M News: COMSAT and Frank Walser House Destroyed / Johnson House Saved / In Situ Studio Sweep
From: George Smart <george@usmodernist.org>
Date: Monday, April 20, 2026

US Modernist

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Welcome, Modernist architecture fans, to the USModernist newsletter, sharing Modernist news and events since 2008. USModernist is an award-winning nonprofit 501C3 educational archive for the documentation, preservation, and promotion of Modernist architecture.

Modernist House Archives: 25,000+ Houses	Architecture Media Library: 5M+ Pages	USModernist Radio Podcast: 460+ Shows

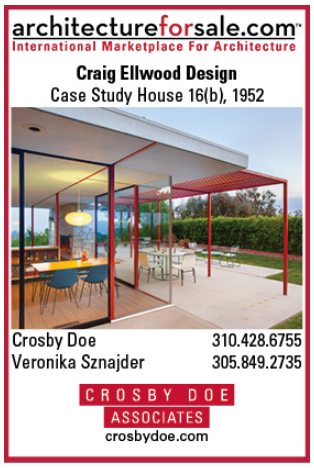
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Editor: **Ron Gallagher** Newsletter Staff: **Virginia Faust, George Smart**
Got Modernist News? Contact **Ron Gallagher** at rpg.modernist@gmail.com

Newsletter Sponsorship: Connect your product, service, or organization to USModernist's 86,000 Modernist fans, architects, real estate agents, preservationists, and builders. Reach out to George Smart, 919.740.8407.

Meet the USModernist Team

Check out the NCModernist For Sale/Rent Database. Real estate agents and owners can list their North Carolina Modernist houses for sale or rent for free. Sponsored by:

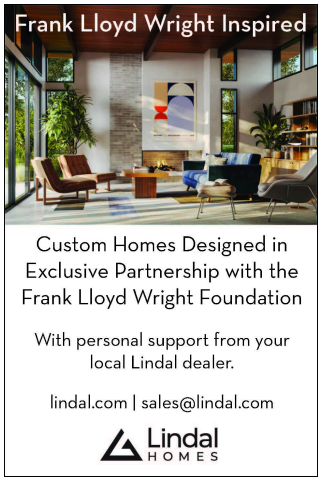














Featured Upcoming Events

It's Matsumoto Prize time! In addition to new houses, NCModernist has added a new Renovations category for the 2026 Matsumoto Prize. This opens up the Prize for many creative solutions to expansion, restoration, and sustainability. The Matsumoto Prize is open to anyone with primary design responsibility for a Modernist house project located in North Carolina; the designer/architect can be from anywhere.

Deadline 5pm ET on April 29. The 2026 George Matsumoto Prize Awards will be held at Leland Little in Hillsborough NC on July 22. Details, or skip right to the entry screen.

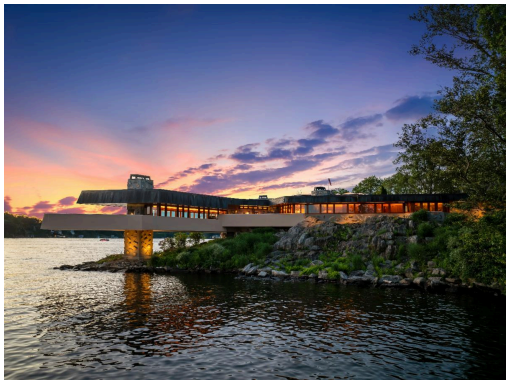
MATSUMOTO PRIZE



NC MODERNIST MOVIE SERIES

Tuesday, May 5, 7pm: *The Donn of Tiki*. Come in your best Hawaiian shirt as we celebrate one of the most enjoyable artifacts of the mid-century era: the tiki bar and its creator, Donn Beach, also known as Don the Beachcomber. But his story goes much deeper than that. He was an American maverick, constantly reinventing himself many times over and was well known for embellishing the details of his extraordinary life. Separating fact from exaggeration to finally tell his fascinating story: a youth spent in Jamaica, running rum during prohibition, hunting down cigars and liquor for troops in World War II, and bringing the first commercial lūau to Hawai'i. Remote Q&A afterwards with producer **Max Well.**

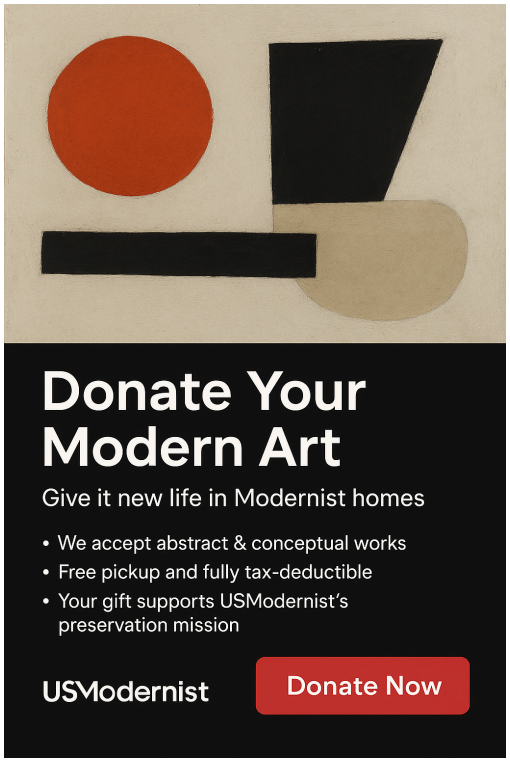
Featuring curated tiki drinks in tiki cups and **live tiki music by Vibexotica** starting at 6pm**.** Rialto Theatre, Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh NC. Get tickets in advance, or at the door. Doors open at 5:45pm.



Sunday, June 7, 11am-1pm: Don't miss the boat! USModernist Celebrates Frank Lloyd Wright's 159th Birthday with a Jazz Brunch on Petra Island, just 50 miles north of New York City. Explore the Chahroudi Cottage and the breaktaking Massaro House during a unique visit.

Only 4 places left! Tickets and details.

Support USModernist's Mission and National Impact



So many ways to be part of the intrepid USModernist community! Sponsor this newsletter or the USModernist Radio podcast.

Join the Mod Squad. Make a tax-deductible donation. Contribute your dad's abstract paintings. Donate old architecture and design magazines to the USModernist Library. Donate your midcentury furniture or modern art.

Can't sleep? Volunteer to do online research. Travel with us. Attend our Raleigh architecture movies. Come to a free Thirst4Architecture (T4A) Happy Hour (schedule below).

Contact **Caroline Francis,** USModernist Chief Development Officer, at **caroline@usmodernist.org.**



Free the shelves! Empty the storage boxes! The massive drop of state and Federal funding is forcing many libraries to make tough decisions. New media, archives of famous alumni, maker spaces, and other emerging needs for square footage puts space at a premium, even at offsite storage. Taking up much-desired space are architecture and design periodicals, valued by design faculty – but – most have been not been circulated or even opened for decades. Your library is likely in this position, desperate for space but reluctant to through these brilliant journals away. USModernist solves this problem – at no cost. At 5 million pages, the USModernist Library is the largest open digital archive for of architecture and design magazines in the world. This award-winning nonprofit project gives old, space-taking

architecture and design magazines new, text-searchable, online life – with free user access. Contact **George Smart**, 919 740 8407, or george@usmodernist.org.

Endangered Modernist Houses



Know an endangered Modernist house? Through our preservation alert program, **Modernism In Danger,** USModernist calls attention to the Modernist buildings around the country at risk for deterioration, demolition, lowball auction, or inappropriate renovation (like turning your Modernist house into an Italianate villa). Tell us.

Endangered: 3401 Ocotea, Raleigh NC, is a gorgeous 1966 Modernist house, 2862 sf, on 3/4 of an acre. Clearly designed by an architect (though we don't know who), the sales listing had no interior photos, which is a surefire sign of intended teardown. Sold to Urban Buildings Solutions.

Endangered: From a town known as Oyster Bay, Long Island, made famous in song by **Billy Joel**, there's a rare, long-neglected Burke House at 144 Center Island Road for sale on 17 acres for $6.75M. **Benjamin Thompson** of TAC was the project architect. TAC leader **Walter Gropius** was friends with the Burkes. No interior photos, being sold as land.



Endangered? The 1953 Wade and Margaret Lewis Residence at 2700 Manning Place in Raleigh is one of the very few houses in North Carolina built over a stream. They don't let you do that any more. Designed by Milton Small, the house was widely published when completed. Off the market, but not under contract. Previously listed for $675,000.

News



Destroyed: Demolition crews last week began ripping down the 500,000-sf COMSAT building in Montgomery County MD. Cesar Pelli designed the offices and laboratories where major developments in communication happened. Hat tip to Karen Burditt.





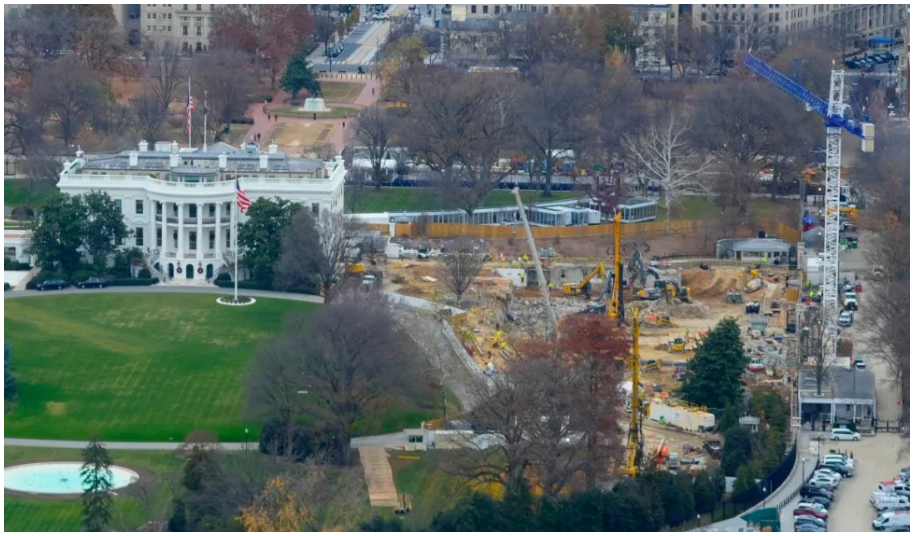
Destroyed: The Frank Walser House at 3350 Alamance Drive in Raleigh NC, a Milton Small design in amazing condition. This was Raleigh's first major first loss of a Modernist house in 10 years.



Saved: Philip Johnson's first built residential design, the long-deteriorating 1946 Booth/Damora House in Bedford NY, has been purchased by a new investment group led by New York architect **Drew Lang** and builder **Ravi Arps**. The team will restore the house and put it up for sale. Story in the Architects Newspaper.



The Bjarke Ingels Group, **William Raw Associates**, and **Hastings Architecture** announced their design for a new Tennessee Performing Arts Center in Nashville. The riverside building will have a screen of bundled aluminum pipes, which Ingels described like "organ pipes or steel chimes.



The federal judge who recently halted work on **Donald Trump's** East Wing ballroom at the White House clarified last week that a "national security" clause in his order lets crews working on the below-ground part of the project, a huge military bunker to replace one ripped out during demolition. Meanwhile, plans for Trump's giant arch get overwhelmingly negative feedback but continues.



After almost ten years of waiting, repairs have been completed on broken water features Dion Neutra designed for the 1975 Huntington Beach CA Central Library. Hat tip to **Alan Ray**.



Time is getting tight for the Dallas TX City Council to decide options for the I.M. Pei's City Hall and plaza, opened in 1978: fix some problems, replace every system in the building, or sell the entire 15 acres and move. DOCOMOMO North Texas has a detailed update.

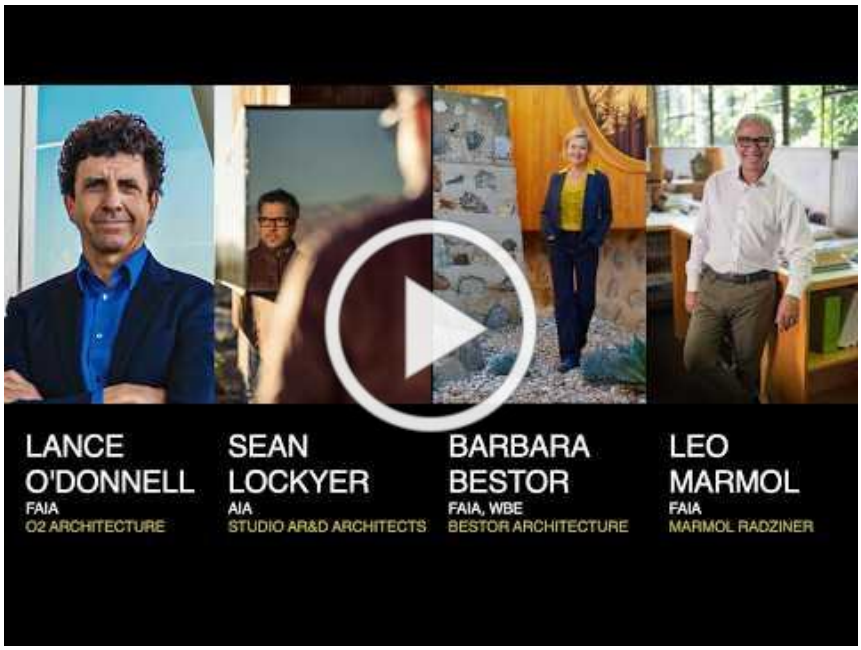
AIA Triangle

In Situ Studio architects of Raleigh swept the AIA Triangle Awards last week, winning an unprecedented seven: three commercial projects plus four Modernist houses. Also winning residential awards, Raleigh Architecture and Thoughtcraft. See them all here.





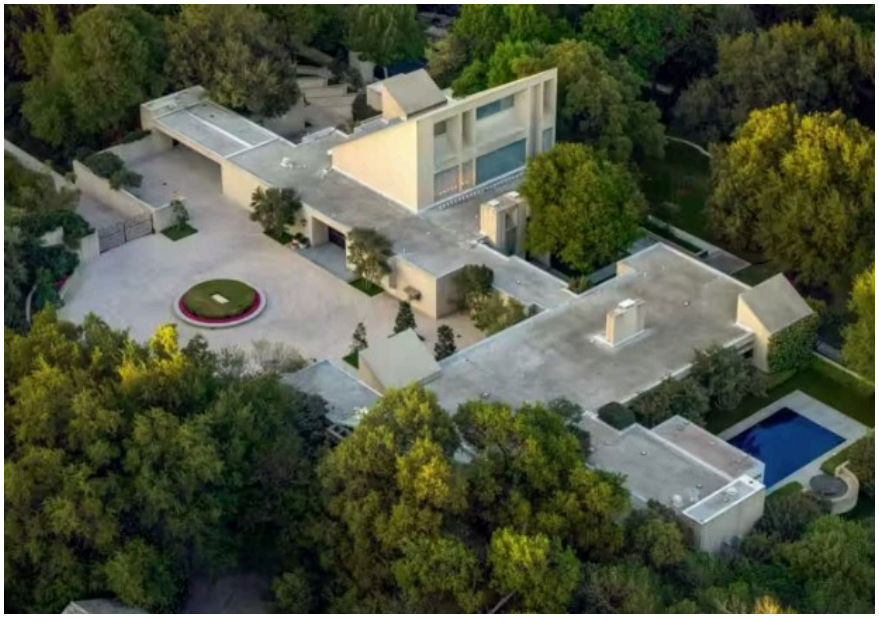
Restoration of a market hall in Belgium and temporary quarters for a component of the Slovenian National Theater were winners of the 2026 Mies van der Rohe Awards.



Watch California architects **Lance O'Donnell, Sean Lockyer, Barbara Bestor, and Leo Marmol** in a presentation hosted by Preservation Mirage from 2026's Modernism Week.

CORRECTION: The April 13 edition of the newsletter attributed the design of Trina Turk's Soleil House in Palm Springs CA to architect Harold Bissner Jr. The house was designed by Harold Bissner Sr.

Modernist Houses For Sale



Reported by news media that cite the Wall Street Journal but nowhere listed on MLS, I.M. Pei's 1969 Charles and Anne Tandy house is Fort Worth TX is said to be available for $22M.





Wise Sellers: 1306 Mayfair in Raleigh NC is a delightfully small 1951 Modernist house in good condition. However, it's in a neighborhood full of teardowns. The owners, who love the house and have been there for over 50 years, have wisely required a no-teardown agreement for prospective buyers. Knowing that buyers can and do lie about destroying houses, this version of deed restriction is a legally enforceable binding promise attached to the property title. New caring owners, who have no intention of tearing a great house like this down, are undeterred. This scares away developers who would destroy it, as happened last week with the Milton-Small-designed Frank Walser house, above. Details.



Ray Kappe's 1959 Earl and Betty Clemmons Residence in Los Angeles is on the market for just under $3M.



Edward Fickett's 1959 **Ava Gardner** House in Los Angeles, where lore has it that the uninhibited actress would answer the door for Fickett au naturel, is for sale at #3M, including vacant land next door.



St. Louis Architect **Harris Armstrong** designed this 1956 house in Columbus MO with a cantilevered bedroom wing, for sale for $1.59M.



A beautiful Arthur Cogswell house with a Dail Dixon renovation at 216 Glenhill in Chapel Hill NC is up for sale, $1.7M.

Upcoming Events

April 25, 1-5pm: Southern Shores NC Historic Flat Top Tour of 13 examples of the area's oceanfront architecture. Information.

April 26: Public visit day to the Pearlman cabin in Idyllwild CA, designed by John Lautner with concept by **Agnes Pearlman**. 11:30 AM to afternoon after

vegetarian lunch. www.pearlmancabin.com. Contact **Nancy Pearlman,** Nancysuepearlman@aol.com.

April 28, 5pm. The Onera Prize recipient **Anne Maxwell Foster** speaks at the Onera Foundation, New Canaan CT, on passive cooling for historic buildings. Details.



April 30: Museum of Arts and Design, New York NY. **Daniella Ohad** hosts Conversation with Design Legends. Special guest **Bill Sofield** who is converting the famous Flatiron building into residential. Tickets.

April 30: Screening of ***Arthur Elrod Desert Cool,*** 5pm PT. Palm Springs Cultural Center, Palm Springs CA. Details and tickets.

May 2: Modernism in Southern Minnesota bus tour by Docomomo-US MN. Details and tickets.

Tuesday, May 5, 7pm: *The Donn of Tiki,* featuring curated tiki drinks and live music by Vibexotica starting at 6pm. Rialto Theatre, Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh NC. Hosted by NCModernist. Get tickets in advance, or at the door. Doors open at 5:45pm.

May 9: MAK Center Spring Architecture Tour of five Los Angeles-area houses designed by Lloyd Wright, Raphael Soriano, and Rudolph Schindler. Information.

May 9: Restore Oregon's popular midcentury modern home tour will spotlight Portland's Argay Terrace. Details.

May 16: The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust's WrightPlus Architectural Housewalk, Oak Park IL. Information.

May 16-17: Preservation Durham Home Tour. Tickets.

MOORE MODERNISM

May 29-30: Moore Modernism Talk + Tour, Southern Pines NC. Featuring USModernist's George Smart speaking on Mayberry Modernism, Friday night. Then on Saturday, a tour of the WR Isom House, the Elizabeth Faye Long

House, the Beith House, the Mattocks House,, and the Adrian House. Tickets and details. Use the USModernist discount code **modernistmember** to receive 10% off.



May 29-31: IconicHouses Conference - City Icons: Barcelona & Beyond. Details.

Tuesday, June 2, 7pm: *Visual Acoustics.* Rialto Theatre, Raleigh NC. Hosted by NCModernist. Get tickets in advance, or at the door.

June 6: Philip Johnson Glass House Summer Party, New Canaan CT. Details and tickets.

Sunday, June 7, 11am-1pm: USModernist hosts Frank Lloyd Wright's 159th Birthday Jazz Brunch on Petra Island! Tickets and details.

Through June 12: ***We Built This***, a traveling exhibition by Preservation North Carolina on NC landmarks designed and built by Black craftsmen, builders and architects. Free and open to the public at 700 Park Offices Drive, weekdays 9-5.

Thursday, August 20: NCModernist Thirst4Architecture Happy Hour at the new Raleigh Building Product Showroom of Fitch Lumber and Hardware, 3010 Stony Brook Drive, Suite 105. Free, registration required. Enter FITCH on the form.

September 13-15: AIA regional design conference, ASPIRE. Asheville NC. Open to architects and non-architects. *Save $50 with code ASPMODERNIST26.*

October 3: La Jolla Modernism Home Tour. Tickets will go on sale in July. Details.



Friday-Saturday, October 9-10: Harkrader House Tour and Celebration Party, Durham NC, sponsored by Preservation Durham and NCModernist. Details TBA.

Thursday, October 15: NCModernist Thirst4Architecture Happy Hour at Raleigh Architecture at their new office in Raleigh NC. Free, registration required. Enter RACO on the form.

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Latest Podcast









#453/Ukraine's Dmytro Soloviov + From the Miller House, Ben Wever + San Diego with Hallie Swenson + Palm Desert with Robert Stone

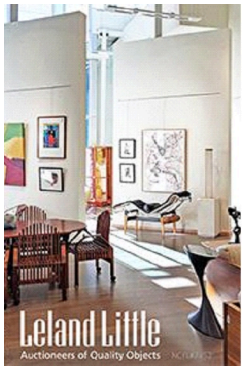
Want to do preservation – in a war zone? **Dmytro Soloviov** documents Ukraine's Modernist architecture. **Ben Wever** cares for one of America's modernist treasures, the Miller House in Columbus IN. **Hallie Swenson** uncovers the stories of San Diego modernism, and architect **Robert Stone** brings new desert Modernism to life.

USModernist Radio is underwritten by The Brent R. Harris Charitable Trust, restorer of Richard Neutra's Kaufmann Desert House in Palm Springs and six other houses in California; by the E Fay Jones Conservancy, preserving the legacy of Modernist architecture in Northwest Arkansas. Visit efayjonesconservancy.org; and by Diane Bald and The Budman Family, restoring significant architecture in Toronto, Los Angeles, Malibu and Palm Springs.

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NCMODERNIST





Leland Little's fantastic quarterly Modern and Contemporary auction is online Thursday, April 30, featuring nearly 400 items.

Support NCModernist by bidding on paintings by artist **John Hiigli,** examples above. Join NCModernist's **George Smart** and **Devra Dubroff** at the pre-auction reception, 6pm, Wednesday, April 29, at Leland Little, 620 Cornerstone Court, Hillsborough NC. This event is free. More info & tickets here.

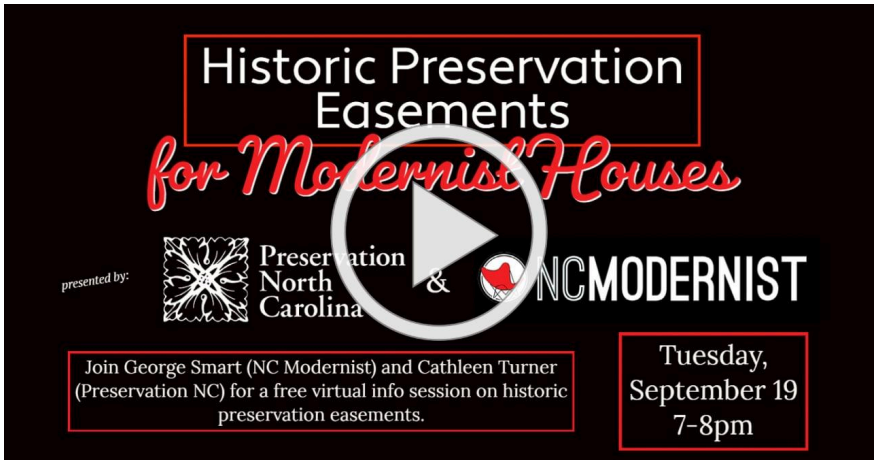
FOR SALE

Vacancy, not development, is the enemy of mid-century Modernist houses. Preserve and protect the architecture you love by notifying us when North Carolina houses go vacant or on the market.

Check out the NCModernist For Sale/Rent Database. Real estate agents and owners can list their NC Modernist houses for sale or rent for free. Submissions are subject to approval: single-family Modernist houses only, they can be old or new, the architect or designer can be from

anywhere, but the house must be in North Carolina.
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The **preservation easement** is one of the only legally enforceable ways to assure a Modernist house does not get destroyed by future owners. National Register status? Meaningless. Famous architect? Nope. Local historic designation? At best, a delay in demolition. And as history shows, there are plenty of smiling buyers who say, "I would never tear this down." Then after closing, it's gone. Think of the preservation easement as a homeowner's association for one house. The easement requires future owners to maintain the house in current structural condition and state of repair, or better, including necessary work to preserve its integrity. Here's a video featuring Preservation North Carolina and NCModernist, along with **Jane Levy**, who has an easement on her Greensboro Modernist home. Here's a sample preservation easement document.

There is another way, the deed restriction. Consider it "preservation easement lite." When a once-cherished residence falls into the hands of new owners, there is always the risk that it will be destroyed, despite promises to the contrary from those owners. One powerful legal tool families can use to guard against demolition is a **deed restriction**. Knowing that potential buyers can and do lie about destroying houses, a deed restriction is a legally enforceable binding promise attached to the property title. Unlike some historic designations, a deed restriction travels with the property through changes in ownership. Even if a buyer threatens to demolish or radically alter a house, they are limited by the deed. The restriction is usually ten years, and it becomes part of the chain of title. Implementing a deed restriction before a sale immediately scares off developers (or developers-in-hiding) in an owner-value-friendly way to protect a property.

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