



# Mid-Century Modern Houses

From Out of Date to  
In Demand



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO  
**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Elizabeth Porterfield

# Modernism

- Begins in Europe in early 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Break from traditional precedents
- Clean lines and surfaces, simplicity, lack of ornamentation
- New materials, building techniques



Bauhaus Building in Dessau, Germany built 1925-26  
[www.bauhaus-dessau.de/english/home.htm](http://www.bauhaus-dessau.de/english/home.htm)



# Leading into the Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century

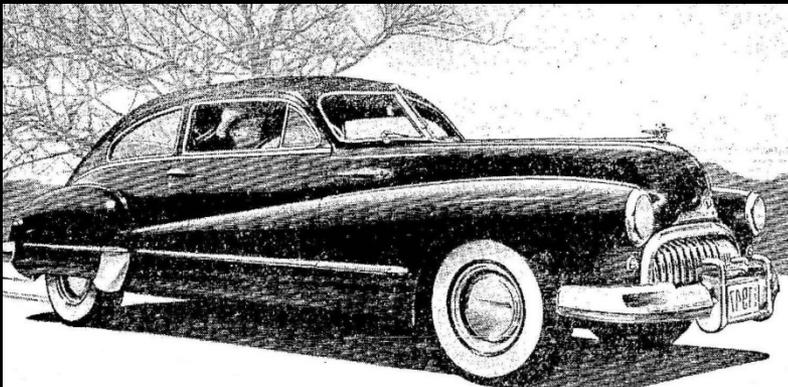
**HOME LOANS**

When you make a First Federal easy monthly payment loan to buy a home or to refinance an existing mortgage, you are dealing with "home folks" who do not sell the loan to outside interests. Payments are small and well fitted to the average home owner's income. Ask for full information—without obligation. We also make F.H.A. loans.

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*San Antonio Light* June 4, 1950

- Depression and WWII
- Returning GIs, baby boom, increased need for housing
- FHA loans
- Rise of the automobile



*San Antonio Light* June 17, 1947

# Iconic Mid-Century Modern Houses



# Mid-Century *Modest*

- Mass produced
- Unpretentious, small
- Middle class homes



# Mid-Century Modern Architectural Features

# Irregular or Flat Rooflines



# Irregular or Flat Rooflines



# Minimal Ornamentation



# Plate Glass & Clerestory Windows



# Plate Glass & Clerestory Windows



# Contrasting Cladding Materials



# Decorative Screens & Accent Walls



# Wing Walls



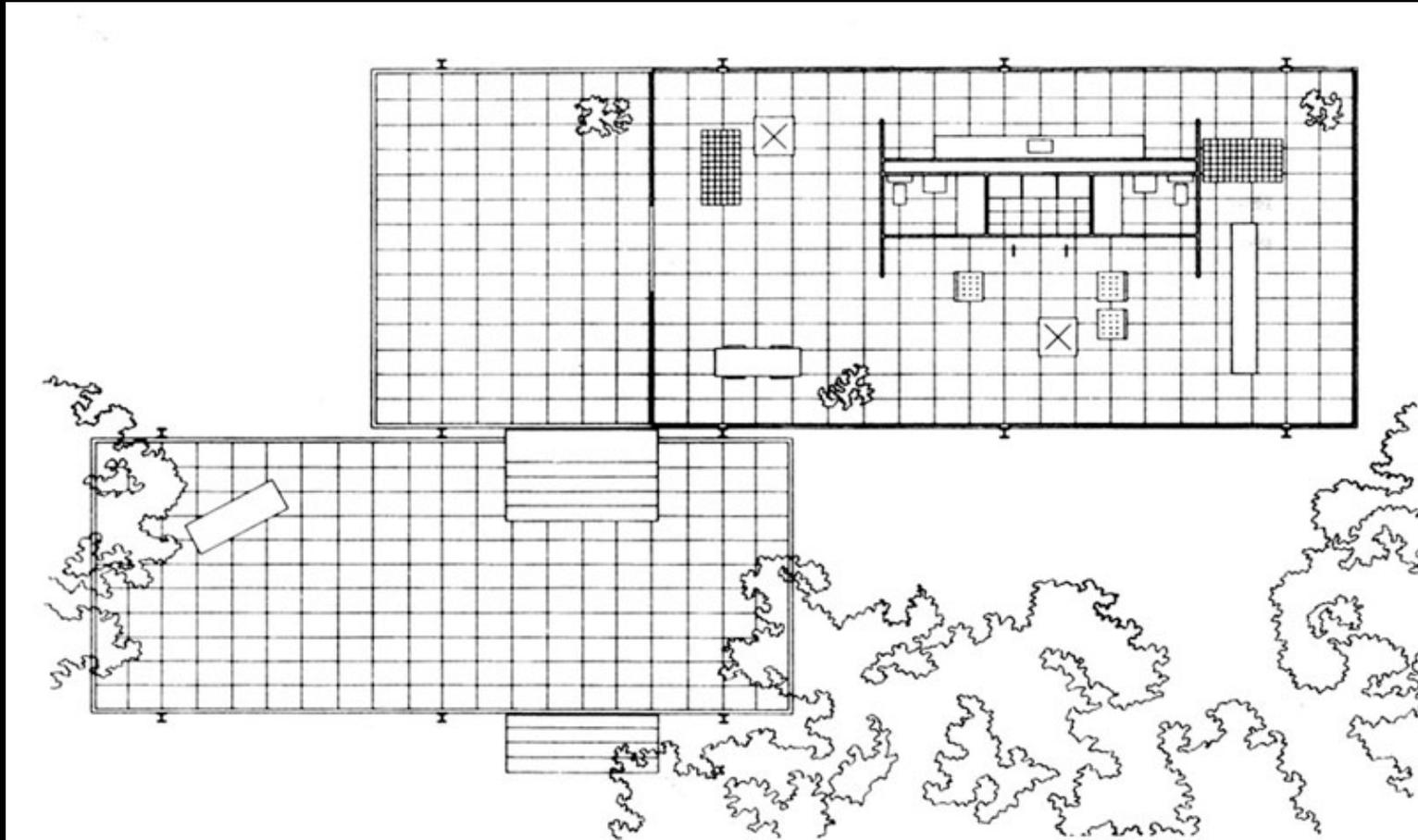
# Garages and Carports



# Garages and Carports



# Open Floor Plans



# Working on your Mid-Century Home

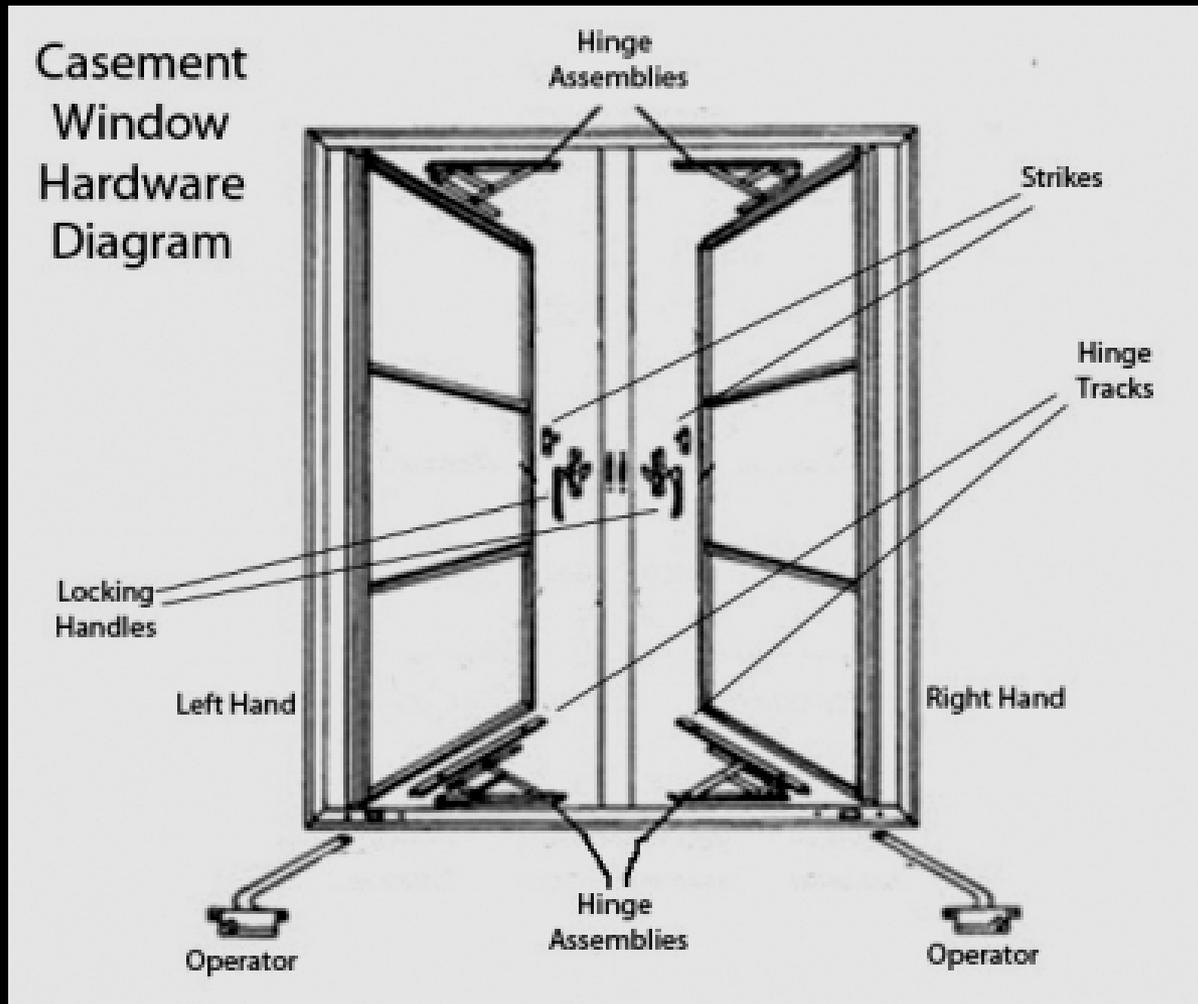
# Steel Casement Windows



# Steel Casement Windows



# Steel Casement Windows



# Casement vs. Replacement



# Improving Energy Efficiency

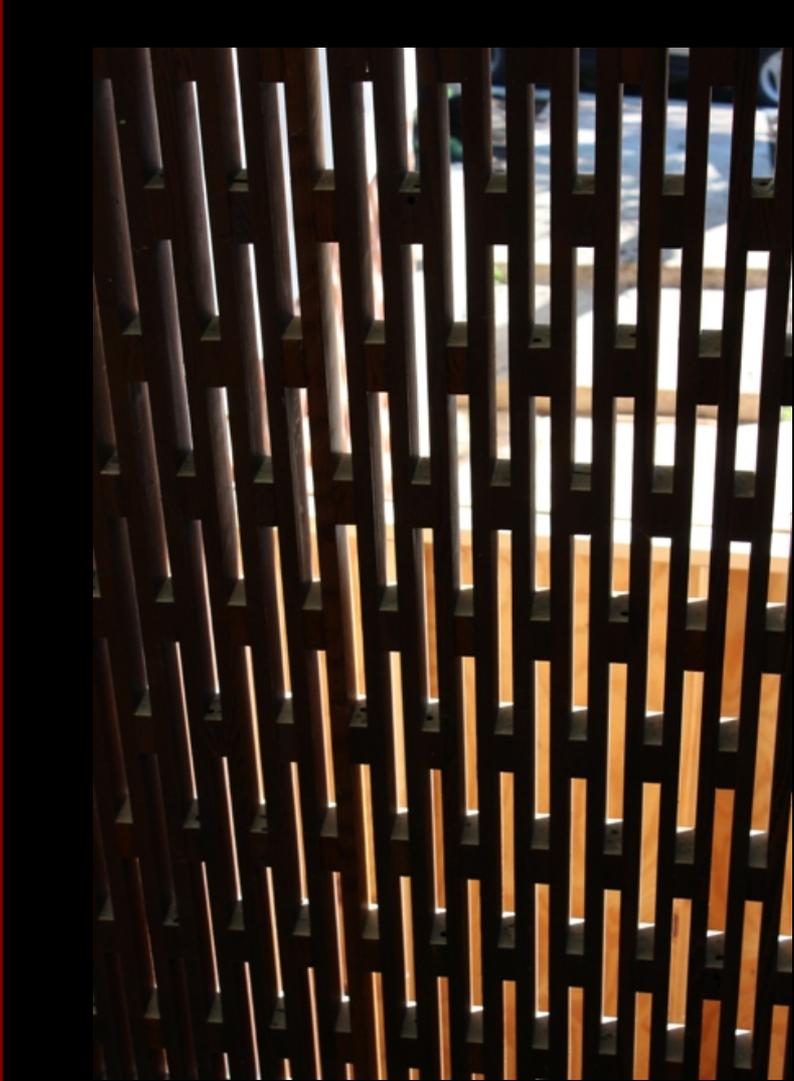
- Wall insulation
- Attic insulation/ventilation
- Replace ductwork
- Update electricity



# Original Finishes



# Original Finishes



# Kitchens



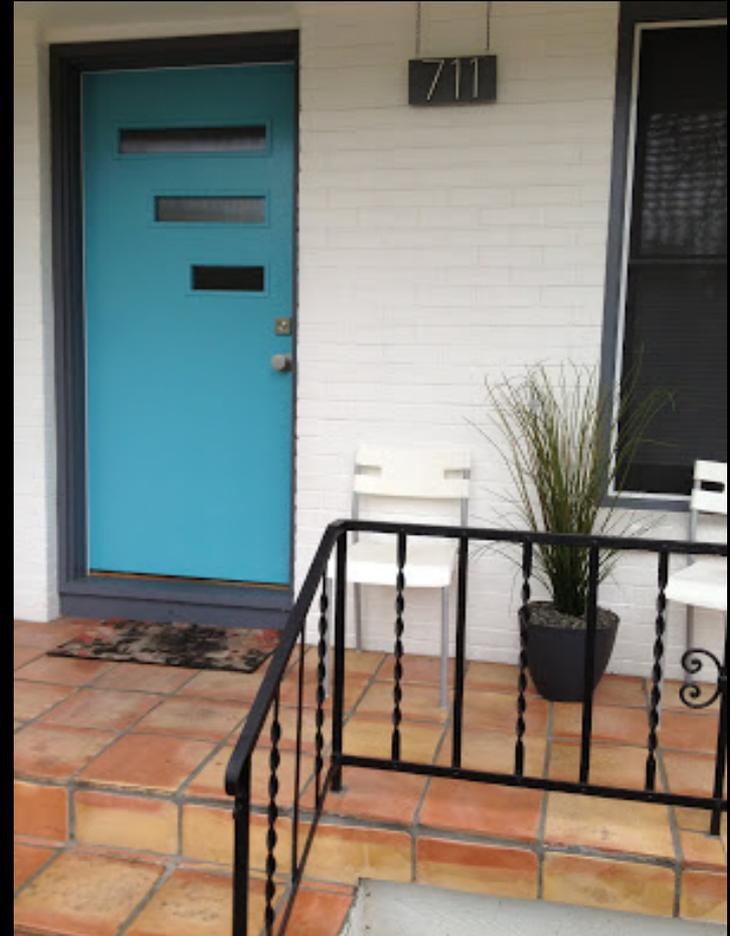
# Bathrooms



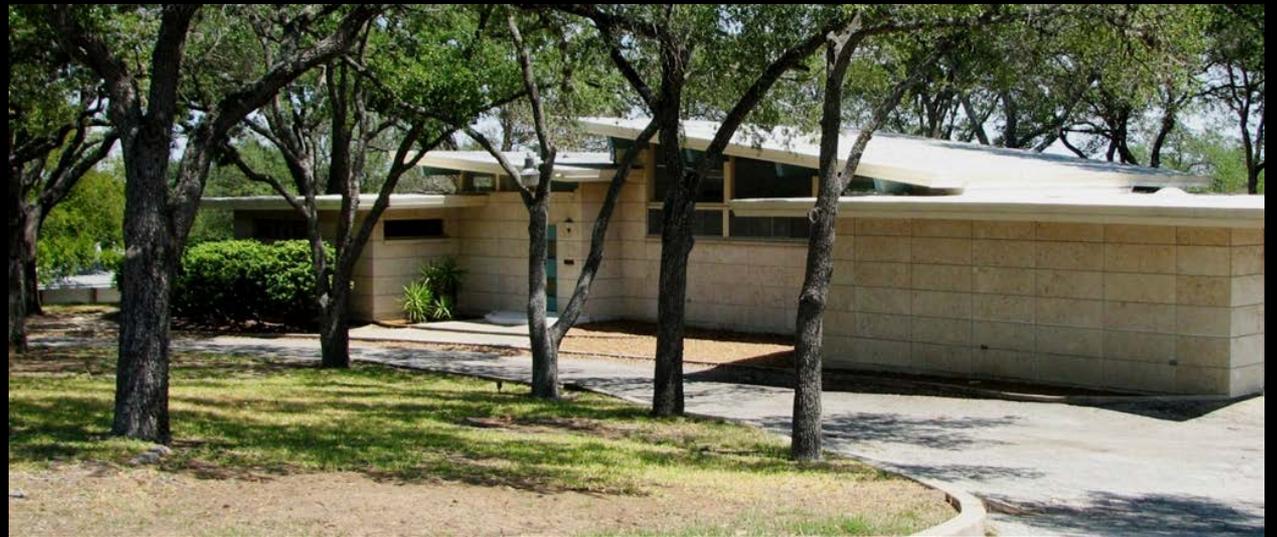
# Fixtures



# Front Doors



# Light on Landscaping



# Embrace the Mid-Century Modern



# Mid-Century Preservation Resources

# Mid Tex Mod

midtexmod  
do.co.mo.mo\_US

Sunday, October 20, 2013

## Mid Tex Mod Tour Day Recap



photography credit: Brent Humphreys

The 2013 Docomomo Mid Tex Mod Tour Day was a great success and was an informative and enjoyable way to learn more about John Chase's work in East Austin. We were especially fortunate to have the super talented photographer Brent Humphreys document Chase's work for a pop up exhibit at the Carver Center. We were also thrilled to have speakers Fred McGhee and Stephen Fox talk about Chase's work in Austin and Houston respectively.

Thanks to all of the people who attended the event and our group of volunteers. Special appreciation goes to Rick Black, Betsy Frederick-Rothwell, and Charles Peveto for organizing the programming and content of the 2013 Tour Day. Please check the Mid Tex Mod blog and Facebook page for future events.

### Who we are

Mid Tex Mod is a chapter of Docomomo US

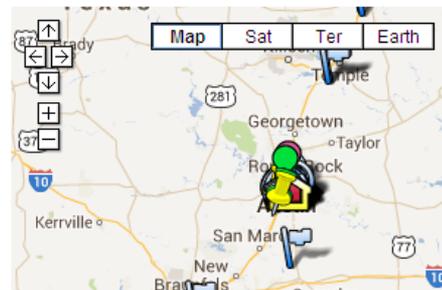
We seek to raise awareness of the Modern Movement in Central Texas and the value of documentation, preservation, and sustained use of buildings, sites, neighborhoods, landscapes, and other manifestations of modernism.

Contact us:  
midtexasmod@gmail.com  
PO Box 12734  
Austin, Texas 78711

### Join us!

Join Docomomo US and you will become a treasured member of our regional chapter!

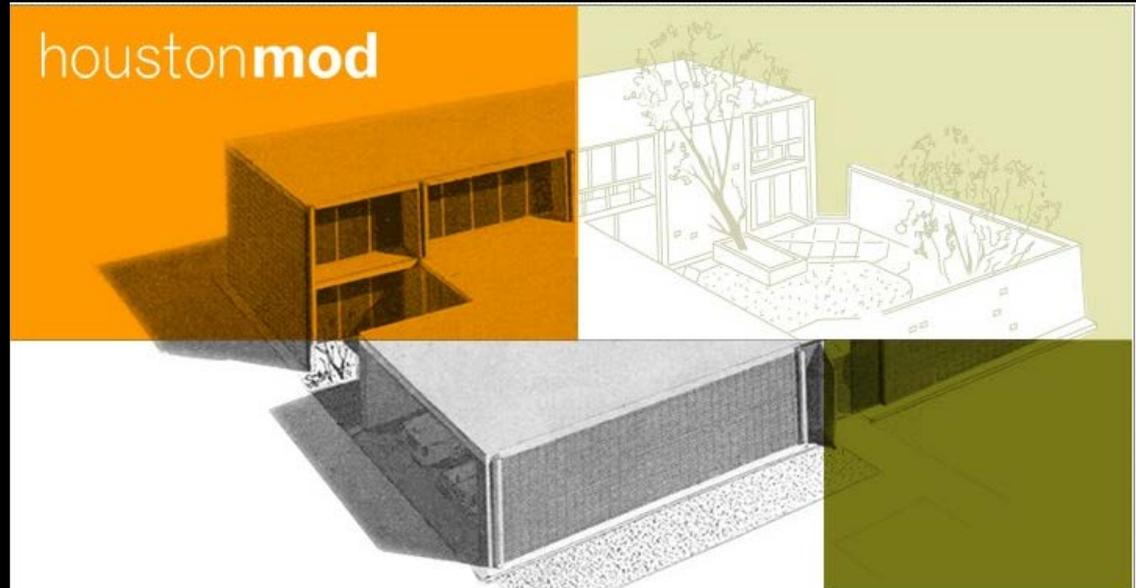
Map of Modern Resources (Please contact us to add your favorite!)



[www.midtexasmod.blogspot.com](http://www.midtexasmod.blogspot.com)

# Houston Mod

www.houstonmod.org



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## In The News

SAVE THE  
ASTRODOME Vote  
Yes on Prop. 2,  
Tuesday, November  
5th, 2013

[Go>](#)

Join Houston Mod for  
the 2013 DoCoMoMo  
National Tour Day  
October 5, 2013 at  
Sylvan Beach

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Barnstone & Aubry's  
Butler House  
Featured as Mod of  
the Month Sunday,  
September 15, 2013-  
Join us in Richmond

[Go>](#)

Mod of the Month  
August 25, 2013 in  
Lake Jackson, Texas

## mission

Houston Mod is a non-profit, 501(C)(3), membership organization dedicated to promoting knowledge and appreciation of modern architecture and design in Houston and Texas. Houston Mod advocates the preservation of this cultural legacy and seeks support from its members and the general public in achieving this goal.

Selected from the Modern in  
Houston Database

Jenkins Second House  
Architect: William R. Jenkins  
Date: 1955



# Palm Springs Modern Committee (PS ModCom)

## PS MODCOM

ABOUT US  
PRESERVATION  
NEWS  
EVENTS  
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VINTAGE PS  
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### MISSION STATEMENT

The Palm Springs Modern Committee (PS ModCom) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the appreciation and preservation of Desert Modern architecture and design. We accomplish this through education, advocacy for threatened buildings, promotion of heritage tourism, and the celebration of successes in preservation and adaptive reuse.



PS ModCom's Fall Home Tour will take place on Saturday, Nov. 2nd. A full-day, self-guided tour concluding with a cocktail reception. [Get your tickets now!](#)



Our self-guided tour app of Palm Springs Modern Architecture is available for iPhones, iPads, Google Phones & Tablets! Visit [iTunes](#) and [Google Play](#) to buy it today!



ELROD HOUSE  
JOHN LAUTNER, 1968



COACHELLA VALLEY SAVINGS  
E. STEWART WILLIAMS, 1960

# North Carolina Modernist Houses

formerly Triangle Modernist Houses



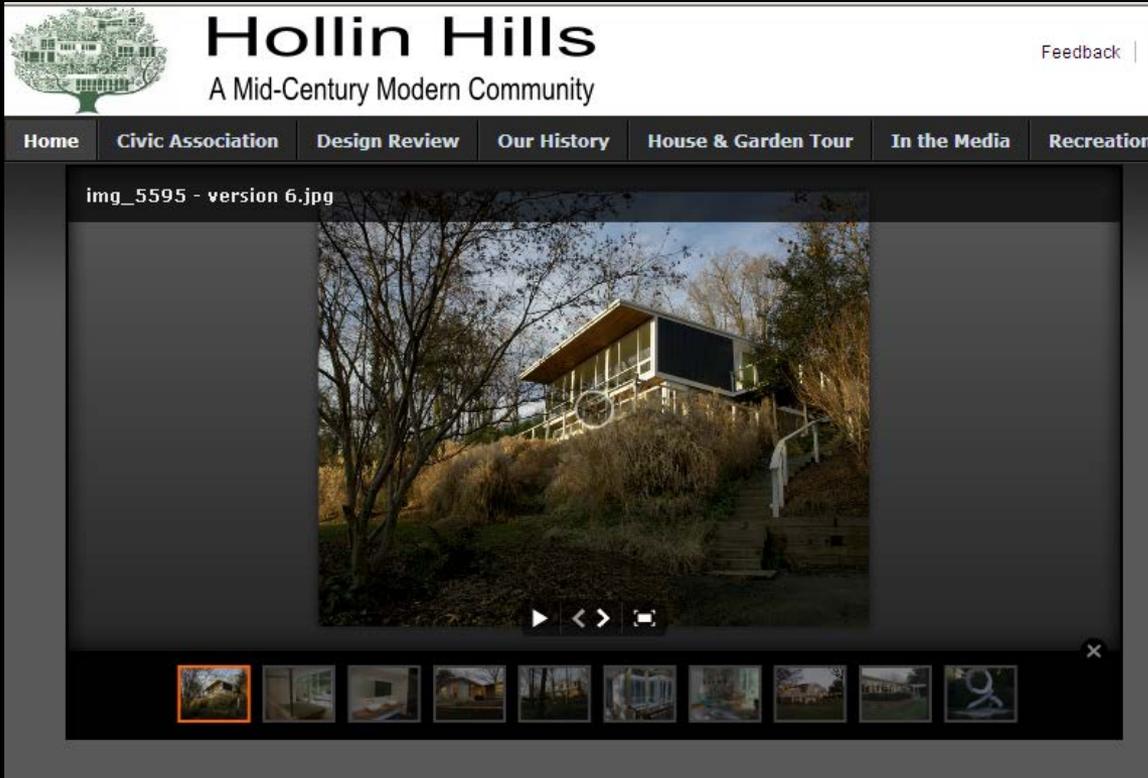
*Architecture You Love*

A North Carolina 501C3 Educational Nonprofit  
Archive Documenting, Preserving, and  
Promoting Residential Modernist Architecture  
4100+ Houses, 15840+ Images



[www.trianglemodernisthouses.com](http://www.trianglemodernisthouses.com)

# Hollin Hills, VA



[www.hollinhills.net](http://www.hollinhills.net)



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# Show me the midcentury love

Just saying No to McMansions

lands a Missouri neighborhood on the National Register

## Creve Coeur, MO

text Toby Weiss  
photography Bruce Day

For 50-plus years, the ranch homes in a Creve Coeur, Mo., subdivision have stood essentially unaltered because it says so in writing. While teardown developers have pockmarked surrounding areas, generations of Ladue Estates residents have respected the original neighborhood covenants, making it a St. Louis County rarity: a fully intact Atomic Age neighborhood. Love of place has always been the motivation for preserving their community, but at the conclusion of a three-year historic registry process, the homeowners are also pioneers of midcentury preservation in Missouri and beyond.



12 photos from 1960-1965



### Westward Ho!

In the 1950s and '60s, St. Louisans enthusiastically embraced modern architecture. Eric Saarheim's *Greenbelt* plan was going up in St. Louis, and other new construction also reflected this desire for a clean, fresh look. The place where Charles E. Carter was born and educated also nurtured renowned modernist architects Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Kahn and William Bryner.

During the late design era, urban dwellers moved west some 20 miles into mid-St. Louis County for suburban elbow room. Low-rising, detached ranch homes were the preferred look, a stark contrast between the old, vertical city and the new, horizontal county west of city limits.

The Creve Coeur rhythm with "three doors" also remains a tightly disciplined 20' code, and when the "young diva" architect for McMansions, it also achieved "Bramble Cottage" status. While original ranch homes were based at ground level, Ladue Estates ranches first primarily because the original vision of developer/builder Sam Goldberg was so perfectly executed.



The 1958 model has interior wood flooring (replaced with grey tile) and a single original kitchen peninsula with open cabinet rear gallery between the 22' walls on the wall from refrigerator and a feature: see page two for a closer view.

The brick wall in the base of the same model, located in West Grove, has original green oak and parquet wood flooring.

On the previous spread, one of three photos depicting the neighborhood in 1965. Here is the neighborhood as built in 1965.



12 photos from 1960-1965



The original hardwood floors and lead core in the kitchen have replaced. The homeowners have added the entry wall and floor with new oak tile.



12 photos from 1960-1965



The front entrance of the home shown in the 1958 sales brochure as it looks today.

### Keys to Gracious Living

The St. Louis Jewish community faced obstacles of relocation discrimination during the postwar building boom. Goldberg's purchase of 65 acres of land in Creve Coeur, Mo., and his partnership with local business associates who sought for a home that could impact the suburban ideal.

With an investment of \$40,000 to \$50,000, buyers could sign up for a ranch-type one-story dwelling with no more than 1,000 square feet on an average of 60 acres of land. From 1960 to 1965, Goldberg & Company built homes designed by local architect, C.W. George Wenzel that were rectangular in shape with attached side-entry garages, minimal ornamentation and full basements.

All Ladue Estates homes share similar floor plans, with open public spaces radiating out from a central fireplace, either on the outside, rear facade or inside. Rooms range from large living areas, main, basement and secondary bedrooms, and a bathroom with natural light. Decorative stone and textured brick are laid in bonded or stacked patterns on walls and built-in platters, sometimes set on the same elevation.

Story homes about the play of asymmetry conveying a strong sense that the builders had fun and jokes. OK, and let us see it differently on the "end" - "ranch" neighborhood and architectural designer David Corvay.

# nick of time

## Tucson's Indian Ridge



*"It is the nature of things that when a man moves up in the world, he and his family reflect his status in many directions. It shows in the car he drives, the clothes he wears, the tailoring of his clothes, and most definitely in the size and size of his home."*

This rather "Mad Men"-esque sentiment was aimed at the country club aspirations of homebuyers in Tucson's Indian Ridge neighborhood, built between 1955 and 1964. Developed by the Lusk Corporation, once the fifth-

largest builder in the U.S., the ranch homes were sited to minimize sun exposure on primary windows, and utilized burnt adobe construction, slab foundations, carports, sliding glass doors and desert-appropriate landscaping as typical features. With no public transportation to this part of northeast Tucson, owning a car was essential to buying a home there.

Named to the National Register of Historic Places in 2010, 278 of the tract's 267 homes were considered to be "contributing"—exhibiting historic front facade elements



Indian Ridge Press photos from 1955



that add to the cohesion of the neighborhood. "Indian Ridge is a superb example of expressive modernism developed with a thoughtful relationship to the desert environment," says Damon Clinco, president of the Tucson Historic Preservation Foundation and the consultant who prepared the nomination. "Four of the models were 'The Monterey,' 'The Riviera Midwestern,' 'The Lanai,' and 'The Isha Home'; each had four or five elevations to choose from. As a marketing strategy, each model featured exclusive options not available on the other models."

Some of the features included Hotpoint appliances, Formica counters and wood cabinets with wingtip-iron or antiqued copper hardware in the kitchens. Bath fixtures could be ordered in pink, green, brown, gray, blue or white. Interior paint choices numbered 168 hues, while 300 wallpaper options were offered, along with inlaid, wall-to-wall carpeting or "Danish cork" floors. The minimum square footage was 1,350, and a Lusk architect had to approve all fences and colors until 51 percent of the homes were developed in the first tract.

WINTER 2011 | 30

## "Indian Ridge is a superb example of expressive modernism"



Doug Striggow (B)



This page, the Harbaugh-Striggow home, which has a room devoted to Dr. Seuss collectibles dating from the '30s to the 1970s. The pair note that Theodor Geisel was an illustrator for the WWII war effort and did advertising for Ford, Holly Sugar, Standard Oil and others before writing his series of popular children's books. Furnishings include a vintage Womb chair and glass-front lawyer's bookcases rescued from an Army base. "We love the Atomic Age," says Doug Striggow. "In the dining room a vintage carnival rocket ride is hanging from the ceiling, and there's a space ship, robot gum machines and a moon wagon. And I can't forget the Space Cruiser pedal car and our great collection of Franciscan Starbuck dinnerware."



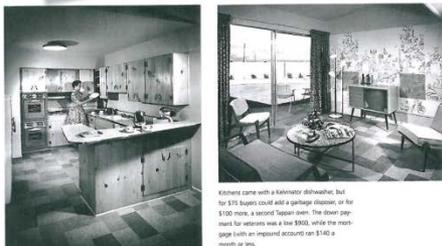
even a magazine that was devoted entirely to these kinds of homes, and carried a copy of Atomic Ranch around."

The group that ushered through the two-year nomination process turned to long-time residents for oral histories and vintage Lusk materials, including invaluable information from Rader's daughter, who still lives in the area. A total of \$37,800 was raised from homeowner contributions, selling framed posters of the vintage ephemera, and special events like a guided tour of the prehistoric Indian ruins that give the development its name.

The neighborhood continues traditions like a Fourth of July parade and lining the streets with 8,000 luminaries on Christmas Eve. "Indian Ridge is just an early tract home neighborhood," says Striggow, "but with much bigger lots than today and a lot more style—truly midcentury modern."

Vintage photography and ephemera courtesy Indian Ridge Historic District. To learn more about Tucson's preservation efforts, including a look at the city's midcentury neon signs, visit [tucsonhistoricalpreservationfoundation.org](http://tucsonhistoricalpreservationfoundation.org).

30 atomic ranch | WINTER 2011



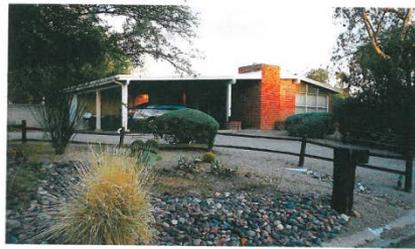
Doug Harbaugh and Doug Striggow own a Lanai model, which they bought from the son of the first owner in 2008. "It was an original inside and out, down to the dishwasher, stove and cooktop," says Striggow, a visual merchandiser for a department store. "All the bathrooms still have their original 1950s fixtures and tile in pink, gray, blue and brown. We updated the appliances and restored the rest of the home, which has cement floors with open beam, tongue-and-groove ceilings. We collected vintage furniture for years, looking forward to finding the perfect

modern home for it."

Every model that Lusk designers Arthur H. Rader and Ray Kueger developed for Indian Ridge could be flipped or angled so that no two look the same, Striggow says. He and Harbaugh wanted to see the neighborhood's uniqueness protected and were instrumental in getting the nomination off the ground.

"We were the leading force in convincing the neighborhood that we should join together and take the funds needed to hire a consultant who would write our nomination for the National Register," Striggow says. "The biggest challenge was convincing a number of neighbors that our 1950s homes were worthy of being listed. We compared Indian Ridge to the Palm Springs modern movement, and the tax savings also helped convince them."

Striggow explains that the tax assessment is cut in half for contributing historic properties for 15 years and homeowners can later reapply for another 15 years. "I would let residents know that, if their home was considered a contributing property to the district and they chose to main-



Doug Striggow (B)

Above: One of Indian Ridge's like Homes.

A Lanai model similar to, yet different than the Striggow/Harbaugh Lanai home, page 30.



# Tucson, AZ

