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Preserving Modernism

By Colin McConaha and Derek Chisholm, AICP, Parametrix

The Pacific Northwest has progressively pursued, and often led, many planning movements, a record highlighted by the Clark-Vancouver Historic Preservation program to improve public awareness and appreciation of mid-century modern architecture. This local program focuses on the unique value of modern architecture and the challenges associated with preserving what could be this nation's most varied, numerous, and misunderstood historic possession: most varied because modernist houses exist in many sub-styles; most numerous because they were constructed in the post-WW II building boom; most misunderstood because we all grew up with them and so have never really appreciated them.

As these buildings turn 50 years old, they are eligible for protection as historic resources. There are a number of reasons why these buildings are worth protecting that planners should understand.

1. It's the law: The Historic Preservation Act, National Park Service Guidelines, and Section 106 of the USDOT Act, in addition to many local codes, regard 50 years as the threshold for historic determinations. While certainly not all 50 year-old homes warrant the protection of these laws, many ranch style houses that may appear mundane exhibit important qualities of their era that are increasingly valued by savvy buyers.
2. Distinct style: Modern-style homes have unique characteristics that distinguish them from their Craftsman and bungalow predecessors. Open floor plans, an exposed structure, and expansive windows are all features of

A "Rummer" Modern Style House in Portland



Photo by Jack Bookwalter

modern homes that greatly influenced the designs of today as well as being, in their own time, new designs for the American home.

3. Growing appreciation: "50 and Proud of It," in the November 2006 issue of Planning, noted that the audiences who read publications devoted to modern architecture are largely younger people who appreciate the clean, open feel of this style, having grown up in homes and buildings built in the 40s, 50s, and 60s.
4. Latent appreciation: Modern houses, such as ranches, are sometimes misunderstood by their owners who attempt to change the character of the house by remodels that adopt other styles (e.g., Craftsman), generally because the owner doesn't know about modernism. It is important that planners continue efforts such as the Clark-Vancouver Historic Preservation program to educate the public about modern architecture and its significance for contemporary architecture and design.

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2007 Washington State Legislative Preview



By Christy L. Osborn, AICP

For several years, the state legislative agenda has been focused on advancing the provisions of the Growth Management Act (GMA). Recent legislative amendments to refine the GMA have included rules on industrial land banks, allowing limited retail sales on designated agricultural resource lands, and expedited state agency review of amendments to development regulations. During the 2006 session, attempts related to Best Available Science and GMA timelines did not pass. Despite its failure, the Property Rights Initiative (I-933) has had a significant impact on the legislative priorities of many groups for the 2007 session. The timing of the initiative and the uncertainty of whether the initiative would be passed by the voters has had a significant effect on lobbying groups' legislative platforms.

The top priorities of the state APA chapter for the 2007 session include:

- Refining GMA, including making clear the status of Best Available Science as a key (but not the sole) factor in decision-making, and also including flexibility for implementation by local jurisdictions as long as comparable designation and protection result.
- Advocating for sufficient funding sources for current and future infrastructure.
- Promoting an adequate supply of housing and housing affordability by encouraging state and federal funding and legislation that authorizes cities to provide property tax incentives and exemptions for housing in designated urban centers.
- Strengthening and coordinating local, regional, and state planning, including state funding for preparing and implementing plans that prioritize the protection of critical areas and supporting areas that do good planning.
- Supporting regulations that require all state agencies to plan and carry out actions consistent with GMA goals.
- Supporting legislation to require a statewide smart growth strategy.

Other priorities include transportation funding, transitioning unincorporated urban growth areas into urban areas, and integrating and streamlining the Shoreline Management Act, the State Environmental Policy Act, and the GMA.

The Governor's land use policy priority for the 2007 session is centered on the working lands initiative which would help landowners and communities protect working farms and forest areas threatened by increasing development. The initiative will include creating an Office of Working Farms and Forests, providing low interest loans for bioenergy projects, promoting Washington products, and implementing the Columbia River Basin water supply initiative.

The priorities of the Association of Washington Cities include:

- Providing for flexible general government operations so that cities have local decision-making authority.
- Advocating for proposals that would better facilitate annexations and encourage better coordination between cities and counties on boundary and governance issues.
- Advancing proposals in response to I-933 that would give greater deference to cities in determining how to balance property rights protection and local environmental resources, including potential clarification of how to find, consider, and apply Best Available Science.

The priorities of the Washington State Association of Counties include:

- Supporting legislation that affirms county authority and discretion in adopting comprehensive plans including which planning elements are included in the GMA plan updates and limiting appeals to the items updated.
- Support the use of the Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) to increase the flexibility for infrastructure funding; implementation of the housing elements of a comprehensive plan; and the use of additional REET in lieu of impact fees as a funding source.
- Allowing counties to impose a \$15 to \$20 dollar vehicle license fee to be dedicated to transportation and shared with cities.

For more information on proposed legislation or to track or comment on legislation log on to www.washington-apa.org and click on the legislative committee web page. This page will provide you with legislative bill reviews, include the state APA legislative platform, and provide a link to the Washington State Legislature homepage. The summer edition of the SW Section newsletter will include a wrap-up article on the 2007 legislative session. The SW Section will host a wrap-up brown bag.

Vancouver Revises Street Tree Ordinance

Vancouver has experienced rapid development and population growth, which puts further pressure on the overall urban tree canopy. As trees are a vital natural resource providing numerous environmental, social, and economic benefits, the City of Vancouver is committed to reversing the declining tree canopy trend.

In 2006, the City Council adopted a revised Street Tree Ordinance (VMC 12.04) which regulates the planting, pruning, and removal of street trees. Although street trees are a public good and are considered public property because they are in the public right-of-way, in Vancouver (as in most Pacific Northwest municipalities) the owner of the adjacent property is responsible for all street tree maintenance, including planting, pruning, and removal. Therefore, property owners, contractors, and planners should be aware of the ordinance requirements:

- Removing a street tree requires a permit, and trees that are removed must be replaced so that there is no net loss in the overall tree canopy.
- All tree work must be done according to

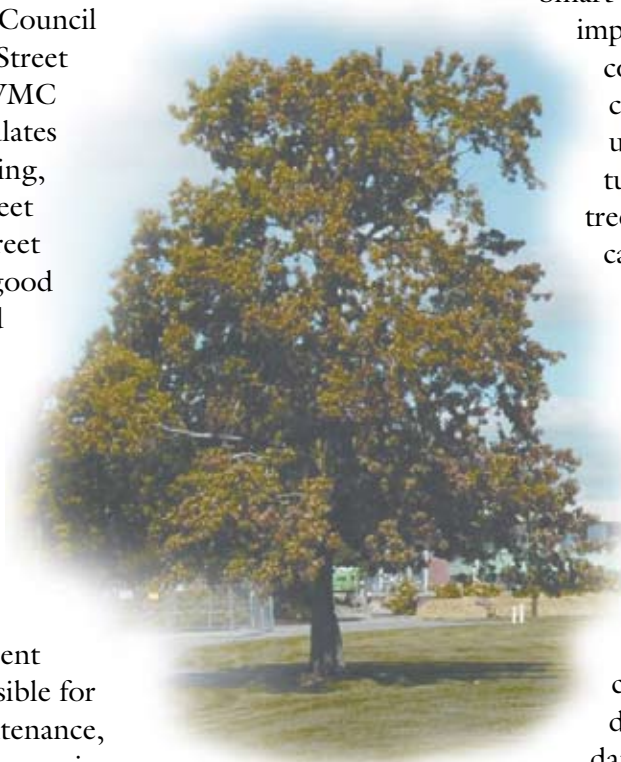
national tree care standards to promote tree health, enhance public safety, and reduce future maintenance costs. Topping is prohibited.

- Major pruning requires a street tree work permit, and must be done by an individual or firm with a City Street Tree Worker License to protect trees and property owners.

Smart street tree planning and care improve the quality of life in a community and reduce future costs by preventing water and utility line conflicts, infrastructure (sidewalk) damage, hazards trees resulting from improper tree care, exotic pest outbreaks, and storm cleanup. By promoting smart planning and elevating the standards of tree care, we can minimize future maintenance costs to utilities, municipalities and property owners.

The Urban Forestry Program offers a street tree manual for property owners, contactors and planners that discusses national tree care standards and includes lists of prohibited and approved street trees so that that the right tree will be planted in the right place. The manual and downloadable permit applications are available at www.cityofvancouver.us/urbanforestry.

For more information, contact Vancouver Urban Forestry at (360) 619-1128 or e-mail urbanforestry@ci.vancouver.wa.us.



Preserving Modernism

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Resources on modern architecture include www.docomomo.com, which advocates documenting and conserving examples of the modern movement, and www.docomomo-wewa.org, which concentrates on modernism in western Washington. A video of the latest lecture on modernism sponsored by the Clark-Vancouver Historic Preservation program is still run-

ning on www.CVTV.org, and can be obtained at the CVTV offices. The lecture featured Jack Bookwalter and Jim Brown, who edits Atomic Ranch, a quarterly devoted to ranch houses and modernist tract houses. For more information on historic preservation in Clark County, visit www.clark.wa.gov/longrangeplan/historic/.

Don't Miss the Feb. 17 Study Session for the AICP Exam!

This workshop will give candidates a thorough look at the exam and its major (typical) topic areas, make them aware of the format and difficulty of test questions, and give strong, focused direction for individual study and preparation. The workshop will also help candidates organize meaningful study groups, which increase the odds of passing while reducing aimless study! Besides auditing the AICP exam for the last 10 years, session speaker Michael Waiczis has instructed preparation workshops around the country.

Saturday, February 17
8:30 am to 5:30 pm
1300 Franklin Street
Vancouver, Washington
Cost: \$125

Continental breakfast and lunch are included; when registering, please specify if a vegetarian lunch is desired.

Please register by Friday, February 9; registrations received later than this date will reserve a seat at the session if space is available,

but study materials may not be received until after the session. Send your name, organization, address, phone, fax and e-mail information with your check (checks only, please), payable to Oregon APA, to the address below, or fax the information and follow with your check.

Oregon APA
1980 Willamette Falls Drive,
Suite 230, #336
West Linn, Oregon 97068
FAX: (503) 210-0860

For questions about registration, call Pat Zepp (503) 657-6087; for questions about the session, call Susan Ellinger (360) 397-2375, x 4272.

The Oregon Chapter and the Southwest Section of the Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association thank sponsors Parametrix, Inc.; Harrang Long Gary Rudnick, PC; OTAK; Perkins Coie, LLP; and Alpha Community Development.

For information about applying for the AICP exam, see www.planning.org/certification.

Announcements

- **First Tuesday on February 6** will focus on the development review permitting process. First Tuesday is a monthly discussion forum on community issues hosted by the City of Vancouver Planning Commission from 4-6 p.m. in Vancouver City Hall Council Chambers, 210 East 13th Street. (This month, the SW Section will host a social following the forum—see below.) For further information on the First Tuesday topic each month, check the Building, Planning and Environment web page at www.cityofvancouver.us/page.asp?menuid=10463.
- **The SW Section Board recently set the program for 2007.** This year, the section will organize and host spring and fall brown bag sessions, and winter and summer socials.
- **The SW Section Winter Social is scheduled for Tuesday, February 6,** at 6 p.m. at the 15th Street Pub at the corner of Mill Plain and Main Street. The SW Section will provide appetizers. Everyone is welcome to attend, so please pass this information along to your colleagues.
- **The City of Ridgefield is looking for an energetic Senior Planner** to assist the Community Development Department with their many projects. AICP Preferred. The salary range for this position will be \$4,662-\$5,909 per month; actual salary will be based on the selected applicant's qualifications and experience. The city also offers an excellent benefit package. If you are interested in this position, please send a completed City of Ridgefield Employment Application, cover letter, resume and salary history to: Office of the City Clerk/Human Resources, 230 Pioneer Street, PO Box 608, Ridgefield, WA 98642, or call (360) 887-3557 for more information. The city's position announcement, job description and Employment Application are available on our website at: www.ci.ridgefield.wa.us.
- **The SW Section APA newsletter is provided free** to APA members and other interested parties. If you found this edition informative, we encourage you to pass it along to others. To add a name to the distribution list, please e-mail a request to Leandra.Cleveland@hdrinc.com