in existence for 50 years and before they have been studied and understood.”<sup>24</sup> The challenges of preserving the recent past are large ones. First of all, with the technological advances that coincided with the post-World War II building boom, came a dramatic change in both design concepts and materials. During this time arose structures borne of new design concepts and a totally different scale than had been previously seen. As skyscrapers got taller, and malls more sprawling, their increasing size added to the difficulty of their prolonged life through adaptive use or other types of preservation. Many of the materials and construction methods used were untested and unlike any traditional building materials used before. Development pressures changed as sprawl reached further and further from the city core and land prices escalate. Finally, the attitudes of the professionals and the public that deal with buildings of the recent past played a huge role in current debate of the issue.

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<sup>22</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation. “America’s 11 most endangered historic places 2002.” Document online. Accessed at: [www.nthp.org/11most/2002/index.html](http://www.nthp.org/11most/2002/index.html).

<sup>23</sup> Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation. “The Passage of Time,” *Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation* newsletter, (Fall 2002): 3.

<sup>24</sup> Bruce D. Judd. “Preserving the Recent Past,” *The Alliance Review*, (May/June 2000): 1.

The history and the current debate together create a precedent for an ongoing study of preserving recent past resources. Preserving these structures has not been an easy task in the past, nor will it become free of challenges in the near future. The next section of this thesis will discuss the issues and problems related to the recent past. Design concepts, including scale changes, material and construction methods, development pressures and professional and public perception of the recent past will be addressed.

## CHAPTER 3

### DESIGN CONCEPTS

Design concepts are continually changing, and as technological knowledge increases, design transforms even more rapidly. Design means “to create, fashion, execute, or construct according to plan.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, design is the resulting solution to a perceived question or challenge. Included in building design are elements of scale, ornamentation, and materials employed, as well as the finished product’s utility—form following function. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the design concepts of recent past architecture are defined by the dramatic changes that transpired after World War II and are comprised of new technological thinking, which creates both anti-historicism and function as a determinant of design form. These design concepts, in addition to issues with building scale, will be discussed.

#### **Shift in Design Trends**

A massive shift in the design of buildings has occurred in the last fifty years. Through time, building styles and types have fluctuated and evolved, making use of the innovations of the day. However, the post-World War II technology boom of the 1950s has forever altered what is to become ‘traditional’ architecture. From this point on, preservationists must deal with the potential of giant leaps in design concepts and tools, as it is doubtful that architects will revert to using solely the tried and true. Post-World War II design can be used as an example in understanding and dealing with the issues of preserving the recent past.

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<sup>25</sup> *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. “Merriam-Webster Online.” Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>.

The post-World War II building boom, fueled by changing political and social climates, technological advances and the abundance of new and inexpensive materials, was illustrated by clean lines, functionality, and an overall pristine, unmarred form. Departing from traditional design, this period of architecture often placed the function of the structure ahead of its form. The resulting aesthetic married well with a larger twentieth century notion of Modernism, exhibited in art, music, literature, and other culture.

Beginning with the Prairie style (Figure 3.1) popularized by Frank Lloyd Wright in the United States in the early twentieth century, strong horizontality became a large part of post-war design. In this typically North American approach, Wright designed buildings to fit in with, become a part of, and stretch across the landscape. Many of these structures began to take on an organic nature. Additional design features of

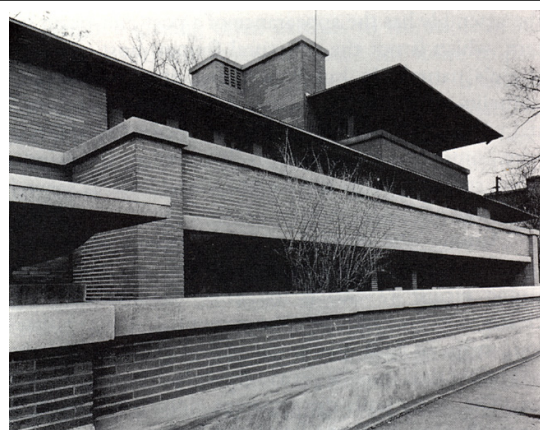


Figure 3.1. Prairie Style: Frederick C. Robie Residence (1906, Chicago, IL), Frank Lloyd Wright. (Reprinted from Terry L. Patterson, *Frank Lloyd Wright and the Meaning of Materials*, 80. © 1994 by Van Nostrand Reinhold.)

the post-World War II era came from other early modernist architects. In France, Charles-Edouard le Corbusier took a different approach in his design than Wright. Using elements such as horizontality, thin *pilotis* and stark white tones, le Corbusier made a point of contrast between the built and natural environments (Figure 3.2). Finally, yet another statement was made in Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's architectural creations. The focus shifted from working with or against the landscape to fading it out altogether. The landscape became a non-entity in van der

Rohe's design; a simple platform upon which buildings often of a strong verticality arose (Figure 3.3).

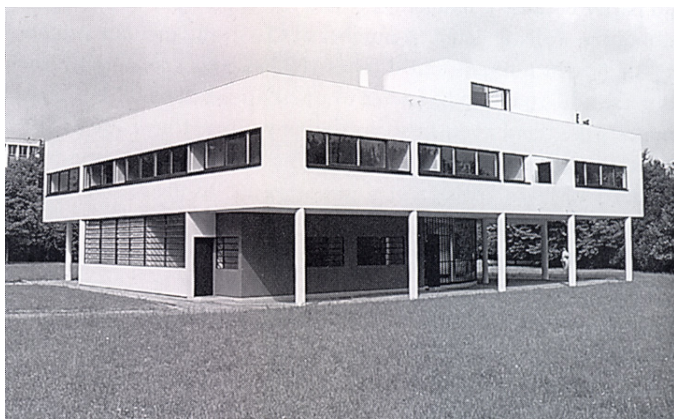


Figure 3.2: Contrast between the built and natural environment: Villa Savoy (1928-9, Poissy, France), Le Corbusier. (Reprinted from Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in their Cultural and Technological Context*, 239. © 1991 by University Press of New England.)

With the advent of air conditioning, washing machines and other conveniences, humans were drawn away from the landscape itself and into their homes and workspaces. Porches and courtyards began to disappear, replaced by large plate glass windows and skylights. On the other hand, some public and commercial buildings dispensed of windows

altogether, installing modern lighting instead. Again, the function of the building was often key to its design. Typical designs in many locales featured buildings created in large numbers, with little variety and few distinctive architectural features.

Many consider these designs to have aged badly and some members of the preservation movement now find the fact that “much of modern design [is]



Figure 3.3: Strong verticality: 860-880 Lake Shore Drive (1948-51, Chicago, IL) van der Rohe. (Reprinted from Jean-Louis Cohen, *Mies van der Rohe*, 103. © 1996 by E & FN Spon.)



mechanistic, abstract, and lacking in associative qualities”<sup>26</sup> to be a negative characteristic, rather than an important part of its original design. The lack of ornamentation and the difficulty of determining a precise style of recent past buildings are considered by designers and architectural historians to be an intentional statement of the era in which they were built. Modern design can easily be misunderstood to represent a deficiency in a structure’s personality, thereby rendering it ‘insignificant.’

“It is hard to assess very recent heritage items...”<sup>27</sup> Far too often they are simply overlooked. It is too easy to dismiss a recent structure because its design may appear tacky or is made with what are considered to be

“cheap” materials. This is a common error made by both preservationists and the public. However, many recent buildings not lauded for their great design, such as the Lorraine Motel (Figure 3.4) in Memphis where Martin Luther King, Jr. was

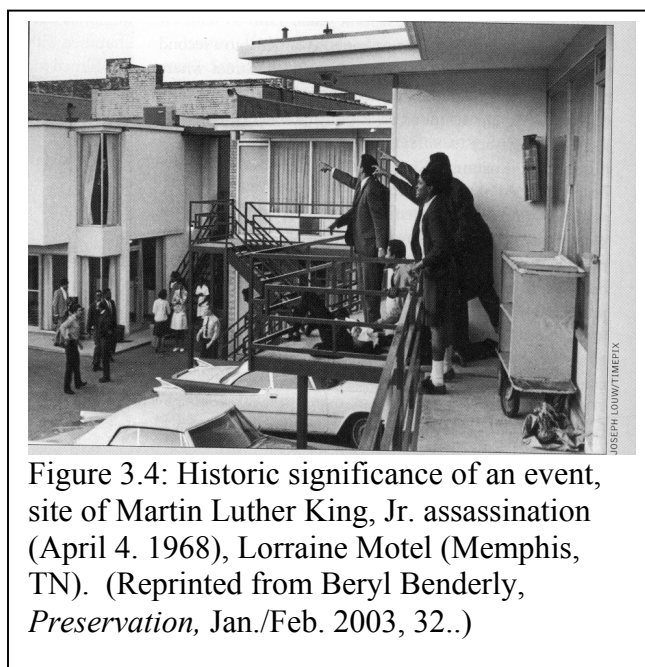


Figure 3.4: Historic significance of an event, site of Martin Luther King, Jr. assassination (April 4, 1968), Lorraine Motel (Memphis, TN). (Reprinted from Beryl Benderly, *Preservation*, Jan./Feb. 2003, 32..)

assassinated, are an important part of history. Still others are examples of a style that is especially representative of a particular era, even if that era is only twenty years ago. How much history would have been lost if all of the Gila cliff dwellings in New Mexico were destroyed when discovered, deserted, by European settlers? What would or will historians in the twenty-second century miss if no post-

<sup>26</sup> William C. Miller. “I’m Not Ugly...I Have International Flair,” *Forum Journal* 15, (Fall 2000): 43.

<sup>27</sup> Helen Larder. “A monument to our recent past,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 95.

war ranch subdivisions remain intact? While many variables, such as scarcity, play a role in the value of a resource, it is important to recognize a significant structure before it becomes so rare as to be endangered or extinct.

The first fifty years may be the most trying period of a building's life. Problems arise when "modern" design is used and soon after abandoned as out-dated. "The movement which celebrates the new whilst rejecting the old does not envisage the moment when the new itself becomes old, still less that it may be in need of support."<sup>28</sup> Another important and perplexing characteristic of recent past buildings is their ever-expanding size.

### Scale

"Scale can be problematic in two ways; either due to the challenge of finding compatible uses for very large buildings and secondly simply due to the capital outlay required for their repair."<sup>29</sup> Preservation of large factories built around the end of the nineteenth century initially



Figure 3.5: Adaptive reuse of King Plow Arts Center, Atlanta GA.

were hindered by their size, but with the passing of time it has been discovered that these spaces are prime candidates for multi-use live/work loft spaces, restaurants, and retail stores. King Plow Arts Center in Atlanta, Georgia (Figure 3.5) is an example of

<sup>28</sup> Kelley Christ. "Sacrosanct or Sacrificial?: The future of Modernism's legacy and the role of new design," *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 133.

<sup>29</sup> Susan MacDonald. "Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges," *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 84.

a successful adaptive reuse project of seventeen factory buildings covering more than 200,000 square feet, which has been converted into live/work studio spaces, several businesses, a restaurant and a theater. The current trend in the design of many commercial buildings is to make them larger and larger. Skyscrapers, shopping centers, and malls built in the last half of the twentieth century create a new management challenge for preservationists.

Joseland and Gillings' Qantas building in Sydney, Australia, designed in 1970, included a 5000 square feet underground computer center. This space was already considered out-of-date in 1982 when construction was finally completed. If the computer room was outmoded only twelve years after its initial design, how must it be considered in an adaptive reuse situation? What can this massive windowless space be used for? Is it economically feasible to reuse it?

Most North Americans can visualize a shopping center or mall that has been abandoned or demolished in the last few years. Now developers are building even larger commercial spaces. The 90,000 square foot Target store in Athens, Georgia now must move into 125,000 square feet of space, updated incorporating a grocery section, thus creating an über-store: The



Figure 3.6: Scale issues, SuperTarget, Athens, GA.

SuperTarget<sup>30</sup> (Figure 3.6). Meanwhile, tens of thousands of square feet that the old Target inhabited a mile down the road will collect dust until turned into a parking lot. Many

<sup>30</sup> Don Nelson. "Does Athens really have that many Big Empty Spaces?," *Athens Banner-Herald*, Sunday Business, 3 August 2003, F1.

preservationists and environmentalists agree that while it would have been better if these buildings were never erected in the first place, it is now the responsibility of these professionals to become more creative in reusing resources of massive scale.

Recent past buildings have become larger and more specialized over the years. In addition, they seem to be out-dated more quickly than ever before. Early computers needed an entire room to house their hardware. Now computer labs are being built with static-resistant flooring and major highways of cable-containing conduit. Shopping centers of the 1960s and 1970s were replaced by even larger malls in the 1980s and 1990s. And what about historic highways like Route 66? The preservation of Route 66 is a success story of professionals and grass roots preservationists working together to preserve a resource of an extremely large scale. Crossing 2,400 miles of the United States, from Chicago to Los Angeles, Route 66 is one of the largest historic preservation projects in North America. The Route 66 Corridor Preservation Act was passed by Congress in 1999 and is administered by the National Park Service. This program “provides cost-share grants to successful applicants for the preservation and restoration of the most significant and representative properties dating from the route’s period of outstanding historical significance, 1926 through 1970.”<sup>31</sup> In addition, several of the states through which the highway crosses have programs to preserve this monument of the twentieth century.

One of the most prevalent large-scale resource types is found in the expansive subdivisions that began to cover the landscape just after World War II. Post-war subdivisions came along with wider use of the automobile and were designed with the car in mind. Examples of these suburbs can be found in almost every American town, but as they age, many are losing important elements that create an intact unit.

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<sup>31</sup> National Park Service. “Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program.” Document online. Accessed at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/rt66/prgrm/index.htm>.

The size of these resources is definitely something at which preservationists balk. Levittown, New York is usually considered the father of all suburbs (Figure 3.7). Built in the late 1940s, this suburb was comprised of small homes that with the advent of FHA-VA loans suddenly became within reach of the average American family, thus fulfilling a large part of the American Dream. The 17,447 houses built along winding roads and pathways contributed to a single, flowing entity.

“Perhaps the biggest psychological barrier to the preservationist’s embrace of post-war suburbs is their size.”<sup>32</sup> Suburbs across the nation are slowly mutating into a mixture of building types as the original homes are torn down to be replaced with new ones, sometimes several on a lot that once held only one home. Intact post-war suburbs are quickly disappearing and few preservationists seem to take action. When dealing with something on the scale of a suburb, it is difficult to see it as a whole comprised of several elements. Lack of a holistic view is one of the most dangerous aspects of trying to preserve something of extremely large scale.



Figure 3.7: Father of the modern suburb, Levittown, NY. (Reprinted from the Historic American Buildings Survey.)

Equally intimidating in size are buildings such as shopping centers and malls, apartment buildings and public housing. When one of these structures has outlived its intended use, what new use could possibly be substituted? “Institutional buildings seem to be particularly easy to overlook.”<sup>33</sup> These large buildings will always by necessity cause preservationists to stretch

<sup>32</sup> Richard Longstreth. “The Extraordinary Post-War Suburb,” *Forum Journal* 15, (Fall 2000): 18.

<sup>33</sup> Charlene Roise. “Establishing Civilization on the Suburban Frontier,” *Forum Journal* 15, (Fall 2000): 10.

their imaginations when attempting to preserve them. Not all warehouses can be adapted into convention centers. It is the preservationists' conundrum to decide what to do in each case. It is very easy to ignore these large buildings because they are so difficult and costly to save. The sheer size of much recent past design is a preservation challenge that cannot be overlooked.

### Design Concepts – Preservationists and the Public

While many preservationists are beginning to see the value rather than the limitations of recent past design, others are still stuck in the rut of deeming it poor design. Now is the time for preservationists to differentiate themselves from critics by thinking more like historians. Perhaps it is easy to target recent past architecture for not being built to last centuries, however, the Sears Roebuck kit houses that were built from 1908 through 1940 and the mid-century all-metal

prefabricated Lustron (Figure 3.8)

houses<sup>34</sup> are now recognized as significant, while in their heyday, they were purchased from mail order catalogs and most likely were quickly considered bourgeoisie. Now a preservationist's discovery of one of these kit homes is an exciting event.

Preservationists are trained to examine buildings over the age of fifty years with a working knowledge of how they should be



Figure 3.8: Lustron house number 2329, (1950, Chesterton, IN). (Reprinted from Thomas Jester, *Twentieth Century Building Materials*, 31. © 1995 by: McGraw-Hill.)

<sup>34</sup> Michael A. Tomlan, "Building Modern America," *Twentieth Century Building Materials*, ed: Jester, Thomas C. Washington, D.C.: MacGraw-Hill Companies, 1995, 31.

managed -- stabilized, maintained, rehabilitated, reused, documented -- but now they must begin to look at the next generation of buildings that will become historic with a watchful eye. The tendency is to suddenly realize when a specific resource or building type is endangered or gone, like a rare species, and jump to action when it may be too late. While more and more professionals and organizations are becoming aware of this concern, a bias remains against the designs that have been drawn up within the last twenty or thirty years and may become historic during their lifetime. Bias and the 'critic tendency,' as well as the lack of awareness of recent past design are some of the most noteworthy problems preservationists must contend with in regard to recent past design.

“What has long been taken for granted is now a non-renewable resource.”<sup>35</sup> The manner in which post-war suburbs were built cannot be duplicated today for a reasonable cost. Middle class families, (for whom these homes were intended in the 1950s) simply cannot afford the high cost of land for which relatively sprawling ranch homes with their garden-like settings were designed. Often covering only an acre or half-acre, these lots were not huge, but when compared with some of today's plots of no more than a quarter of an acre, they were relatively large. However, much of the general public finds it just as difficult, probably more so than preservationists to see the most recent generations of buildings regarded as historic. The idea of a historic building far too often is associated with grand columns, turrets, or at least Craftsman detailing—something one would visit on an annual tour of homes.

One of the greatest difficulties for the public created by large-scale resources is the cost involved. “There are specific access issues for some types of modern buildings--high rise for

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<sup>35</sup> Richard Longstreth. “The Extraordinary Post-War Suburb,” *Forum Journal* 15, (Fall 2000): 22.



example--that have considerable cost implications.”<sup>36</sup> Much as preservationists must weigh the cost of preserving with that of new construction, the public must also make this decision, but usually without holding the same sense of historical or architectural value for the building. “The local economy cannot sustain so large a building in a single use, and economic motive is lacking for a single developer to take in hand its subdivision.”<sup>37</sup> While this quote was directed specifically toward the 1946-51 Rubber Factory in Brynmawr, Gwynnt, Great Britain, it could very easily be applied to any number of large recent commercial or industrial buildings.

It is even more difficult to look at the strip malls that were erected in the 1960s and 1970s with the realization that they will shortly be coming of age. Many of these building designs were created in such abundance that it is hard to believe that they could ever not be a part of every day life, much less disappear altogether. They have become permanent fixtures on the daily landscape and may or may not be considered ugly; in fact they simply may not be considered at all. It is important to recognize that not all recent past buildings can or should be preserved, but preservationists should be willing and able to adequately determine which resources are significant to history.

Because the public as a whole has a relatively sparse education of historic preservation and what it entails, it is difficult to regard these common designs that have been built in such numbers and see value in them. Lack of education, compounded with the invisibility of recent architecture and the dismissal of its design, are major problems with public perception and preserving recent past design. In time, some of the design concepts of recent past architecture

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<sup>36</sup> Susan MacDonald. “Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 87.

<sup>37</sup> Alan Powers. “The Dilemma of Industrial Buildings and Conservation.” *Twentieth Century Architecture*, no.1, 1994.



will come to be appreciated, but the key is to ensure its continued existence during the turbulent times in which it is still considered unsightly or common.

## CHAPTER 4

### MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION METHODS

Related to new ideas in design concepts, many new or improved building materials and construction technologies emerged after World War II. The large number of new and untested materials used in buildings during the past fifty years is a significant issue to be overcome in preserving these structures. The change of aesthetic and technological thinking that became prevalent during the time that these modern buildings were designed and built (risking the use of materials and methods that were untested by time, for instance), force preservationists today to reevaluate how and what to maintain and preserve. Can recent past buildings acquire a graceful patina? How should preservationists manage and maintain buildings created from materials that were built to last a finite period? What should be done when a specific product, as is often the case, is discontinued? Is it necessary to preserve materials that were prefabricated or manufactured in bulk quantities, or the manufacturing process that fashioned them?

#### **Types of Recent Past Materials**

Many of the materials that were widely used after World War II, originated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some of these materials, such as concrete, have been used in some form for thousands of years. “Building materials of the last half of the twentieth century are sometimes composites or synthetics developed to respond to the needs of the project, not simply what nature provided and humans manipulated or treated in some basic fashion.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas C. Jester. *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995, 43.

Recent past materials often were created for a specific building. Because of this specialization of materials, it becomes more difficult to stay informed of relevant research and tackle an appropriate means of preservation. The number of buildings materials that have been used during the last fifty years is staggering. Following are a few examples of recent past materials and the types of structures in which they were used.

Concrete has been used for thousands of years. The Romans from 300 B.C. through 476 A.D. used a material from Pozzuoli, Italy known as *pozzolana* cement, which enabled them to develop several construction forms, such as domes. This concrete was used in the construction of structures such as the Pantheon and the Coliseum. The technology of concrete was lost in the Middle Ages, but was used regularly again beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in British military construction. In England in 1796, James Parker patented the first hydraulic cement. Reinforced concrete, first used in France in 1867, became an important structural component of twentieth century building. One of the most commonly used building materials, construction technology changed dramatically with its widening use. Prestressed concrete has been utilized since 1949. It is internally stressed and generally used for structural members. “Applications of prestressed concrete range from industrial buildings to structures such as the monorail (1971) at Disney World in Orlando, Fla.”<sup>39</sup> Architectural precast concrete (Figure 4.1) may be either load bearing, or primarily aesthetic. It has been used in buildings such as the Police Administration Building (1962) in Philadelphia. Concrete, especially reinforced concrete is a major component of many recent past structures and is found in industrial, commercial and residential buildings, as well as many non-building structures.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 115.

Metals also have been used in architecture since ancient times. Items made of naturally occurring metals such as copper, iron and bronze have been found dating back to 7000 B.C. Copper was the first metal used by humans, due to its softness and ease in manipulation. In 4000 B.C. the Sumerians and Egyptians made small

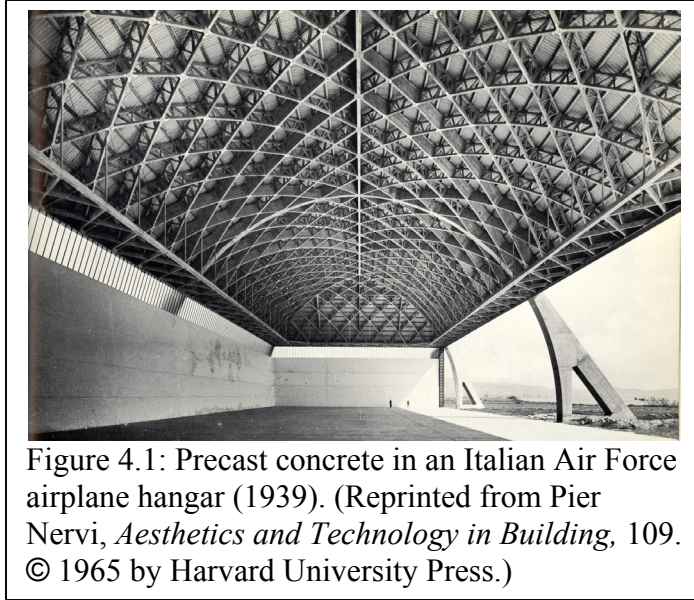


Figure 4.1: Precast concrete in an Italian Air Force airplane hangar (1939). (Reprinted from Pier Nervi, *Aesthetics and Technology in Building*, 109. © 1965 by Harvard University Press.)

metal objects out of iron they found in meteorites. Cast iron, in which the iron is melted and poured into molds, has been in use since some time between 1500 and 1700 A.D. During this time in much of Europe wood had become scarce, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, metal became employed in building ships and houses. The primary difference in metals as building materials in the recent past is due to the ability of humans to easily create alloys. The first alloy was made around 2000 B.C. when it was discovered that copper was strengthened with the addition of tin, creating bronze. Alloys are mixtures of different kinds of metals that are formulated for greater strength, flexibility or certain aesthetic values. While some alloys occur naturally, their consistency can be questionable, and with excessive use, a deposit can be quickly depleted. With modern technology and the ability to heat metal to thousands of degrees, the creation of alloys has become much more scientific and manageable.

Monel steel (Figure 4.2) is an alloy primarily of nickel and iron. Monel steel was originally a naturally occurring alloy<sup>40</sup>, but was exhausted by mining and the formula quickly reproduced by man. Used architecturally in the 1920s, it was the predecessor for white, stainless

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 52.

metals, and was slowly replaced in the 1950s by stainless steel, which uses a lower percentage of nickel, and is therefore less expensive to manufacture. Stainless steel “comprises a diverse group of metal alloys” and has been frequently used in curtain wall design. Weathering steel is a type of low carbon steel. It has properties that give it a specific texture and colors ranging from light to dark brown. This type of steel was used frequently in the 1960s and 1970s

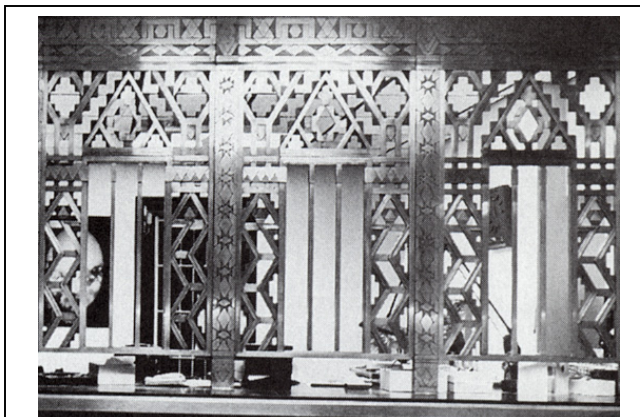


Figure 4.2: Monel steel on the Union Trust Building (1928, Detroit). (Reprinted from Thomas Jester, *Twentieth Century Building Materials*, 55. © 1995 by: McGraw-Hill.)

and can be seen in Chicago’s 1965 Civic Center. Aluminum was widely used in the first half of the twentieth century and has continued to serve as a popular decorative element in many recent past structures. A spectacular use of aluminum can be seen in the Aluminum Company of America Building (1953) in Pittsburgh.<sup>41</sup>

Glass, too, has come a long way in the last fifty years. Man-made glass has been around since about 3500 B.C. when Egyptians and Mesopotamians used it to make beads and as a glaze on pottery. The Romans first used glass in architecture in Alexandria around 100 A.D. This early glass was a mixture of calciferous sand, soda and manganese oxide. Sheet glass was first produced in the eleventh century A.D. in Germany. As technology advanced, the ability to produce larger, stronger sheets of glass, has greatly affected architecture. In combination with stainless steel, plate glass is a main component of the curtain wall. Vitrolux spandrel glass (Figure 4.3) is used to cover the space above and below strip windows in some recent past

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<sup>41</sup> The Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA) building was designed by architect Harrison Abramovitz.

designs. “In the late 1950s spandrel glass referred specifically to ceramic-coated plate glass, but today the term is used broadly to include many types of transparent flat glasses used for spandrels.”<sup>42</sup> Spandrel glass, for example is found in the AAA Building (1960) in Seattle, Washington, and poses a particular preservation problem because it is difficult to match historic colors.

Probably the greatest leap in new materials for recent past buildings can be found in the huge array of plastics utilized in architecture during the past fifty years. Plastic is defined as “any of numerous organic, synthetic or processed materials that are mostly thermoplastic or thermosetting

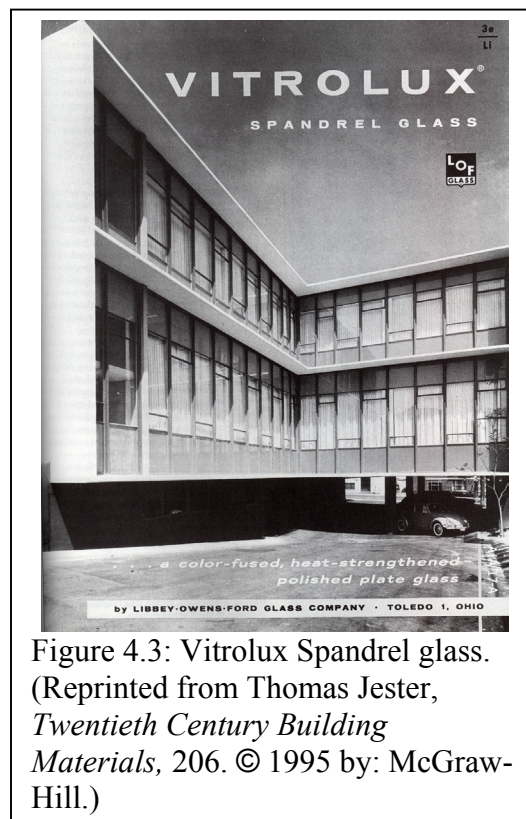


Figure 4.3: Vitrolux Spandrel glass. (Reprinted from Thomas Jester, *Twentieth Century Building Materials*, 206. © 1995 by: McGraw-Hill.)

polymers of high molecular weight and that can be made into objects, films, or filaments.”<sup>43</sup> Research for military, space and other purposes during and just prior to World War II, created a deluge of new plastics on the market (figure 4.4). “Once regarded as cheap substitutes for real materials, synthetic resins and plastics have now been largely recognized for their values and for the fact that they can often be used where natural materials cannot.”<sup>44</sup> Polyvinyl chloride, polystyrene, and polyolefines are all products that became available after World War II. In addition, the use of mastics and sealants, urethanes and silicone to aid construction is common in

<sup>42</sup> Thomas C. Jester. *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995. 206.

<sup>43</sup> *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. “Merriam-Webster Online.” Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>.

<sup>44</sup> Martin E. Weaver. *Conserving Buildings: A Manual of Techniques and Materials*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997, 254.

recent past buildings. Decorative plastic laminates are used in numerous public buildings as well as for countertops in residential kitchens and bathrooms. Plastics can be “molded, cast, extruded, or used for coatings, consolidants, and films.”<sup>45</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright used white cast plastic for the ceiling in Xanadu Gallery (completed 1959) in San Francisco, California and also in the lunchroom in the Johnson Wax Administration building.

The study of recent past materials is a field unto itself. Preservationists are slowly appreciating and understanding materials used in the last fifty years and (more pressingly) how to preserve them. They are also pondering the philosophical questions regarding replacement with different materials and what it means to the profession of

preservation. Preservation of recent past materials is a complex science and often requires alternative thinking to solve basic conservation problems.

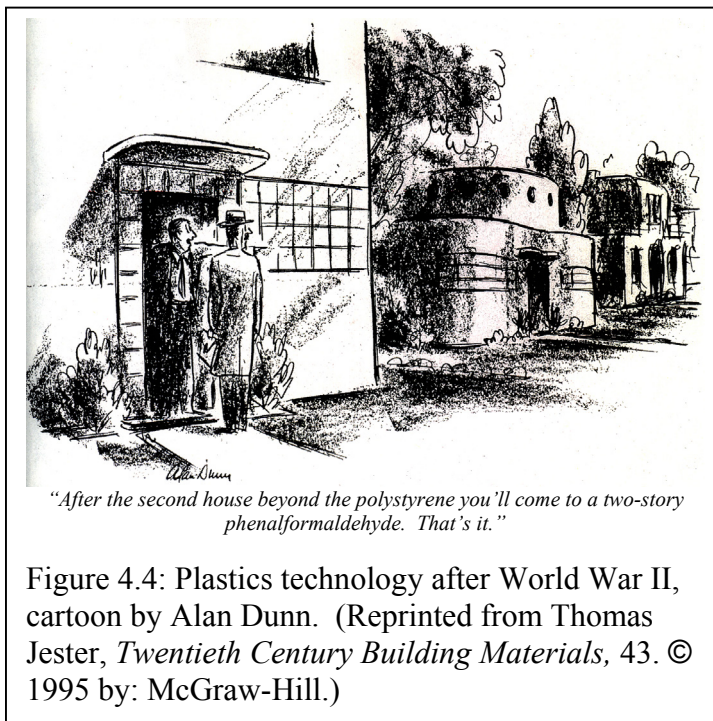


Figure 4.4: Plastics technology after World War II, cartoon by Alan Dunn. (Reprinted from Thomas Jester, *Twentieth Century Building Materials*, 43. © 1995 by: McGraw-Hill.)

<sup>45</sup> Martin E. Weaver. *Conserving Buildings: A Manual of Techniques and Materials*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997, 254.



### Materials and Preservation Issues

In the twentieth century “architects exuberantly used new materials that were not fully understood in terms of their long-term performance.”<sup>46</sup> As the time comes for these materials to be repaired or replaced, the unfortunate result is that far too often, insensitive alterations or demolition are the least demanding options. If a building is not designated, there is absolutely no protection from this. When the time came to restore the glass curtain wall of the 1952 Lever House<sup>47</sup> in New York City, the entire wall was taken down and replaced with completely new materials. In the early twenty-first century, Lever House had to be stripped of its entire glass curtain, which needed to be completely replaced due to materials failure. Does this make it a significantly different building? “When it comes to restoring buildings of the modern era, the notion of the historical integrity of materials may well be greeted with a shrug.”<sup>48</sup> Newer buildings must be considered for their design and engineering, or for social significance, rather than the craftsmanship that marks many historic buildings as important. It has been said, “these buildings are being saved by being changed.”<sup>49</sup> Some amount of change is absolutely necessary for the survival of a design that outlives its materials.

The Gropius House (Figure 4.5) in Lincoln, Massachusetts is one example of a recent past preservation success. Walter Gropius was a German architect known for founding the Bauhaus (House of Building), which focused on a combination of creative design, industry and

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<sup>46</sup> Susan MacDonald. “Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 83.

<sup>47</sup> Designed by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

<sup>48</sup> Wayne Curtis. “No Clear Solution,” *Preservation*. September/October 2002, 48.

<sup>49</sup> Kelley Christ. “Sacrosanct or Sacrificial?: The future of Modernism’s legacy and the role of new design,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 133.



science. Gropius moved to the United States where he designed a house for himself in 1938, making a point to

absorb into [his] own conception those features of the New England architectural tradition that [he] found still alive and adequate. This fusion of the regional spirit with a contemporary approach to design produced a house that [he] would never have built in Europe with its entirely different climatic, technical and psychological background.<sup>50</sup>

Now owned and managed by The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities



Figure 4.5: The Gropius House, (1938, Lincoln, MA) Walter Gropius, photo online: [www.spnea.org/visit/homes/gropius.htm](http://www.spnea.org/visit/homes/gropius.htm).)

(SPNEA), the house is being restored with

partial funding by a Save America's

Treasures grant administered by the

National Park Service. The Gropius

House is open to the public, with

educational tours and lectures

emphasizing the architect's use of

"modernist design, using experimental

materials"<sup>51</sup> such as glass block, chrome banisters and acoustical plaster. This resource is a National Historic Landmark.

Susan MacDonald suggests that "throwaway architecture...gain[ed] legitimacy in the second half of the twentieth century."<sup>52</sup> The use of plastics, fiberglass, fiberboard, and synthetic rubber, to name just a few, present completely different maintenance issues than those

<sup>50</sup> Galinsky. "Walter Gropius House." Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.galinsky.com/buildings/gropiushouse/>.

<sup>51</sup> Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. *Programs and Events*. Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.spnea.org/things/calendar/Events.asp?State=MA>.

<sup>52</sup> Susan MacDonald. "Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges," *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 84.

preservationists generally have dealt with in the past. A large part of preserving buildings of the recent past is research of compatible replacement materials when the original ones fail.

The white marble Business Men’s Assurance (BMA) Tower<sup>53</sup> in Kansas City, built in 1963 and reclad in the mid 1980s with a synthetic material when the original marble deteriorated, was denied listing on the National Register in 2002. Beyond the fact that the building was only thirty-nine years old at the time, lack of original materials was key in its refusal, which made it ineligible for tax credits. Tiffany Patterson, the National Register coordinator in the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office says, “Ten years from now I will probably be a lot more sympathetic toward this building than I am now.”<sup>54</sup>

Another important issue preservationists must address is patina. Often, the design of recent past buildings does not allow for what many people consider a graceful patina. The tarnishing of brass or bronze fixtures is generally more aesthetically acceptable than rust-stained, crumbling concrete or fading colored glass or plastic. The sterile vertical boxes, so stylish in their time, are now seen as dingy eyesores on the cityscape. Using the Lever Building (Figure 4.6) as an example: this building represented everything clean and pure that could be found in the product that was formulated within the straight lines

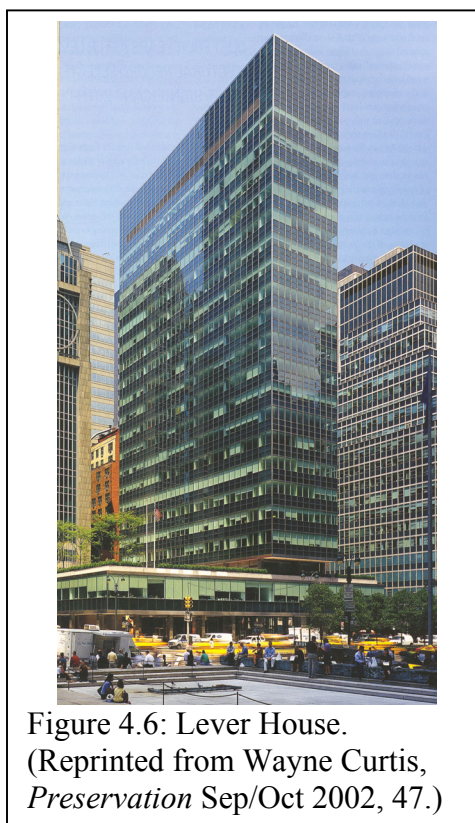


Figure 4.6: Lever House.  
(Reprinted from Wayne Curtis,  
*Preservation* Sep/Oct 2002, 47.)

and bright walls—soap. But a time came when the amazing curtain wall became grimy, dull,

<sup>53</sup> Designed by architectural firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

<sup>54</sup> Wayne Curtis. “No Clear Solution,” *Preservation*. September/October 2002, 51.

passé, not yet old enough to be regarded with nostalgia. It has been difficult for this building to be regarded as a valuable resource.

On the other hand, the Ford Foundation building (Figure 4.7) in New York City represents use of material in a recent past building which incorporated its eventual patina into the design. Designed by Roche-Dinkeloo (Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo), this building was constructed between 1963 and 1968. “Made of Core-ten steel, the structure's surface resembles wood due to a patina which results from oxidation and gives the steel a rich tone.”<sup>55</sup> While a primary function of Core-ten steel is fireproofing, the designers of this building intended for the



Figure 4.7: Planned patina, the Ford Foundation Building (1963-8, NYC), photo online: [www.greatbuildings.com](http://www.greatbuildings.com).

rust patina to quickly become an important aspect of this building's presence. “Styles and movements are cultural constructs, and the most vigorous (re- or de-) construction activity naturally occurs with regard to the most recent material.”<sup>56</sup> How can these buildings age gracefully when so often their design seems to contradict it?

With the development of new materials, inevitably comes new technology in construction methods. Many post-World War II buildings moved away from traditional wood and masonry construction. New construction

methods are another recent past issue with which preservationists must contend.

<sup>55</sup> New York University. “Ford Foundation Building.” Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/finearts/nyc/grand/ford.html>.

<sup>56</sup> David Dolan. “The first stage of aging: modern heritage places get old,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 432.

### Recent Past Construction Methods

“The daring experimental architecture of the 1950s often depended on improved structural and mechanical systems, as architects and engineers enclosed space with cantilevers, plate and shell structures, tents and hung roofs, geodesic domes, space frames, and inflatable forms.”<sup>57</sup> Many new construction methods were experimented with in the period following the Second World War, and tried and true methods were used in more innovative ways.

In conjunction with the use of new materials came new construction methods. “Modern construction techniques also make use of current materials and processes of production, which both limit and empower the designer.”<sup>58</sup> The glass curtain wall (Figure 4.8) was first used in Chicago and New York City in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was popularized by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in the 1950s, is made up of “a simple and rational structural cage, onto which [is] hung an external cladding system completely subservient to the structure’s inherent geometrical grid.”<sup>59</sup> The metal and glass wall of Lever House is a well-known example.

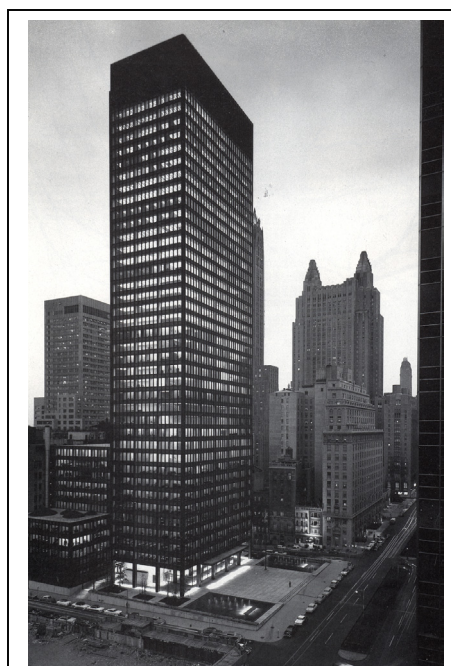


Figure 4.8: Glass curtain wall: Seagram Building (1954-8, NYC), van der Rohe. (Reprinted from Jean-Louis Cohen, *Mies van der Rohe*, 110. © 1996 by E & FN Spon.)

<sup>57</sup> Thomas C. Jester. *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995, 42.

<sup>58</sup> William C. Miller. . “I’m Not Ugly...I Have International Flair,” *Forum Journal* 15, (Fall 2000): 46.

<sup>59</sup> Mark Gelernter. *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in their Cultural and Technological Context*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999, 266.



Reinforced concrete became widely used as a structural material, and also for design application, in the early twentieth century, and especially during World War Two and the years following. Also known as the Ransome Unit system or mushroom system (Figure 4.9), due to its use in the striking mushroom shaped columns in Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson Wax Building (1936-39), it is commonly found

in recent past structures. In Wright's building, "The main office work space is articulated by dendriform columns capable of supporting six times the weight imposed upon them, a fact Wright had to demonstrate in order to obtain a building permit."<sup>60</sup> In addition to the mushroom system, Frank Lloyd



Figure 4.9: Ransome Unit Construction, Johnson Wax Administration Building (1939, Racine, WI), Frank Lloyd Wright. (Reprinted from Thomas Jester, *Twentieth Century Building Materials*, 97. © 1995 by: McGraw-Hill.)

Wright utilized cantilevering as method of construction in the fourteen-floor tower at this same Racine, Wisconsin location. "This design allows the tower to appear to hang, suspended in the air."<sup>61</sup> The administrative Center and Research Tower were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976, at the age of thirty-seven years.

<sup>60</sup> Great Buildings Online. "Johnson Wax Building." Document online. Accessed at: [http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Johnson\\_Wax\\_Building.html](http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Johnson_Wax_Building.html).

<sup>61</sup> Racine County. "Frank Lloyd Wright." Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.racinecounty.com/golden/wright.htm>.

Prefabricated structures, Butler buildings,<sup>62</sup> and buildings made of mass produced parts (such as Lustron houses) became increasingly popular in the post-war period. These are buildings that were produced in factories, then shipped in part or whole to the site. Many types of building kits were, and are available. The ill-fated all-steel Lustron houses were a hit with Americans in the late 1940s, but the company quickly went out of business in the early 1950s due to problems involving what was thought to be a misuse of federal funds.<sup>63</sup> These unique houses were made of steel panels and included built-ins, such as a vanity in the master bedroom and a clothes washing machine that could also be used to wash dishes. Most of these houses had approximately 1000 square feet with two bedrooms, but a three-bedroom version was offered shortly before the company's demise.

Around the same time, the traditional mobile homes were being produced. These houses on wheels could simply be attached to a truck and driven to a plot of land. Options such as the doublewide became available when purchasers wanted more space. Trailers became increasingly popular in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s with the increasing use of automobiles. Soon trailer parks, originally called auto camps, began forming across the United States. Los Angeles, California made history in 2002 by being the first city to grant historic status to a trailer park. Monterey Trailer Park has been around since as early as 1937, and though the trailers themselves are not necessarily historic, the intact park demonstrates an important aspect of American history.

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<sup>62</sup> The name Butler building is a brand of prefabricated metal building that has been generalized to encompass any of a number of different brands of prefab structures. The first Butler building was built in 1909 as a car garage. Butler Manufacturing Company created a series of storage, utility and military buildings in the following years. These structures are now seen ranging from small tool sheds up to large commercial office buildings.

<sup>63</sup> Lustron, Inc. quickly spent its first grant on very expensive equipment needed in the production of parts. The enameling machines were especially cost prohibitive. Due to public suspicion and related negative press, Lustron was unable to acquire the additional funding needed to carry on operations, even though a large number of houses had already been ordered.

Manufactured housing has taken on an entirely different form than the original boxlike ‘trailers’ found across the nation. It is sometimes difficult to tell a modern manufactured home from any other new home. This and other new methods of construction have opened the door for much innovative recent past architecture. But how well do these constructions methods stand the test of time?

The preservation issues regarding recent past construction methods are tied very closely to those of materials. Because many of these materials were created specifically for an individual building, are no longer in production, or because they have a limited lifespan means that a large part of a preservationist’s work will likely focus in on the materials that make the resource. It can be seen in cases like the Johnson Wax Building, that some buildings utilizing newer construction methods have been successfully protected. Others, such as Lever House, raise a series of questions regarding appropriate intervention. Still others never make it to the point of consideration and are left neglected. It remains a difficult task to convince the general public that unfamiliar construction methods can be viewed as a legitimate aspect of architectural history, rather than an immediate reason to demolish a building.

## CHAPTER 5

### DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES

Development pressures impact historic buildings of all ages. A time comes in the life of many areas, when land is no longer freely available. In England, this space crunch occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. When North America was first colonized, open land seemed limitless. Within two short centuries, certain metropolitan areas of the United States began feeling land availability pressure. In some of these areas, the value of land increased exponentially, thereby creating development pressures upon existing buildings. In addition, during the building boom immediately after World War II, many Americans wanted large plots of land on which to build stretching homes. Prairie, Ranch and International are typical popular recent past building styles represented by their horizontal; low, spread out buildings usually set upon park-like tracts of land. These types of buildings in particular have felt development pressures in areas with skyrocketing land prices.

As land prices continue to increase, many buildings in urban areas are erected on smaller lots (Figure 5.1) out of necessity. Therefore, the land that the buildings from the fifties and sixties were built upon is often worth a small fortune. For a developer, it is much more financially advantageous to raze modest ranch homes, and build three or four times as many homes on the same land. Recent past commercial buildings face a similar difficulty. The Rivergate, built in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1968 was a significant domed post-war auditorium/exhibit hall designed by Nathaniel C. Curtis, Jr. The economically flailing Rivergate



was torn down in 1995 to make room for a massive Harrah's Casino, which undoubtedly generated significantly more income than the auditorium.

On the other hand, certain types of commercial buildings are getting larger and, due to the nature of most Americans' love of automobiles, require more space for parking. Far too often this task is accomplished by razing blocks of historic, or soon-to-be historic, buildings that



Figure 5.1: The Silos of Ellington. Development pressure in Newton County, GA.

will accommodate multi-acre parking lots. Because of the 'non-historic' status, recent past buildings are at a greater risk of being demolished due to development pressures. Most of these buildings are not protected, and many people cannot see their value, making them frequent victims of new development.

"As land values continue to escalate, larger structures will surely replace buildings of the 1930s, '40s, '50s, and '60s as they have those of the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries."<sup>64</sup> The problems of scale and development pressures are very closely tied. It is then these development pressures combined with attitudes that, when the time comes to build a new superstore, give less

<sup>64</sup> Susan Benjamin. "Underage Landmarks," *Inland Architect*, January-February 1988, 4.

value in general to recent past buildings than those of what is considered a more 'significant' age. Because of the massive amounts of development that have ensued in the last half-century, land in the United States is becoming a more valuable commodity.

The pressure of development and other economic factors is one with which preservationists are all too familiar. The battle to demonstrate the economic feasibility of preservation is ongoing and particularly present in the advocate's daily life. Recent past structures are in even greater danger, however because much of the public believes that they are not significant or valuable enough to protect and some preservationists agree. It is easier for the preservationist to 'choose a battle' in which an older, 'truly' historic building is saved than worry too much about a building that is only thirty years old.

Because land is so expensive, commercial giants are driving out local businesses, more of which are willing to reside in an historic or recent past building. In many towns, stores such as Wal Mart, Home Depot and Target, move into large buildings on the outskirts of town, drawing customers away from downtown locales. Smaller, locally operated businesses are unable to compete with the low costs of these stores, and tend to go out of business. Many large corporations have a relatively uniform building design, therefore they are unlikely to inhabit pre-existing building types.

The invisibility of the recent past in the public eye plays a devastating role when it comes to economic pressures. The demolition of the stark, square building atop the three acres of land is viewed as little more than an additional construction cost. Saving the building as a resource, either for potential historic value or even as a means to save some nonrenewable resource, rarely

enters into the picture. The public is not accustomed to looking at architecture from the recent past as a part of history, and development pressures only make it more unlikely that they will see things differently any time soon.

## CHAPTER 6

## ATTITUDE

“But most threatening of all, is their very familiarity—for it breeds contempt.”<sup>65</sup>

Probably the leading problem both preservationists and the public face is the negative attitude often associated with preservation of the recent past. We tend to view our generation as creators of advanced or modern structures with the best in technology and our grandparents’ architecture as something to be respected and even revered. It is that unstable time in between these two that must be confronted by historic preservationists and the public in general. “Our recent heritage must be perceived as a valuable resource with potential for sustainable development, rather than as an impediment to progress.”<sup>66</sup> Almost all of the problems discussed in the previous chapters are in some way directly or indirectly related to attitudes.

Both preservationists and the general public find it problematical to place value on recent past architecture. “It is rather strange that many preservationists, and by no means just some of the old guard, have conspicuous difficulty coming to grips with the recent past – more difficulty, I think, than many members of the public at large.”<sup>67</sup> Fortunately, with time, more preservationists are appreciating the value of recent past architecture. It remains important for professionals to keep abreast of recent past issues. Preservationists must train themselves to

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<sup>65</sup> Sheridan Burke. “Mid-Century Modern: How do we save it? A Popular Education Strategy,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 90.

<sup>66</sup> Kelley Christ. “Sacrosanct or Sacrificial?: The future of Modernism’s legacy and the role of new design,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 143.

<sup>67</sup> Richard Longstreth. “I Can’t See It; I Don’t Understand It; and It Doesn’t Look Old to Me,” *Forum Journal* 10, (Fall 1995): 13.

observe the recent past in a more measured and scientific manner. By placing greater value on the more distant past, a disservice is done to the buildings we are trying to save and to future historians. “History is a continuum, the ancient past no more historical than the recent past.”<sup>68</sup> Some of the attitudes that create challenges in preserving the recent past are: bias against the architecture of the prior generation; the attitude that these structures are not important (thereby creating a lack of awareness of existing resources); an unwillingness to be flexible with current guidelines; and the unsympathetic nature of some modern architecture.

### **Bias Against Recent Past Architecture**

“The challenges are significant because now, like many times and places in the past, the next generation represents a demographic shift.”<sup>69</sup> Here we again refer to what is termed “Laver’s Law of Fashion.”<sup>70</sup> This is the time when a building is “no longer new, but not yet old enough to be appreciated by the general public.”<sup>71</sup> This is also the time when it is most likely that a resource will be destroyed. Lever House and Drayton Arms in Savannah, Georgia pulled through this difficult period relatively unscathed, but Rio Mall in Atlanta, Georgia was a recent past casualty.

Preservationists are trained to view resources as either ‘historic’ or ‘non-historic.’ Using this terminology demonstrates the limitations that are created by looking at preservation in only black and white. This is just a small, but important way that professionals view or have viewed

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<sup>68</sup> Diane Wrey. “Organizing to Preserve Modern Architecture: The Modern Architecture Preservation League,” *Forum Journal* 10, (Fall 1995): 17.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Longstreth,. “The Extraordinary Post-War Suburb,” *Forum Journal* 15, (Fall 2000): 16-25.

<sup>70</sup> David Dolan. “The first stage of aging: modern heritage places get old,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 432.

<sup>71</sup> Charlene Roise. “Establishing Civilization on the Suburban Frontier,” *Forum Journal* 15, (Fall 2000): 9.

recent past preservation. By simply broadening the vocabulary to include ‘contributing,’ much recent past architecture can be studied as an integral part of the evolution of an area.

While some professionals in the field of preservation recognize the recent past as something worthy of note, there will always be some who refuse to consider it a valuable resource. Fortunately, the subject is being discussed on a professional level as well as in many historic preservation degree programs, giving future preservationists the benefit of knowledge with which to tackle recent architecture. While some preservationists “appreciate the significance of the recent past, but they still face the formidable task of convincing a public that generally does not ‘get it.’”<sup>72</sup>

### **Lack of Awareness of Recent Past Architecture**

The recent past and its preservation is often not valued by the community. Perhaps a resource is viewed as ordinary or ugly, but more often than not, the recent past lies just outside the peripheral vision of heritage. Americans often are not trained to view it as a part of history. “We need to find a way of investing modern buildings with value in the eye of not only the conservationist, but also of the building owner, the development community, the local authority, and the public, by means of intelligent conservation strategies.”<sup>73</sup>

In addition, little research has been done on most recent past architecture. “It is hard to know if [a structure] is representative or outstanding when compared with [similar recent]

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<sup>72</sup> Rebecca A. Shiffer. “The Recent Past,” *CRM*, Vol. 18, No. 8, (1995): 3.

<sup>73</sup> Kelley Christ. “Sacrosanct or Sacrificial?: The future of Modernism’s legacy and the role of new design,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 140.

monuments because of the lack of available inventory material.”<sup>74</sup> Some cities, like Raleigh, North Carolina have a limited inventory of recent past resources; however, with the exception of larger or more progressive cities, this is atypical, perpetuating the difficulty of knowing what is or may potentially become significant.

“Preservationists also need to rid themselves of the ‘style’ fetish – the reliance on simplistic categories presented in guides that is antithetical to what is taught in serious programs of history.”<sup>75</sup> This ties in closely with problems of design, but it is the attitude that a building must have an identifiable style that prevents many from being viewed as significant. Much recent architecture’s style is marked by its lack of any definable one. Preservationists must be able to look beyond ‘style’ at other components, such as developmental history, mass-production, and technological advances that are much more a part of recent past buildings.

The public is finally beginning to notice the existence historic preservation in general, but the recent past is still far from the thoughts of most. Usually the public is still seeing just one part of the field of preservation, with a concentration on the ‘historic.’ *The 1910 House* and other popular television shows are proof that preservation is on the minds of the public, however, as new as the recent past is to preservationists, it is for the most part, remaining deep in its embryonic stage as far as the public is concerned. While certain fashion trends may popularize a past decade (the Fab Fifties, for instance), the idea of recent past preservation needs to be more than a fad.

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<sup>74</sup> Helen Larder. “A monument to our recent past.” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 97.

<sup>75</sup> Richard Longstreth. “I Can’t See It; I Don’t Understand It; and It Doesn’t Look Old to Me,” *Forum Journal* 10, (Fall 1995): 14.

The best form of education and inspiration can come when a homeowner becomes aware of a home's history, which makes the preservation of the building more personal. Raleigh, North Carolina became concerned with preserving recent past architecture as early as the 1960s. In the early 1990s, eleven resources were added to a State Study List, marking them as potentially eligible for listing on the National Register. "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."<sup>76</sup> By keeping preservation of the recent past in the eye of the public, more people will be introduced to, and become interested in the subject. When preservationists are able to show that a recent past resource is a directly relevant, connected part of history, the public can more easily place value on the resource. The recent past needs good marketing.

### **Nature of Recent Past Architecture**

The starkly simple, mechanistic, unsympathetic nature of some recent past architecture prevents it from being viewed as a significant resource. Difficulty in relating to a big, cold building, adds to the distance between it and the humans in charge of protecting it. "Most people don't view Modernism as anything worth saving. To them it was just sort of a white box with no decoration, no beauty, but that was the beauty of Modernism."<sup>77</sup> In addition, the fact that recent past architecture is so widespread and familiar makes it less valuable to many.

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<sup>76</sup> Dan Becker and Claudia Brown, "Hyperbole in Parabolas: Preserving the Fabled Future of Raleigh's Modernist Visionaries," *Forum Journal 15* (Fall 2000), 37.

<sup>77</sup> Rick Polito. "Mid-century Marin's disappearing design," *Marin Independent Journal*. 12 July 2003. Document online. Accessed at: [www.marinij.com/Stories.html](http://www.marinij.com/Stories.html).



### Rigidity of Recent Past Guidelines

While some guidelines for preserving recent past architecture do exist in the United States, they are not as widespread, standardized or flexible as guidelines dedicated to resources older than fifty years. *National Register Bulletin #22*<sup>78</sup> includes Criteria Consideration G, which allows significant resources that are fewer than fifty years old to be eligible for listing on the National Register. As early as the 1960s, “there was a recognition of the importance of recent architecture”<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, recognition alone does not provide protection. Many questions remain as how to appropriately standardize guidelines for the preservation of recent past architecture that is a quickly changing type of historic resource.

Internationally, some countries have amended their guidelines regarding recent past resources.

Unlike the United States, where most buildings are not considered for historic designation before their 50-year mark, England, beginning in 1987, recognized that many of their significant buildings were rapidly being destroyed, and changed their criteria in a dramatic way. They instituted new 30-and ten-year waiting periods.<sup>80</sup>

While this type of change undoubtedly helps preserve structures, which may have otherwise been destroyed by the time they are fifty years old, it is still extremely difficult for many to overcome the age taboo. Susan Bronson, an architect and historic preservation professor at the University of Montreal, and Gordon Fulton of Parks Canada agree that in Canada “there was a great deal of interest on the part of professionals and scholars regarding preservation of modern buildings; but

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<sup>78</sup> National Park Service. “Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years,” *National Register Bulletin 22*. US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1998.

<sup>79</sup> Dan Becker and Claudia Brown, “Hyperbole in Parabolas: Preserving the Fabled Future of Raleigh’s Modernist Visionaries,” *Forum Journal 15* (Fall 2000), 35.

<sup>80</sup> Eichler Network. “‘Historic Quest’ and Advisory Committee Gives Eichler Historic Movement Wings,” *The Eichler Network*. Spring/Summer 2003. Document online. Accessed at: [www.eichlernetwork.com](http://www.eichlernetwork.com).

at the same time, many property owners, decision-makers, and members of the general public remained skeptical about the relevance of its protection.”<sup>81</sup> This narrow perception of what should be preserved, held by the public as well as some professional preservationists, is one of the most difficult issues facing the preservation of the recent past.

The problems facing preservation of the recent past are daunting, but much can be done to facilitate their protection. Creating an open mind to the idea that recent past resources have historic value is a vital tool in preserving these structures. Attitudes are beginning to change. The National Register accepts nominations for recent past resources meeting the guidelines listed in *National Register Bulletin No. 22*, and some state and local governments as well as non-profits are strong advocates of recent past preservation. Further education on the part of both preservationists and the public will continue this trend of acknowledging recent past resources as an important part of history.

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<sup>81</sup> Susan D. Bronson. “Built Heritage of the Modern Era: Overview, Framework for Analysis, and Criteria for Evaluation”, *Built Heritage of the Modern Era*, Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Fall 1997, 12.

## CHAPTER 7

### METHODS OF PRESERVING THE RECENT PAST

How can the recent past be preserved? How can it be ensured that the “evaluation of our past, particularly the recent past, includes all significant themes from our heritage and not just those that are currently ‘politically correct’?”<sup>82</sup> With the history, current issues and problems of preserving the recent past addressed, the required preservation response can be explored. “Ignorance, priority, and complacency are three persistent problems that emerge in considering, evaluating, and protecting our more youthful landmarks.”<sup>83</sup> The act of preserving architecture of the recent past should be similar to that of any historic resource, but specifically tailored. There is a definite need for current, specific tools for practitioners of recent past preservation such as a guideline template. Resource identification methods should be utilized to determine exactly what recent past resources are significant and how they should be preserved. Tools such as creating an inventory, documentation, evaluation and intervention or management—including preservation, restoration, and adaptive use—are all important in preserving recent past resources. There is also a need for public education and awareness.

Due to the difficulty of placing value on recent past buildings, systematic evaluation and interpretation of these resources has been complicated. Few guidelines exist to aid preservationists in the field, and literature on the subject is often ambiguous or difficult to locate. “In addition to a lack of recognition for twentieth century buildings, in practical terms there is a

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<sup>82</sup> W. Ray Luce. “Kent State, White Castles, and Subdivisions: Evaluating the Recent Past,” *Forum Journal* 10, (Fall 1995): 35.

<sup>83</sup> Susan Benjamin. “Underage Landmarks,” *Inland Architect*, January-February 1988, 4.

lack of experience in both identifying and finding appropriate practical solutions.”<sup>84</sup> It is important to note that some guidelines are already in place for preservation of the recent past on international through local levels. Many of these guidelines are based on existing instructions for preserving buildings fifty years or older. This chapter will begin with a discussion of current guidelines or strategies, then move to a more in-depth look at potential preservation methods.

### **Existing Guidelines**

On an international level, preserving the recent past is not a novel concept. Australia and the United Kingdom, for example, have made marked progress in the field. Other countries, such as Cuba and Canada, are beginning to support preservation of the recent past and even place recommendations for the preservation of recent heritage in their preservation guidelines. These nations have worked together in organizations such as the DOcumentation and COnservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the MODern MOVement (DOCOMOMO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH), and the Modern Asian Architecture Network (MAAN) that make a point to concentrate on preserving twentieth century architecture. In addition, these international organizations are working toward the creation of guidelines for preserving the recent past.

The United States has not fully accepted the non-exceptional or vernacular recent past as a legitimate part of preserving heritage, however some guidelines do exist for ‘significant’

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<sup>84</sup> Susan MacDonald. “Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 83-89.

resources. While some guidelines exist on a national level, they tend not to be flexible enough for the great variety of recent past resources in the U.S. Some state and local governments have adopted recent past recommendations, and while these are based on the national guidelines, a lack of standardization remains. It is important that guidelines be flexible on a local level while maintaining an overall national or international standardization to aid in selection of recent past resources.

The next discussion will provide examples of guidelines or organizations, countries, states and local governments that provide some form of guidelines or recommendations for preserving the recent past.

#### International

- DOCOMOMO: The DOcumentation and CONservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the MODern MOVement, founded in 1988 in the Netherlands, and now working in forty countries around the world, has developed local lists of important modern buildings, including an American list. DOCOMOMO offers six criteria to determine the significance of a building or landscape: technological merit, social merit, artistic and aesthetic merit, canonic merit (famous work and/or architect), referential value, and integrity.<sup>85</sup> DOCOMOMO has local or national committees within collaborating countries. Each of these committees develops guidelines for their country.
- Montreal Action Plan: Adopted by ICOMOS in 2000, this plan was created to focus on increasing concern of international twentieth century heritage resources. The plan is designed “to provide a framework for developing specific scientific initiatives within

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<sup>85</sup> DOcumentation and CONservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the MODern MOVement. “6 Point Criteria.” Document online. Accessed at: [http://www.docomomo-us.org/buildings\\_6\\_point\\_criteria.shtml](http://www.docomomo-us.org/buildings_6_point_criteria.shtml).

ICOMOS and co-operation with other organisations, such as UNESCO, ICCROM, DOCOMOMO, TICCIH or, in Asia, MAAN (Modern Asian Architecture Network).”<sup>86</sup> ICOMOS’ *Heritage at Risk 2000* report indicates twentieth century resources as a high-risk resource.

- Conclusions of the Seminar of Experts on the Conservation of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Heritage- Drawn up by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Mexico City in 1996, this document offers the conclusions of a seminar held in Mexico. Representatives from fourteen nations “sought to pay deserving attention to heritage constructed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as to specific and singular problems regarding their preservation.”<sup>87</sup> This document briefly discusses the objectives of the seminar, and the conclusions, which include the identification of heritage, its protection, preservation and technical problems, research and formulation, and the raising of social awareness. In addition, several recommendations are made, such as the establishment of an information network, compilation of a bibliography, and different levels of standardization in the protection of twentieth century heritage.
- Twentieth-Century Architectural Heritage- The Council of Europe recommended that the “governments of the member countries develop strategies for identifying, protecting, conserving, restoring, and promoting heritage from [the twentieth] century.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> ICOMOS International. “Twentieth-century heritage places,” *Heritage at Risk*. Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.international.icomos.org/risk/2001/synthesis.htm>.

<sup>87</sup> Conclusions of the Seminar of Experts on the Conservation of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Heritage. ICOMOS, Mexico City: 1996, *Built Heritage of the Modern Era*. Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Fall 1997, APP 4-C, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas C. Jester. “International Perspectives on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Heritage,” *CRM*, Vol. 18, No. 8, (1995): 28.

## National (United States)

The United States also has guidelines and organizational recommendations to assist in the preservation of the recent past. Most of these guidelines are based on *National Register 22*, but preservationists are becoming aware of the need of additional recommendations to cover the wide range of recent past resources found in the U.S.

- National Register Criteria Consideration G (Appendix A): *Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years*.

“The National Register Criteria for Evaluation exclude properties that achieved significance within the past fifty years unless they are of exceptional importance.”<sup>89</sup>

*National Register Bulletin #22: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that have Achieved Significance within the Past Fifty Years* gives more specific information on preserving the recent past.

Criteria Consideration G carefully explains which recent past resources may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. These resources must be one of the following: less than fifty years old; achieving continued significance into a period of fewer than fifty years ago; have non-contiguous periods of significance, one of which occurred fewer than fifty years ago; or achieving significance from a period of less than fifty years ago.<sup>90</sup> In addition, these resources must be of exceptional importance. It is understandable that certain boundaries must be defined when determining significance, however more emphasis should be placed on non-age based criteria, such as historical

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<sup>89</sup> National Register of Historic Places. *Criteria Consideration G*. Document online. Accessed at: [http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15\\_7.htm#crit%20con%20g](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_7.htm#crit%20con%20g).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

events, craftsmanship, architectural design and innovation, technology and association with important people.

Too much emphasis is placed on the number fifty in Criteria Consideration G. While it is reasonable that a certain amount of time must pass to determine the significance of some resources, this period of time differs for each resource. For example, the value of one building may be apparent five years after its construction, while another may not become significant for one hundred years. It is limiting to place a cut off time on historic resources, and some have definitely been lost due to this short sightedness. It is the responsibility of preservationists to be aware of recent past resources within their jurisdiction and have the wherewithal to follow up with appropriate research. Resources should not be penalized for their youth. On the contrary, familiarization of the significance of these structures could possibly make their long-term preservation easier.

- Preserving the Recent Past is a “National Park Service CRM (Cultural Resource Management) Bulletin. Articles by H. Ward Jandl, Thomas Jester, and others illuminate the art of saving our 20th-century landmarks as well as preserving materials particular to this era of architecture.”<sup>91</sup>
- 20th Century Museum Guidelines- The Association for Preservation Technology (APT) Museums in Historic Buildings created these guidelines to aid in preserving recent past museums. “Committee Museums should consider the potential significance of twentieth century buildings they occupy in the same way that they look at older structures, since preservation of these 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings can be just as important a part of the

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<sup>91</sup> The Recent Past Preservation Network, “Taking Action to Save Historic Resources.” Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.recentpast.org/help/index.html>.



museum's mission as preservation of its collection."<sup>92</sup> This is part of the New Orleans Charter, which was adopted in 1992 by the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers.

### State and Local

Most state and local guidelines are also taken from *National Register 22*, however some localities with a large number of recent past resources have made an effort to concentrate more of their energy on these guidelines.

- How to Apply the Nomination Criteria for the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties- These guidelines for preserving the recent past in the state of Colorado are based on National Register Criteria Condition G ('Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years).
- Mississippi's comprehensive plan recognizes the need for research and guidelines for preserving the recent past. "Additionally, studies should be done to provide contexts for identifying significant properties from the recent past, including those associated with the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s."<sup>93</sup>
- Lake Anne Center in Reston, Virginia, is one of thirteen Historic Overlay Districts in Fairfax County. Each district has guidelines tailored to its unique character. Lake Anne Center was built in the 1960s and designated in 1983, when it was barely twenty years old.

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<sup>92</sup> Association for Preservation Technology International. Twentieth Century Museum Guidelines. Document online. Accessed at: [http://www.apti.org/cmtes/museums\\_cmte/guidelines.htm](http://www.apti.org/cmtes/museums_cmte/guidelines.htm).

<sup>93</sup> Mississippi Department of Archives and History, "Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan for the State of Mississippi 2000-2004." Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.mdah.state.ms.us/hpres/plan3.html>.

- Los Angeles, California- The Los Angeles Conservancy formed a Modern Committee in 1984, as a result of major loss of recent past resources in the city. This all-volunteer group focuses on significant buildings from the twentieth century and “plans tours, exhibitions, and lectures; researches and nominates buildings for landmark designation; and serves as an advocate for Modern design.”<sup>94</sup>

The creation of these guidelines demonstrates that the recent past is slowly being identified as worthy of consideration for protection. But what are the specific methods that can be used to preserve this part of history? Considering recent past architecture, “the key challenges in this country at present are recognition, identification and protection.”<sup>95</sup> The primary methods that can be utilized in preserving the recent past include those discussed in the first paragraph of this chapter.

### **Identification/Inventory**

The first steps in determining the preservation need are identification and subsequent evaluation. “One of the fundamental problems in evaluating the recent past is that many, if not most of its building types, structures, and styles are not viewed as historic.”<sup>96</sup> Neither preservationists nor the public tend to be well versed on architecture of the recent past, which in its newness is often rendered invisible.

“In order to determine the significance of the resources in questions, it is necessary to understand both their scope (i.e., what we have) and their heritage values (i.e., what makes them

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<sup>94</sup> Los Angeles Conservancy. Modern Committee. Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.modcom.org/>.

<sup>95</sup> Susan MacDonald. “Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 87.

<sup>96</sup> W. Ray Luce. “Kent State, White Castles, and Subdivisions: Evaluating the Recent Past,” *Forum Journal* 10, (Fall 1995): 36.

significant).”<sup>97</sup> This is where identification of resources comes in. Professionals must be able to know which recent past structures are significant. In order to adequately accomplish this, preservationists and architectural historians should be versed in recent past architecture. A way must be found “of investing modern buildings with value in the eye of not only the conservationist, but also of the building owner, the development community, the local authority, and the public by means of intelligent conservation strategies.”<sup>98</sup>

Surveying is one of the traditional ways to both identify what buildings are significant, and create an inventory of the resources within a defined geographical area. Surveys of recent past architecture have been conducted in several places in the United States: Phoenix, Arizona; Los Angeles, California; Denver, Colorado; Atlanta, Georgia; Gary, Indiana; Kansas City, Missouri; New York, New York; Charlotte, South Carolina; Eugene, Oregon; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In addition, the states of Maryland, Michigan, Texas, and Virginia have surveyed the recent past to some extent.<sup>99</sup> The presence of recent past surveys indicates a need and desire for the protection of these resources.

Identification of recent past resources is an international issue. In 1990, in Canada, the Vancouver Recent Landmarks Program was initiated, which “has involved the identification of some 200 buildings according to stylistic categories.”<sup>100</sup> In October 1999, a conference was held

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<sup>97</sup> Susan D. Bronson. “Built Heritage of the Modern Era: Overview, Framework for Analysis, and Criteria for Evaluation”, *Built Heritage of the Modern Era*, Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Fall 1997, 3.

<sup>98</sup> Kelley Christ. “Sacrosanct or Sacrificial?: The future of Modernism’s legacy and the role of new design,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 140.

<sup>99</sup> The Recent Past Preservation Network, “Listing of Recent Past Surveys by City/State.” Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.recentpast.org/research/surveys/index.html>.

<sup>100</sup> Susan D. Bronson. “Built Heritage of the Modern Era: Overview, Framework for Analysis, and Criteria for Evaluation”, *Built Heritage of the Modern Era*, Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Fall 1997, 3.

in Australia entitled ‘Fibro House: Opera House Conserving Mid-Twentieth Century Heritage.’ This two-day conference investigated the development of Australian architecture, landscape and urban design from the mid-twentieth century. Sheridan Burke, one of the conference contributors claimed it “set a strong theoretical context for debate about the spectrum of the legacy, suggesting plans for inventories, materials research and government action.”<sup>101</sup>

After resources are located and identified, an inventory should be created on the listing of significant recent past architecture. The National Register of Historic Places provides a place for listing in the U.S. More than two thousand recent past resources have been listed on the National Register, and listing on the national level allows for obtaining grant or loan funding. Properties can also be listed on a state and local level, and it is these listings that may allow protection. The primary method for individual building preservation in Britain is through listing. “In August 1993, the Alexandra Road Estate (Figure 7.1), which had been completed only fifteen years earlier, became the ‘youngest’ listed building in Britain; it was also the first British post-war housing estate to be listed.”<sup>102</sup> This white concrete housing development consists of flats boasting balconies and green park areas. Byker Estate, another housing development in Newcastle, Great Britain, has been the subject of recent past preservation. The unusual design including color-coded bricks in chevron patterns is being documented with photography and art as part of its conservation plan. A group of local commissions was created to generate public interest and promote the conservation plan.

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<sup>101</sup> Sheridan Burke. “Mid-Century Modern: How do we save it? A Popular Education Strategy,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 91.

<sup>102</sup> Catherine Croft, F.A. “Down Lego Lane: Alexandra Road and Issues in the Preservation of Post-War Public Housing in London,” *Preserving the Recent Past*, ed. Deborah Slaton and Rebecca A. Shiffer. Washington, D.C.: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 1995, II-165.

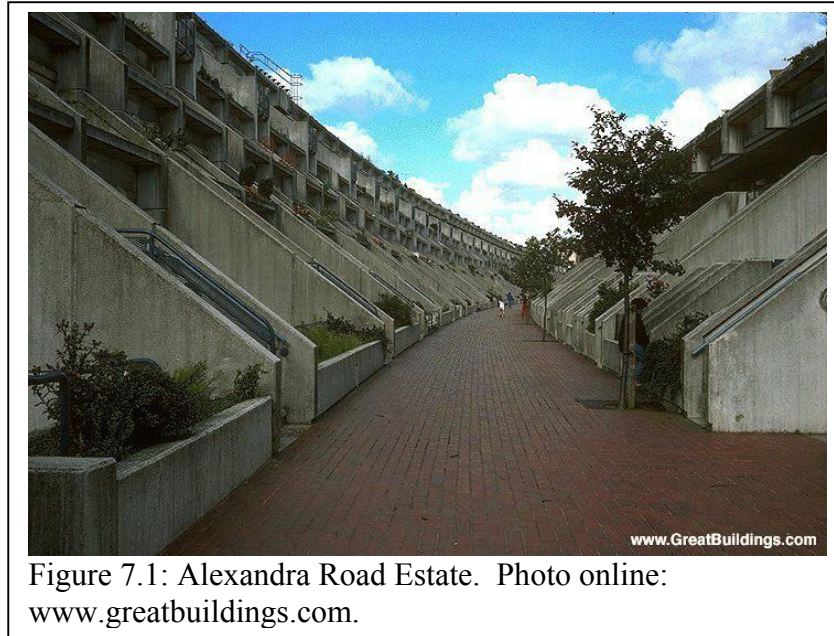


Figure 7.1: Alexandra Road Estate. Photo online:  
[www.greatbuildings.com](http://www.greatbuildings.com).

### Documentation

“The fact that the design and construction processes for mid-century modern buildings are still in living memory offers the potential to understand them in a way that has not been possible before.”<sup>103</sup> Documentation can be accomplished in many ways and is often the first step in protecting a resource. Typical are oral histories, historic structure reports, photography and measured drawings. One of the advantages of recent past structures is that many of the original plans, photographs, and even newspaper stories are still in existence.

In the U.S., the government-operated Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) has documented upwards of 37,000 resources. Most of the structures included in this survey are more than fifty years old, however some recent past structures such as the Middlesex Sampling Plant (1950 & 1969) in Middlesex, New Jersey have been surveyed. Unfortunately, many rural and vernacular structures are not included within a HABS survey, regardless of age.

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<sup>103</sup> Susan MacDonald. “Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 88.

In Australia, the Heritage Places Record Project was developed to document that country's historic resources "as they undergo changes of redevelopment, adaptation or conservation."<sup>104</sup> The Heritage Places Record documents resources using video and oral histories, as well as measured drawings and photography. Recent past structures, because of their young age, often allow for first hand oral histories from the architect, builders and others directly involved in the project. This is a unique opportunity for the preservation of recent past architecture.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation is the process of determining that a resource is significant. Evaluation can be particularly difficult when dealing with recent past architecture. Many of the problems discussed previously, (such as design, materials and scale) that preservationists are not used to contending with, create a dilemma of what action should be taken to preserve the resource. What elements should be used to determine a resource's significance? What aspects are *not* important? When evaluating the recent past, judgment must be made "regarding the conservation of not only authentic fabric, but original concept."<sup>105</sup> Methods of evaluation must be employed that allow for a variety of factors that may make a recent past building worthy of preservation. In addition, "Developing standards for the handling of such materials will become an important issue as more buildings from this period become recognized as significant. Scientific data will be required to

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<sup>104</sup> Sheridan Burke. "Mid-Century Modern: How do we save it? A Popular Education Strategy," *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 91.

<sup>105</sup> Kelley Christ. "Sacrosanct or Sacrificial?: The future of Modernism's legacy and the role of new design," *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 132.

develop such standards and proper condition assessments by experts may be required as part of this process.”<sup>106</sup>

### **Intervention/Management**

After a resource has been deemed significant, it is necessary to decide how to preserve it. It is at this stage that the method of intervention or management must be determined. The most important stage in protecting a historic building is through the intervention taken. After evaluation, the (hopefully) best method to preserve a particular building must be determined. These methods include preservation, restoration/rehabilitation, and adaptive use. Preservationists “must consider the diversity of approaches available to solve the problems of retaining mid-twentieth century buildings in a meaningful way; and solutions must necessarily reflect the impetus of contemporary society and current development trends.”<sup>107</sup> In some cases it is not possible to save a building from demolition, therefore adequate documentation is indispensable.

### Preservation

Preservation refers to “the maintenance of a property without significant alteration to its current condition.”<sup>108</sup> Preservation is generally the preferred method of protection by preservationists, however because of problems with unavailability and short life of materials in

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<sup>106</sup> Susan MacDonald. “Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 86.

<sup>107</sup> Kelley Christ. “Sacrosanct or Sacrificial?: The future of Modernism’s legacy and the role of new design,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 133.

<sup>108</sup> Norman Tyler. *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2000, 22.

recent past buildings, this most unobtrusive method is often not possible. On the other hand, youthful age can work to a building's advantage. The Rose Seidler House in Wahroonga, Australia is a good example of preservation of a recent past building. In 1950, architect Harry Seidler created a masterpiece in the modern home that he built for his parents. An 'open plan' design, the Rose Seidler House featured adaptable interior space. The exterior of the structure is almost sculptural, yet allows nature to enter into the living space through large plate glass windows in the curtain wall. Seidler's parents were the sole inhabitants of the house prior to its being acquired by the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, at which point it was opened to the public. The house is unaltered and the original appliances and furnishings created by significant designers such as Eero Saarinen, Charles Eames and Jorge Ferrari-Hardoy are still in place. The nature of this house's ownership (by the architect's parents) allowed for an opportunity to preserve the house exactly as it was at the time it was built. This type of preservation is virtually impossible in houses more than fifty years old.

#### Restoration/Redevelopment

Restoration is "the process of returning a building to its condition at a specific time period, often to its original condition."<sup>109</sup> The restoration of recent past buildings requires a change of thought from traditional restoration. The Homewood, in Esher, Australia was dramatically restored in 2001 and required "an approach which marks a principle departure from the idiom of traditional conservation practice espousing like-for-like replacements, patch repairs

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 24.



of contrasting infill to indicate contemporaneity, and minimum intervention.”<sup>110</sup> The Homewood was designed by Patrick Gwynne for his parents and built in 1938. Gwynne has lived in the house since his parents’ deaths. The goal was to restore the house to its post-war condition, which involved removing some more recent changes that the architect had made. More dramatically, the entire roof structure was replaced, asbestos removed, major repairs were made to the exterior of the building and much of the interior was refurbished.

Major restoration is a common sticking point for many preservationists when attempting to restore a recent past resource. Restoration is becoming more common as preservationists must deal with building and health codes. The difficulty of exact restoration of these structures makes it even more necessary to have thorough documentation. On the other hand, “redevelopment respects the historic interest of the design whilst achieving the necessary changes.”<sup>111</sup>

### Adaptive Use

A building must be adaptively used if for any reason it is no longer suitable for its original purposes. Adaptive use may be the saving grace of many recent past buildings. Because these structures were often specialized, with technology that is now unused, their large scale (though perhaps not large enough for some new specialized buildings), and dated design, many of them are being converted into useful spaces for other activities. Recent past structures are now being successfully reused. In Palm Springs, California, a 1963 Tramway gas station featuring a hyperbolic-paraboloid roof structure, designed by Albert Frey, was once threatened with demolition, but has now been restored and is currently being used as an art gallery. Also in

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<sup>110</sup> Kelley Christ. “Sacrosanct or Sacrificial?: The future of Modernism’s legacy and the role of new design,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 134.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

California, a 1958 Wich Stand, originally designed as a drive-in, coffee shop and cocktail lounge is now being successfully reused as a health food grocery store and restaurant.

Much needs to be taken into consideration when a recent past building is reused. In her essay, “Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges,” Susan MacDonald poses the following questions that must be considered when reusing a recent past building:

- How (can) buildings be adapted for new spatial and planning requirements?
- How (can) buildings be upgraded for modern environmental performance requirements?
- How (can) current health and safety requirements be met?
- How does one identify compatible uses for very large modern buildings?
- What is the economic viability of repairing large buildings?<sup>112</sup>

These questions can serve as a basis for many preservationists when determining whether adaptive use is an appropriate method of intervention for a given recent past resource.

### **Public Education and Awareness**

Education is probably the most effective way to protect recent past architecture. Governmental agencies, non-profit and private preservation groups are all prime candidates to help educate the general public of its importance. “Education activities can be used to address the general lack of knowledge about modern architectural ideals and values.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Susan MacDonald. “Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 83.

<sup>113</sup> William C. Miller. “I’m Not Ugly...I Have International Flair,” *Forum Journal* 15, (Fall 2000): 43.

“Popular public programmes are a critical element in building general public knowledge and support.”<sup>114</sup> The Rose Seidler House in Australia has been used as a tool to educate preservationists and the public of the importance of preserving the recent past with an annual ‘Fifties Fair.’ This fair integrates the interpretation of recent past architecture and its place in history, with food, music and art representing the 1950s. In April 2003, DOCOMOMO New York/Tri-State organized a tour of modern architecture in Litchfield, Connecticut: “In Our Own Time: Modern Architecture in Litchfield, 1949-1970.” Several homes and a library building, as well as a companion exhibit at the Litchfield Historical Society were used to demonstrate the variety of Modern structures in the town.<sup>115</sup> Events like the ‘Fifties Fair’ and ‘In Our Own Time’ keep the recent past visible and accessible to the public. “Raising public appreciation of the value and significance of our post-war heritage requires a concerted effort in professional and stakeholder education if we are to be able to identify, manage and conserve this resource for future generations.”<sup>116</sup>

### **Demolition**

It is not always possible or reasonable to preserve a recent past building. In these instances, documentation is invaluable. By preserving a record of the structure, its history is not entirely lost and can be referenced in the future. Sometimes when a resource is demolished,

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<sup>114</sup> Sheridan Burke. “Mid-Century Modern: How do we save it? A Popular Education Strategy,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 91.

<sup>115</sup> Carol Berens. Modern Architecture in Litchfield Tour, *DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri State Newsletter*, (Summer 2003): 2.

<sup>116</sup> Sheridan Burke. “Mid-Century Modern: How do we save it? A Popular Education Strategy,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 90.

“salvaged parts of the demolished building will be incorporated into the new works.”<sup>117</sup> This is one way to save aspects of a building that must be destroyed. Demolition should generally be a last resort, however some recent past buildings cannot be stabilized or are contaminated with hazardous materials that cannot be removed. With demolition, just as with any form of protective intervention, good records should be kept regarding the structure’s life as well as its demise.

Beyond guidelines and methods of protection, what are some real life scenarios of preserving recent past architecture? The next chapter will cover two Georgia case studies as examples of recent past preservation with two very different results.

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<sup>117</sup> Kelley Christ. “Sacrosanct or Sacrificial?: The future of Modernism’s legacy and the role of new design,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 138.

## CHAPTER 8

### CASE STUDIES

*To declare the hill at Kent State University a National Historical Site would be in effect spitting on the graves of the 35,000 Americans who died in Vietnam. I would consider this a personal insult to myself and every other disabled veteran in the country. If such action is taken I swear that I will regretfully have to renounce my United States citizenship.<sup>118</sup>*

*I'm sitting on a pile of dirty laundry...in the back of my Renault stationwagon...I slept in here last night...it rained on Blanket Hill nearby. I've spent the last three weeks camping out in front of Taylor Hall...Students here are determined to stop the construction of that gym. There's a battle being fought here...we're holding the hill with bodies & tents...trying to get the nation to hear what we have to say. I'm crying for my country...I'm crying to my fellow man...I'm crying for goodness...for the god in all of us...to take a stand.<sup>119</sup>*

These are two examples of public response to the failed attempt to stop the construction of a gymnasium and name Blanket Hill—site of the 1970 confrontation between students and the National Guard at Kent State University, which resulted in the deaths of four students—a national historic site. Attitudes such as these can save a recent past structure, or condemn it. Preservationists and the public are often quite impassioned when dealing with preserving the recent past.

Examining public attitudes towards preservation of the recent past in action can help inform both preservationists and the public as to what works and what does not. Some recent past properties, such as Lever House in New York, have received a large amount of publicity due to the controversy of renovating and protecting them. Others seem to slide by without notice,

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<sup>118</sup> A New York veteran quoted in W. Ray Luce. "Kent State, White Castles, and Subdivisions: Evaluating the Recent Past," *Forum Journal* 10, (Fall 1995): 40.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, A demonstration participant quoted in Luce. 40.

either to eventual preservation or demolition. Two case studies were undertaken on recent past properties in Georgia and their very different fates. Drayton Arms in Savannah and Rio Mall in Atlanta demonstrate how valuable recent past buildings are perceived and what can be done to protect them.

Each case study will include a brief history of the building/site, including information on the erection and a physical description, as well as the public and professional response to each resource. A brief chronology of the interim period between construction and designation or demolition will be mentioned, followed by a description of the designation, focusing on perceived values. In conclusion, reaction of non-preservationist professional, preservationist and public of the most recent outcome of each case study will be discussed.

These two properties demonstrate only two of many possible conclusions when preserving the recent past is attempted. Each resource has very specific and individual issues that must be considered during its preservation. In addition to those mentioned earlier in this thesis (such as design and materials) timing, location, governmental attitudes, and economy all play a role in the preservation of a structure.

### **Drayton Arms (Drayton Tower)<sup>120</sup>**

#### History and Description

“Savannahians never saw anything like it before.”<sup>121</sup>

Drayton Arms (Figure 8.1) opened in downtown Savannah 1951 as an ‘ultra-modern’ apartment building. The International Style structure was designed by Georgia Institute of

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<sup>120</sup> Drayton Arms is located at 102 E. Liberty St., Savannah, GA 31401.

<sup>121</sup> “Ultra-Modern Drayton Arms Now Ready for Occupancy,” *Savannah Morning News* 10 June 1951, 24.

Technology student Bill Bergen in 1948 as a senior architectural thesis and built three years later for \$2,000,000 by the Byck-Worrell Construction Company. By this time Bill Bergen had

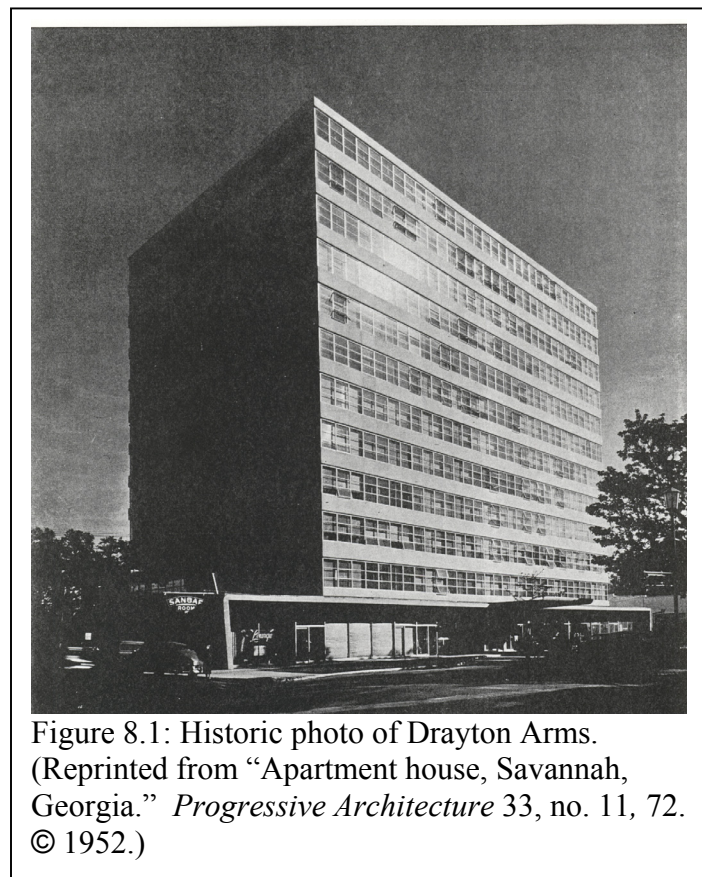


Figure 8.1: Historic photo of Drayton Arms. (Reprinted from “Apartment house, Savannah, Georgia.” *Progressive Architecture* 33, no. 11, 72. © 1952.)

joined his father Cletus Bergen in his Savannah based architectural practice. Cletus Bergen was already well known for his architectural contributions to the city. Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) art historian Robin Williams says, “The Bergen collection<sup>122</sup> represents a major transition in 20<sup>th</sup> century modern architecture from the more traditional masonry-built buildings such as SCAD's Bergen Hall to the more avant-garde modernism of Drayton Tower.”<sup>123</sup>

Lauded as “one of the most unusual in apartment construction,”<sup>124</sup> Drayton Arms is a prime example of what is now considered recent past architecture. It upholds much of the post-World War II architectural concepts in its design and scale, materials and construction methods, as well as the attitudes held by both preservationists and the public at the time of its construction and at the time the building was first considered historic.

<sup>122</sup> The Bergen collection, including original blueprints for Drayton Arms can be found at the Georgia Historical Society in Savannah. Unfortunately, Bill Bergen’s thesis has not been located.

<sup>123</sup> Erin Rossiter. Rossiter, Erin. “Archive built for Savannah’s builder,” *The Savannah Morning News*. 18 October 2001. Online <http://www.savannahnow.com/storeis/101801/LOCarchitect.shtml>.

<sup>124</sup> “Ultra-Modern Drayton Arms Now Ready for Occupancy,” *Savannah Morning News* 10 June 1951, 24

### Design

The design of Drayton Arms was cutting edge in the early fifties. Rising above the older, darker, lower buildings surrounding it, the twelve-story tower appears bright, if somewhat contradictory to nearby architecture. The location (Figure 8.2) of Drayton Arms contributes to its significance

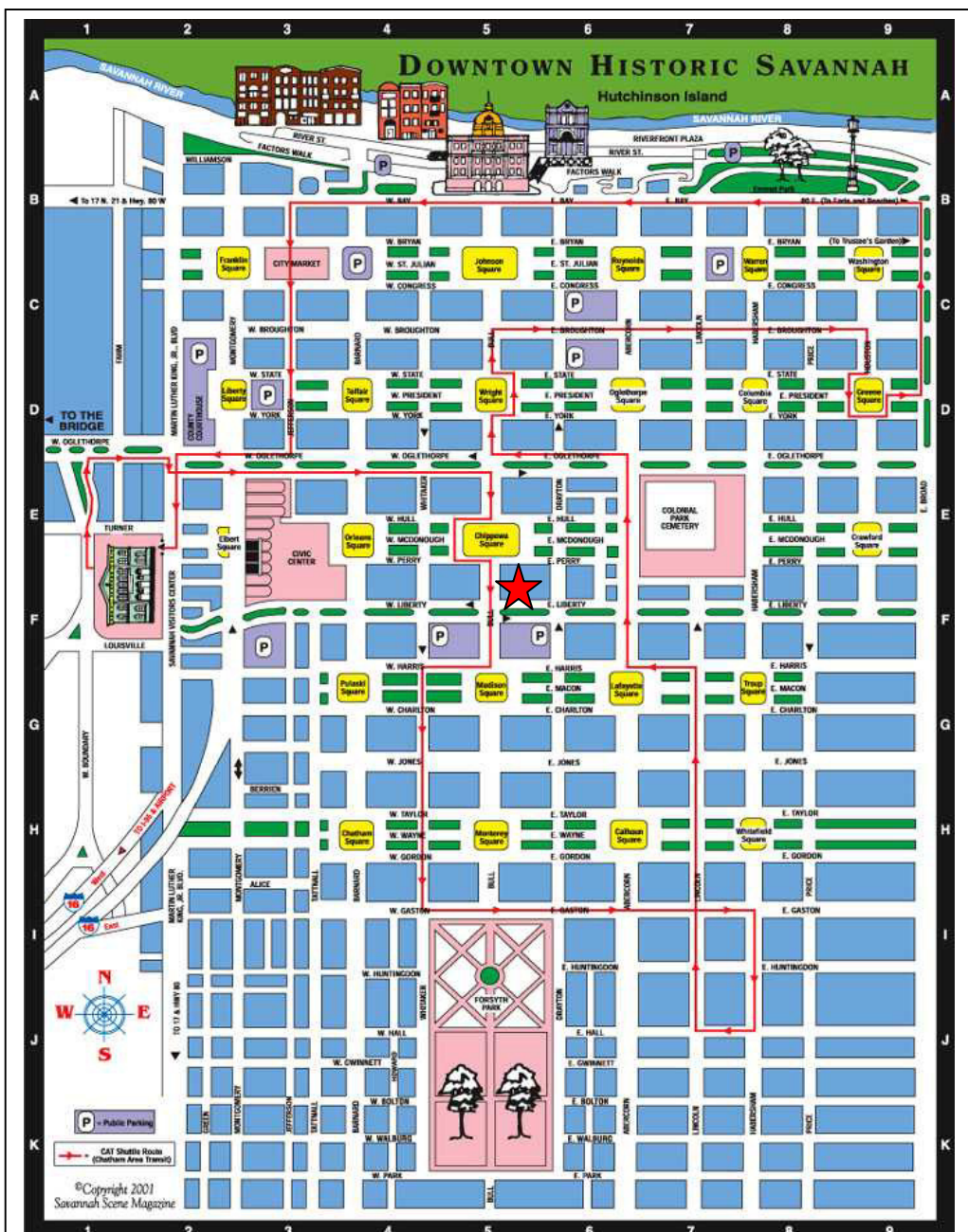


Figure 8.2: Map of downtown Savannah. Available online: [www.savannahgeorgia.com/historic.htm](http://www.savannahgeorgia.com/historic.htm).



as an early post-war modern building that contrasts starkly with other buildings in the area. Contrast with older, historically based architecture was an important characteristic of modernism. Because of this, the significant aspects of its design stand out. The green glass curtain wall can be seen for blocks from a variety of locales in the city. Its location within the city was considered prime. Located only seven blocks from Savannah's busy waterfront, "Drayton Arms Apartments is near theaters, schools, churches and the city's shopping center; at the same time it is just far enough removed, a matter of several blocks to insure home-like privacy and quiet."<sup>125</sup>

The green-tinted, heat-absorbing and glare proof Solex glass, which makes up the curtain wall, is a defining feature of the design of this building. Solex glass, created in 1934, is considered to be the "first spectrally selective tinted glass"<sup>126</sup>. The first floor of the twelve-story building was set aside for shops, while the remaining eleven contained efficiency apartments with all outside-facing rooms. "Mail boxes in the lobby and elevator service, along with electricity, water and heat equip the building giving the occupant the ultra-modern conveniences for gracious living."<sup>127</sup> Even though Drayton is several stories taller (Figure 8.3) than most Savannah buildings, its design maintains a sense of horizontality common to the era, breaking up each row of windows with one of buff-colored concrete. Each window is divided into three horizontally oriented lights, adding to its overall design concept.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>126</sup> Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company. "PPG Marries Green, Reflective Architectural Glass Technologies." Document online. Accessed at: [http://www.ppg.com/gls\\_commercial/news/news060102.htm](http://www.ppg.com/gls_commercial/news/news060102.htm).

<sup>127</sup> "Ultra-Modern Drayton Arms Now Ready for Occupancy," *Savannah Morning News* 10 June 1951, 24.

Each apartment was painted a warm gray with partitions highlighted in one of three colors—“grayed-rose, green or blue”<sup>128</sup>—depending on the apartment’s location within the building “The warmer colors were used in north apartments, and the cooler tones for apartments with southern exposure.”<sup>129</sup>

The scale of Drayton Arms, while nowhere near skyscraper proportions, is certainly much greater than earlier Savannah buildings. It is rare to find a historic building of more than three or four stories in the city, though several buildings--primarily hotels near the riverfront--constructed after Drayton

Arms was built, surpass this height. In addition, Drayton Arms demonstrates scale issues common to recent past buildings in the sheer number of apartment units it contains. With 198 units, Drayton Arms set a new standard in Savannah for the ‘apartment complex.’

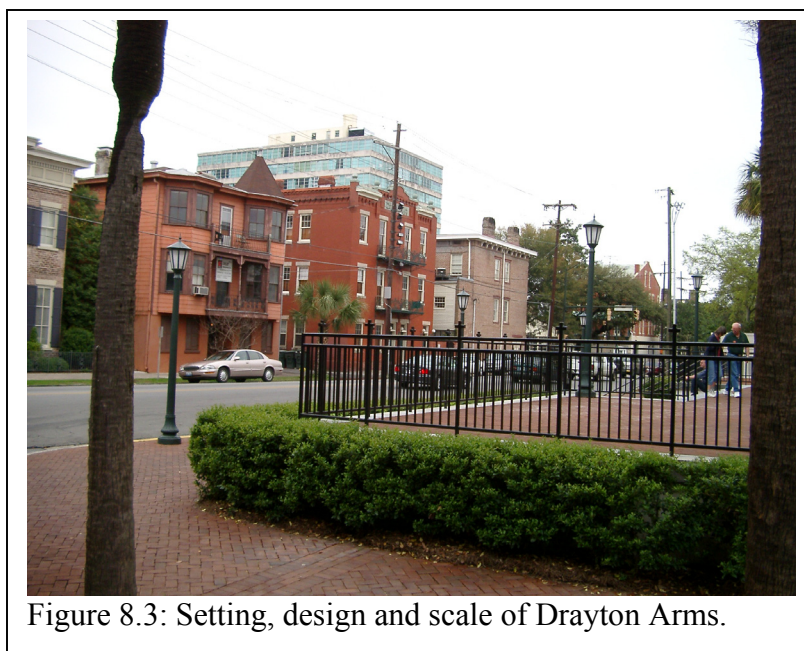


Figure 8.3: Setting, design and scale of Drayton Arms.

### Materials and Construction Methods

The systems and materials found in Drayton Arms are a perfect example of the technological exploration in building after the war. It was the first building of this type in the

<sup>128</sup> “Apartment house, Savannah, Georgia.” *Progressive Architecture* 33, no. 11, (1952): 71.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

state of Georgia to have central air conditioning. Among its other high-tech features were the green Solex glass mentioned previously, and an additional tap located in the bathroom, with a constant supply of running ice water.

Drayton Arms utilized recent technological advances in reinforced concrete engineering and also exploited cantilever construction, decreasing the amount of reinforcing steel required.<sup>130</sup>

The reinforced concrete building (Figure 8.4) was considered to be “completely fireproof.”<sup>131</sup>

This type of construction, involving the elimination of columns and wind beams, allowed for greater freedom for installation of systems and partitions, such as elevators, air conditioning and heating systems in a strong core at the center of the building. In addition “in the event of an aerial attack, the occupants would be afforded some measure of bomb-blast protections by the core.”<sup>132</sup>

Drayton Arms’ construction can uphold well over the 30 pounds per square foot (psf) of vertical projection required at the time it was built. Apartments were



Figure 8.4: Construction of Drayton Arms, showing reinforced concrete, cantilevered design surrounding a central core. (Reprinted from “Apartment House Construction Methods.” *Progressive Architecture* 33, no. 11, 83. © 1952.)

<sup>130</sup> “Apartment House Construction Methods.” *Progressive Architecture* 33, no. 11, (1952): 83.

<sup>131</sup> “Ultra-Modern Drayton Arms Now Ready for Occupancy,” *Savannah Morning News* 10 June 1951, 24.

<sup>132</sup> “Apartment House Construction Methods.” *Progressive Architecture* 33, no. 11, (1952): 83.

designed to withstand 40 psf live load, with 80 psf live load for corridors. Pre-fabricated metal walls were originally considered for the construction of Drayton Arms; however, architects and engineers decided that these had not yet been developed enough for their use. “In the final solution, lime-faced spandrels were backed with 8 in. x 12 in., hardburned structural terra cotta tile.”<sup>133</sup>

### Public and Professional Response

The response of the public and professionals to Drayton Arms was generally positive. The Savannah public considered the apartment building “the most significant forward step in Savannah’s Housing System.”<sup>134</sup> The public greeted its construction with interest and anticipation, as seen in a newspaper article printed at the time of Drayton Arms’ opening. Several apartments were pre-leased. With its little luxuries and modern design and construction, Drayton Arms offered a good representation of the idealism of the technologically driven 1950s. An advertisement for Haverty’s Furniture that ran in *The Savannah Morning News* on May 20, 1951, uses floor plans of Drayton Arms apartment units as a visual diagram for laying out ‘Tomorrow’s Style’ of furniture.

Professional architects and engineers viewed the apartment building with interest for its modern use of design, materials and construction method. A 1952 article in *Progressive Architecture* features Drayton Arms as one of three exceptional concrete apartment buildings in the United States. The article gives an in depth and technical description of the construction and the interior and exterior design. Additional research has been undertaken in a 2002 thesis by

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>134</sup> Haverty’s Furniture Advertisement, *The Savannah Morning News*, Sunday, 20 May 20 1951, 47.

Marc Belanger, entitled *Innovating Modern Housing for Post-War Savannah, Georgia: The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), William P. Bergen , and the Drayton Arms Apartments*.<sup>135</sup>

### Chronology

Little was reported in the news about Drayton Arms (now called Drayton Tower) during the next fifty years. A 1978 article appeared in the *Savannah Morning News* about the architectural career of Bill Bergen and his father, Cletus, who had died the previous year. The Drayton Arms thesis project was mentioned as heralding the start of Bill Bergen's career.

Drayton Arms has remained in constant use as an apartment building, but its once 'high caliber' residents have been replaced, primarily with college students. Today the building that was once bright and clean is now marred by age, showing patina of a modern building (Figure 8.5). The exterior is more gray than buff in color, with streaks and blotches resulting from environmental wear and tear. Many of the original windows have been replaced with new, slightly different shades of green glass, giving the building a patchwork appearance.



Figure 8.5: Drayton Arms, now Drayton Tower demonstrating signs of age. Photo online: [http:// skyscraperpage.com/gallery](http://skyscraperpage.com/gallery).

<sup>135</sup> This thesis is available in the Savannah College of Art and Design library.

## Designation

In 2002, shortly after its fiftieth birthday, the apartment building was included on a list of significant resources placed on Savannah's Historic Buildings Map, which offers limited protection from demolition as well as recognition by locals and tourists of its historic value. This map is still in production, and a complete list of resources should be available by the end of 2003. The map itself will be published at a later date. "The City Council added Drayton Tower to the Historic Buildings Map,"<sup>136</sup> announcing to the city that an integral element of the population considered the building a significant part of the city's history, at age fifty-one. To the pleasure of many preservationists like Beth Reiter of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, the City Council showed no hesitation in accepting the inclusion of Drayton on the map.

Even though a building must only be fifty years old to be considered for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, many local preservationists as well as the public could not accept that this modern, relatively recent building should stand shoulder to shoulder with Savannah's charming Italianate and Victorian-era structures. Drayton Arms continues to carry the stigma of recent past architecture.

Drayton Tower's greatest problem is the fact that so many residents view it as an eyesore. To be honest, there probably aren't too many structures among Savannah's most prized architectural collection that have not fallen into that category sometime in the last fifty years. Even Mercer House<sup>137</sup> was declared to be without architectural merit by a Florida State Architecture professor back in the late 1960's.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> "It's Not the Hyatt, But it's Historic," *The Savannah Morning News*. The Exchange: Business and Employment Magazine, 22 August 2002.

<sup>137</sup> The Mercer House, built in 1871 is one of the oldest examples of the Italianate Style in Savannah. The house is known for its beautiful arches and columns as well as being a focal point in the book and later the movie, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*.

<sup>138</sup> Dirk Hardison. "An Amendment to the Historic Buildings Map: The Right To Drayton Arms." Georgia Historical Society, 2002.

Because of its status as the first air-conditioned apartment building in Georgia and its use of the newest technology of the post war era, Drayton Tower has been evaluated by the city of Savannah as historic. The inclusion of the building on the city's map of historic buildings offers a modicum of protection: it cannot be demolished without the approval of the city. This limited protection does not place an absolute moratorium on demolition. Savannah's "zoning ordinance allows a historic building's owner to tear it down, despite city denial, if he places a notice on the structure and waits exactly one year."<sup>139</sup> Some preservationists are presently at work, attempting to amend these historic zoning regulations.

### Values

Termed a "building Savannahans love to hate,"<sup>140</sup> Drayton Tower's concrete slabs and mismatched blue-green windows hover in stark contrast to other buildings in historic downtown Savannah. While some local preservationists and members of the public consider the building a blemish on Savannah's landscape, the fact that it has been declared historic by the city demonstrates a recognition of its value, regardless of the bias held against its age, design, and materials. Drayton Tower has been shown to be an exceptional model of post war modernism in the early articles published at the time of its erection, as well as through research by art historians like Robin Williams and Marc Belanger at SCAD.

The values that make Drayton Arms historically significant enough to be placed on this map are much more than age. Robin Williams considers Drayton's design one of the earliest International Style buildings in Georgia to be of significance. The design demonstrates the post-

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<sup>139</sup> Bret Bell. "Tower tagged historical." *The Savannah Morning News* 23 August 2002, 1A.

<sup>140</sup> "1950's building gets spot among historic neighbors." *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer* 29 September 2002, C8.

war principle of progress and is a rare example in Savannah. In addition, it was the first air-conditioned apartment building in the state of Georgia. The innovative use of modern materials, such as Solex glass, in Drayton Arms is another important value. Williams also states that Drayton Arms was featured in at least one national advertisement campaign for the Pittsburgh Glass Company in an architectural journal. Finally, and possibly of most value, is the fact that Drayton Arms retains much of its original setting, demonstrating local evolution and a sharp contrast between its post-war Modernist design and the older, more staid design of earlier decades. Williams considers this to be especially significant because most post-war buildings have been surrounded by other post-war structures, thereby blending and muting the features of buildings of this era.

#### Professional, Preservationist and Public Response

When the list of buildings to be included on Savannah's Historic Buildings map was released, reaction was divided between those who appreciate modern design and those who do not. Many residents of the city took offense at the inclusion of Drayton Arms, creating a citywide controversy. Lee Adler, one of the city's early preservation leaders,<sup>141</sup> exclaimed that the inclusion of Drayton Arms on the Historic Buildings map was absurd. His wife, Emma continued with, "We were looking down on that very ugly building and wishing that it could be imploded."<sup>142</sup> This is a perfect example of the preservationist not being able to regard a building in an objective manner and appreciate obvious heritage values.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.



In the late summer of 2002, the article quoted above ran in newspapers statewide, illustrating the controversial use of the term ‘historic’ to describe Drayton Tower. After the quotes expressing the Adlers’ displeasure at the recognition of Drayton Arms ran in the newspaper, Emma Adler followed with an editorial dated December 2002, complaining that the true reasons she and her husband criticized the building were not accurately portrayed. It was not the design they found offensive, but rather the materials used. “We have always wanted Savannah to have the best of its kind in its time. In other words, we want high quality. The scale, mass and setback of the Drayton Tower are acceptable; it is the cheap materials that offend the eye.”<sup>143</sup> Mrs. Adler continued to compare Drayton Tower to Lever House, explaining that if the materials of the former had been of the same quality as the New York building, perhaps it would be a different story. So the issue moves from that of design to recent past materials. This could also be considered an education issue since Drayton’s materials were not inexpensive. Should a building be doomed because the materials are currently considered ‘cheap’? As mentioned, the plate glass in Lever House had to be replaced due to failure. Perhaps a similar treatment should be used on Drayton Tower, thereby eradicating the complaint of shoddy materials. This has been, and will continue to be, a recurring theme in the protection of recent past architecture. The question is, should it be dealt with now, or should it be put off until the buildings come of age, in hopes that they have survived long enough for intervention?

On the other hand, some Savannah preservationists agree with the historic status of Drayton Tower. Robin Williams concurs, saying, “Drayton Towers is one of the best examples in the United States of the dramatic architectural shift that took hold following World War II.”<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Emma M. Adler. “Drayton Tower criticized because of cheap material.” *The Savannah Morning News* Editorial 17 December 2002, 14A.

<sup>144</sup> Bret Bell. “Tower tagged historical.” *The Savannah Morning News* 23 August 2002, 1A.

Williams continues: “it’s intentionally a shift away from the old world, representing the people, ideals and place at that point in history. It’s a contrast to the other buildings in Savannah. For it to be one of the earliest examples of the international style is remarkable.”<sup>145</sup> Fortunately, some preservationists are able to see beyond what is considered ‘tacky’ design, to the historic relevance of recent past buildings. “Aesthetically, it is unique, and should by all means remain so.”<sup>146</sup> Other notable professionals, such as Mark McDonald of the Historic Savannah Foundation and Beth Reiter from the Metropolitan Planning Commission, supported recognition of Drayton Arms.

The general public’s attitudes are divided. Many people agree with the Adlers when regarding the recent past. Kate Miller, a Savannah resident is quoted as saying, “Can you say eyesore? The thing should be torn down immediately.”<sup>147</sup> Students of SCAD awarded Drayton Tower the second annual Golden Fecal Matter Award in a student-run newspaper that is not associated with the college. One of the newspaper’s staff members states, “We believe that if SCAD does acquire the Dreaded Tower, the first thing SCAD should do is demolish it.”<sup>148</sup> While the article is tongue in cheek, one part of the public’s attitude seeps through the sarcasm. Many people cannot get past what currently seems aesthetically displeasing to find the value within. Modern architecture, like modern art and music often evokes a response of fear or hatred because it is not understood. This does not necessary mean that all modern architecture is great

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Dirk Hardison. “An Amendment to the Historic Buildings Map: The Right To Drayton Arms.” Georgia Historical Society, 2002.

<sup>147</sup> Bret Bell. “Tower tagged historical.” *The Savannah Morning News* 23 August 2002, 1A.

<sup>148</sup> Al Liebonowicz. “Famed Downtown Building Bestowed with Prestigious Award.” *The Underground Newspaper*. Spring 2003. Document online. Accessed at: [www.rocket-vision.com/frankenstone/pages/tun2/award2.html](http://www.rocket-vision.com/frankenstone/pages/tun2/award2.html).

architecture, but it plays an important role in public reaction. Some residents recognize the history of the building and believe it should maintain its place on the Savannah skyline.

### **Rio Shopping Center<sup>149</sup>**

#### History and Description

Rio Shopping Center was built in midtown Atlanta, Georgia, in 1988-89. Much like Drayton Arms, its style was considered particularly modern and groundbreaking at the time. Designed by architect Bernardo Fort-Brescia of the Miami based firm Arquitectonica, and landscape architect Martha Schwartz of the Office of Peter Walker and Martha Schwartz, the project was constructed by contractors McDevitt & Street for a total cost of \$750,000. Prior to the construction of Rio, both the architect and the landscape architect were internationally known.

“In the early 1990s Philip Johnson wrote ‘Bernardo Fort-Brescia and Laurinda Spear are the gutsiest team in the business.’”<sup>150</sup> Arquitectonica is known primarily for their “loud” modern, Miami-influenced design, and were perhaps a surprising choice for a shopping center located just east of downtown Atlanta. Designs such as the Pink House and The Palace, both in Miami, demonstrate a provocative use of color and implied motion to create a modern tropical character. Arquitectonica has also undertaken international projects like *Banco de Credito* in Lima, Peru, the Shanghai Information Town in China and the Banc de Luxembourg in Europe.

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<sup>149</sup> Rio Shopping Center was located at 595 Piedmont Ave, NE, Atlanta, Georgia

<sup>150</sup> Arquitectonica. *Laurinda Spear and Bernardo Fort-Brescia*. Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.arquitectonica.com/keypersonnel.html>.

“The firm’s work evinces movement and progress; it is a look to the future.”<sup>151</sup> Arquitectonica’s design for Rio Shopping Center concurred with this notion, filling space with energetic colors and shapes.

Martha Schwartz is an award winning landscape architect who became renowned for her 1979 “Back Bay Bagel Garden” in Boston,

Massachusetts. “Her goal is to find opportunities where landscape design solutions can be raised to a level of fine art.”<sup>152</sup> She is an adjunct professor of Landscape Architecture at Harvard Graduate School of Design and has won many awards for her pioneering urban landscape designs. Schwartz’s design ranges from creating a “cool and inviting environment”<sup>153</sup> at the Mesa Art and Entertainment Center in Arizona, to the *Lehrter Bahnhof* train station plaza in Berlin, Germany. Her fine arts background and desire to make landscape a work of art are obvious in her design of

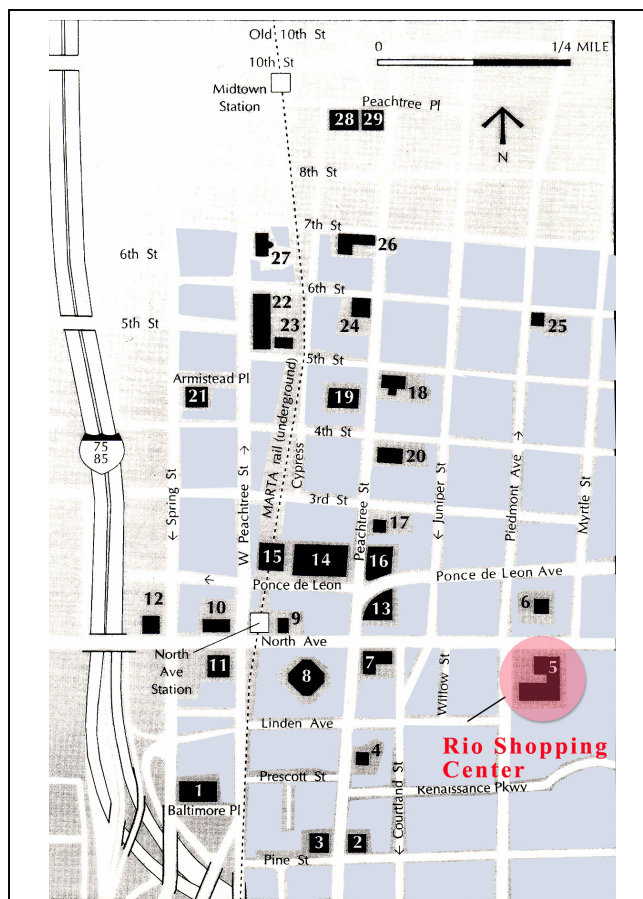


Figure 8.6: Map of midtown Atlanta. (Reprinted from Isabelle Gourney, *AIA Guide to the Architecture of Atlanta*, 87. © 1993 by University of Georgia Press

<sup>151</sup>Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Martha Schwartz, Inc. “Biography.” Document online. Accessed at: [http://www.marthaschwartz.com/firm\\_schwartz\\_bio.html](http://www.marthaschwartz.com/firm_schwartz_bio.html).

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

the courtyard, and inclusion of Darra Bimbaum's video installation, at Rio Shopping Center.

In an era of gargantuan malls, Rio Shopping Center is a “small, two-story open-air mall that was ahead of its time in terms of design and in-town shopping needs.”<sup>154</sup> The roughly U-shaped shopping center was set on the corner of a busy Midtown intersection on Piedmont and North Avenues and afforded easy access to Atlanta's public transportation system. The mall was designed to accommodate foot traffic as well as the usual driving customer, something perhaps for which Atlantans were not quite prepared. The location of Rio (Figure 8.6) may have contributed to its demise. While close to the center of in-town action, residents of Atlanta are known for living and shopping on the outskirts of the city, and for leaving their automobiles only when necessary. In addition, many of the businesses that leased space within the mall were small and locally owned, while the general trend in Atlanta during the 1990s was larger chain stores.

Rio falls into the category of recent past buildings due to its age and modern, somewhat irreverent design. As a 25,000-square-foot shopping center, it was larger than historic stores, though not nearly as large as super-shopping centers being built at the same time as Rio. The two-story mall had storefronts opening onto a central courtyard. New and unusual materials were used in its construction, adding to a striking design. Rio was also subject to a great amount of development pressure due to its location close to downtown Atlanta, and throughout its brief lifespan, Rio provoked a wide range of attitudes and emotions by those who came into contact with it.

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<sup>154</sup> Emory University. “Rio Shopping Center.” Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.emory.edu/WHSC/MED/CME/partic/shopping.html>.

## Design and Materials

The open-air center has been considered to be in the modern pop art style, utilizing many bright colors and a corrugated metal skin. Its horizontality allies it also with the International style. The entire building and its site consist of parallel lines (Figure 8.7): lines of glass

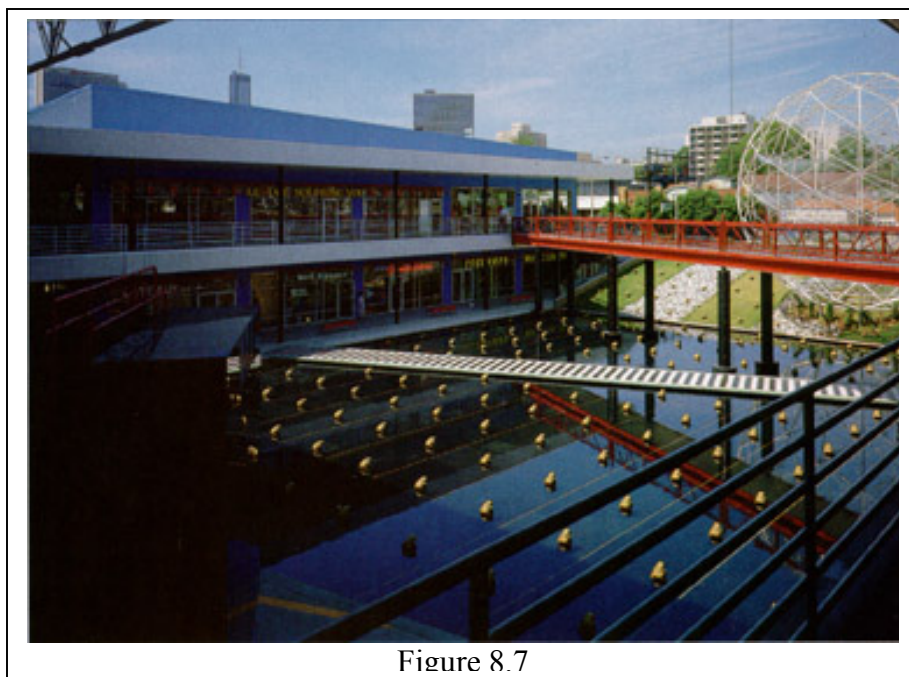


Figure 8.7

windows; lines of blue corrugated steel siding; red tubes; yellow ladders; gold frogs; green grass; gray riprap; and fiber optic lighting. These lines, while parallel and orderly within each use of a particular material

are juxtaposed against each other in a controlled chaos, drawing the eyes back and forth to the two legs of the building, down into the black frog-addled pool, lying in the center of the U, and up to the mist-emitting dome at the head of the pool. At night, dramatic lighting emphasized the horizontality of the place even more. The structure has been said to “answer Robert Venturi’s definition of the ‘decorated shed.’”<sup>155</sup>

<sup>155</sup> Isabelle Gournay. “Rio Shopping Mall,” *AIA Guide to the Architecture of Atlanta*, G. Sams, ed., Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1993, 91.



As important as the building design is what makes Rio Shopping Center especially unique is its site design. The focal point of the site is a forty-foot high geodesic dome (Figure 8.8). “The great globe is designed ‘to visually complete with all the junk around and create a landmark.’”<sup>156</sup> Over the years, the dome was intended to metamorphose from a hard-lined manmade object into one of nature as green vines grew to softly enshroud the

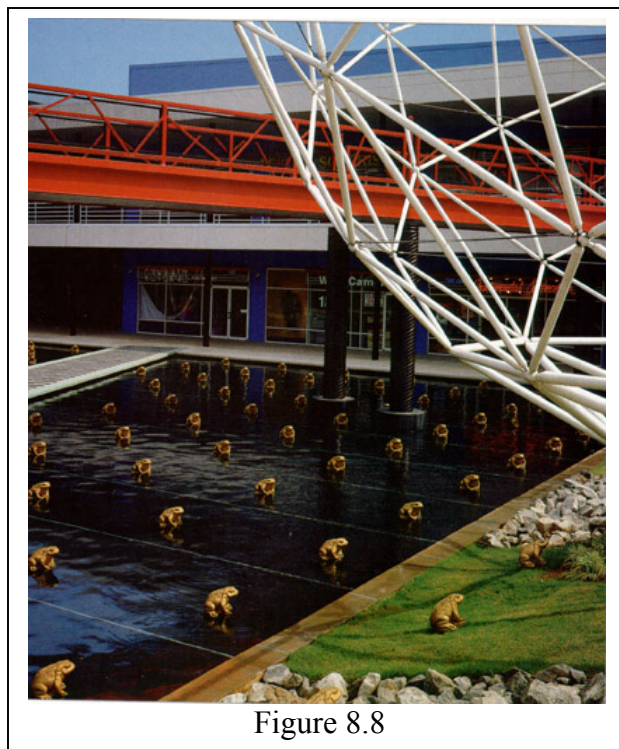


Figure 8.8

white, straight edges. Looking down from the hill, next to the building lay a large reflecting pool lit up with lines of colored lights at night. Within the pool stood “scores of plaster frogs”<sup>157</sup> that had been painted gold. These three hundred and fifty frogs (actually toads, due to the presence of the Paratoid glands located behind the eyes) stand in a grid all facing the dome as if in worship. Horizontal walkways, both directly above the pool and on the second floor level, tie the landscape and the building together. Martha Schwartz called it “a big, bright pop festival type of place.”<sup>158</sup> A video wall made up of twenty-five television screens lies, seemingly randomly, next to an elevator shaft and a gazebo bar.

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<sup>156</sup> “PA Profile: Peter Walker and Martha Schwartz,” *Progressive Architecture*. Special Issue: New American Landscape/Ceramic Tile, July 1989, 64.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

## Development Pressures

Most of the United States experienced significant growth during the 1990s. However, the city of Atlanta did not have enough of this increase to accommodate for the loss of population in the area in the 1980s. Because of this, small downtown businesses, like those located within Rio Shopping Center, struggled to stay afloat. The brief economic boom just prior to and during the 1996 Summer Olympics ended abruptly soon after the Games. Just as the shopping center was closing its doors, Atlanta underwent a large growth spurt. “The city of Atlanta is experiencing a turnaround. After losing nearly 10,000 people in the 1980s and only gaining 1,200 during the 1990s, the city has added more than 16,000 new residents since 2000.”<sup>159</sup> This dramatic change in population could have allowed Rio to bounce back from its lack of business in the 1990s, however it only created additional pressure for demolition and replacement with an updated shopping center.

Many recent past shopping centers have faced similar issues with development issues: locally owned stores cannot compete with large corporations, causing them to lose customers and close, and they are not viewed as large or modern enough to accommodate an adaptive use project. It is very difficult for many recent past designs to fit comfortably in today’s world. Increasing development pressures then quickly squeeze them out of the picture often before preservationists and concerned citizens have time to react.

## Public and Professional Response

Immediately after its erection, Rio began asserting its existence to locals and beyond. The surprising design was seen as refreshing by many who had grown tired of the standard

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<sup>159</sup> “ARC: Atlanta region’s population growth continues,” *The Atlanta Business Chronicle* 14 August 2003. Document Online. Available at: <http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/stories/2002/08/12/daily53.html>.



shopping center mold. Images of Rio turned up in paintings and music videos of local Atlanta artists like Orange Hat. Finally, the frogs of Rio Shopping Center were named the Best Architectural Statement by Atlanta Magazine's "Best and Worst" for 1989.

However, much of the public thought the design was too strange. A review of an Indian restaurant renting space at the mall showed not everyone agreed that Rio was the epitome of great modern design. "Upstairs in the otherwise peculiar Rio shopping center, it's an oasis of calm and plenty."<sup>160</sup>

Rio Shopping Center made a positive national impression in both the fields of architecture and landscape architecture. In 1989, it was selected for a merit award in the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)'s Professional Award in the Design Category. It was also chosen for the Atlanta Urban Design Commission's Award of Excellence in Architecture in 1989. Its inclusion in the AIA Guide to Atlanta Architecture, as well as on web sites such as the German-based Arch Inform, demonstrates that professionals found the building to be significant. These reactions could also be mixed. Atlanta-based architect, Janeen Whitney of Whitney Design, Inc. thought that the design of Rio Shopping Center would be better suited to a tropical climate, like Miami, and that an open air shopping center was not appropriate for Atlanta's environment. However, Whitney felt that, despite ill-placement, the building design was of exceptional and innovative quality.

### Chronology

After the initial attention the shopping center received, Rio struggled economically for several years when people failed to shop at its stores and restaurants. The mall experienced a

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<sup>160</sup> DinerPages.com. Heera of India. Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.dinerpages.com/usa/atlanta/asian/heeraofindia.htm>.

resurgence of popularity in the mid-1990s, as Atlanta prepared to host the 1996 Summer Olympics. Rio Shopping Center was placed on several motel and hotel lists of places worth visiting while in the city. In addition, it was found on lists created by Emory University, Atlanta mass transit (MARTA), and newsletters:

Here one finds hundreds of enigmatic gilded concrete frogs scattered throughout a reflecting pool and small hillside all facing and meditating intently on an enormous geodesic sphere as if awaiting the mothership...Amphibiously monolithic and Mayan. I always get the uneasy feeling that something HUGE is about to happen...<sup>161</sup>

Unfortunately, after the tourists went home after the Olympics, Rio quickly reverted to its former neglected state, minus several original frogs. “Perhaps someday, the dome will spew again, and the amphibians will reappear en masse.”<sup>162</sup> In 1999, just as Atlanta was beginning to find life in its inner city again, Rio Shopping Center was demolished to make way for a 60,000 square foot mixed-use center, containing an apartment component, a large chain grocery store and a drug store.

### Values

Ignoring the 50-year rule for designation, Rio Shopping Center had enough other attributes to make it significant. Had the building survived intact to the year 2039 (the point at which it could be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places) it almost certainly would have been nominated. Rio Shopping Center demonstrated significance in its design for both architecture and landscape architecture. The award-winning and respected architects involved, Bernardo Fort-Brescia and Martha Schwartz, have made places for

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<sup>161</sup> *Beave Jerky*, “The Official Orange Hat Newsletter of the 1996 Olympics”, Issue #8, Atlanta, Georgia, (July 1996): 3.

<sup>162</sup> Emory University. “Rio Shopping Center.” Document online. Accessed at: <http://www.emory.edu/WHSC/MED/CME/partic/shopping.html>.

themselves in the world of modern architecture. Rio's design, both innovative and funky, demonstrated an important step in International and Pop style. Rio Shopping Center was a landmark for Atlantans in the 1990s and probably would have maintained that status for years to come.

### Professional, Preservationist and Public Response

While many professional architects and designers praised Rio Shopping Center for its unusual design and location, others felt that it had outlived its usefulness, and that perhaps demolition was the best choice. Janeen Whitney states that this type of design, after a point “starts to blend into the landscape in the minds of the locals, it just gets mixed into the chaotic soup of decaying urban sprawl and becomes either kitsch (not necessarily a bad thing) or sad, or gets remodeled in a freakish Frankenstein style (a bad thing).” Whitney continues on to say that it is unfortunate that a building that for a time was a successful cultural center could not have been replaced by another, rather than a chain store.

In the end, Rio Shopping Center just was not old enough for preservationists to consider it for protection. In addition, the large scale and outlandish design of the building and its use as a shopping mall, worked against perpetuation into the new century. This is a perfect example of a significant resource being lost due to restrictions that preservationists have placed on themselves by defining too narrowly potential value. It is impossible to know how the shopping center would have fared against Criteria G of the National Register, but it is very possible to see it being significant enough for values in architecture and landscape architecture to have been listed.

Though there was public outcry, it all seemed to happen before most people realized it was gone. Due to its age, no preservationists were involved in attempting to protect Rio from its

fate, and thus a site significant for both architecture and landscape architecture is forever lost. Rio was listed as an ill-conceived development scheme in a 2002 *Creative Loafing* article. “The golden frogs were funky, the fountain was cool, the wall of TVs was eye-catching, but Rio -- hailed as an architectural prize when it debuted in 1989 at the corner of Piedmont and North -- was just too quirky and Gap-free to catch on with conservative Southerners, despite its in-town location.”<sup>163</sup> Atlantan Mark Prejsnar sums it up in the last stanza of his poem entitled “for the Rio Shopping Center: in memorium”:

there are these visions of a gone place..  
they sold it like air  
& its 144 bronze frogs....<sup>164</sup>

Many Atlantans seemed pleased to have the oddity of Rio Shopping Center erased from the landscape and memory. Residents of the area were happy to have the national chain grocery store put on the site, even though another was already located within a mile of the new one. In an article about the new store from August 2000, the corner on which Rio Shopping Center once stood was considered a “treasure island”<sup>165</sup> in busy midtown. Ironically, “buildings were designed to accommodate pedestrian traffic”<sup>166</sup> at the request of potential shoppers.

In the next chapter the case studies will be examined and analyzed. How and to what level is preservation of the recent past currently being accomplished? Are preservationists adequately facing the issues?

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<sup>163</sup> Scott Henry. “30 years of the good, the bad, and the weird as hell” *Creative Loafing Atlanta*. 5 June 2002. Document online. Accessed at: <http://atlanta.creativeloafing.com/2002-06-05/cover.html>.

<sup>164</sup> Mark Prejsnar. “for Rio Shopping Center: in memorium,” Atlanta Poets Group. Document online. Accessed at: [http://www.atlantapoetsgroup.net/MarkPrejsnar/Poems%20by%20Mark%20\(text\)/rio\\_shopping\\_center.html](http://www.atlantapoetsgroup.net/MarkPrejsnar/Poems%20by%20Mark%20(text)/rio_shopping_center.html).

<sup>165</sup> Jenny King. “Sembler finds a treasure island in Atlanta,” Retail Traffic, *Primedia Business Magazines and Media*, August 2000. Document online. Accessed at <http://retailtrafficmag.com>.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 9

### ANALYSIS

The case studies presented in the previous chapter show two ways in which the recent past can be dealt with by preservationists and the public. Do these case studies show that preservation of recent past resources is currently working? Are preservationists paying enough attention to the issue? By analyzing the two Georgia case studies in relation to recent past issues such as design concepts and scale, materials and construction methods, development pressures and attitudes of preservationists and the public, these questions tentatively can be answered.

#### **Drayton Arms, Savannah, Georgia**

Drayton Arms was simultaneously praised and criticized for its innovative modern design. The building has had to go through this awkward stage twice in its life: first as a new building; fifty years later as a newly historic building. It is difficult to view a style considered to be modern as historically significant. Fortunately, art historians and preservationists recognize that Drayton Arms is a valuable part of Savannah's history. Original architectural plans are archived at the Georgia Historical Society in Savannah, available for viewing by interested persons.

Because Drayton Arms has been utilized continuously as an apartment building, it could be argued that scale has not greatly affected it. However, due to the fact that this once-luxurious apartment building is made up of efficiency and one-bedroom apartments, the demographic of the residents, and more than likely the upkeep, of the building has changed dramatically. In the

1950s, it was common for families to live comfortably in four room houses and small apartments, but in the age of the McMansion, Americans crave living quarters with significantly more space. An efficiency apartment could only be seen appropriate for college students, young singles or newlyweds. It can be recognized that a landlord would most likely not be as inclined to keep a dormitory-like building as pristine as if it were occupied by wealthy professionals. If the use of Drayton Arms were to change, it could face additional problems by being considered too large to fit in with other buildings or uses in the area, or too small to accommodate a modern apartment complex. As long as the building retains its current use (and perhaps with its newly ‘historic’ status, the owner will see greater value in his property) Drayton Arms has a decent chance of survival.

One aspect that could present a preservation problem is the type of materials used in Drayton Arms. It is evident in Emma Adler’s editorial about Drayton Arms being listed on Savannah’s map of historic buildings, that preservationists are stymied by the temporary and seemingly “cheap” nature of more recent materials. This case study building utilized systems and materials that were new, and had not yet stood the test of time to determine their stability and durability. Drayton Arms experienced significant problems with its materials, including rust stains on its concrete façade (some of which could probably be cleaned) and failure of many of the original green-tinted Solex windows, which could not be replaced with the same type or color glass, as it was no longer in production. For the time being the grime and mismatched materials contributes to the reasoning of people who feel this building should be torn down. On the other hand, Drayton’s cantilevered reinforced concrete structure has stood the test of time.

Drayton Arms is still considered a tasteless eyesore by many in Savannah, residents and tourists alike. The negative attitudes held by the people, including a well-respected

preservationist, could cause significant problems for the eventual preservation of the apartment building. On the other hand, Drayton Arms has been noticed by a section of a population that recognizes value in early twentieth century buildings. Attitudes can have a huge effect on the outcome of a recent past resource. Because there are few guidelines in place to determine what gives a recent past resource its value, it is more difficult to know how to deal with and protect these structures.

While Drayton Arms has received a small amount of protection from its listing on Savannah's map of historic buildings, it remains up to the owner of the property as to whether it will be demolished or not. During the interim time preservationists and other advocates in favor of saving the building could possibly convince the owner not to demolish. In addition, Drayton Arms only received this historic status after it was fifty years old. At this point, preservationists acted quickly, recognizing the building's value. However, no preventative steps were taken in earlier stages of the building's life to assure that this structure would survive to its fiftieth birthday.

Drayton Arms Apartments can, for the time being, be considered a recent past preservation success; however, the building has yet to be fully valued as a significant architectural resource in Savannah. Luckily, it has remained a viable source of income for its owner, or it may have never reached this point. It may have simply gone the way of the golden frogs of Rio Shopping Center.

### **Rio Shopping Center, Atlanta, Georgia**

Like Drayton Arms, the design of Rio Shopping Center was lauded at the same time it was denigrated. Unlike Drayton Arms, Rio did not survive to reach a second awkward phase.

Fortunately, Rio Mall is recent enough that computer generated drawings of its design are available. It would be hard to deny that Rio did not possess architectural value. The fact that the building was designed by an internationally known architect, and the site by a renowned landscape architect, lends to its notoriety as one of the funkiest buildings in Atlanta, Georgia. Perhaps during its time in the city, not enough people were aware of the significance of the designers, and the design itself also received plenty of negative reaction. This extremely young building more than likely never had a chance to be studied by preservationists, though it certainly represented a unique moment in Georgia's architectural history.

Rio Shopping Center was definitely affected by its size and location. Shopping centers and malls are particularly problematic because even within the same building type, larger or trendier models quickly outdate them. Rio was a relatively small shopping center at 25,000 square feet, which probably dissuaded its continued use under a new owner or for a different use, such as an office park. However, it was too large for other types of commercial development in the area. Far too often, it is deemed economically necessary to raze the entire structure to allow for a building of more popular current style and scale. Due to its good location on a busy corner in Midtown, developers could no doubt see the potential economic success, but only in a new and revised format. Replaced with yet another, larger shopping center, scale perhaps played a significant part in Rio's demise.

With the exception of several stolen frogs, Rio Shopping Center did not stand long enough to determine if its materials would hold up. It is possible that if the building would have experienced frequent damage to its corrugated metal siding, and its paint colors might have become difficult to match; however for the time being, most of the materials utilized on Rio are still in production. It is impossible to say whether the same will be true in 2039.



Rio Shopping Center was considered amazing by some, bizarre by others. The attitudes of the general public and professionals hit both ends of the spectrum. With its string of awards and popularity among local artists and tourists, most of the publicity Rio got was affirmative. Of the people who did not appreciate Rio's unusual design and materials, few got any amount of publicity. The majority of attitudes seemed positive, yet it was not enough to save the center. Even though many who came into contact seemed to react very strongly to the building, surprisingly few actually seemed to take notice of its demolition. It was almost as if people saw that the businesses were not thriving and therefore decided that it was acceptable that the building be destroyed. Rio Shopping Center, with its bright colors, strings of light and golden frogs suffered from the invisibility of recent past architecture.

Rio Shopping Center is an example of a recent past failure. Preservationists did not take notice of the building soon enough to save it from becoming razed for an 'updated' multi-use complex centering around a chain grocery store. Because the building obviously had value and probably could have been considered significant early on, it is unfortunate that no guidelines or educational opportunities were in place to draw Rio out of its invisibility into the public and preservationist's eye.

## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Conclusions**

The problems associated with preserving recent past buildings increase the difficulty of identifying value in these buildings. It is evident that preserving the recent past is important to many preservationists as well as factions of the public. The significant number of research papers on the topic as well as the growing number of conferences, Web sites and guidelines geared toward resources younger than fifty years, is substantiation of its increasing importance. Much of this work has occurred within the last decade. Preserving the recent past is a growing concern in the profession of historic preservation. Although this concern has saved many buildings from demolition, many more have succumbed to this fate.

This chapter will discuss each of the conclusions of this thesis. Because recent past architecture is so often overlooked, even by professionals in the field of historic preservation, these resources must be made more visible. Preservationists must also begin to look beyond unfamiliar design and materials in order to ascertain the value of a resource. The attitudes of preservationists and the public on protecting the recent past must change through education. Professionals should use the ‘newness’ of recent past resources to their advantage. Finally, preservationists and other interested citizens can promote preservation of the recent past by taking an active role in the discipline.

### Make recent past resources visible

A major reason recent past resources are not preserved is that they are not recognized as heritage resources. Due to their very nature of being from the ‘recent past,’ they are easily overlooked. Preservationists and other professionals concentrating on saving these resources must be trained to pick resources out from among a jumble of recent architecture.

### Look beyond unfamiliar design concepts and materials use

Like modern art and music, certain people are immediately drawn to architectural innovation while others are equally repulsed by them. Having both sides of the argument actually adds to the value of a resource. If it draws emotional response, it is probably something worth considering for evaluation. It is common for viewers to be taken aback when first confronting a new architectural design or style. It is very important for preservationists, if not the general public, to manage to look beyond static ideas of history, or, even better, have the foresight to recognize a resource’s contribution to history at the time of its construction or shortly thereafter.

Preservationists and the public often quickly write off a resource that is made of what may be considered ‘tacky’ or ‘difficult’ materials. Often with recent past structures, the issue is not so simple. First of all, what is considered ugly today may be significant tomorrow. Secondly, the very nature of the innovation involved in many recent past resources makes them susceptible to material failure. If one or two elements of a building fail, that does not necessarily imply that the entire building is valueless. In addition, a very significant building could well have been built with poor materials. It is necessary that professionals determine an appropriate way to protect these resources by taking a new approach to preservation.

Generate positive attitudes regarding the protection of recent past resources

Preserving the recent past does not need to be controversial forever. While a certain amount of controversy early on can actually help get a resource noticed by a larger number of people, in the long run, preserving the recent past should become as normal an aspect of historic preservation as preserving a Greek Revival mansion. Because it is a relatively new part of historic preservation, it will take time to become fully accepted, much as preservation of vernacular architecture has slowly become an integral part of the profession. While it is usually clear that a historic high style building has value, it is somewhat more difficult to see such significance in historic vernacular structures. Similarly, but to a lesser extent, some people are able to see potential historic value in a high style recent past building, but a vernacular recent past resource is the most difficult of all upon which to place value. Even though the recent past changes with each generation, if preservationists make a point to concentrate on its importance, they will be more willing and able to make the necessary gradual changes in the field as time passes. Historic preservation as a whole has had to go through (and to some extent is still going through) an acceptance stage. Preserving the recent past is another step in the evolution of historic preservation.

Most of the issues discussed in this thesis--design, materials and construction, and development pressures--combine to create negative attitude toward recent past buildings. Recent past structures will continue to undergo scrutiny by preservationists. Even though their value is often recognized, it is impossible to put aside the bias generated by critics of these buildings that they need to mature to achieve value.

### Use the 'newness' of these resources to aid in their preservation

Because recent past buildings are relatively new, often architects, designers, engineers and builders are still alive and available to answer questions. It is generally easier to track down publications about recent past resources, and generally architectural plans and photographs are much better preserved. Preservationists could use this accessibility of resources to their advantage, building a strong foundation for the value of specific resources. Without proper education and guidelines it could always be difficult for preservationists to find a reasonable way to place value on a recent past building, therefore it is important that they be aware of as many resources as possible.

### Take an active role in preserving the recent past

Rio Shopping Center is an illustrative example of a tragic loss that might have been prevented (or at least been more newsworthy) if preservationists had recognized its value. More likely, the majority of people in Atlanta, Georgia were unaware of the uniqueness of the structure and its site. If preservationists and other advocacy groups--environmentalists, local business owners, artists, architects and historians--had raised awareness of Rio's value, perhaps its demolition could have been halted.

Research shows that while many professionals in the field are promoting preservation of the recent past in theory, not enough of them are actually taking active steps to save these sometimes-controversial buildings. Preservationists must not shy away from protecting this type of resource. Education of preservationists and the general public on the subject could make preserving recent past architecture much more feasible. The sooner preservationists recognize

the recent past as a legitimate part of the profession, the faster that all involved will see recent past architecture as an important part of history.

### **Recommendations**

How should preservationists and the public meet the challenges of preserving the recent past? What do these challenges mean to the field? And what tools should be developed? The following recommendations suggest solutions.

First and foremost, preservationists must be aware that new challenges will be faced when preserving recent past resources. They must educate themselves on the recent past. Adequate research must be done and made available to the profession at large. The significance of recent past design and materials must be thoroughly understood. Some literature exists on this subject, but the immense variety of materials needs to be something which can be quickly referenced and understood by preservationists. Standardized guidelines and effective management tools targeted at evolving recent past resources must be created. Adaptive reuse should be encouraged and environmental concerns and their appropriate remediation understood. Finally, and most importantly, building partnerships and educating the public are key in successfully preserving the recent past.

Understand that preserving the recent past faces new challenges in the field

On the most general level, preservation of the recent past should not be thought of differently than preserving any historic building. “There are however, a number of characteristics of modern buildings, such as material and structural innovation that pose new

conservation challenges.”<sup>167</sup> In addition, new resource types, such as public housing, modern landscapes, transportation systems and shopping malls, should be considered when dealing with the recent past. Another important point is that preservationists should “move away from a purely ‘architectural’ view of cultural heritage, and away from focusing on monuments and masterworks, to recognizing more vernacular buildings and sites.”<sup>168</sup>

In order to be able to face these challenges, preservationists can stay abreast with recent past issues by joining organizations like the Recent Past Preservation Network (RPPN) and DOcumentation and COnservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the MOdern MOvement (DOCOMOMO). The RPPN offers an online forum in which members can share experiences and discuss relevant subjects. The Association of Preservation Technologies (APT) and other journals often have articles relating to recent past materials or other important concepts. These groups also hold conferences that focus on the subject of the recent past and can be wonderful educational tools for professionals. By keeping in touch with the latest in the field, preservationists will be able to think in new directions, an absolute must to preserve the recent past.

### Research

Research is “the essential foundation for making informed decisions about treatment.”<sup>169</sup> Only when preservationists are familiar with the intricacies of the recent past can they fully protect it. The knowledge of what is significant and why it should be protected as well as how it

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<sup>167</sup> Susan MacDonald. . “Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 83.

<sup>168</sup> Thomas C. Jester. “International Perspectives on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Heritage,” *CRM*, Vol. 18, No. 8, (1995): 28.

<sup>169</sup> Rebecca A. Shiffer. “The Recent Past,” *CRM*, Vol. 18, No. 8, (1995): 3.

should be maintained or preserved is at the base of preserving the recent past. Some ideas have come about as to how this should be done. “Place the structures into a time continuum demonstrating how their relationship to national and international trends affects your community’s development.”<sup>170</sup>

The number of recent past resources that are in need of, or will soon be in need of preservation is overwhelming. However, gaining a concept of how these buildings contribute to history we will develop a better idea of where to begin. “On a professional level, better historical analysis—through objective thematic and monographic studies—is needed to avoid reliance on traditional art historical interpretation and premature judgments, often in the media, about significance.”<sup>171</sup> To preserve the recent past, we must mimic the structures we are trying to protect by breaking out of the mold and using untried methods.

Preservationists can research recent past subjects on both historic and scientific levels. While most professionals in the field are well aware of the importance of historic research, it can be difficult when a resource does not have a long history. Therefore, it is necessary to think of the scientific aspects of preservation. Again, the World Wide Web, when used with caution, can be an excellent resource for this type of history. Another way to research is through direct communication with architects, designers and builders of a specific building. Scientific research is becoming increasingly important in the field of recent past preservation. By working cooperatively with materials scientists and engineers, a great deal can be learned about how a building works, a necessary first step for its preservation or restoration.

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<sup>170</sup> Dan Becker and Claudia Brown. “Hyperbole in Parabolas: Preserving the Fabled Future of Raleigh’s Modernist Visionaries,” *Forum Journal 15* (Fall 2000), 40.

<sup>171</sup> Thomas C. Jester. “International Perspectives on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Heritage,” *CRM*, Vol. 18, No. 8, (1995): 28.



### Understand the significance of design

The difficulty of design is that it often requires the passage of a certain amount of time to fully emerge. Preservationists should keep track of similarities and differences found in recent past architecture's design. "Because with these newer buildings we don't have the benefit of 50 years to guide our judgment on which are important to save, we should be more conservative and save more rather than less of them."<sup>172</sup> Modern design is especially hard to read since one of its trademarks is a pronounced lack of ornamentation.

With continuing recent past research and time, understanding design will become less complicated. Keeping an open mind and a watchful eye will be an integral part of learning to pick out new design elements and be aware of their value. Preservationists should use the availability of a resource's architects and designers to their advantage. Documenting the thoughts and ideas of those directly involved in the creative process of a resource can add significantly to the overall understanding of a specific building, style or series of structures.

### Get familiar with recent past materials

Through research, professionals can become more knowledgeable of the many materials used in recent past building. This will be an ongoing job, as materials continue to evolve and change. "Recognizing conservation as a process, rather than an event in time is...vital."<sup>173</sup> Books such as *Twentieth Century Building Materials* by Thomas C. Jester are helpful references to the new materials used on recent past buildings, as are contacts with materials scientists and

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<sup>172</sup> Bruce D. Judd. "Preserving the Recent Past," *The Alliance Review*, (May/June 2000): 1.

<sup>173</sup> Susan MacDonald. "Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges," *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 86.

engineers. Not only do preservationists need to be aware of materials used in the original structures, they should know of alternatives that can be employed when certain materials fail or are no longer produced. It is important to be able to look at materials from both a preservationist's standpoint as well as a scientist's. Research, open communication with other professionals, and hands on practice will allow greater understanding of this integral part of preserving the recent past.

#### Create effective standardized guidelines

There is a definite need for current, specific tools for practitioners of recent past preservation, such as guideline templates which can be adapted for more localized use. By establishing standardized guidelines for preserving the recent past, the entire process—from identification through management, can be a much smoother and more logical one. Currently, few guidelines exist to aid preservationists on the recent past and many existing recommendations quickly become passé. “The fifty-year rule defies reason. Buildings deserving of preservation can be logically identified on the basis of the established National Register criteria regardless of their age or architectural style.”<sup>174</sup>

Preservationists must work together to create reasonable and comprehensive national and international guidelines that are flexible enough to cover the many idiosyncrasies of preserving recent past resources. Recent past guidelines should be based on existing guidelines, with less emphasis on age or passage of time, and more on issues such as design, materials, technology, social and political events.

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<sup>174</sup> Christine Madrid French. “Preservation in Person: Diane Wray, Denver, CO,” *RPPN Bulletin*. Volume 1, Number 1, (Winter 2003): 3.

### Appropriate management

“The immediate challenges associated with their management are arguably more complex than the challenges associated with managing long-recognised and ‘established’ historic places.”<sup>175</sup> Many of the issues previously discussed such as design, material and lack of research or guidelines contribute to the current challenges of preserving the recent past. As more and more of these aspects fall into place, so will appropriate management of recent past resources.

Preservationists should keep up-to-date on the latest management technologies such as digital cameras, and data collection devices that can be carried out into the field on a survey. Generalized survey instructions could be created to aid in the identification of significant resources and local preservation organizations should be knowledgeable enough of local styles and trends to successfully adapt the more generalized instructions for their specific needs. A national or international organization could be created that would give full-time technical assistance to local governments on their recent past resources.

Using these tools to their advantage, professionals can become much more efficient at recent past management. Preservationists should also avoid getting stuck in a rigid formula when it comes to these buildings. It will become increasingly important to have an open mind to new methods and management techniques.

### Emphasize adaptive use

It is still far too easy to look at an empty recent past building and believe that demolition is the only tactic. Most of these structures can be successfully reused. Often they are better built

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<sup>175</sup> David Dolan. “The first stage of aging: modern heritage places get old,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 430.

than new structures and the amount of energy lost when demolition occurs is huge. “Reuse approaches based on sustainability”<sup>176</sup> should be considered with recent past structures.

Preservationists can work together with environmental or anti-sprawl groups to gain more support in an effort to save a building. In addition, many of these buildings can be easily retrofitted for modern HVAC or computer technology making them more economically feasible than new construction.

Adaptive reuse is probably one of the best ways to protect recent past buildings. As their original uses become redundant, they can be turned into office parks, community centers and residential or artist lofts, among many others. If recent past resources are allowed into local historic districts, or as landmarks, these structures may be eligible for funding, thereby making adaptive use a more economical option. Adaptive use of recent past buildings is not only a good way to save bits of history, but a means to protect the environment from unnecessary strain on nonrenewable resources.

#### Understand environmental concerns

Sometimes materials used in recent past buildings are discovered to be hazardous. “Don’t let environmental concerns be used as a justification for demolition.”<sup>177</sup> The use of lead pipes, lead paint, and asbestos for fireproofing or insulation is not uncommon in recent past buildings. Lead-based paint, for instance, was not restricted from residential use until the late 1970s. There are ways to stabilize or safely remove these substances without harming the

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<sup>176</sup> Thomas C. Jester. “International Perspectives on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Heritage,” *CRM*, Vol. 18, No. 8, (1995): 29..

<sup>177</sup> Dan Becker and Claudia Brown. “Hyperbole in Parabolas: Preserving the Fabled Future of Raleigh’s Modernist Visionaries,” *Forum Journal 15* (Fall 2000), 40.

building. Preservationists will have to continue dealing with environmental concerns as new research is conducted on building materials.

Preservationists should maintain contact with organizations such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and others doing research in recent past materials. Often a local Cooperative Extension Agent will have information on housing hazards and those who deal with their safe removal. It is very important to keep up-to-date on environmental hazards, or have a technical assistance center to gain access to quick answers.

#### Build partnerships and educate the public

Creating partnerships strengthens the ability to protect important recent past resources. Governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, schools, and private groups can all work together to preserve these buildings and to educate the public of their value. Preservationists should make a point to promote activities that will bring the public into frequent contact with the idea of preserving the recent past and generate publicity. “Without wider public recognition, it is difficult to convince people of the value of tangible evidence of the recent past.”<sup>178</sup> By reaching out to groups and individuals, more people will become aware of the value of recent past architecture. This awareness, in turn can generate interest and promote preservation. “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.”<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Susan MacDonald. . “Conserving the Recent Past: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges,” *Twentieth Century Heritage – Our Recent Cultural Legacy*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Australia, 2001, 87.

<sup>179</sup> Dan Becker and Claudia Brown. “Hyperbole in Parabolae: Preserving the Fabled Future of Raleigh’s Modernist Visionaries,” *Forum Journal 15* (Fall 2000), 39.

Publications, such as brochures and Web sites, should be created with the public in mind. The Los Angeles Conservancy has as a part of their historic preservation Web site, a page focusing on preserving modern houses.<sup>180</sup> This valuable information educates owners of post World War Two homes, which are extremely common in southern California. The website defines ‘modern’ and gives hints for homeowners to determine if their residence is modern, as well as why modern homes are valuable and why they should be maintained. A brief section also covers how a modern house should be restored. This type of information can be extremely helpful in educating the general public, and resources such as the World Wide Web should be fully utilized in its dissemination.

These are just a few of the challenges that preservationists encounter when dealing with the recent past. The fact that these challenges exist should not be daunting, but should be seen as healthy hurdles that must be overcome in order to add a new dimension to the field of historic preservation. Preservationists can use these challenges to improve existing tools for protecting recent past structures.

From these data it is possible to deduce an image of the future Berenice, which will bring you closer to knowing the truth than any other information about the city as it is seen today...But what I wanted to warn you about is something else: all the future Berenices are already present in this instant, wrapped one within the other, confined, crammed, inextricable.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Los Angeles Conservancy. “Your Modern Home.” Web site, available online at: <http://www.laconservancy.org/preservation/YourModernHome.html>.

<sup>181</sup> Italo Calvino. *Invisible Cities*, translated by William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1974, 162-3.

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## APPENDIX A

CRITERIA CONSIDERATION G: PROPERTIES THAT HAVE ACHIEVED  
SIGNIFICANCE WITHIN THE PAST FIFTY YEARS

**A property achieving significance within the past fifty years is eligible if it is of *exceptional importance*.**

*(For more information on Criteria Consideration G, refer to National Register Bulletin: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years.)*

***Understanding Criteria Consideration G: Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years***

The National Register Criteria for Evaluation exclude properties that achieved significance within the past fifty years unless they are of exceptional importance. Fifty years is a general estimate of the time needed to develop historical perspective and to evaluate significance. This consideration guards against the listing of properties of passing contemporary interest and ensures that the National Register is a list of truly historic places.

***Examples of Properties that MUST Meet Criteria Consideration G: Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years***

- *A property that is less than fifty years old.*
- *A property that continues to achieve significance into a period less than fifty years before the nomination.*
- *A property that has non-contiguous Periods of Significance, one of which is less than fifty years before the nomination.*
- *A property that is more than fifty years old and had no significance until a period less than fifty years before the nomination.*

***Examples of Properties that DO NOT Need to Meet Criteria Consideration G: Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years***

- *A resource whose construction began over fifty years ago, but the completion overlaps the fifty-year period by a few years or less.*
- *A resource that is significant for its plan or design, which is more than fifty years old, but the actual completion of the project overlaps the fifty year period by a few years.*
- *A historic district in which a few properties are newer than fifty years old, but the majority of properties and the most important Period of Significance are greater than fifty years old.*

## **Applying Criteria Consideration G: Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within The Last Fifty Years**

### **Eligibility for Exceptional Importance**

The phrase "exceptional importance" may be applied to the extraordinary importance of an event or to an entire category of resources so fragile that survivors of any age are unusual. Properties listed that had attained significance in less than fifty years include: the launch pad at Cape Canaveral from which men first traveled to the moon, the home of nationally prominent playwright Eugene O'Neill, and the Chrysler Building (New York) significant as the epitome of the "Style Moderne" architecture.

Properties less than fifty years old that qualify as exceptional because the entire category of resources is fragile include a recent example of a traditional sailing canoe in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, where because of rapid deterioration of materials, no working Micronesian canoes exist that are more than twenty years old. Properties that by their nature can last more than fifty years cannot be considered exceptionally important because of the fragility of the class of resources.

The phrase "exceptional importance" does not require that the property be of national significance. It is a measure of a property's importance within the appropriate historic context, whether the scale of that context is local, State, or national.

### ***Eligible***

- The General Laundry Building in New Orleans, one of the few remaining Art Deco Style buildings in that city, was listed in the National Register when it was forty years old because of its exceptional importance as an example of that architectural style.

### **Historical Perspective**

A property that has achieved significance within the past fifty years can be evaluated only when sufficient historical perspective exists to determine that the property is exceptionally important. The necessary perspective can be provided by scholarly research and evaluation, and must consider both the historic context and the specific property's role in that context.

In many communities, properties such as apartment buildings built in the 1950s cannot be evaluated because there is no scholarly research available to provide an overview of the nature, role, and impact of that building type within the context of historical and architectural developments of the 1950s.

### **National Park Service Rustic Architecture**

Properties such as structures built in a rustic style by the National Park Service during the 1930s and 1940s can now be evaluated because a broad study, *National Park Service Rustic Architecture* (1977), provides the context for evaluating properties of this type and style. Specific



examples were listed in the National Register prior to reaching fifty years of age when documentation concerning the individual properties established their significance within the historical and architectural context of the type and style.

### **Veterans Administration Hospitals**

Hospitals less than fifty years old that were constructed by the Veterans Bureau and Veterans Administration can be evaluated because the collection of forty-eight facilities built between 1920 and 1946 has been analyzed in a study prepared by the agency. The study provided a historic and architectural context for development of veteran's care within which hospitals could be evaluated. The exceptional importance of specific individual facilities constructed within the past fifty years could therefore be determined based on their role and their present integrity.

### **Comparison with Related Properties**

In justifying exceptional importance, it is necessary to identify other properties within the geographical area that reflect the same significance or historic associations and to determine which properties best represent the historic context in question. Several properties in the area could become eligible with the passage of time, but few will qualify now as exceptionally important.

### **Post-World War II Properties**

Properties associated with the post-World War II era must be identified and evaluated to determine which ones in an area could be judged exceptionally important. For example, a public housing complex may be eligible as an outstanding expression of the nation's post-war urban policy. A military installation could be judged exceptionally important because of its contribution to the Cold War arms race. A church building in a Southern city may have served as a pivotal rallying point for the city's most famous civil rights protest. A post-war suburban subdivision may be the best reflection of contemporary siting and design trends in a metropolitan area. In each case, the nomination preparer must justify the *exceptional* importance of the property relative to similar properties in the community, State, or nation.

### **Eligibility for Information Potential**

A property that has achieved significance within the past fifty years can qualify under Criterion D only if it can be demonstrated that the information is of exceptional importance within the appropriate context and that the property contains data superior to or different from those obtainable from other sources, including other culturally related sites. An archeological site less than fifty years old may be eligible if the former inhabitants are so poorly documented that information about their lifeways is best obtained from examination of the material remains.

***Eligible***

- Data such as the rate of adoption of modern technological innovations by rural tenant farmers in the 1950s may not be obtainable through interviews with living persons but could be gained by examination of homesites.

***Not Eligible***

- A recent archeological site such as the remains of a Navajo sheep corral used in the 1950s would not be considered exceptionally significant for its information potential on animal husbandry if better information on the same topic is available through ethnographic studies or living informants.

**Historic Districts**

Properties which have achieved significance within the past fifty years can be eligible for the National Register if they are an integral part of a district which qualifies for National Register listing. This is demonstrated by documenting that the property dates from within the district's defined Period of Significance and that it is associated with one or more of the district's defined Areas of Significance.

Properties less than fifty years old may be an integral part of a district when there is sufficient perspective to consider the properties as historic. This is accomplished by demonstrating that: 1) the district's Period of Significance is justified as a discrete period with a defined beginning and end, 2) the character of the district's historic resources is clearly defined and assessed, 3) specific resources in the district are demonstrated to date from that discrete era, and 4) the majority of district properties are over fifty years old. In these instances, it is not necessary to prove exceptional importance of either the district itself or the less-than-fifty-year-old properties. Exceptional importance still must be demonstrated for district where the majority of properties or the major Period of Significance is less than fifty years old, and for less-than-fifty-year-old properties, which are nominated individually.

**Properties More Than Fifty Years in Age, Less Than Fifty Years in Significance**

Properties that are more than fifty years old, but whose significant associations or qualities are less than fifty years old, must be treated under the fifty-year consideration.

***Eligible***

- A building constructed early in the twentieth century (and having no architectural importance), but that was associated with an important person during the 1950s, must be evaluated under Criteria Consideration G because the Period of Significance is within the past fifty years. Such a property would qualify if the person was of exceptional importance.

**Requirement to Meet the Criteria, Regardless of Age**

Properties that are less than fifty years old and are not exceptionally important will not automatically qualify for the National Register once they are fifty years old. In order to be listed in the National Register, all properties, regardless of age, must be demonstrated to meet the Criteria for Evaluation.

## APPENDIX B

## EXAMPLE OF STATEWIDE (COLORADO) GUIDELINES

**Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Recent Past**

**A property achieving significance within the recent past is eligible if a sufficient historic context exists to permit the evaluation of the resource.**

The State Register recognizes *historic* properties. Properties associated with events and persons from the recent past are difficult to evaluate objectively. History repeatedly demonstrates that an event which seemed to be of paramount importance at its occurrence proved to be of little consequence in the larger course of subsequent events. Other events, hardly noticed at their occurrence, proved to be of great influence on the course of future activities. Finally, there are those events that were generally recognized as important at their occurrence, but which turned out to have long term consequences varying greatly from that expected .

A sufficient amount of time must have elapsed since the event to allow the development of a historical perspective to facilitate the evaluation of significance. This consideration guards against the listing of properties of passing contemporary interest and ensures that the State Register is a list of truly *historic* properties. For some events the passage of 20 or 30 years may provide sufficient chronological distance to permit thoughtful evaluation. For other events, 50 or 60 years may be necessary. Generally, the closer an event dates to the present, the more difficult will be the evaluation of such an event and thus more care will be taken in listing associated properties in the State Register.

**Examples of properties that have achieved significance within the recent past requiring special consideration:**

- A property of recent construction.
- A property that continues to achieve significance into the recent past.
- An older property that is significant for associations that occurred in the recent past.

**Examples of properties that have achieved significance within the recent past not requiring special consideration:**

- A historic district in which a few properties are of recent construction, but the majority of properties and the time at which the significance occurred are of greater age.

### **Rare Surviving Resources**

Certain categories of resources are so fragile that survivors of any age are unusual. If significant examples are to be preserved, they must be identified and evaluated early in their life. However, just because a group of properties tend not to survive in an unaltered state, does not automatically make that group or individual members of that group historically significant. Appropriate evaluation is still necessary.

### **Historical Perspective**

A property that has achieved significance within the recent past can be evaluated only when sufficient historical perspective exists to determine that the property is exceptionally important. The necessary perspective can be provided by scholarly research and evaluation, and must consider both the historic context and the specific property's role in that context.

In many communities, properties such as apartment buildings built in the 1950s and 1960s cannot be evaluated because there is no scholarly research available to provide an overview of the nature, role, and impact of that building type within the context of historical and architectural developments of the 1950s and 1960s.

### **Eligibility for Information Potential**

A property that has achieved significance in the recent past can qualify under Criterion E only if it can be demonstrated that the information is of importance within the appropriate context and that the property contains data superior to or different from those obtainable from other sources, including other culturally related sites. An archaeological site of the recent past may be eligible if the former inhabitants are so poorly documented that information about their lifeways is best obtained from examination of the material remains.

### **Historic Districts**

Properties which have achieved significance within the recent past can be eligible for the State Register if they are an integral part of a district, which qualifies for State Register listing. This is demonstrated by documenting that the property dates from within the time period when the district achieved its significance and that it is associated with one or more of the district's defined Areas of Significance.