



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649 Seattle WA 98124-4649
Street Address: 700 5th Ave Suite 1700

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

LPB 620/12

Name and Address of Property: Chiarelli – Dore House
843 NE 100th Street

Legal Description: Lot 1 and the west 22 feet of Lot 2, acre 4, tract 95; and that portion of lot 3, acre 3, tract 95, Maple Leaf Addition to Green Lake Circle, according to the plat thereof recorded in Volume 2 of plats, page 115, in King County, Washington. Situated in the city of Seattle.

At the public meeting held on December 19, 2012, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Chiarelli – Dore House at 843 NE 100th Street as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standards for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- D. *It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction; and*
- E. *It is an outstanding work of the Architect James Chiarelli.*

DESCRIPTION

SETTING

The Chiarelli House is situated on the current lot 3, Block 95, of the Maple Leaf Addition to Green Lake Circle in north Seattle's Maple Leaf neighborhood, directly southeast of Northgate Mall and the Northgate neighborhood (Figures 1–5). The dwelling sits in the northeast portion of its current parcel, with the façade elevation situated at a slight angle to NE 100th Street, which runs in an east-west direction in front of the property (Figure 6). The dwelling is oriented toward the north-northeast.

The Maple Leaf Addition is characterized largely by dense residential development, dating primarily to the post-World War II era and the mid-twentieth century. Roosevelt Avenue NE passes through the addition in a north-south direction, intersecting with NE 100th Street less than one-half block to the east of the Chiarelli House. Roosevelt Way, primarily south of NE 98th Street, is characterized by small-scale commercial development, primarily single-story buildings with small parking areas directly in front, indicative of the mid-twentieth century development of the area, as well as a number of more recently developed apartment buildings. A large reservoir is located along Roosevelt Way between NE 82nd and 88th Streets. The Maple Leaf reservoir features a large holding

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pond as well as a local, visual landmark water tower with maple leaves painted on it. Additional commercial development is found where Roosevelt Way intersects Northgate Way at the northerly boundary of Maple Leaf. Dense commercial development is found along Northgate Way, and surrounding Northgate Mall and the I-5 corridor that runs north-south directly west of the mall.

EXTERIOR & SITE

The Chiarelli house is a single-story, shed roof, single-family residence set on a concrete-block foundation with a partial basement beneath the north portion of the dwelling. The dwelling is L-shaped, with an obtuse angle at the northeast corner. Basement windows are visible along the north elevation where the main level is raised from the primary grade, while the rear elevation is essentially level with the grade in this location. The foundation is hidden from view on the rear and east elevations, with the main level cantilevered out from the foundation creating the appearance that the house is floating above the ground. On the façade, the second level is cantilevered out over the basement level. The shed roof runs at a gentle slope downward toward the east. It is highest at its west end towering over the carport, which is attached in this location. The northwest corner of the shed roof is supported by a large, square beam, which also serves as the corner for the main entry porch. The primary entry to the dwelling is found in this location, with a single door and a large, rectangular window beside it. The form of the door and window are repeated above, resulting in a tall, vertical orientation at the entryway.

Both the façade and east elevations exhibit large, rectangular windows with fixed-louvered vents below, and large expanses of horizontal board cladding. The widely overhanging eaves, feature a slightly shallower overhang on the façade. The west end of the main block of the dwelling features a brick chimney, of wide, horizontal bricks, and an interior and exterior brick wall that passes beyond the rear wall of the house out into the rear yard, creating separation between the back deck and the original pass-through or doorway between the carport and the rear yard. The brick also continues from the fireplace toward the north, creating a low knee-wall with a planter box near the primary entry porch, separating the entry from the carport. The south end of the interior/exterior brick wall, extending from the chimney and fireplace, as well as the south and north ends of the brick wall along the west end of the carport are not set flush, rather they extend out creating an irregular edge in these locations.

The exterior of the Chiarelli house is characterized primarily by wood and glass, as well as some brick as previously noted. The cladding is primarily vertical boards, and the windows are large, undivided expanses of glass. Fixed-louvered vents run along the bottom of many of the dwelling's windows. The dwelling, with its dark gray or black stain on the exterior, blends into the surrounding natural environment as the dark colors easily camouflage with the deep, dark foliage, which includes large evergreens. Some of the wood inside and on the rear of the carport have been left natural.

The attached carport, original to the dwelling, features a flat roof, space for two vehicles, and a brick wall on its west side, which is attached then to a brick wall constructed at the west boundary of the property. The brick wall extends and is connected to the front of the house at 835 NE 100th Street, which Chiarelli simultaneously designed and built. Originally, an open pass-through led from the carport to the rear yard; a narrow storage area accessible within this pass-through was originally created for the storage of bicycles and other outdoor toys. A door has been added to the pass-through, and the narrow area is now utilized as a workshop. A small storage close in the southeast corner of the carport currently holds some of the dwelling's systems such as a furnace. A paved driveway leading into the covered carport is found at the northwest corner of the lot.

The rear elevation is characterized primarily by walls of glass, spanning nearly floor-to-ceiling in most locations. A single door leads from the living room out to the rear yard, and another leads out from the rear of the master bedroom. A wooden deck spans the full width of the rear wall behind the living and dining areas, though originally it only extended from the back door to the west wall of the rear extension of the L-shaped plan. A translucent panel is found within the widely overhanging eaves on the rear outside of the large dining room window, allowing additional light to pass into that room.

The yard, both front and rear, have been left in a natural state as intended by the original design, which was laid out around the trees and other pre-existing landscape features. Only a few minor designed landscape elements have been added to the otherwise wild property, which include footpaths in the front and rear, two benches in the rear, a few small concrete sculptural/decorative items in the rear, a small retaining wall along a footpath on the west side of the rear yard, and a small water feature running over native rocks just south of the rear deck. Mature, native vegetation is found throughout the property, both maintaining a naturalistic northwestern appearance and creating a visual blend between the dwelling and its surroundings. The property features a distinctly northwest style of landscaping, featuring Western Red Cedar, Douglas Fir, Japanese Maple, Western Yew, Rhododendron, Azalea, Sword Fern, Oregon Grape, Bamboo, Nandina, Bunchberry, and various mosses. The largest and most notable trees are Western Red Cedar and Douglas Fir.

The minimal landscape elements that have been added are considered minimal and do not diminish the site's ability to convey significance. A small, non-historic shed in the rear southwest corner of the property was added by the current owners within the last fifteen years.

The original wood fence, added when the neighboring house sold ca 1955, still surrounds the back yard. The shed exhibits horizontal board cladding, a shed roof, and has been painted black. It is not considered a contributing element within this nomination.

The house sits relatively near the road, creating a minimal front yard and a large rear yard. Despite its location near the road, the native, mature plantings, even larger now than when the house was originally constructed, obscure the house from clear view and help to achieve the original design goals of the architect. The dwelling's irregular form aids it in blending into the natural environment that surrounds, as intended by Chiarelli in his design.

INTERIOR

The interior of the Chiarelli house is accessed via the front entryway located at the northwest corner of the main block of the dwelling. Inside the entry door is a small foyer with tile floors, providing access to a small stairway to the partial basement or a small stairway up to the main floor. The entryway today has a non-historic tree that has been added, as well as a small sunken area on the floor filled with rocks beneath the cantilevered overhang of the main level floor; a portion of the concrete-block foundation is visible in this location as well. Large windows are found in this area, though some privacy has been provided for by two large, square wooden panels finished with a color-blocked design in the style of Mondrian; this finish, though faded, remains today. The inside of the front door as well as the panel above the door both exhibits a three-dimensional, diamond-shaped pattern extending inward to the foyer; an original feature of the house. The wall-cladding inside the foyer is clear-grained cedar, which is stained dark gray or black.

Upon entering the main level of the dwelling, one enters the main living area through a large opening between the landing at the top of the stairs in which multiple sliding-glass doors have been added. This room features elm panels on the walls, which have been left natural in finish per the original design. Two original, silver, wall-mounted, directional lamps remain on the north wall. The

south wall of the living room features two large windows, extending from floor to ceiling. The west wall exhibits a fireplace with a wide, brick chimney extending up, and a brick half-wall extending toward the south passing the rear wall continuing to the outside. A large window is found above the half-wall, and a transparent panel is found in the ceiling above the fireplace. According to Pat Chiarelli, wife of the architect, this panel created a dramatic environment during rain or snow (Chiarelli, 2012). Original drawings for the fireplace can be found in Figures 11–13.

Black-dyed magnesite flooring with flecks of mother of pearl and marble is found throughout the main floor. Electric heating coils beneath the floor provide heat, and were the only source of heat when the dwelling was originally constructed. This flooring material was used by Chiarelli for its fireproof qualities, durability and ease of maintenance.

Off of the living room, is a small dining area. Like the living room, a large window is found on the rear wall, though it does not extend all the way to the floor. Rather, it features a ventilation system below, similar to what is found in many of the rooms throughout the house. An interior panel opens inward, revealing a louvered vent leading to the outside and providing airflow throughout the house. A drawing of Chiarelli's typical louvers can be found in Figure 26. A single door leading to the rear yard is found between the living room and dining room windows. A double-sided, wooden cabinet is found on the south side of the dining room, separating the dining area from the main hallway. Sliding wood doors are found on both sides of the cabinet unit, providing storage both for the dining room and a hall closet for the entryway. The cabinet does not extend the full-height to the ceiling, and lighting is found on top of the cabinet providing indirect lighting into the room – a Chiarelli trademark. Double-sided cabinetry is also found at the east end of the dining room, providing separation with the kitchen, and again functioning as storage for both rooms.

The kitchen is accessible via a passageway from the dining room. It is a small, U-shaped kitchen enclosed on all sides with the exception of the passageway and an opening above the countertops providing a view into the utility area beyond. A silver, wall-mounted lamp like those found in the living room, is mounted on the wall in the opening. A large window is found on the south side of the kitchen. The original wood cabinets remain, with sliding doors found on the upper cabinets. Though the appliances have been updated, a detail drawing by Chiarelli for the custom stove originally installed in the kitchen can be found in Figure 14.

Returning to the main hallway, two small bedrooms are found on the north side of the house filling the northeast corner. They feature slightly smaller windows, placed higher on the wall for privacy, with the same louvered vents below. Large closets, and built-in drawers are also found in the bedrooms. Chiarelli designed the built-in drawers to work together situating them back to back and staggering the drawers themselves so that one opens into one room, the next down into the other room, and so on.

Turning right down the hallway, extending into the rear of the L-shape plan, is a small bathroom with a tub, corner shower, and tiled vanity. The walls inside the bathroom have been covered with wood shingles. Several original built-in cabinets remain in the walls. A linen closet is found in the bathroom, accessible via a small door in this room as well as a small door in the hallway. A wooden laundry basket is found at the base of this closet, and was designed so that clothes could be tossed into it from inside the bathroom, and the basket could be pulled out from the hallway and taken directly into the utility room. The original laundry basket remains.

Across this same hallway is another storage closet, and an open area beneath the pass-through from the kitchen where a deep freeze and some storage shelving is currently positioned. According to

Pat Chiarelli, the Chiarelli family also had a large freezer in this location when they resided in the house. The ceiling in this portion of the hallway exhibits a cork tile finish. It is unknown if this was original or added later. Across from this area, off the hallway, is a large utility room containing a double laundry tub, washer and dryer, and additional storage closets. One of the closets in this room contains dowels on slanted rod holders, where the laundry could be hung to dry. A small heater or fan was located in the next closet, which would circulate air and dry the items. The rod holders and many of the dowels remain.

At the back of the house, accessible via this central hallway, is the master bedroom. It features a floor-to-ceiling window on the south wall as well as a door to the rear yard, large windows with louvered vents below on the west wall, a full wall of closets on the north side, and small windows positioned higher up on the east wall. An original built-in vanity with a window above is also found on the west side of the room. A small fire pot has been added in the corner of the room. Two additional wall-mounted, articulated lamps, the same as those in the living room, are found in the master bedroom. An original brass light fixture with a glass dome is also found in this room, above the exterior door leading from this room, and several other locations.

Upon heading into the basement, a partial-height wall separates the small landing at the base of the stairs from the basement family room. A small bench is found in the landing, in front of an open area beneath the stairs leading to the upper level. The family room is one, rectangular open space with a ribbon of windows high up on the north wall, shaded by the cantilevered second level. A small powder room with no lighting is found in the rear corner of the room. A non-historic, decorative mural was painted along the south wall of the family room, though the clear-grained cedar boards on the ceiling remain unpainted. The mural was painted ca. 2000 by a student of William Dore's who was hired to complete the mural that depicts waiters in bow-ties and vests or tuxedo jackets, serving food along with wine and/or champagne. Track lighting has been added in the basement to supplement the original recessed can lighting that still remains. For reference, a sketch floor plan has been included (Figures 8–10).

ALTERATIONS

No major remodels or renovations have been done to the Chiarelli house. Since the Chiarelli family moved out of the house in 1966, only one other family, the Dore family, has owned or resided in the dwelling. The Dores made a few cosmetic changes since 1966 including:

- adding the tree and a new light fixture in the foyer
- rebuilding the original desk (on its same footprint) and adding an additional section to extend the deck across the full width of the rear elevation
- added a wood door on the pass-through from the carport to the rear yard
- wood shingles added to the bathroom walls, and the mural in the basement
- bathroom tower tiled
- fire pot added to master bedroom
- installation of sliding glass doors between the staircase landing and the main hallway
- installation of water feature and shed in rear yard

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

INTRODUCTION

The Chiarelli House is eligible for Seattle Landmarks designation in the area of architecture as a locally significant example of Northwest Modernism that embodies the distinctive characteristics of its period of construction. It is also significant as an example of the work of architect James J.

Chiarelli, a locally significant architect of the twentieth century who both designed and built the dwelling, who is noted for his contributions to Northwest Modernism during the mid-twentieth century. It retains integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, material, and association as well as many of its most character defining features and details including form, massing, shape, its naturalistic setting, family-oriented function, and integration of the outside to the inside and vice-versa.

The Chiarelli House is identifiable as belonging to the Northwest Modern movement of the mid-twentieth century, specifically representative of the experimental post-War period, as well as being highly representative of the work of Chiarelli who utilized, in the design of this property, the aesthetics and design principles that would carry through many residential and commercial designs throughout his career.

Having only had two owners during its lifetime, only minor alterations have been done. The integrity of the property has been minimally impacted by these alterations. As a result, the Chiarelli House at 843 NE 100th in Seattle, WA maintains sufficient integrity for listing.

SEATTLE'S MAPLE LEAF NEIGHBORHOOD

During Seattle's earliest days, and even towards the mid-twentieth century, many of the areas in North Seattle, including Northgate and Maple Leaf, remained essentially outlying, unincorporated county areas. Growth in these areas was generally slow, and was most directly tied to logging or mills. After Green Lake was lowered in 1911 and the Maple Leaf reservoir, with its surrounding park area, was established, and people began to slowly populate the area. Because this growth slowed during the Great Depression, it was not until after the wartime boom of the 1940s that many north end neighborhoods, including Ballard, Greenwood and the University District, began to reach their saturation points, forcing people to begin moving farther north into the newly developing suburbs and developments such as Maple Leaf, Northgate and Lake City (Maple Leaf History).

Following the wartime boom, Seattle's north end entered a period of dramatic change. In 1950, the Northgate Shopping Center (Northgate Mall) opened. The \$12-million project situated on a 60-acre tract, was one of the nation's first such regional, suburban, shopping centers, and the first to be designated as a "mall" ("Northgate Shopping Mall"). Though the location was outside the city limits, the area was already showing tremendous growth and was easily accessible from other parts of Seattle along Aurora Avenue N, Lake City Way NE and Roosevelt Way NE ("Northgate Shopping Mall").

In 1954 the Seattle city limits were extended from N 85th to N 145th, finally incorporating the areas north of Ballard and Green Lake, including Maple Leaf. In 1962, I-5 was constructed through Seattle bringing another major impact to this north end neighborhood. The North-South I-5 corridor was established directly alongside the western boundary of Northgate Mall, with an exit at the northwest corner of the mall property onto NE Northgate Way. This not only changed the character of the Northgate neighborhood, but it brought additional growth, people and traffic into the area. Nevertheless, the Maple Leaf neighborhood, despite its close proximity to the mall and mid-century boom, managed to maintain a residential neighborhood character favoring primarily modestly sized, simple, single-family residences housing mainly middle-class families. Business grew all throughout the north end, but the commercial character in Maple Leaf, primarily along Roosevelt Way NE, remained primarily small-scale and neighborhood-oriented (Wilma).

In recent years, the Northgate area has continued to grow and change, with shopping and multi-family housing expanding dramatically. The Maple Leaf neighborhood is still very much as it was originally conceived, housing primarily middle-class families in mostly the same modest and simple

homes that were constructed during the wartime boom era, though some residences have been expanded or altered. The commercial character along Roosevelt Way NE remains much the same, though some multi-family dwellings and larger apartment buildings have been added.

HISTORY OF THE CHIARELLI HOUSE

James and Pat Chiarelli purchased three lots in the Maple Leaf neighborhood shortly after their marriage in 1947. At the time, the neighborhood was largely undeveloped and would not even be incorporated into the newly expanded city limits for seven more years. The lots, all put together, were then split approximately three-quarters and one-quarter into two separate parcels at 835 and 843 NE 100th Street, as they remain today. In 1948, construction began on the two houses, which were both designed and built by Chiarelli along with his brothers and some members of his wife's family. The nominated house was originally intended to be for Chiarelli's mother and his three brothers to live in, while James and Pat Chiarelli would live in the neighboring dwelling at 835. However, during the course of construction, which was completed in 1949 (Figure 7), two of the brothers had married off so James and Pat Chiarelli, who were expecting their first child at the time, switched houses with the mother and one remaining brother so that they could utilize the larger of the two houses for their expanding family (Chiarelli, 2012).

The rear portion of the nominated house, containing the master bedroom and utility room, was completed first. As soon as this happened, James and Pat Chiarelli took residence in this back area essentially living, working, bathing, and preparing meals in these two rooms while the rest of the house was constructed around them. Pat Chiarelli, even though pregnant, was very active in the process and contributed to the construction pounding nails alongside the men (Chiarelli, 2012).

Chiarelli, though a talented and trained draftsman, never produced professional plans for the design of these two neighboring dwellings. He set out the siting and major dimensions, which were all carefully followed. Over the weekends he would simply sketch out on butcher paper the work to be done that week, and he and the other family members would then execute that portion of the plan; sometimes he would simply make a sketch of the day's work that morning. What became of these drawings is unknown, though two sheets have been recently discovered, detailing the fireplace and a custom stove Chiarelli designed for his wife's new kitchen (Figures 11–14) (Chiarelli, 2012).

According to Pat Chiarelli, "it was a really happy time." She noted that being involved in the construction of the house made Chiarelli "a better architect," allowing him to gain a practical understanding of the reality of his designs – with the shed roof presenting a particular challenge for the men, as each support required a different height and angle! Pat Chiarelli also made mention that the design was very "purposeful... [he was] very careful to save all the trees and work the design within the trees... it was his intention to slip the house into the site – to blend in with the native growth... trees [were] left in place and the design incorporated trees into special sight-lines out the windows and doors." Originally the rear yards of the two neighboring dwellings were left open, creating one large garden area shared by both. The entire rear yard of the nominated house was fenced in the mid 1950s when the neighboring house at 835 was sold, somewhat altering the original vision for the open back yard shared between the two neighboring, family houses (Chiarelli, 2012).

Though somewhat of an experiment both in design and construction, having built the house himself, the dwelling is highly representative of Chiarelli's design principles and aesthetics, and is easily relatable to numerous other buildings in his body of work. His designs exemplified consistency and an upholding of both his beliefs (such as respect of the landscape and vegetation, integration of the indoors to the outdoors, use of natural light, blending with the environment, compact designs,

family-friendly function, etc) as well as his preferences (including the use of wood, often displaying natural finishes, the use of certain light fixtures, durable materials, etc).

James, Pat and their children resided in the house during some of the most significant years of Chiarelli's career, remaining until 1966 when they moved to a new Chiarelli design in Seattle's Sandpoint neighborhood. The house was purchased in 1966 by the Dore family, who still own it today. It remains a single-family residence, retaining its form, function and characteristics as a recognizable Chiarelli design. The 835 house has been extensively remodeled.

JAMES J. CHIARELLI

James Chiarelli (Figure 16) was born a fraternal twin in Spokane, WA in 1908 into a family of five children, but primarily grew up in Cle Elum, WA. His father died in a flu epidemic when Chiarelli was only 10 years old. Before passing, his father asked him to look out for the family leaving young James as the man of the house. To earn money, he even worked in the coalmines during his youth. Despite this responsibility, he was able to let his passions and talents in the arts shine from an early age playing trumpet in a local band in high school. Following high school, Chiarelli proceeded to the University of Washington. While standing in line for registration, he struggled over whether or not to choose a major in music or architecture; by the time his turn came around he had decided to declare architecture his major (Chiarelli, 2012).

Chiarelli graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1934, and for several years worked for a variety of architecture firms in Seattle, WA, Portland, OR and Missoula, MT. During World War II, he served as a field architect for the Vancouver Housing Authority, an agency established in 1942 to deal with an influx of aluminum and shipyard employees. More than 1,000 permanent and 11,396 temporary housing units were built in six major developments, as one of "the largest wartime housing projects west of the Mississippi" (Jollota).

In 1944, Chiarelli formed a Seattle-based partnership with fellow architect Paul Hayden Kirk that lasted through 1950 (Figure 17). The firm of Chiarelli & Kirk produced many modernist buildings around the Puget Sound including the award winning Crown Hill Medical-Dental Clinic (1947) (Figure 20), several buildings at Camp Norwester on Lopez Island (1946–1962) (Figures 30–31), the C & K Apartments (1949), Morris Graves residence (n.d.), Hamack residence (1946) (Figures 32–33), Laboratory Theater (1949), the Port Angeles Fire Station, City Hall and Jail (ca 1946), the Maple Lane School in Grand Mound (n.d.), the Lakewood Community Church (1949), and several houses in Bellevue's Norwood Village (1951) (Figures 34–35) ("Kirk, Paul Hayden," "Chiarelli, James J.").

The firm was also involved in a number of residential projects, as well as the Revere Model Home project of the Revere Copper & Brass Co. of America (Figure 22). The model home designed by Chiarelli & Kirk was built by the Revere Quality Home Institute and Albert Balch at 8504 43rd Ave NE in Seattle (completed in 1950) to "raise the postwar standards of home construction quality and economy and combat shoddy construction" (The Seattle Times, 18 July 1948). Reflecting the core design principles evident throughout Chiarelli's body of work, "The Revere Model Home [was] designed to meet existing conditions of the site – natural trees, contours and orientation... maximum sunlight... [and] a useable outdoor eating terrace. Natural growth [was] retained and the architecture blends with it" (The Seattle Times, 18 July 1948). The house also utilized elements similar to what he was incorporating into his own house, which he was designing at this same time, including radiant heated floors, inclusion of areas for children, a carport one-half level below the living areas "providing utility and streamlining," indirect lighting, and screened vents at the windows (The Seattle Times, 18 July 1948).

Between 1944 and 1950, the work of the duo was highlighted in a number of publications including *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Sunset Magazine*, *McCall's Book of Modern Houses*, *Architectural Record*, *Small Homes Guide*, and *Architectural Form The Magazine of Building* (Figure 36) ("Chiarelli, James J."). Their work, as well as the two Chiarelli-designed houses at 835 and 843 NE 100th Street, were included in a 1953 guide to Seattle architecture, featuring selections from the Washington State Chapter of the American Institute of Architecture (AIA) and its members as well as an unpublished guide to progressive architecture in the Pacific Northwest (Steinbrueck: n.p.).

Because the firm's tenure dates to the period directly following World War II, much of their work, as well as Chiarelli's design of the nominated house, is indicative of the experimental nature of the period reflecting new and different thinking about architectural design. These characteristics include the necessity for compact and flexible designs, the option to expand with ease, durable materials, the use of new materials, integrated parking, openness for entertaining, and different treatments for both public and private spaces. Because so many young people were starting families during this time, family-focused design, including an emphasis on ease of access to the backyard, was also something that gained great importance during this period. Nearly all of these elements are present in the Chiarelli House.

In 1950, the partnership was amicably dissolved; though the two were very good friends, they had different concepts, with Kirk more heavily focused on his business and Chiarelli on his family. As a result, the two both went on to work as sole practitioners (Figure 15) (Chiarelli, 2012). Though he continued working on a number of residential projects, Chiarelli is perhaps the most well known for his institutional and commercial projects during the 1950s and 1960s including the Seattle Medical Surgical Clinic (n.d.) (Figures 18–19), Rosellini 410 and 610 Restaurants (1957 and n.d.) (Figure 37), the Tacoma/Pierce County Blood Bank (1951), and the former Scottish Rite Temple at 1155 Broadway Ave E (n.d.). Two projects during this period are perhaps the most well known, including the Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum (the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture) (1962) at the University of Washington and the Seattle Opera House (1962), designed by Chiarelli along with B. Marcus Priteca to replace the former Civic Auditorium on the Grounds of the Century 21 World's Fair (Seattle Center) (Figures 26–28). The Opera House (now known as McCaw Hall) has since been totally redone, and no longer reflects the original design.

Connecting his interest in architecture with his interests in arts and culture, Chiarelli was also responsible for the designs for the Tsimpshen Long House in Metlakatla, AK (n.d.), a project that also allowed him to connect culturally with the tribe, and a community building, church, and residence in the Philippines for Bartolomeo Napenius, a gardener-turned-good friend of Chiarelli's (1977) (Chiarelli, 2012).

There is a notable consistency in Chiarelli's body of work, with certain characteristics, forms, features, and aesthetics. His works are easily recognizable both as Chiarelli designs and representations of Northwest Modernism, whether commercial, institutional or residential. Some of these elements include the use of wood (often left natural or stained in shades that will help them blend into their surrounding environment), large windows in public areas and smaller, higher windows in private areas, family- or children-oriented elements, vents at the windows, simplicity of design, the importance of function in design, hard floor surfaces (such as magnesite, slate or concrete), and the consistency of material within each design. Some examples of a variety of his designs can be found in Figures 18–24. Chiarelli also favored flexibility, often providing for the ability to open up or close off a room, easily add an addition to a house or building, utilize storage from both sides rather than just one, or change the function of a room from one thing to another either for a special event or as your needs change over time, something that also prolongs the relevance of his designs.

Another element central to Chiarelli's aesthetic and design principles is siting. The siting utilized in his designs was very intentional, utilizing the natural vegetation, trees, contours, and other elements of the site as well as establishing sightlines to the natural outdoor elements through the placement of doors and large windows.

In his residential designs, Chiarelli's priority as a family man is evident. Whether his own house, a residential design for a client, or a stock design for a magazine or publication, his designs are very family-focused never failing to incorporate elements such as a children's play room, a children's study, children's bedrooms grouped together for family function, or children's play areas outside that are easily accessible and easily viewed from inside. His use of natural yet durable materials also made his designs more robust to the abuse of family living. As part of his focus on family, Chiarelli even taught all four of his children to draft, so that they not only knew an employable skill but could work for their dad during summers (Chiarelli, 2012).

Many of these elements as well as the consistency visible in his work, are evident in both of his own residences (the nominated house and his Sandpoint house), both of which he designed. Similar to the nominated house, the Chiarelli house in Sandpoint features: a flow focused on family function with the children's bedrooms grouped together and a large family room in the basement containing durable materials such as concrete floors; the use of natural materials such as clear-grained cedar finished with only a wax stain and a gray-stained exterior wood; integration of the inside to the outside; naturalistic treatment of the surrounding lot; large, often floor-to-ceiling, windows in the public spaces and smaller windows in the private rooms; integration of creative and useful storage throughout; and an overall simplicity in the design, construction and appearance. Though the Sandpoint house features a bit more sophistication in its finished appearance, it is similar in character to the nominated house and clearly continues the legacy of Chiarelli's body of work.

The continuity evident in Chiarelli's work flows from his earliest professional days, at which time he designed and constructed the nominated house, into his later works constructed into the 1950s and 1960s demonstrating he was a man with a clear vision of his aesthetic and design principles from the start. The nominated house was not only his own family home, but it was an education experience for him in designing and building. A number of the elements he utilized in this house are evident in many of his other design projects throughout the years. Floor-to-ceiling windows, integration of the outdoors and a cantilevered second floor are also present in such projects as the Tavernite House (Figure 23), Lundberg House, Ceis House, Corley-Brown House (Figure 36), and the Hamack House. A cantilevered second level and integrated parking is found in the Brown Clinic (Figure 25). The use of wood with a natural finish as an interior wall treatment is seen in the Tavernite House (Figure 24), the Lakewood Community Church, the Crown Hill Medical-Dental Clinic, the Seattle Medical-Surgical Clinic, the Corley-Brown House, and a Norwood Village house. A hard floor surface and an integrated carport both are featured in the Tavernite House, Rader-Revere House, Corley-Brown House, and many of his institutional and medical projects, while two-sided storage units in a wood finish can be seen in the Rader-Revere House (Figure 22). Irregular angles and rooflines are also found on the Crown Hill Medical-Dental Clinic (Figure 20) and the Taylor Clinic, and split-level stairs are found in the Hart Residence. Strong vertical elements, large windows and large open spaces are featured in projects such as the Burke Museum (Figure 29), the Seattle Opera House (Figures 27–28), and some of the camp buildings on Lopez Island. Chiarelli was even known to utilize some particular elements repeatedly, such as clear-grained cedar, window louvers (Figure 26) and even the glass dome light fixture found in the master bedroom in the nominated house, which is also present in the Corley-Brown House.

According to his wife, James loved to work and never really stopped working. He “was a prominent member of the local art and architectural community,” serving as president of the Washington State AIA between 1956 and 1958, president of the University of Washington Architectural Alumni Association, Chairman of the Citizens’ Recreation and Park Committee of King County, sitting on both the Seattle City Planning Commission and the original Civic Art Commission, and serving as a member of the Cultural Arts Advisory Board for the Seattle World’s Fair. In 1959 Chiarelli was “elected to the AIA College of Fellows” and took his wife and all four children on a roadtrip to Washington DC for the induction ceremony. He retired in 1979 and passed away in 1990 (“Chiarelli, James J.” and Chiarelli, 2012; The Seattle Times, 9 May 1965).

NORTHWEST MODERNISM

Though modern architecture’s roots are found earlier in twentieth-century Europe with individuals such as Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, Modernism in the United States did not find true, widespread use until the period of unprecedented growth and prosperity ushered in by the World War II era and the post-War boom. During the war, a halt on civilian building left many architects working on projects designing efficient war-industry housing developments, training camps and other defense-related facilities. “The lean efficiency of Modernism,” however, was well-suited to this task reducing ornament, maximizing material and focusing on pure function (Roth: 411).

During the post-War era, the availability of materials and the introduction of new materials and methods only added to America’s eagerness to embrace this new school of thought. Millions of young Americans, with money in their pockets and the ability to acquire a mortgage or start a business, created an unprecedented demand for architectural design, which combined with large numbers of newly educated architects eager to bring their new and modern ideas to reality. Though the movement continued to evolve between the 1940s and the 1960s, many dwellings designed and constructed within a few short years directly following the war exhibit a unique quality reflecting not only the excitement to utilize new ideas but also to experiment with the design of the new post-War dwelling.

“In the Pacific Northwest, Oregon’s Pietro Belluschi and Paul Thiry in Seattle (known as the “father of modernism” in Washington), had already gained national recognition for designing significant Modern buildings before World War II” (“Modernism 101”). The weather, landscape, materials, and environment of the Pacific Northwest provided local architects the elements they needed to establish their own version of modern architecture unique to the area. A new generation of architects, following the lead of Belluschi and Thiry, embraced this Northwest Style of Modernism. The modern house, and especially the houses associated with Northwest Modernism, is not only sensitive to material and function, but to the site as well linking local materials together with architecture upon the site in a new way.

Because of its combination of reliance on time-tested architectural principles and its eagerness to embrace ingenuity, creativity and new ideas, Northwest Modernism soon gained national recognition with many Seattle-based modern architects being honored by the AIA and their designs being selected for a variety of national honors or being featured in national publications. Commercial examples of modernism can be seen throughout the city, most notably in the downtown area, where notable examples “include the Miesian tradition and the advanced technology of the aluminum and glass curtain-wall as exemplified by the Norton Building. The Buildings designed for Seattle’s World Fair of 1962 reflected the ongoing power of Modernism’s influence, as exemplified in the Fair’s symbol, the Space Needle, which embodied the era’s faith in technology and progress.” (Boyle, 2009: 12).

In residential design, wood was commonly used, often exhibiting natural finishes, despite the fact that concrete and steel were the materials of choice in European Modernism (Lodi). Also important in Northwest Modern residential design was simplicity, clarity of openness and space, and compact design with groupings by function (Roth: 428). These dwellings often “featured exposed wood... extensive use of glass, sliding and pocket doors, flat roofs or simple sheds, and extensive use of wood as an interior and exterior finish material” (Boyle, 2009: 12). The importance of the environment and siting were central design characteristics; careful siting, not only preserving the natural features and vegetation on the site but incorporating it into the design of the house as well as the surrounding landscape, was an important principal. Views, taking advantage of slopes on the lot, the exchange of the outside to the inside, natural lighting and even protection from the rain were also tied to the environmental focus of Northwest Modernism (Lodi). Many of these principles indicated that this group of architects was green long before there was such a thing.

Though perhaps one of the lesser-known designers in this group, Chiarelli was no exception. His designs garnered both local and national recognition, with his personal achievements as an architect being recognized when he was elected to the AIA College of Fellows. He was a well-known and well-respected architect and member of the arts community, also making a number of cultural contributions through his work. His designs exemplify Northwest Modernism, and remain easily recognizable through the consistent application of his design principles and aesthetics.

The Chiarelli House at 843 NE 100th Street continues to stand out within its neighborhood, as it did at the time of construction, as one of the more unique houses, being a custom, architect-designed mid-century modern dwelling in a part of the city characterized largely by the simple, modest houses so often associated with the residential development of the post-World War II era. The house exhibits all of the core elements associated with its type and period including interior and exterior wood finishes, expanses of glass, a simple shed roof, integration with the site, simplicity, openness, natural lighting, groupings by function, and preservation of the vegetation. It remains a significant residential example of Northwest Modernism and is highly representative of the post-War period, with its family focus, utilization of new materials, integrated parking, and open entertaining areas. It also continues to stand as a significant example of the work of Chiarelli, an architect significant within this movement, both in his design and construction of the house, exhibiting characteristics identifiable within his body of work.

SUMMARY

The Chiarelli House is an excellent example of a Chiarelli-designed Northwest Modern dwelling in Seattle. The Maple Leaf neighborhood was largely developed during the mid-twentieth century as Seattle began to burst at its seams and expand northward embracing the suburban ideals of the day. Though its style and form is different from much of what surrounds it, the development of the house very similarly reflects the development of the neighborhood in which it sits. It exhibits characteristics notable of its period, the Northwest Modern movement and key characteristics and elements of Chiarelli’s work, design principles and aesthetics.

Though some minor changes have been done to the dwelling over the years, the house remains in character, appearance, form, material, and plan nearly the same as it was originally designed and constructed. As a result, the Chiarelli House is nominated to the NRHP for its architectural significance and its association with the notable Seattle architect (and first resident) responsible for its design and construction.

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The features of the Landmark to be preserved include: the site, the exterior of the building, and portions of the building interior including the entry foyer, living room, and dining room.

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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Karen Gordon", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen Gordon
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