



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

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| Originator Joyce Repya Senior Planner | Meeting Date July 8, 2015 | Agenda # VII. A. |
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INFORMATION/BACKGROUND

Mrs. Marri Oskam, 6901 Dakota Trail, is requesting to add her house and property to the Edina Heritage Landmark Overlay Zoning Designation.

The Planning Commission is asked support the Heritage Preservation Board's recommendation to add the Edina Heritage Landmark (EHL) Overlay Zoning designation to the R-1 Single Dwelling Unit District for 6901 Dakota Trail.

Project Description

The subject property is located on the east side of the 6900 block of Dakota Trail in the Indian Hills neighborhood. The existing single family home, an International style constructed in 1963, is situated on the west bank of Indianhead Lake, and has a 2-car detached garage in front of the residence; connected by a roof-covered deck. Built for the current owners Hendrik and Marri Oskam, this Contemporary home was designed by renowned, female architect, Elizabeth Close; who with her husband started the architectural firm of Close & Close in 1939.

One of the first homes built on Indianhead Lake, the natural terrain remained untouched as the home nestled into the sloping hillside. There have been no additions to the homes since it was constructed, however it has been meticulously maintained, and is as shining an example of Mid-Century Contemporary architecture today as it was when constructed in 1963.

Fearing her home could be subject to a future tear-down, Mrs. Oskam approached the Heritage Preservation Board to determine whether her home could be a candidate for designation as an Edina Heritage Landmark (EHL) which would provide protection from demolition (Attachment # A-1).

Upon the direction of the Heritage Preservation Board (HPB), Preservation Consultant Robert Vogel conducted an evaluation of the Oskam property and provided the HPB with a "Determination of Eligibility" concluding that, "The Oskam House is historically significant in the area of architecture under Criterion "C" of the City Code (Sec. 36-714. (1) c. The following is the Eligibility Criteria:

Sec. 36-714. - Eligibility criteria.

The following criteria will guide the heritage preservation board and the council in evaluating potential heritage landmark designations:

- (1) The quality of significance in history, architecture, archeology and culture present in buildings, sites, structures, objects and districts that reflects:
 - a. Association with important events or patterns of events that reflect significant broad patterns in local history;
 - b. Association with the lives of historically significant persons or groups significant;
 - c. ***Embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of an architectural style, design, period, type or method of construction; or that possess high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or***
 - d. Important archeological data or the potential to yield important archeological data.
- (2) The retention of specific aspects of historical integrity, including location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, that convey significance as a heritage resource worthy of preservation.

In addition to being a noteworthy example of Modern residential architecture, the house is one of a relatively small number of post war residences in Edina designed by a female architect. Elizabeth ("Lisle") Scheu Close (1912-2011) was one of the first women to graduate from the architecture school at the University of Minnesota. In partnership with her husband, architect Winston A. Close (1906-1997), she designed many modernist homes and other buildings and was an influential force in regional architecture. Her work is demonstrably important in women's history and architectural history."

EHL Designation Request
6901 Dakota Trail
July 8, 2015

On September 9, 2014, the HPB voted to add 6901 Dakota Trail to the list of Edina properties eligible for Edina Heritage Landmark Designation, and instructed Consultant Vogel to prepare a nomination study identifying the significance of the home. Mr. Vogel and Planner Repya also worked with Mrs. Oskam to create a plan of treatment that would provide protection for the home she was seeking, as well as clear direction to future owners.

On April 14, 2015, the HPB considered the request to designate the Oskam House an Edina Heritage Landmark property subject to the nomination study and plan of treatment approved by Mrs. Oskam.

As required by code for pending landmark designations, the Minnesota Historical Society received a copy of the nomination study and plan of treatment for their consideration. In a letter dated June 5, 2015 (Attachment # A-2) Michael Koop opined that the Oskam house is an ideal candidate for local designation - he went on to recommend that the plan of treatment specifically address interior features of the home which were integral to the Close's modern design philosophy. Typically, only the exterior of Edina's landmark properties have been addressed in their respective plans of treatment, however in consideration of Mr. Koop's suggestion, Mrs. Oskam agreed that the interior design elements should be addressed, thus item #1 of the plan of treatment was amended to include those interior elements.

Recommendation

Provide Support for the Heritage Preservation Board's recommendation to add the Edina Heritage Landmark (EHL) Overlay Zoning designation to the R-1 Single Dwelling Unit District for 6901 Dakota Trail. The following pages include the Nomination Study and the Plan of Treatment that will guide future Certificate of Appropriateness requests for the property.

**EDINA HERITAGE LANDMARK
NOMINATION STUDY AND PLAN OF TREATMENT
OSKAM HOUSE
6901 DAKOTA TRAIL**

*Prepared by Robert C. Vogel
Preservation Planning Consultant
Edina Heritage Preservation Board
revised June 16, 2015*

INTRODUCTION

This report documents the historic Oskam House for designation as an Edina Heritage Landmark. It identifies and locates the heritage resource, explains how it meets the heritage landmark eligibility criteria, makes the case for historical significance and integrity, and outlines a plan of treatment for the property. In general, the city heritage preservation program has adopted the conventions and terminology of the National Register of Historic Places in its documentation of Edina Heritage Landmarks. Once a property is rezoned as a heritage landmark by the City Council, the plan of treatment contained in the nomination report becomes the official site preservation plan.

The subject property is owned and occupied by Marri Oskam. It occupies Lot 1 of Block 2 in the Overholt Hills Sally Addition. The property identification number (PIN) is 06-116-21-34-0058. The Oskam House was determined eligible for heritage landmark designation by the Heritage Preservation Board in 2014.

DESCRIPTION

The Oskam House is a two-level, single-family residence in the International style with a rectangular plan, a butterfly roof, post and beam construction, a walk-out basement, and a two-car detached garage. In keeping with its style, it is carefully integrated within its site. The exterior walls are clad with vertically grooved redwood siding. The interior of the house reflects the modernistic aesthetic in its vigorously functional open plan, geometric shapes, flat surfaces, exposed post and beam structure, and indirect lighting. The floors in the kitchen and other functional areas are covered with brick pavers, a feature borrowed from Dutch vernacular architecture. The floors in the living room, study and bedrooms are carpeted. The house is set into a sloping half-acre lot overlooking Indianhead Lake. The detached garage echoes the house in design and materials and is accessed by a paved driveway from the street. When viewed from the public right-of-way, the house looks smaller than it really is and presents a somewhat stark appearance, but the rear (east) elevation

features large windows overlooking the lake and surrounding woods. The property is in an excellent state of preservation and retains a high degree of historical integrity.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Oskam House qualifies for designation as an Edina Heritage Landmark by meeting the criteria for evaluation set forth in City Code §36-714. Its historical significance is the product of its association with the broad themes of suburban development and Midcentury Modern residential architecture in Edina. The property is widely recognized by architects and architectural historians as one of the outstanding residential examples of the International style in the Twin Cities area. The house is in excellent condition and retains historic integrity of those features necessary to convey its significance.

The house was built in 1963 for the late Dr. Hendrik J. Oskam (d. 2001), professor of electrical engineering at the University of Minnesota, and his wife Marringje M. Oskam, who is the current owner. It was designed by Elizabeth Scheu "Lisl" Close (1912-2011) of Close Associates, a firm well known for its role in helping to disseminate the Modern Movement philosophy and aesthetic in Minnesota. One of the first women licensed to practice architecture in Minnesota; Lisl Close (although she refused to call herself a woman architect) was a role model for a generation of women who aspired to careers in what was then a male-dominated profession.

The International style developed in Europe during the 1920s and became popular in the United States during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Minimalist and utilitarian in concept, the common characteristics of International style houses are their compact plans, simple geometric forms (usually rectilinear), undecorated exterior walls, and open interior spaces; glass and reinforced concrete were the preferred materials of construction, although regional variants sometimes incorporated wood, stone, and other indigenous materials. In the context of Twin Cities suburban development, the International style encompasses the period from roughly 1938 until 1975, but it reached its height of popularity around 1960. Architect-designed houses in the International style are rare in Edina, where postwar builders generally favored house forms based on the Ranch style over more avant-garde manifestations of Modernism.

PLAN OF TREATMENT

By ordinance, no city permit may be issued for certain kinds of development activities (demolition, moving a building, new construction, and excavation) involving a designated Heritage Landmark without a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) approved by the Heritage Preservation Board. The City of Edina has adopted the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as the authoritative guide for COA review decisions. Within the framework of these standards, and in consultation with the property owner, the Heritage Preservation

Board has adopted the following plan of treatment specifically tailored to the preservation requirements of the Oskam House:

1. The Oskam House will be preserved in place and rehabilitated so that those features which are significant to its historical and architectural values can be preserved intact. These features include but are not limited to the following: 1 story with two levels of living space; compact rectangular plan (wider than deep); continuous low pitch "butterfly" roof; wood exterior wall cladding with vertical grooves; casement windows; balcony-type porch; open floor plan with living room, dining room and kitchen connected on the main level; fireplace with end-wall chimney; walk-out basement; and detached garage.
2. Historically significant character defining architectural features should not be altered or destroyed as a result of any project permitted, funded, or assisted by the City of Edina.
3. Whenever possible, deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.
4. Construction of new additions and adjacent accessory structures should be kept to a minimum and they should be designed to be compatible with the historic house in scale, size, and building materials. Additions should be designed to be distinguishable from the original construction and reversible.
5. Minor alterations and small structural additions should not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historic architectural features and the new work is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the historic property.
6. Mechanical equipment should be placed in an inconspicuous location where installation will require the least possible alteration to the structural integrity and physical appearance of the historic house and garage.
7. Landscape features such as decks, patios, mature trees, walkways, and setbacks that have historically linked the house to its environment are important parts of the property's history and should be retained intact, whenever possible.

Attachments:

1. Request for Edina Heritage Landmark Evaluation
2. Comment from Minnesota Historical Society dated June 5, 2015
3. Location Maps

EHL Designation Request
6901 Dakota Trail
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4. Support from Jane King Hession, architectural historian
5. HPB Minutes: April 14, 2015
6. "Elizabeth "Lisl" Scheu Close, FAIA", by Jane King Hession, *Docomomo*, 8/11/2014
7. "Elizabeth Close, FAIA, Gold Medal Winner", *Sparks*, September 2002
8. "A look at mid-century modernist homes through the work of Close Associates" by Gar Hargens, AIA, President, Close Assoc. Inc., Architects
9. Edina City Code: Article IX. - Edina Heritage Landmarks



DATE: 08-01-2014

REQUEST FOR EDINA HERITAGE LANDMARK EVALUATION

FOR INFORMATION: Edina Planning Department – Joyce Repya, Senior Planner
4801 West Fiftieth Street * Edina, MN 55424 * (952) 826-0462 FAX (952) 826-0389

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 6901 DAKOTA TRAIL, EDINA

OWNER: MARRI M. OSKAM

EMAIL: MARRIHJ@USFAMILY.NET **PHONE:** 952-941-3226

STYLE OF HOME: MID-20th CENTURY MODERN

DESCRIPTION OF THE KNOWN HISTORY OF THE HOME:
SEE APPENDIX I

IMPORTANT EXTERIOR ELEMENTS OF THE HOME:
SEE APPENDIX II

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE HISTORIC INTEGRITY OF THE HOME:
SEE APPENDIX I

Include photographs and any information determined pertinent to the proposed designation. *Photo courtesy of Bill Olexy, Modern House Productions*

Mari M. Oskam
Property Owner's Signature

08-01-2014
Date

ADDENDUM I

Construction of the house started in August 1963 and was completed in February, 1964.

My husband, Hendrik Jan (now deceased), and I had chosen Elizabeth Close of Close Associates, Inc., Architects, to design the house in early 1963 and expressed the following wishes to her to create a house with:

- a spacious feeling,
- lots of light and
- few bedrooms

that would compliment the site. (An area ordinance stipulated that the site was not to be altered and the architect complied)

During the conversations that followed different proposals and ideas were discussed until we arrived at the final design. The fact that we had an excellent rapport with the architect made the design process harmonious and exciting.

The result was so satisfactory to us that in all the years that we have lived in the house we never felt any need to alter it.

ADDENDUM II

This information was sent to me by Gar Hargens AIA.

1. **Clear, all heart redwood T&G vertical siding with raked side out.** Close Associates used this distinctive product for interior ceilings and some exterior soffitts, but this house is the only design I am aware of where Ms Close chose to use it as siding. The raking or grooves were claw marks from the sawmill. Ms Close told me she saw this interesting pattern on S3S boards at a job site and told the carpenters to install it “wrong side out”. Another product from that era was Cement Board (w/asbestos). The Closes used it mostly for exterior soffitts but also for siding as on the Oskam House.

2. **Butterfly roof.** This gracefully shaped roof is also a simple, practical way to collect rain water on this sloping site and direct it away from the house and into the Lake.

3. **Orientation to Sun and Views.** The Lake view and passive solar gain were the factors that determined the home’s orientation. The open stairway to the Lower Level takes full advantage of both.

Gar Hargens AIA, President/Owner

Close Associates Inc., Architects

Office: 612-339-0979

gar@closearchitects.com

www.elosearchitects.com



Oskam House: 6901 Dakota Trail

Photo courtesy of William B. Olexy



Oskam House: 6901 Dakota Trail

Photo courtesy of William B. Olexy









June 5, 2015

Joyce Repya
City of Edina
4801 W 50th Street
Edina MN 55424

RE: Local designation of the Hendrik and Marri Oskam House, 6901 Dakota Trail, MHS Referral No. 2015-1788

Dear Joyce,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above referenced designation. It has been reviewed pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §471.193, subd. 6., and Edina City Code Sec. 36-717.

Located on a sloping hillside overlooking Indianhead Lake, the Oskam House is an International style, two-story residence clad with vertically grooved redwood siding. Typical of the style, the Oskam House features a flat roof, smooth and uniform wall surfaces, a large expanse of windows facing Indianhead Lake, a projecting balcony and upper floor, and an absence of ornamentation.

The Oskam House was built in 1963 according to the design of Elizabeth and Winston Close. Formed in 1938 by Lisl Scheu and Win Close, Close Associates has been recognized for its modern, innovative designs and careful consideration of site. The Oskam House is a significant and extremely well-preserved example of an International style, Close design. As such, it is an ideal candidate for local designation.

We note that the landmark nomination form makes specific reference to the interior features and open floor plan of the Oskam House, which is appropriate given that interior spaces are an integral component of the Close's modern design philosophy. We believe it would be appropriate to specifically call out and designate the interior of the house, given its importance and integrity. To that end, it would be best to include a variety of photos of the interior spaces with the nomination form. Please send copies of those photos for our files as well.

If you have any questions regarding our assessment of this property, please feel free to contact me at 651.259.3452 or michael.koop@mnhs.org.

Sincerely,



Michael Koop
Heritage Preservation Department

cc: Ryan Weber, HPB Chair



Parcel ID: 06-116-21-34-0058

Owner Name: Marrigje M Oskam

Parcel Address: 6901 Dakota Tr
Edina, MN 55439

Property Type: Residential Lake Shore

**Home-
stead:** Homestead

Parcel Area: 0.51 acres
22,012 sq ft

Map Scale: 1" ≈ 50 ft.

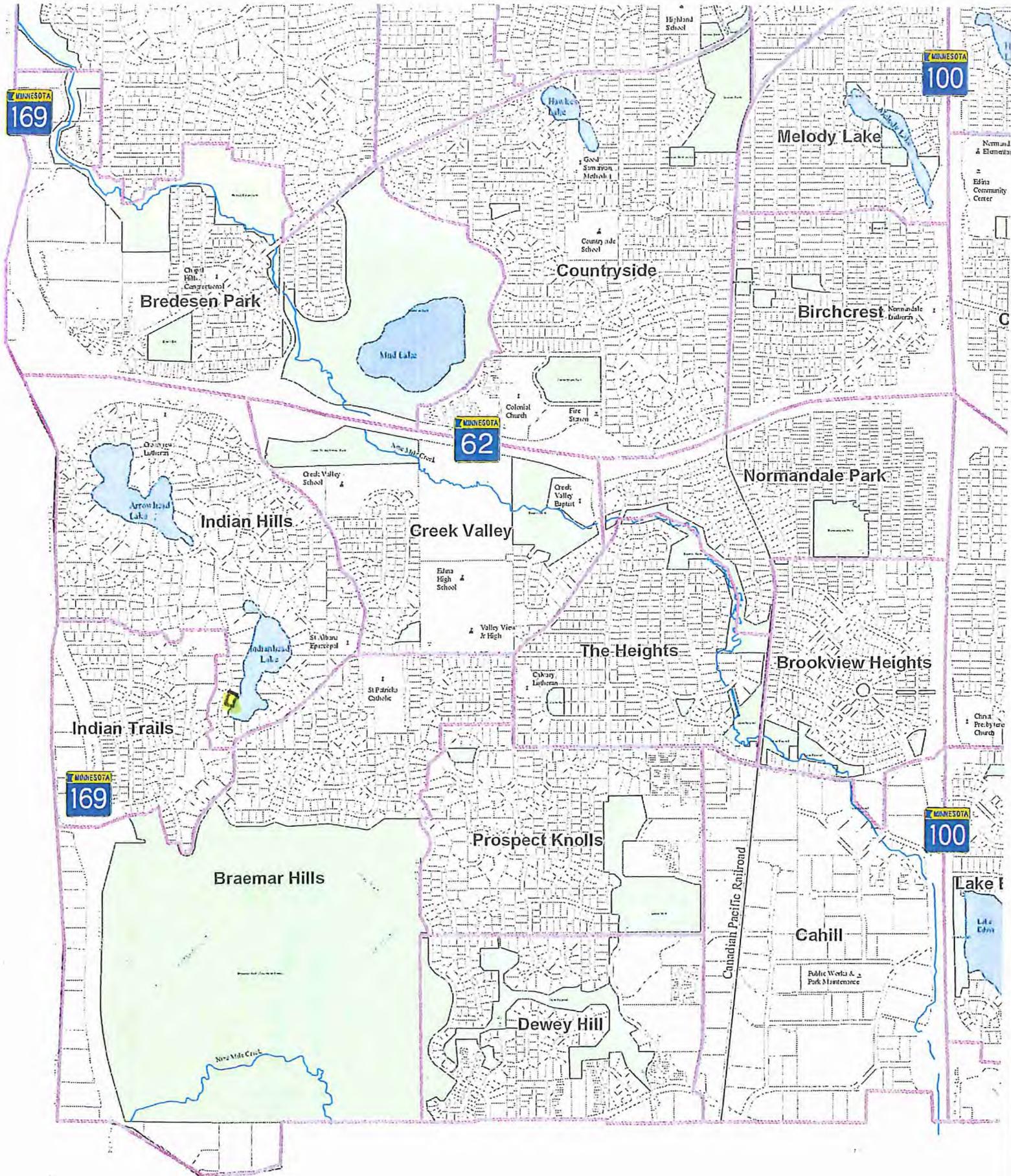
Print Date: 2/11/2014



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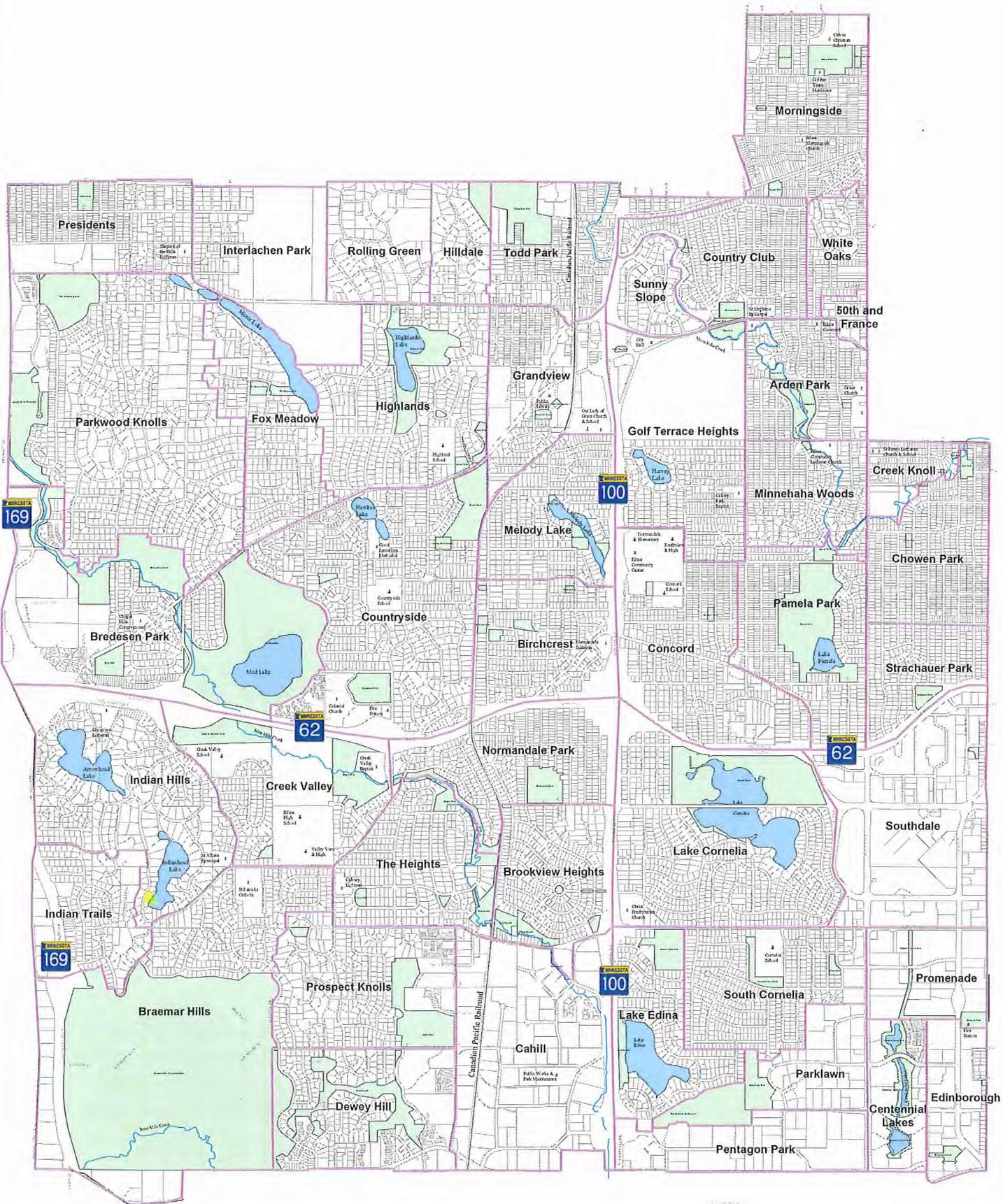
A - 3



6901 = 6901 Dakota Trail

Edina Neighborhood





Edina Neighborhoods

6901 Dakota Trail



Engineering Dept
Council Approved: April 16, 2013

Joyce Repya

From: Jane Hession <janekinghession@icloud.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 12, 2015 1:00 AM
To: Joyce Repya
Cc: Marri Oskam
Subject: Oskam House

Dear Ms. Repya,

My name is Jane King Hession and I am an Edina-based architectural historian. I am in the process of writing and researching on book on the work of Winston and Elizabeth "Lisl" Close. As such, I have had the opportunity to learn more about the Close-designed Oskam House in Edina through my contact with Marri Oskam. I am well aware of her effort to secure designation for the house through the City of Edina and fully support it.

As she will be unable to be at the upcoming Edina Heritage Board meeting at which this designation is to be considered, she asked me if I would represent her. If I were not in New Zealand, I would be happy to do so. The best I can do is to offer a few brief words (Sorry, but I am traveling and am about to lose my internet connection for a few days.)

The Oskam House is a well-preserved, significant example of the residential work of Elizabeth and Winston Close (Close Associates), the first architectural firm (founded in 1938) in Minnesota that dedicated itself exclusively to modern design. Vienna-born Lisl Scheu Close lead the design process. Lisl, who passed away in 2011 at the age of 99, was the first woman architect to be awarded the Minnesota AIA Gold Medal—the highest award that organization gives. Architecturally, the work of the Closes is held in high regard by Minnesota architects.

Lisl and the Oskams (all European born) shared similar philosophies about (and knowledge of) modern architecture, and an admiration for functional, efficient design. As such, their working relationship was particularly fruitful. The house, which stands on a steep, lakeside site, bears all the hallmarks of a Close design: sensitive placement on a site, use of natural (and in some cases unconventional materials), lack of ornamentation, an efficient floor plan, and not a wasted inch of space. It is a unique design created for one set of clients, but it also well represents the work of Close Associates.

Remarkably, the house is still owned by the original client and it has been well preserved for decades. What is truly special about it is that it is a model—in this age of energy and environmental concerns—of how to build a house that is spacious (but not huge or bloated), that is suited in size and scale to its site (but does not dominate it), and that retained its relevance over time.

We would all do well to remember that the word "heritage" can also refer to significant works of architecture from the modern era. The Oskam House is a significant work of architecture by one of Minnesota's most significant modern architects. I hope the Edina Heritage Board will honor it, as it deserves, with historic designation.

Thank you,

Jane King Hession

A - 4

MINUTES
Regular Meeting of the
Edina Heritage Preservation Board
Edina City Hall – Community Room
Tuesday, April 14, 2015
7:00 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER 7:00 P.M.

II. ROLL CALL

Answering roll call was Chair Weber and Members, Moore, McLellan, Sussman, Christiaansen, Birdman, Kelly, Pearson and Student Members Otness and Druckman. Absent was Member O'Brien. Staff present was Senior Planner, Joyce Repya.

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

Member Kelly moved to approve the meeting agenda. Member Moore seconded the motion. All voted aye. The motion carried.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES **March 10, 2015**

Member Moore moved approval of the minutes from the March 10th meeting. Member Birdman seconded the motion. All voted aye. The motion carried.

V. COMMUNITY COMMENT - None

VI. REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Edina Heritage Landmark Nomination - Oskam House - 6901
Dakota Trail

Planner Repya reported that the HPB received a request for Edina Heritage Landmark designation from Marri Oskam, the owner of 6901 Dakota Trail. Mrs. Oskam explained her motivation for requesting the heritage landmark designation of her home centered on her desire to prevent a future owner of the property from tearing the house down - particularly in light of the tear-down trend underway in Edina. Upon receipt of the request, Preservation Consultant Robert Vogel conducted a nomination study and worked on a plan of treatment for the property in collaboration with Mrs. Oskam.

The nomination study describes the Oskam House as a two-level, single-family residence in the International style with a rectangular plan, a butterfly roof, post and beam construction, a walk-out basement, and a two-car detached garage. In keeping with its style, it is carefully integrated within its site. The exterior walls are clad with vertically grooved redwood siding. The interior of the house reflects the modernistic aesthetic in its vigorously functional open plan, geometric shapes, flat surfaces, exposed post and beam structure, and indirect lighting. The floors in the kitchen and other functional areas are covered with brick pavers, a feature borrowed from Dutch vernacular architecture. The floors in the living room, study and bedrooms are carpeted.

The house is set into a sloping half-acre lot overlooking Indianhead Lake. The detached garage echoes the house in design and materials and is accessed by a paved driveway from the street. When viewed from the public right-of-way, the house looks smaller than it really is and presents a somewhat stark appearance, but the rear (east) elevation features large windows overlooking the lake and surrounding woods. The property is in an excellent state of preservation and retains a high degree of historical integrity.

In the nomination study, Mr. Vogel observed that the Oskam House qualifies for designation as an Edina Heritage Landmark by meeting the criteria for evaluation set forth in City Code §36-714. Its historical significance is the product of its association with the broad themes of suburban development and Midcentury Modern residential architecture in Edina. The property is widely recognized by architects and architectural historians as one of the outstanding residential examples of the International style in the Twin Cities area. The house is in excellent condition and retains historic integrity of those features necessary to convey its significance.

The house was built in 1963 for the late Dr. Hendrik J. Oskam (d. 2001), professor of electrical engineering at the University of Minnesota, and his wife Marrigje M. Oskam, who is the current owner. It was designed by Elizabeth Scheu "Lisl" Close (1912-2011) of Close Associates, a firm well known for its role in helping to disseminate the Modern Movement philosophy and aesthetic in Minnesota. One of the first women licensed to practice architecture in Minnesota; Lisl Close (although she refused to call herself a woman architect) was a role model for a generation of women who aspired to careers in what was then a male-dominated profession.

The International style developed in Europe during the 1920s and became popular in the United States during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Minimalist and utilitarian in concept, the common characteristics of International style houses are their compact plans, simple geometric forms (usually rectilinear), undecorated exterior walls, and open interior spaces; glass and reinforced concrete were the preferred materials of construction, although regional variants sometimes incorporated wood, stone, and other indigenous materials. In the context of Twin Cities suburban development, the International style encompasses the period from roughly 1938 until 1975, but it reached its height of popularity around 1960. Architect-designed houses in the International style are rare in Edina, where postwar builders generally favored house forms based on the Ranch style over more avant-garde manifestations of Modernism.

Planner Repya further explained that the following recommended plan of treatment for the property was created in collaboration with the homeowner, Mrs. Oskam:

PLAN OF TREATMENT

By ordinance, no city permit may be issued for certain kinds of development activities (demolition, moving a building, new construction, and excavation) involving a designated Heritage Landmark without a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) approved by the Heritage Preservation Board. The City of Edina has adopted the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as the authoritative guide for COA review decisions.

Within the framework of these standards, and in consultation with the property owner, the Heritage Preservation Board has adopted the following plan of treatment specifically tailored to the preservation requirements of the Oskam House:

1. The Oskam House will be preserved in place and rehabilitated so that those features which are significant to its historical and architectural values can be preserved intact.
2. Historically significant character defining architectural features should not be altered or destroyed as a result of any project permitted, funded, or assisted by the City of Edina.
3. Whenever possible, deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.
4. Construction of new additions and adjacent accessory structures should be kept to a minimum and they should be designed to be compatible with the historic house in scale, size, and building materials. Additions should be designed to be distinguishable from the original construction and reversible.
5. Minor alterations and small structural additions should not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historic architectural features and the new work is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the historic property.
6. Mechanical equipment should be placed in an inconspicuous location where installation will require the least possible alteration to the structural integrity and physical appearance of the historic house and garage.
7. Landscape features such as decks, patios, mature trees, walkways, and setbacks that have historically linked the house to its environment are important parts of the property's history and should be retained intact, whenever possible.

Ms. Repya explained that Mrs. Oskam was unable to attend the meeting, however she asked Jane King Hession, an Edina resident and architectural historian to represent her in supporting the request for Edina Heritage Landmark designation. Ms. Hession is currently out of the country; however she submitted an email to the HPB heartily endorsing the proposed landmark designation of the Oskam home.

Planner Repya concluded that Staff recommends that the HPB nominate 6901 Dakota Trail for Edina Heritage Landmark Designation and submit Mrs. Oskam's request to the Planning Commission and ultimately the City Council who is responsible for the final determination. Findings for the nomination are found in the nomination study, and the conditions for the designation are found in the proposed plan of treatment.

Ms. Repya also pointed out that as required by city code, the proposed nomination if approved by the HPB will be sent to the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office providing 60 days for them to submit comments relative to the proposed designation. The City Council will consider the proposed landmark designation after SHPO's 60 day comment period.

Board Comments

The board engaged in a brief discussion gathering clarification on design elements of the home. Member Kelly observed that when she drove by the home to become acquainted with the property, Mrs. Oskam invited her on a tour. Ms. Kelly commented that the home has been impeccably maintained, and with its original Danish Modern furnishings it stands out as well deserving of an Edina Heritage Landmark designation.

Motion

Member Moore expressed his enthusiasm for the proposal by moving approval of a recommendation to the City Council that the Oskam House at 6901 Dakota Trail receive the Edina Heritage Landmark overlay zoning designation. Member Kelly seconded the motion. All voted aye. The motion carried.

VII. 2015 HERITAGE AWARD

Planner Repya explained that the two following nominations were received for the 2015 Edina Heritage Award:

1. Savory's Gardens - 5300 Whiting Avenue

Site of the 2014 summer tour, Savory's Gardens has been in operation since 1947 when it was one of three nursery businesses operating in the city. Today, only Savory's remains and thrives in its hidden niche amongst a residential neighborhood; and

2. 5201 Wooddale Avenue - A private residence

This home has undergone an extensive remodel/addition project that was sensitive to the original 1935 home. In these times when homeowners would rather tear down an older home and start over; it was good to see the owners appreciate and expand upon the "old bones" of this lovely home.

Ms. Repya observed that the nomination for 5201 Wooddale Avenue did not include all of the required information for a nomination (photos, homeowner information, etc.). However, the recent addition to the home was well executed, preserving the original home in lieu of tearing it down and building a new home. Board members agreed, suggesting that more information be gathered on the property, with the nomination being filed for consideration in the future.

Member Christiaansen commented that she believed the heritage award should be presented to public/civic spaces with a focus on the heritage of the city that the people can visit rather than private residences. In these times with so many homes in the community being renovated, to call out one home as being more significant than the others does not fulfill the intention of the heritage award program.

Board members discussed how the 2014 Heritage Award recipient 5501 Londonderry Road (private residence) was unique. Built in 1956, it was designed by the son of Frank Lloyd Wright,

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Elizabeth "Lisl" Scheu Close, FAIA

Published by info on Mon, 2014-08-11 17:08



By Jane King Hession

Long before she became an architect, a Fellow in the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and the first (and only) woman to receive AIA Minnesota's Gold Medal ^[1], Elizabeth "Lisl" Scheu Close was deeply immersed in architecture. In 1912, the year of her birth, her parents commissioned architect **Adolf Loos** to design a residence in Vienna, Austria. Not only

is the radically modern Scheu House significant in the annals of architectural history, it played a major role in determining Lisl's future profession and shaping her architectural aesthetic.

Photo (left): The Hendrik and Marri Oskam House, 1963, Edina, Minnesota. Photo credit:© William B. Olexy, Modern House Productions

Informally known as the "Giant's Staircase" for its stepped conformation, the unadorned **Scheu House** stood in stunning contrast to the old world villas that predominated in Vienna's elegant Hietzing neighborhood, which flanks the grounds of Schönbrunn Palace, a former Habsburg summer retreat. Lisl's parents, Gustav Scheu, a lawyer and social democratic city councilman, and Helene Scheu-Riesz, a writer and translator of children's books who was active in international peace and women's movements,



were as unorthodox and forward thinking as the residence they commissioned. Their house became a salon for friends and colleagues from Vienna's political and artistic circles, as well as a magnet for a wide range of international visitors. Lisl remembered the house as being full of lively conversation, music, and ideas.

Photo (right): Garden view of the Scheu House by Adolf Loos, 1912, Vienna, Austria. Photo credit: © William B. Olexy, Modern House Productions



She began her architectural education at the **Technische Hochschule in Vienna**. As political tensions heightened and the Nazis rose to power, Lisl chose to leave Austria in 1932. With assistance from American department store magnate Edward Filene, a family friend and frequent visitor to the Scheu House, she traveled to the United States and enrolled at **MIT** where she earned her B.Arch in 1934 and her M.Arch in 1935. She was the only woman in her graduate school class. In graduate school, she met Minnesota native Winston "Win" A. Close, who would become her architectural partner and husband.

The mid-1930s was not a propitious time to be seeking employment as an architect--particularly for women. Nonetheless, Lisl further narrowed her options by limiting her search to firms that shared her commitment to modern design. She also hoped to work on public housing, a legacy from her father who, as advisor for settlement and housing for Vienna, strove to alleviate the critical shortage of shelter that plagued the city following

World War I.

She applied to three firms: **Willam Lescaze** would not employ her because he believed she would be a distraction in the drafting room; **Richard Neutra** offered to hire her if she would pay him \$20 a month for the privilege; **Oskar Stonorov** hired her. For Stonorov she worked on Westfield Acres, a PWA public housing project in Camden, New Jersey.

Photo (above):Elizabeth "Lisl" Scheu Close, c. 1940. Photo credit: Courtesy of Roy Close

Her tenure with Stonorov was brief as Winston Close advised her of an opportunity to join the firm of Magney and Tusler in Minneapolis and work on Sumner Field, a WPA project. In 1938 Lisl and Win opened the firm Scheu and Close (later Close Associates ⁽²⁾) in Minneapolis and two months later, they married.



The firm's "Opus One" was the 1938 **Faulkner House**, the first residence built in Minnesota that was inspired by the International Style. Commissioned by three



bachelor University of Minnesota professors, the house featured flat roofs and strip windows, and rejected ornamentation. In two further departures from convention, the Closes employed

Homesote, a material not typically used in residential construction, for some interior finishes. To add a touch of color, they paved the driveway with blue-tinted concrete.

Photo (left): The Faulkner House, 1938, Minneapolis, was the first house designed by the firm of Scheu and Close. Photo credit: Courtesy of Jane King Hession

In its own way, the Faulkner House was as startling a presence in its quiet Minneapolis neighborhood as the Scheu house had been in Hietzing. One local publication reported (perhaps apocryphally) that the shock of seeing the modern house induced a heart attack in an unsuspecting passerby. At the very least, the Faulkner House initiated a discussion about modern architecture in the state.



Although the Closes partnered in the firm for fifty years, Winston also served as university architect for the University of Minnesota during much of that time. As such, Lisl assumed the lion's share of the firm's daily operations and took the lead on design work and client relations. The firm specialized in residential work, but also designed numerous hospitals, clinics, laboratories, and educational buildings. Notable among these is the **1974 Freshwater Biological Institute in Excelsior, Minnesota**; a building designed to facilitate scientific research relating to issues of freshwater in lakes, rivers, and marshes.

During World War II, Lisl Close was recruited by the Minnesota-based Page & Hill Company to design prefab housing. The company approached her when it learned that the manufacture and distribution of prefab houses was the subject of her undergraduate thesis at MIT. For **Page & Hill she designed at least twenty-five house models each engineered to be packed and shipped in a single truckload**. Hundreds of the houses were built across the upper Midwest and Northwest.

Photo (right): The Freshwater Biological Institute, 1974, Excelsior, Minnesota. Photo credit: © William B. Olexy, Modern House Productions

During the Cold War, one of her prefab designs for Page & Hill became a propagandistic tool for the United States government when the State Department selected a "Jubilaire" model to represent "the typical American House," at the 1950 German Industrial Exposition in Berlin. The house, which was stocked with such household marvels as the mix master, vacuum cleaner, and television, was visited by over forty thousand people during the course of the fair. A State Department official later reported the house was "a gratifying demonstration of what can be accomplished in selling the American democratic way of life."

Scores of Close houses stand in Minnesota including fourteen in **Saint Paul's University Grove**, a University of Minnesota-owned enclave of 103 architect-designed houses. Among them is the Closes' own home, designed in 1953. Although the firm never advertised its services, it enjoyed extensive patronage within university circles where the Closes' design sensibilities resonated with potential clients, many of whom-- like Lisl and Win Close--were in the vanguard of modernism in their respective fields.



Photo (right): The Elizabeth and Winston Close House, 1953, University Grove, Saint Paul. Photo credit: © William B. Olexy, Modern House Productions

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SPARKS

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Elizabeth Close, FAIA, Gold Medal Winner



Elizabeth Close, FAIA

Elizabeth Close, FAIA, will be awarded the 2002 AIA Minnesota Gold Medal, AIA Minnesota's highest award bestowed on an individual member. It serves as recognition for a lifetime of distinguished achievement and significant contributions to architecture. Elizabeth, with a

bachelors and masters degree from MIT, became one of the first women to practice architecture in Minnesota. She and her husband, Winston Close, opened their firm in 1939. Thirty years later she was elevated to the College of Fellows of AIA National. Truly, her contributions to architecture are significant and influential -- our cities are a better place because of them.

Elizabeth was born in Vienna Austria in 1912 and grew up in a house designed by an early modernist, Adolf Loos. This influence of modernism is the essence of Elizabeth's signature style. Her innovative designs of buildings and houses strongly relate to their sites through use of modular planning, simplicity and natural materials. Some noteworthy projects include: Duff House in Wayzata (AIA MN 1959 Honorable Mention and

AIA MN 1988 25-Year Award Winner), Skywater, an earth-sheltered cabin on the St. Croix (1940); Gray Freshwater Biological Institute in Navarre; Rood House, Minneapolis; 14 houses in University Grove; Ferguson Hall (Music School) at the U of M (recognized nationally as one of the premier music schools); the Lippincott House (across from the FLW Willey House in Prospect Park); the Dayton House on Lake Minnetonka; Metropolitan Medical Center (with Horty Elving); and the Close Office in the Seward neighborhood.

Her exceptional design work through these and numerous other projects have "a consistency about them - low maintenance, strikingly unique appearance, well-integrated with its site, openings to light and views to private yard, spacious floor plans, flat roofs, deep overhangs, pre-cast concrete floors, interior atrium spaces as the core, and always a rich landscape."

AIA Minnesota is proud to recognize Elizabeth Close, FAIA, for this award. She will officially receive the award at the December 6, 2002, AIA Minnesota Awards Celebration.

Executive Vice President's Report, Beverly Hauschild-Baron, Hon. AIA



Beverly Hauschild-Baron, Hon. AIA

Now that Fall is fast approaching it's time to shift into high gear. The AIA Minnesota Convention is occupying the minds and work of all staff members. The Convention Committee is planning an exciting 4 day event with the theme of **Crossing Borders**.

Convention Committee Chair, David Eijadi, AIA defines the theme as "exploring and celebrating the connections between design, communities and cultures." We will illustrate ways in which architects

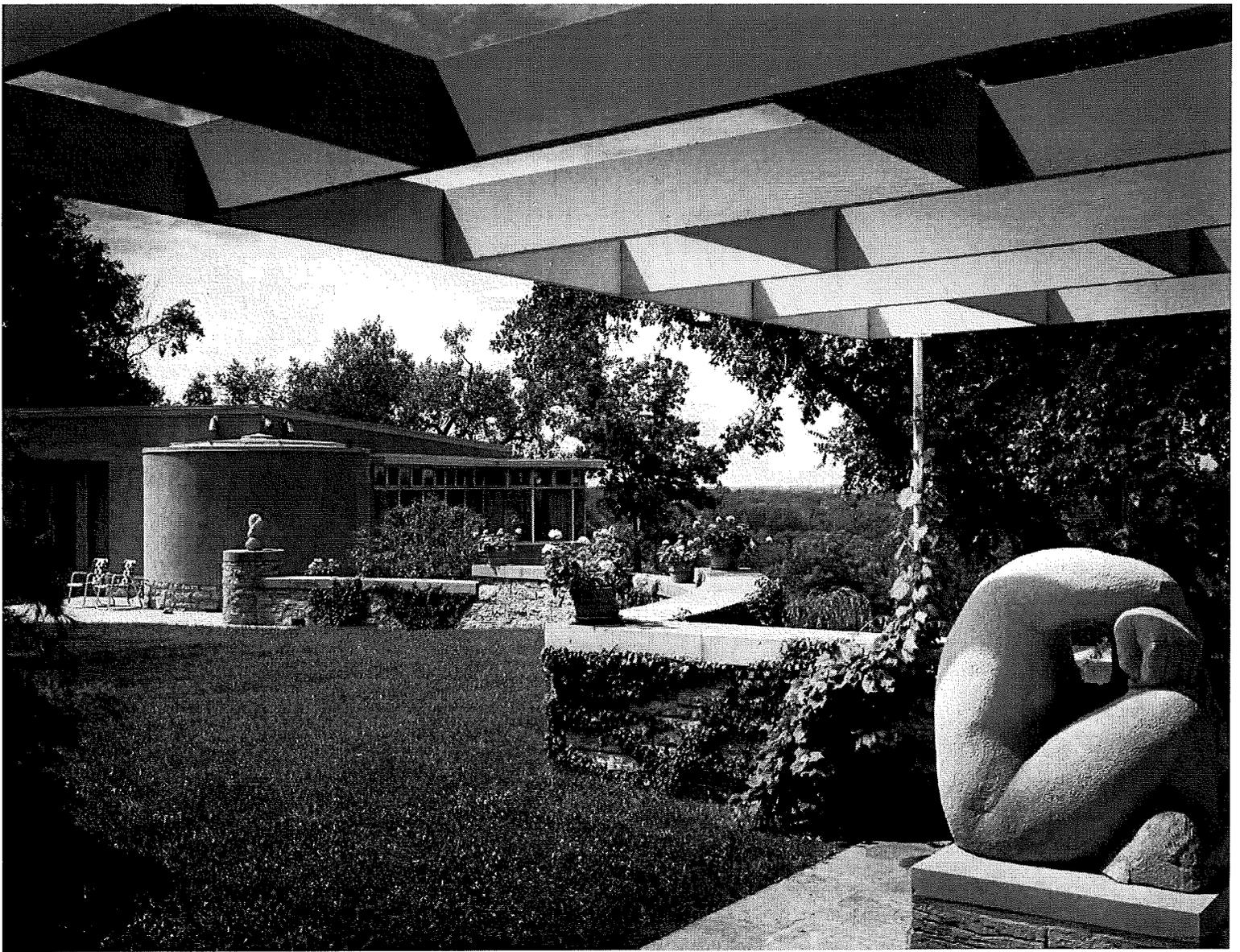
become valued collaborators in this ongoing process called architecture. Be sure to put **November 12, 13, 14, 15** on your calendar now!

Convention Time There are two new technological innovations that will be unveiled for the convention. The first is a brand new online registration system that will give you improved service and immediate confirmation of your registration. As an incentive to use the new online registration system you will get an automatic discount on your registration fees. In addition, should a program be filled, you will receive immediate feedback with the ability to select another program. The second technology innovation for us is an interactive connection --continued on page 2

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Exterior view of Rood House in Lowry Hill, Minneapolis. The house was designed by Winston and Elizabeth Close in 1947.

A look at mid-century modernist homes through the work of Close Associates

*By Gar Hargens, AIA, President,
Close Associates Inc., Architects*

For over twenty years, I worked for and with two pioneering practitioners of mid-century modern architecture in Minnesota—Winston and Elizabeth Close, FAIA. Founded in 1938, Close Associates designed many types of buildings but specialized in houses. I was their student intern in 1968 at the start of my architectural schooling at the University of Minnesota. By the time I was their partner and they retired, I understood and appreciated the tenets that Win and Lisl held dear: compact efficient designs, a strong connection to the site, sustainable practices, and a maximizing use of materials. It is interesting how large and elaborate homes became in the 1980s and

1990s, and how today most clients who call our office want the simple, affordable, energy efficient, innovative houses that the Closes and their colleagues championed for many years.

I own *The 1940 Book of Small Houses* edited by *Architectural Record*. Its contributors include such diverse and famous talents as Prairie architect Frank Lloyd Wright, traditionalist Royal Barry Wills, and a young Ralph Rapson. What is strikingly similar about their designs is how deliberate and compact they are, reflecting perhaps the economic sacrifices of World War II and a lingering sense of frugality. The designs are spare and maximize space in ingenious ways. I remember watching the Closes turn a design over and over to cut a few more square feet from the scheme. They favored built-ins because they saved space and the expense of buying furniture.

Like the architects in the book, the Closes also carried the goal of economy into structural design. A favorite Close solution was chassis framing, where an abutting 2x8 and 2x4 become a four-foot-on-center structural column and also the frame for a fixed window, with only the addition of an outer wood stop. It was simple, clean design with minimum materials. No wonder that one of the Closes' favorite books was *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk and E.B. White, which preached tight, precise prose.

Builders of the mid-century modern era did not have the power tools the trades work with today, and ripping a plywood sheet, for example, was done by hand with a rip saw. Architects therefore used dimensioned lumber and full-uncut sheets to save on labor. The grid was an essential planning tool. Its use contributed to the modular, boxy look of many mid-century modern homes. The credo was economy and affordability, and there was little waste. That still sounds like a good approach.

Another elegant solution involved the use of concrete plank, concrete slabs with large voids along their centers to lessen their

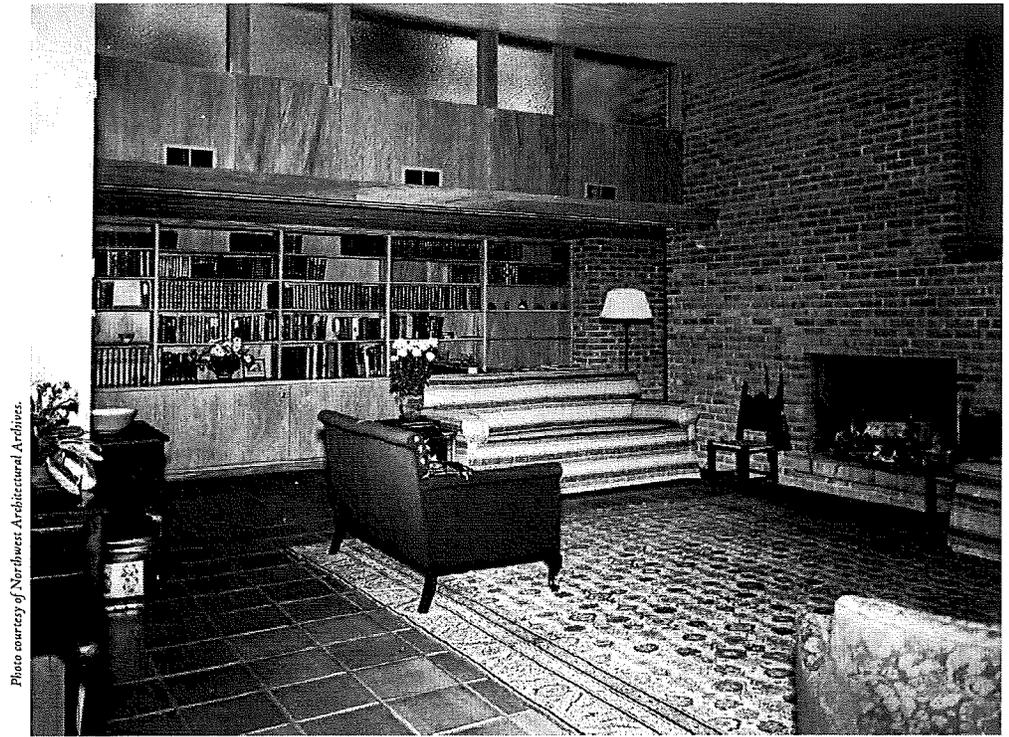


Photo courtesy of Northwest Architectural Archives.

Living room with floor of structural clay tile in King House.

weight. Early on, the Closes realized that if holes were added to the plank's downward face, the main furnace duct could be placed right below so that the planks could duct tempered air. Holes at the other end or top of the plank let air flow into the space or evenly up to windows. Our office also has this system. In slippers or stocking feet, having a naturally warm floor is a special treat this time of year. And the concrete floor makes up/down acoustics great too. The Closes used this system even if there was no basement with concrete plank above. The one story, slab on grade King House built in 1950 in the Kenwood Neighborhood in Minneapolis appears to have a floor of large tiles. However, they are not a standard tile dimension. Looking further reveals that the tiles are the outer faces of 4-inch structural clay tile, masonry units that for years were used for walls in commercial and manufacturing buildings. With the house drawings is a diagram showing how these hollow units were to be placed on the floor with their openings aligned to form duct runs.

Another characteristic of the times and one still popular in modern designs today is the use of new and in some cases unlikely materials. Plywood, developed during World

War II, was of particular interest to the Closes and like-minded architects. The Closes used plywood as the exterior finish siding/facing material on the 1947 Rood House, a large home for a sculptor and his wife on Mount Curve Parkway in Lowry Hill. Plywood was also used inside many Close homes. It was rotary cut (to show maximum pattern) and dressed up with only a light white stain. Concrete block, cement asbestos board, Masonite, Homasote (pressed cardboard sheets), and vinyl asbestos floor tile were some of the other new, fairly inexpensive, low-maintenance materials mid-century modernists liked to use and that could often be left in their natural state. Redwood was also available and became a popular wall choice inside and out. The Closes trumpeted redwood's natural tendency to weather to a silver tone, so that it didn't have to be finished and required no maintenance. Not all clients agreed with this aesthetic but it was clearly part of the architects' vision.

Honest expression of materials was in fact very important to the mid-century modernists. Concrete block was left exposed, Masonite and Homasote were unpainted and wood was left unfinished whenever possible. The Closes scorned the idea of hiding materials and disliked decoration in

general. Serendipity could also play a role in their designs. One day Lisl noticed that the backside of a 1x4 had been grooved during the milling process. She like the way it looked and told the carpenters to install it wrong side up. The resulting attractive pattern became standard for Close ceilings. In Close homes I visit, many of these ceilings (all redwood and unfortunately, no longer available) have now been painted. The owners may have been trying to cover up condensation stains, since mid-century homes usually had little insulation and sketchy vapor barriers.

The Closes and other mid-century modernists liked flat roofs, partly for reasons of economy and partly for their appearance. Flat roofs offered several advantages: good rainwater management (especially with interior drains), no danger of ice dams, and potential use as decks. Unfortunately, spotty insulation and vapor barriers sometimes caused condensation problems, as mentioned above. Skylights, too, were popular, but early deficiencies in their design and installation gave them an unreliable reputation. Today's skylights are much better.

Mid-century modernists also strove to relate houses to their sites in creative ways. New technologies of the era allowed large glazed openings that made smaller spaces seem larger by leading the eye to the outdoors. Flat roofs were often extended over window walls to protect openings and provide sun shading. Siting was very important, both for passive solar gain and establishing a comfortable relationship to the ground. To limit digging no deeper than the required footing depth, designs were often split leveled with entry at grade; the lower level half in the ground, the upper half out of the ground. This allowed the lower level slab to be right above the footing and provided that level with better light and easier access.

In a time of lingering recession and worry over climate change, the work of the mid-century modernists remains instructive. Today's architects are trying to simplify, reuse, recycle, and incorporate the latest technologies – all practices that the Closes and architects like them first embraced more than half a century ago. Sometimes recent history can suggest smart solutions for today's problems.



Photo courtesy of Northwest Architectural Archives.

Interior hallway in the Rood House. If one looks carefully, you can notice that the shelves/cabinets in the hallway are made of plywood.

Gar Hargens, AIA, is President and Owner of Close Associates Inc., Architects in Minneapolis. Gar is known for designing affordable, contemporary homes, a natural progression from the firm's Mid Century Modernist beginnings. He has also pursued the preservation side of sustainability through renovation of historic properties. Two well known award winners are Pratt School in Minneapolis and 260 Summit Avenue in Saint Paul, the Louis and Maud Hill House. Gar served nine years on the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, three as its Chair. He is currently on the Board of the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota.

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ARTICLE IX. - EDINA HERITAGE LANDMARKS

Sec. 36-713. - Purpose.

The zoning classification of Edina Heritage Landmark is established to promote the preservation, protection and use of significant heritage resources in the city. Heritage landmarks shall be nominated by the heritage preservation board and designated by council resolution.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(1))

Sec. 36-714. - Eligibility criteria.

The following criteria will guide the heritage preservation board and the council in evaluating potential heritage landmark designations:

- (1) The quality of significance in history, architecture, archeology and culture present in buildings, sites, structures, objects and districts that reflects:
 - a. Association with important events or patterns of events that reflect significant broad patterns in local history;
 - b. Association with the lives of historically significant persons or groups significant;
 - c. Embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of an architectural style, design, period, type or method of construction; or that possess high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
or
 - d. Important archeological data or the potential to yield important archeological data.
- (2) The retention of specific aspects of historical integrity, including location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, that convey significance as a heritage resource worthy of preservation.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(2))

Sec. 36-715. - Determination of eligibility.

The heritage preservation board shall review the inventory of heritage resources and evaluate the significance of all properties identified by survey. If it determines that a surveyed heritage resource appears to meet at least one of the heritage landmark eligibility criteria, the heritage preservation board may, by majority vote, issue a determination of eligibility for planning purposes.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(3))

Sec. 36-716. - Nomination of a heritage landmark.

Nomination of a property to be considered for designation as an Edina Heritage Landmark shall be submitted to the council by the heritage preservation board. Each nomination shall be accompanied by a heritage landmark nomination study prepared by the city planner. This study shall:

- (1) Identify and describe in detail the heritage resource being nominated;
- (2) Explain how the property meets one or more of the heritage landmark eligibility criteria;
- (3) Make the case for historical significance and integrity; and

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- (4) Recommend a plan of treatment for the heritage resource, with guidelines for design review and specific recommendations for preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction, as appropriate.

The study shall be accompanied by a map that clearly locates the property, a detailed plan of the nominated heritage resource, and archival quality photographs that document significant features of the building, site, structure, object or district.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(4))

Sec. 36-717. - State historic preservation office review.

The city planner shall submit all heritage landmark nominations to the state historic preservation officer for review and comment within 60 days.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(5))

Sec. 36-718. - Planning commission review.

The city planner shall submit all heritage landmark nominations to the city planning commission for review and recommendations prior to any council action.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(6))

Sec. 36-719. - Public hearing.

On receipt of the heritage landmark nomination documents and the comments of the state historic preservation office and the city planning commission, the council shall hold a public hearing to consider the proposed landmark designation.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(7))

Sec. 36-720. - City council designation.

The council may designate a property as an Edina Heritage Landmark by resolution.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(8))

Sec. 36-721. - Designation of heritage landmarks on zoning map.

The planning commission shall place all designated heritage landmarks on the official city zoning map.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(9))

Sec. 36-722. - Review of permits.

- (a) To protect significant heritage resources, the heritage preservation board shall review all applications for city permits for the following types of work in relation to a designated heritage landmark:
 - (1) Demolition of any building or structure, in whole or in part;
 - (2) Moving a building or structure to another location;
 - (3) Excavation of archeological features, grading or earth moving in areas believed to contain significant buried heritage resources; and
 - (4) New construction.

- (b) No city permits for the types of work described in subsection (a) of this section will be issued without a certificate of appropriateness signed by the city planner and approved by the heritage preservation board evidencing compliance with the comprehensive heritage preservation plan. Applications for a certificate of appropriateness shall be made on forms provided by the planning department and shall be accompanied by the fee set forth in section 2-724. The application shall be accompanied by plans and drawings to scale, which clearly illustrate, to the satisfaction of the planner, the work to be undertaken if the permit is granted. Certificates of appropriateness may be granted subject to conditions
- (c) Permit review decisions shall be based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, the comprehensive heritage preservation plan and the heritage landmark preservation study, for each designated property.
- (d) The city planner and the heritage preservation board shall complete their review of applications for city permits requiring certificates of appropriateness within 45 days of the date of application.
- (e) The city planner and the heritage preservation board may issue certificates of appropriateness for work projects submitted voluntarily by owners of heritage resources.
- (f) To ensure compliance with the goals and policies of the comprehensive heritage preservation plan, the heritage preservation board shall review every application for a preliminary plat, conditional use permit, variance or rezoning, in relation to a designated heritage landmark; and the city planning commission shall give the heritage preservation board a reasonable opportunity to comment on such projects before making its recommendation to the council.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(10))

Sec. 36-723. - Appeals.

Any party aggrieved by a decision of the heritage preservation board or an administrative official may appeal such decision by filing a written appeal with the city clerk no later than ten days after the decision of the heritage preservation board or the administrative official. If not so filed, the right of appeal shall be deemed waived and the decision of the heritage preservation board or administrative official shall be final. Upon receipt of the appeal, the city clerk shall transmit a copy of said appeal to the heritage preservation board. The council shall hear and decide all appeals in the manner provided by section 36-100.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(11))

Sec. 36-724. - Violation.

Violations of the provisions of this chapter or the conditions of approval granted thereunder shall be a misdemeanor. This chapter may also be enforced by injunction, abatement or any other appropriate remedy, in any court of competent jurisdiction.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(12))

Sec. 36-725. - Maintenance of heritage landmark properties.

Every owner or person in possession of a designated heritage landmark shall keep the property in good repair.

(Code 1970; Code 1992, § 850.20(13))