M News: Brent Leggs / Calvin Howell / Dominyka Voelkle / Will Bruderer
From: "George Smart, Hon AIA" <george@usmodernist.org>
Date: Monday, June 29, 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: 5.5M+ Pages	USModernist Radio Podcast: 465 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

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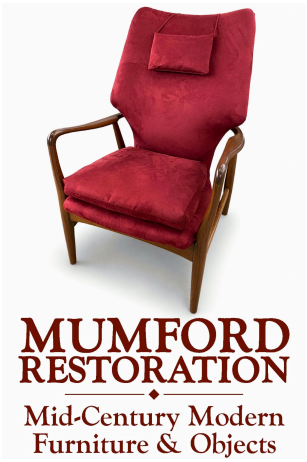
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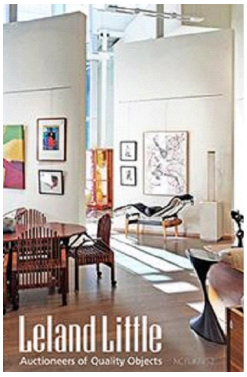
Weber



Voting ends tomorrow, Tuesday, June 30, 5pm ET for the **2026 George Matsumoto Prize**. Go here to see the houses (8 are shown above). You can vote for two categories, NEW and RENOVATED.

VOTE

The Matsumoto Prize Awards are sponsored by



Wednesday, July 22, 6-8pm: NCModernist Thirst4Architecture Happy Hour and the 2026 George Matsumoto Prize Awards at Leland Little Auctions, 620 Cornerstone Court, Hillsborough NC. Preview hundreds of wonderful Modernist items going on auction the next day. Wonderful food and drinks. Free, registration required. Enter MATSUMOTO on the form.



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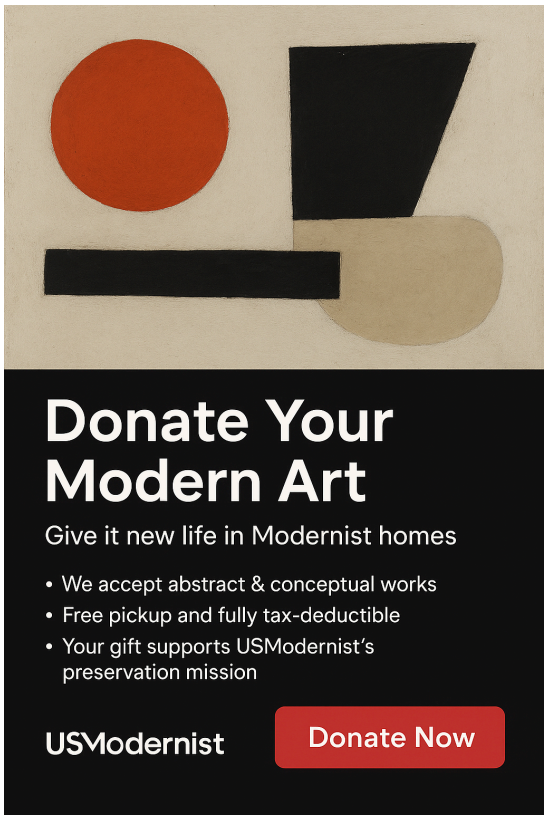
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and NCModernist. Details and tickets.

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

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



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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: From a town known as Oyster Bay, Long Island, NY made famous in song by **Billy Joel**, there's was a rare, long-neglected Burke House

at 144 Center Island Road for sale on 17 acres for $6.75M. Back on the market. **Benjamin Thompson** of TAC was the project architect. TAC leader **Walter Gropius** was friends with the Burkes.

Endangered: Frank Lloyd Wright's Sturges House in Los Angeles was built in 1939. Located at 449 North Skyewiay Road, the house is long-abandoned and in significantly deteriorating condition, with the cantilevered balcony falling down. The Los Angeles Conservancy has named the Sturges House the first advocacy priority on its 2026 L.A. Watch List. If you are concerned about this Frank Lloyd Wright house, contact LA City Council Member **Traci Park** at traci.park@lacity.org and urge the council to step in now.

News



The National Trust for Historic Preservation announced **Brent Leggs** as the organization's new CEO. Leggs founded the National Trust's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund in 2017, raising over $200 million to preserve historic sites, including major funding from the Getty in LA.





There's a TikTok from a few years ago that's hard to watch now. A woman walks through a sun-filled Los Angeles house during an estate sale — original beautiful cabinetry, clean lines, light pouring across the floors. The Modernist house looks ready to live in for another 70 years. It is the Zimmerman House, built in 1950 by Craig Ellwood, landscaped by Garrett Eckbo, photographed by Julius Shulman, and published in Progressive Architecture. The house is one of the finest early works of California modernism. Yet, in 2024, it was bought and bulldozed: cabinetry, gardens, fixtures, and all — to build a new 15,000-square-foot mansion. The Ellwood house wasn't failing. It wasn't unsafe. There were alternatives, yet this exceptional house is gone now. If that makes you wince, you understand exactly why USModernist exists. But documentation alone doesn't stop a bulldozer. Awareness does. Every house we catalog, every story we tell, every researcher and realtor and homeowner we reach is one more line of defense against the next quiet demolition.

That's where you come in. A gift of $250 directly funds the cataloging, archiving, and advocacy that gives endangered Modernist homes a fighting chance. If you can give more—$500 or $1000—it dramatically accelerates how we can research more houses and architects. Every amount keeps this unrivalled archive growing. Every donation over $250 received through July 31 receives a free year's membership in USModernist's Mod Squad.

The Zimmerman House is gone. We can't undo that. But somewhere right now there's another Ellwood, another Wright, another quiet masterpiece moments away from the same fate. With your help, we'll make sure the next one is recognized—and defended—long before the permit is filed. Donate here.



Destroyed: The Cesar Pelli-designed COMSAT Laboratories building in Clarksburg MD sat vacant for about 20 years before its owner, River Falls Investments, moved to redevelop the 204-acre site as a mixed-use community. Preservationists fought hard to save it but the Montgomery County Planning Board rejected that recommendation, and the County Council sided with the Planning Board. The building had real significance: COMSAT Labs was where live international phone calls and satellite television were pioneered, including broadcasts of the 1969 moon landing.



Saved: Austin Coming Together (ACT) acquired the endangered and deteriorating Walser House in Chicago, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. This gives the property a fighting chance at survival. The Chicago-area organization plans to stabilize the building first, then chart a course for its

long-term preservation. ACT partnered with Landmarks Illinois, Preservation Chicago, and estate attorneys **Jack Lydon** and **Michael Rachlis**. There's still a long way to go to restore the house. ACT is inviting the public to follow along and get involved.



Paused: On June 18, the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission approved a 180-day stay on demolition of the Barry Building, temporarily halting demolition activity while preservation alternatives are explored. The LA Conservancy has partnered with Angelenos for Historic Preservation in a lawsuit to overturn approved demolition, advocating for the building's preservation, and urging a solution that protects this historic place. The Office of Historic Resources is expected to update the Commission in approximately one month on any progress made, including exploring options for sale or relocation.



Endangered: The Dallas City Council voted 9-5 to spend up to $3 million exploring new sites for its city headquarters, again putting the iconic 1978 City Hall, designed by architect I. M. Pei, in jeopardy. City manager **Kimberly Bizor Tolbert** will study up to four potential sites and report back in August. The road here was rocky. A June 10 special meeting ended in a lawsuit after three council members got a judge to temporarily block some relocation votes, arguing the public hadn't been properly notified. The day before the vote, two of those members asked a judge to hold city officials in contempt.

Meanwhile, MIT acquired the personal archive of I. M. Pei, who graduated from MIT in 1940. The archive includes more than 1,500 rolls of architectural drawings, 50 architectural models, and 1,000 linear feet of manuscripts documenting Pei's exchanges with fellow architects and contemporaries over his 64-year career.



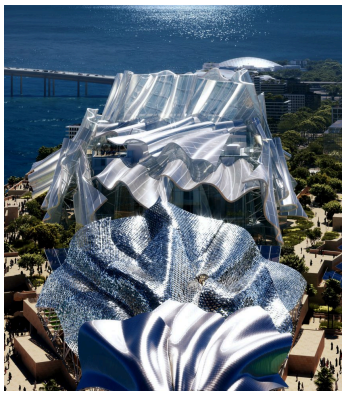
Doomed: The iconic canopy on the Kennedy Building at UNC Charlotte is to be torn down. The canopy was a part of the original design of the first building on UNC Charlotte's 1960's campus and is depicted in the seal of the University.



Built: Do you remember the Vandamm House, featured in **Alfred Hitchcock's** famous film, *North by Northwest*? Set on top of Mount Rushmore, the thrilling Modernist house wasn't real — it was a movie set — until now. Designed by **Michael Upwall**, the recently completed house was built in Utah, It's real, and it's spectacular. Coverage in the Wall Street Journal.



Norwegian architecture firm Snøhetta has unveiled plans to convert Finland's Paimio Sanatorium - the iconic 1933 tuberculosis hospital designed by Aino and Alvar Aalto - into a hotel. Patient rooms will become guest bedrooms, the former surgery wing will be transformed into a 200-seat auditorium, and a new spa will open on the lower level with direct access to the surrounding forest.



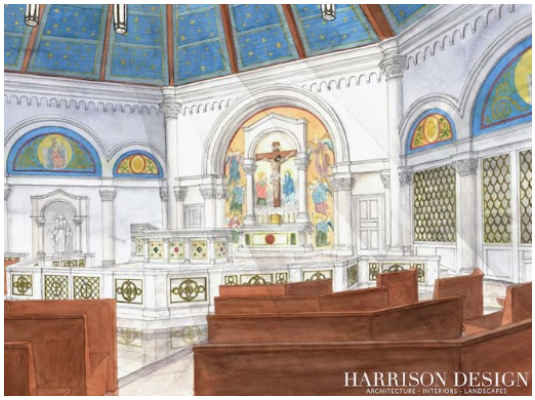
From Dezeen: Construction has commenced on Dar al Funoon Abu Dhabi, a performing arts venue designed by Canadian-American architect Frank Gehry before his death. Expected to be completed in 2030, the landmark venue will be located on Saadiyat Island, joining Gehry's Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, which is also under construction. The sculptural venue will contain a 2,000-seat performance hall, a 3,500-seat open-air amphitheatre, a 400-seat theatre and a 250-seat jazz venue. It will be situated adjacent to other landmark buildings on Saadiyat Island, including Zayed National Museum by Foster + Partners, the Louvre Abu Dhabi by Jean Nouvel, the National History Museum by Mecanoo and TeamLab Phenomena by TeamLab Architects.

Vanity Fair covers Paul R. Williams, the man who designed much of Los Angeles. “Paul Williams is one of the most prolific American architects, period. I would set his body of work alongside Frank Gehry and Thom Mayne,” says Milton Curry, senior associate dean at Cornell University. Williams was the first licensed Black architect west of the Mississippi. He was known for



drawing upside down across a table when presenting to White clients, because at the the time many clients were uncomfortable sitting adjacent.





Endangered: Christ the King parish in Milwaukie OR plans to dramatically change Pietro Belluschi's Modernist design. Calling it "beautification," new Romanesque themes, at right, will undo Belluschi's work, left.



The National Geographic Museum of Exploration opened June 26 in Washington DC, capping a $300M renovation. The four-year overhaul added more than 100,000 square feet of visitor space. A towering yellow frame, the magazine's iconic border, anchors the new entrance pavilion. Inside, a 400-seat cinema and gardens. Architects Hickok Cole recovered 95 percent of construction materials, repurposed original marble in the new pavilion, and

delivered a building that uses 25 percent less energy than comparable structures.



The Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design at the University of Arkansas has named **James Stevens** FAIA as its new Dean. With a Bachelor's in historic preservation from Savannah College of Art and Design, and a Masters in Architecture from NC State, and a Ph.D. in architecture from the University of Ferrara, he was founding director of makeLab, Lawrence Technological University's digital fabrication laboratory before moving to Clemson in 2020. He takes over on August 15.

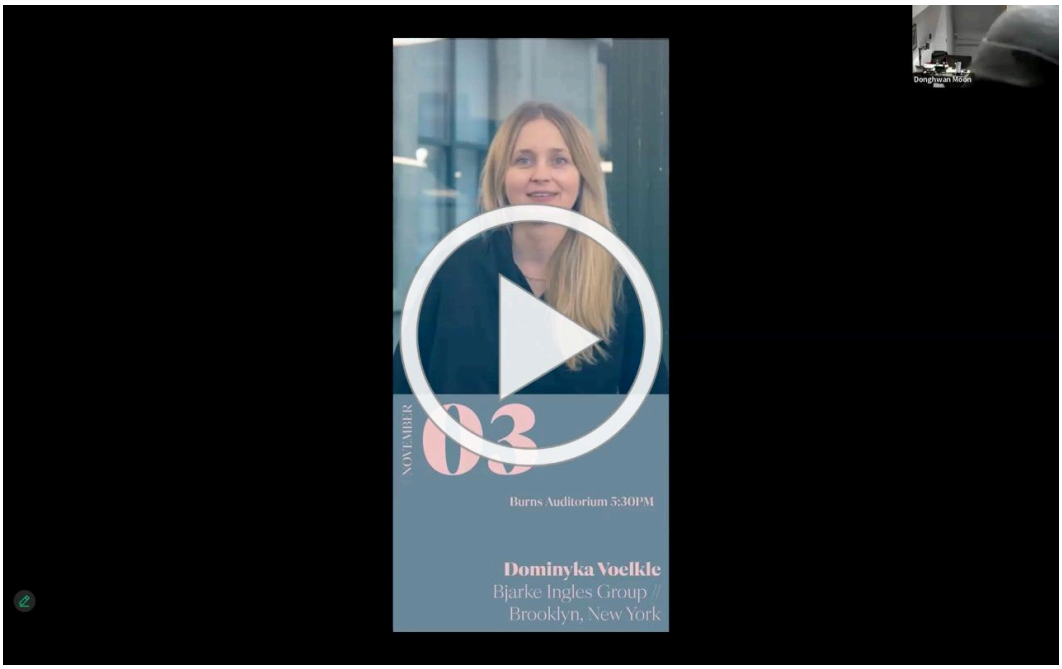
INTERNET ARCHIVE
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Journalists deserve to have their work remembered for generations. This year breaks that promise. For the first time, reporting from major outlets — including *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic* and *USA TODAY* — is no longer preserved by the independent, nonprofit Internet Archive. The justification? Hypothetical fears about AI. Well, that ship has sailed. AI companies can already scrape the news off publishers' sites without consent, and little stops them.

The Internet Archive is not AI. It has been backing up the internet for decades, preserving the news longer than many people have been alive. We need it now more than ever. Censorship and authoritarianism are rising, along with pressure to rewrite stories and erase facts. The least we can do is protect a neutral, third-party record so their reporting survives — for their colleagues, their families and the eyes of history. Sign the petition here.



Up for grabs: The US General Services Administration is auctioning off the 1964 **Julian Goodrich**-designed Modernist federal office building in Montpelier VT. GSA set a $500,000 minimum for bidding, which opened June 15 and runs through August 5. Hat tip to **Devin Colman**.



Movie of the Week: Watch a talk at NC State by **Dominyka Voelkle**, project lead at the Bjarke Ingels Group for The Spiral in Hudson Yards in New York City, the firm's largest project there.





Modernist Houses For Sale



Frank Lloyd Wright's only Tennessee house, the 1952 Shavin House in Chattanooga, is for sale for the first time for $1.6M. The children of original owners **Seamour and Gerte Shavin** are selling after 75 years of family ownership.



The 1949 Leonard and Betty Asher House by Rodney Walker in Sherman Oaks CA is for sale for $3.95M.



Architecture firm **Ainsworth, Angel & McClellan** designed this house in Pasadena CA in 1965. Actress **Kristen Wiig** bought it in February for $5.5M, but now she's selling it for just under $6M.



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 recently with the Milton-Small-designed Frank Walser house on Alamance Drive. Details.

Upcoming Events

Opening **July 1:** The Onera Foundation, New Canaan CT. *AMERICA ABROAD: Art, Architecture, and Diplomacy – Works from the FAPE Collection* explores how art and architecture have shaped the US diplomatic presence abroad—from the Cold War to today. The exhibition features **Ed Ruscha, Robert Rauschenberg, Carrie Mae Weems, Julie Mehretu, and Martin Puryear**, alongside mid-century architects such as Edward Durrell Stone and Walter Gropius, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and Kieran Timberlake, among others. Details.

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Through September 2, AIA Center for Architecture in New York: Dutch photographer Arjan Bronkhorst published lesser-known houses by renowned architect Gerrit Rietveld (1888–1964). This exhibition features fifteen, including one in Oberlin OH. Curated by **Arjan Bronkhorst** and **Barry Bergdoll**. Details.

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

NEW: Thursday, September 24. 6-8pm: NCModernist Thirst4Architecture Happy Hour at PELLA Windows Showroom, 3252 South Miami Blvd, Suite 107, Durham NC. Free, registration required. Enter PELLA on the form.

Saturday, September 26: NCModernist's Modapalooza New Modernist House Tour. Details TBA.

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

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

NEW DATE Wednesday,. October 21 (was October 15): NCModernist Thirst4Architecture Happy Hour at Raleigh Architecture at their new office in

Raleigh NC. Free, registration required. Enter RACO on the form.

Thursday, December 3, 7-9pm. NCModernist Holiday Party, details TBA.

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Latest Podcast









#463/Will Bruder + Alex Josephson + Greg Case + Off Grid with Suzy Cash

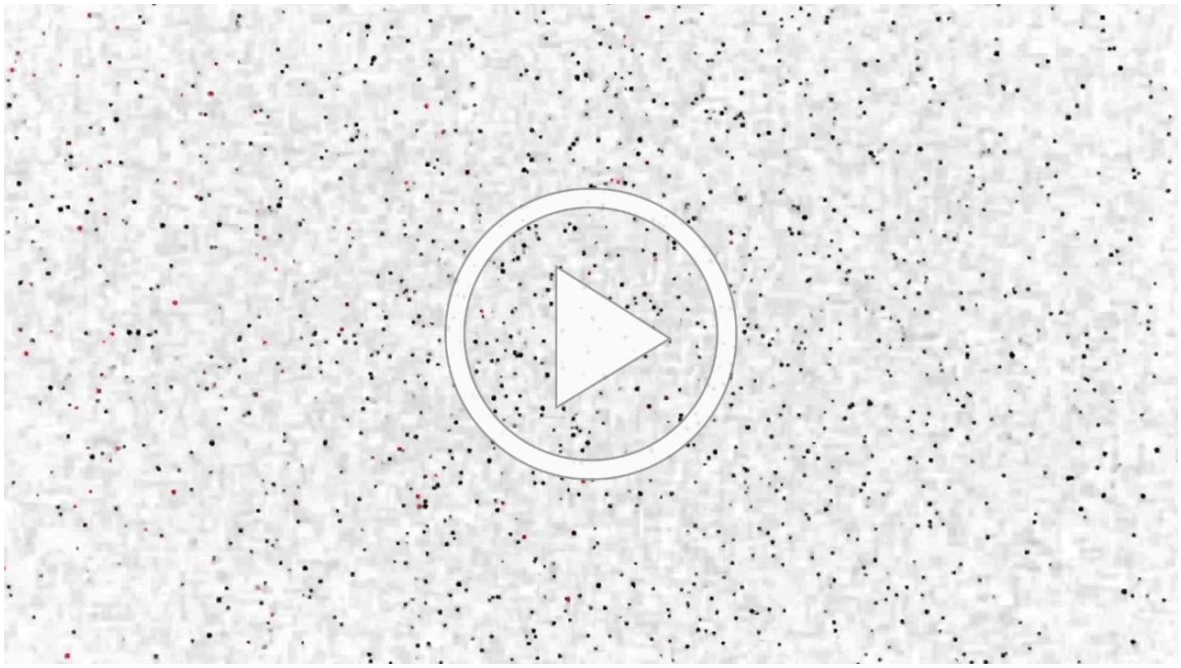
Will Bruder is a celebrated architect who never went to architecture school — he just became one of the most respected architects in America through apprenticing to **Paolo Soleri** and Gunnar Birkerts. **Alex Josephson** quit London's most prestigious architecture program mid-degree and struck out on his own. **Greg Case** is an ad guy who out-researched the professionals and rescued a forgotten Modernist architect from obscurity. And **Suzy Cash** has a graduate degree and a résumé from one of the best firms in the South, yet she traded it for an off-grid life built with her own hands.

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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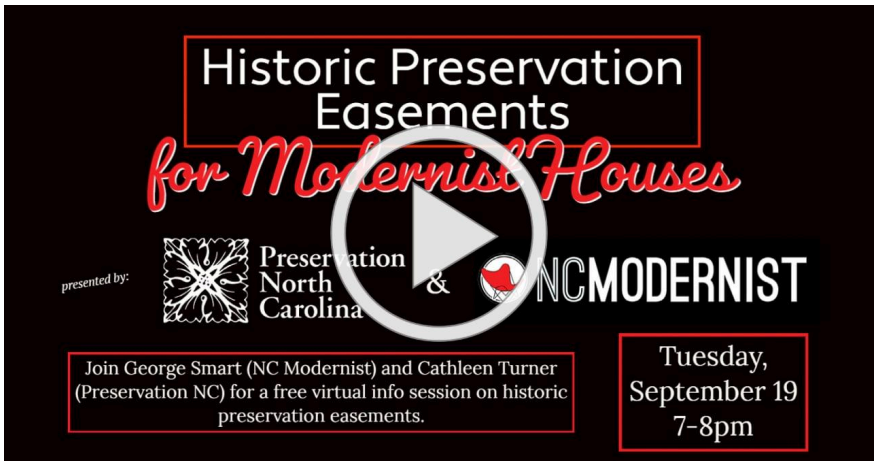
Hayes Howell was the premiere Modernist architecture firm in the Sandhills region of North Carolina for decades. Watch our 2026 interview with the last surviving partner, Calvin Howell, now in his 90's.

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. Exclusively sponsored by:

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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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