



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 220/09

Name and Address of Property: Egan House  
1500 Lakeview Boulevard East

#### Legal Description:

Beginning 286.56 feet east of the south quarter of Section 20, Township 25 North, Range 4 East, W.M., in King County, Washington; thence north, 80 feet; thence west to east line of Lake View Boulevard; thence southwesterly on said east line to south line of said Section 20; thence east to point of beginning, subject only to the permitted exceptions listed on Exhibit A attached hereto and incorporated herein. (This legal description dates from the Statutory Warranty Deed, dated 2.26.98)

At the public meeting held on April 15, 2009, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Egan House at 1500 Lakeview Boulevard East 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, period, or of a method of construction; and*
- E. It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder; and*
- F. Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the City.*

### **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

#### **Location and Surroundings**

The property is at 1500 Lakeview Boulevard East, on the east side of the street, in a natural bowl, at the bottom of a steeply sloping greenbelt. It is located along the western edge of the North Capitol Hill neighborhood and above the southeastern edge of the Eastlake neighborhood, which is separated from Capitol Hill by the Interstate 5 freeway that runs along the west side of Lakeview Boulevard East. One of the freeway's northbound off-ramps exits onto this street approximately one block north

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The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

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of the Egan House. (Lakeview Boulevard East becomes Boylston Avenue East after it passes through an underpass north of the Egan House.) To the south of the house the street intersects with Harvard Avenue East, which leads to Capitol Hill, and with an overpass that leads to the Cascade neighborhood.

Lakeview Boulevard East is a wide street, providing for two-way traffic, with a lane in each direction and two outer lanes for parallel parking. Although there are other houses, multi-family dwellings, and apartment buildings located along the street, the Egan House is isolated from neighboring buildings by its specific siting deep within an inside curve of the street where it is partially obscured by a dense tree canopy and site topography.

One of the nearby buildings is the 20-unit CK Apartment Building/Lake View Apartments at 1551 – 1559 Lakeview Boulevard East, designed and developed by architects Paul Hayden Kirk and James Chiarelli in 1949. To the southwest of the Egan House, at 1338 Lakeview Boulevard East, there is a large, wood-framed, single-family dwelling dating from 1909. St. Mark's Cathedral was built in 1929 on a large site at 1245 10th Avenue East, to east of the Egan House and the present St. Mark's Greenbelt. Because of the steep grade and height of the forested hillside, the spatial relationship between the Egan House and the cathedral is visible only from distant or aerial views.

The Interstate 5 Freeway runs generally parallel to Lakeview Boulevard East. Where the slope of the hillside becomes steeper, the large cylindrical columns that support the freeway are visible, as are parts of the recently developed I-5 Columns Park with its off-lease dog run and mountain bike trails.

### **The Site**

The site on which the Egan House is situated is owned by the City of Seattle Parks and Recreation Department and is surrounded on three sides by parcels owned by St. Mark's Cathedral. The Parks Department owns the land around the Egan House and between the house and Lakeview Boulevard East. It acquired the six acres that include the house site and the surrounding property that together make up the present St. Mark's Greenbelt in 1998. The park itself includes a steep trail through the southern part of the greenbelt, which is accessible from trailheads in the south and southwest portions of the St. Mark's Cathedral parking lot. (Seattle Parks and Recreation Department website)

The site of the house is an irregular shaped parcel of 10,350 square feet (nearly one-quarter of an acre) within the greenbelt. The boundary extends approximately 287' along the south property line and 80' along the east. The northern property line runs west before angling to meet the southwest corner of the lot. According to Historic Seattle, the northwest corner of the existing deck is 5' to 6' from the nearby property line and the northwest corner of the building is 3' to 4' from the property line. (No survey of the Egan House property is available, but a site plan from the June 27, 2008 Environmental Critical Area Review is included in the graphic section of this report.)

The front of the house is set deep within the Park Department property. The deep south and east setbacks are inaccessible due to grades, which drop steeply from the east, with an estimated total grade change on the site of 70'. The building is sited on a relatively level area at an intermediate plateau. The site slope along the building's south side has an overall estimated grade change of 6' to 8' while there is a flat terrace at the northeast side. The driveway slopes down an estimated 16' to a crescent-shaped parking area and the street.

A chain link fence, placed on park property, surrounds three sides of the Egan house site. Surrounding landscapes consist of naturalized woodland plants and trees, including mature firs, cedars, alders, maples, as well as ivy and other persistent ground covers. The 8' wide driveway acts

also as a walkway and leads from the public parking area up to the house. The original driveway was unpaved. Later, brick paving was installed on the driveway and on the grade near the north and west sides of the house.

There is very little open or level space between the dwelling and the steep hillside of clay and sandy soils. Large trees near the east and south sides of the house have required periodic trimming since 1984. The area surrounding the building site is categorized by the City as a potential slide area with “sensitive soils.”

### **The Structure and Exterior Features**

The floor area of the wood-framed building is approximately 1,190 square feet according to King County Tax Records for parcel No. 2025049049. The house contains three stories within an unusual, truncated wedge-shaped form. The footprint is defined by two parallel walls on the west and east—approximately 12’ and 20’ in width respectively—and a perpendicular south wall 40’ in length and an angled north wall approximately 48.5’ in length. Three bays, with varied widths of 15.5’, 15’, and 15.5’ are identified in the plans along the south side, although they do not register on the interior or facades. Load-bearing interior partitions at each level are aligned with the east and west perimeter walls.

The eastern two-thirds of the wedge-shaped building mass rises with the slope, and exposes the poured-in-place concrete foundation wall at grade. The western third originally featured a cantilever with an open area below it. The crawlspace below the enclosed center section has been finished with a concrete slab, and fitted with access doors to a small storage space.

The object-like building form has taut roof and siding surfaces and no overhangs, with the exception of the dramatic west end (originally a cantilever). Original composition roofing was applied in wide sheets resulting in the bold appearance of wide red and green stripes. Similar composition roofing was installed to maintain the striped appearance when the house was rehabilitated in 2002.

The Egan House has two highly visible facades that face north and west, although the building’s sculptural wedge-shaped form seems to defy the concept of primary and secondary facades. Treatment of the north facade renders it as a simple triangular shape, originally quite two-dimensional.

The original siding consists of 1x5 painted cedar siding with grooves set at 1.5” to create a fine vertical pattern on the west and north facades. This contrasts with the painted, rough-textured, horizontal cedar boards that feature a 7.5” exposure on the east and south facades. The grooved siding was used also as the soffit material below the roof overhang at the west end. A 6’ tall section of the north wall is a horizontal band clad in T&G plywood, which is painted black, in contrast to the white color of the grooved siding on the primary facades. The horizontal wood siding on the east and south facades is painted a dark gray color.

The on-grade main entry is set at the west end, facing onto the end of the driveway. The 6’ wide opening was fitted with a pair of glazed sliding doors. The entry is distinguished by its visibility and emphasized further by the projecting roof overhang that terminates at the west end. The roof extends to shelter an exterior entry space. Originally cantilevered, the end is supported presently by a single steel column.

The rectangular and tall, linear shaped window openings are set into the different types of siding in a geometric composition that was created for its exterior effect rather than interior function. In addition

Reichert placed symbolic decorations at both ends of the roof. A pole with a small sculpture, “Starship Enterprise,” was placed above the upper east end, and a Christian symbol was placed above the entry door. Both Reichert and Admiral and Mrs. Egan were religious, and the entry element has been cited as a symbol of Episcopal liturgy.

The original windows were wood. These were articulated as simple shapes, some dramatic in their narrow geometry, with minimal projections on the taut exterior facade. The original windows have been replaced by double-glazed aluminum window set flush with the exterior envelope plane and in the original locations. The windows vary in size—5’ w x 3’ t, 1’ w x 6’ t, and 6’ w x 2’ t at the north facade and a single 4’ square window on the east facade—to emphasize the abstract qualities of the facade compositions. The south facade, which faces directly onto the wooded hillside, has four windows and a non-original glazed door opening onto a mesh screen panel. Together these openings provide ample daylight within the interior, and views of the nearby wooded hillside.

The original house had no exterior decks, and access to the exterior was limited. A June 1987 permit application, for owner Dillis Knapp, included several changes to the house that remain present today. Modifications included a 188 square foot, triangular deck addition on the north side of house, which was accessed by a new, non-original 8’-wide aluminum sliding door installed in an expanded window opening on top floor. A single 3”-diameter steel pipe column on a concrete footing supported the deck, which was clad in grooved cedar siding to match that of the adjacent walls. The deck framing included 2”x10” wood joists and 3.3” x 13.5” glue-laminated wood beams, which were supported by a ledger along the north wall rim joist.

(Reconstruction of the entire deck is near completion. The current work, which started in October 2008, included repairs and in-kind replacement of some of the south facade siding. Because of poor detailing, the glue-laminated beams that supported the deck were almost entirely dry-rotted. The original siding deteriorated also, due in part to a lack of a moisture barrier or flashing in the original design and construction.)

Another project in the late 1980s was the addition of a new 4’ by 6’ skylight near the western corner of the roof, and a patio door that accessed a small deck on the south side. The south deck was removed subsequently and the door opening fitted with heavy wire mesh, which serves as a security railing. A second skylight was added later.

## **Interior Features**

Reichert’s original sketches for the house include a revealing perspective that captures the sense of the open interior space within the wedge-shaped form. It has been described as a single angular space with two upper floors inserted, like shelves, facing out toward the entry at one end. (Although it is categorized as a two-story dwelling, the house appears internally as three stories.)

Cast concrete basement walls enclosed 130 square feet and create a shallow entry foyer and a single service space with a toilet. To the east of this there was a small crawlspace, which has been fitted with a concrete slab floor to provide additional storage. The kitchen, bathroom, and a single bedroom with closet/dressing space were arranged in a linear fashion on the 630 square foot first floor, above the entry level, which was accessed by an open staircase set along the north perimeter wall.

Another single flight of stairs led up to the largest single space in the house—the 430 square foot, approximate 20’ by 27’ living room on the second floor. The first and second floor levels are both held back from the west side and overlook the spaces below so that the three levels are visually connected. The open volume and plane of the ceiling, which corresponded to the steep shed roof

shape. The dramatic flow of volumetric space is evident, particularly when viewed from the lowest level.

Original finishes and elements within the house expressed its contemporary character. These include white 4"x4" ceramic floor tiles, wood strip cladding on the monolithic sloped ceiling, simple flush type pocket doors, and built-in stainless steel kitchen fittings and cabinetry. The kitchen features a single cabinet unit with integral General Electric wall oven, cook top and refrigerator/freezer—the most “contemporary” models, finished in pale turquoise enamel. The cabinet unit and appliances, which were ordered from Sears, remain within the house today, although the original cabinet refrigerator has been adapted for storage use.

The open stair featured 10" marble slabs as treads, but no risers, and a minimal support and railing system. Similarly the original upper floor level was open on its west sides, with only minimal X-bracing for railings. (The opening has been fitted with open mesh panels to meet safety code requirements.) Original interior finishes include painted plaster and gypsum wallboard. Heating was originally provided by an in-wall ceramic coil core, replaced by electric baseboards and a non-original freestanding wood stove in the living room. Interior lighting is supplied by several simple, suspended fixtures as well as more utilitarian mounted ones.

The house currently has non-original skylights, which provide additional daylight to the interior. The addition of skylights appears to have been a response to the limited number, location and size of window openings, which reinforced the hermetic nature of the interior space. Views to the outside from several windows on the north side, for example, require a seated position, while others are narrow shapes with glazing less than 9" wide. These windows appear to have been chosen to benefit the exterior composition rather than for day-lighting or ventilation functions.

### **Documented Changes to the Building**

DPD records provide a short list of original permits and drawings that document the relatively few changes that have been made. The work is noted as follows:

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Scope of Work</u>
1958		Original construction
1987		Deck Addition; sliding door unit in existing opening, and skylight in existing roof
1998		Demolition (permit no. 697124, not executed)
2002		Structural upgrade, new systems, kitchen/ bathroom upgrade (No. 730608)

The 1987 deck addition permit application noted the building size as 1,390 gross square feet, and its height as 28'. Property setbacks were then noted as 128' on the front, 102' on the back, 44' on the north, to be reduced to 30' by the new deck, and 15' on the south. (The zoning classification at that time was for single family residences.)

Even with the expansion of space provided by the deck addition, the design of the original Egan House was found to be impractical by several later owners and tenants. In 1989 the property owner, Dillis Knapp, proposed to raze the house and replace it with a triplex. Knapp faced resistance from his architect, Jeffrey J. Hummel of Hummel Design. Hummel produced a Conceptual Analysis in 1992, which noted that “the house is not listed on the National Historic Registry, but is considered by many as an outstanding example of Washington state residential architecture.” His narrative report, however, focused on the building’s condition and disrepair and the seeming inefficiency of the

original plan. His comments reflected Knapp's view that the interior was crowded and dark, the circulation stair cramped, and that the 1950s era Sears kitchen worn out. Other noted deficiencies included a lack of storage; low windowsill levels; outdated mechanical, electrical, and lighting systems; and a small crawl space with an unfinished dirt floor.

Based on Hummel's report, Knapp agreed in September 1992 to a scheme for the building's remodel. However, he did not go forward with the proposed project, and soon after sold the house in 1993.

By 1992 it was evident that the site had contributed to the building's deterioration. The structure was integrated into the sloped site, but difficult to maintain in response to soil movement due to hillside sloughing and nearby highway vibration. Moisture infiltration, due in part to poor original detailing and lack of flashing, had impacted the roofing, foundation, and cladding systems. Hummel also reported problems with the steep entry walk and inaccessible driveway. His report called for the regrading of the entry walk, a new garage addition, reworking and extending of the interior plan for a larger entry, addition of storage, replacement of the bedroom at the first floor with a dining room and laundry, removal of the 1987-era deck, new windows, and updating of systems. Some of the envelope concerns were addressed, with newer windows for example. Fortunately, most of the proposed upgrades were not carried forward, and thus the original and existing floor plans remain relatively consistent, with exception of the north deck.

In April 1994, engineer K. Donald Solvang, P. E, made a visual inspection of the house. His report noted areas of continued dampness and potential deterioration in the siding, soffit, and framing, drainage problems with downspouts, water infiltration in the crawlspace, and evidence of leaks. The engineer's report did not include a structural inspection or analysis.

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **Historic Development of the Eastlake Neighborhood**

Present day Eastlake is a narrow hillside community on the east side of Lake Union, which was once a part of nearby Capitol Hill. When the I-5 freeway was constructed in 1962, it cut Eastlake off from Capitol Hill. The Egan House is located on the east side of I-5, along the western edge of North Capitol Hill. Due to the surrounding topography and the layout of the street system, however, it shares some historic, economic, and social characteristics with the lakeside area.

The Eastlake neighborhood first emerged in the early 1880s, with a group of small farmhouses, homes, and small businesses along Eastlake Avenue, which linked the city's downtown to communities at the north end of Lake Union, such as Latona and Portage Bay. North-south travel through the area increased with the establishment of a streetcar line, the development of the University of Washington campus (established in 1890s), and the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition of 1909. Traffic on Eastlake Avenue North further increased with the construction of the University Bridge in 1919 and the introduction of bus service in the early 1940s. Eastlake remains one of the city's prominent north-south routes, connecting downtown with areas north of the city, such as the University District, Roosevelt, Northgate, and Lake City, and the nearby towns of Kenmore and Bothell.

Similar to some other older neighborhoods near the center of Seattle, Eastlake contains a broad mix of uses and building types. Traditionally, it was a blue-collar residential and industrial neighborhood. Seattle City Light's earliest electric generating plant was located at the south end of the neighborhood. Fairview Avenue East and the lake supported businesses such as Lake Union Dry

Dock, Sound Propeller Company, William Boeing's 1916 airplane facility, and as numerous small marinas (some of which held ships from the Alaskan fishing fleet). A few of these businesses remain today, interspersed with offices, and other services. There are many taverns, restaurants and cafes, and specialty retail shops along Eastlake Avenue East. In contrast, the blocks that parallel the freeway to the east are made up primarily by residential properties.

The blocks near the Egan House retain some examples of neighborhood architectural history with Victorian farmhouses, Craftsman-style bungalows, and Mission Revival and Art Deco apartment buildings. St. Marks Cathedral (1929 – 1931), located directly east of the Egan House at 1245 10th Avenue East, is probably the most significant historic building in the immediate vicinity, although it is not a designated landmark. Nearby designated landmark structures include the Seward School/former Denny-Fuhrman School at 2500 Franklin Avenue East (1893 – 1895, 1906, and 1918, and remodeled and expanded in 1997), and the previously mentioned Lake Union Steam Plant at Fairview Avenue East and Eastlake Avenue East (1909 – 1921, presently part of Zymogenetics).

Census documents from 1940 describe the residential composition of the Eastlake neighborhood and the types of housing then available. The patterns suggested by this data reflect the varied physical characteristics of the area, with its industrial buildings, early houseboats, single-family residents and apartment buildings. Eastlake was home to people with a range of incomes and occupations, but the Great Depression left nearly 30% of its occupants unemployed in 1940. Whereas Capitol Hill boasted higher income residents and a higher rate of home ownership, in Eastlake, fewer than 22% of residents owned their dwellings at that time. (Schmid, p. 155 – 183, and p. 218 – 254)

In the early 1960s, the Eastlake and Capitol Hill neighborhoods were separated by the construction of Interstate-5. Those planning the freeway failed to envision the resultant impacts of traffic, noise, and or dislocation. During construction of the freeway, many of the area's large old homes were removed, some by relocation, but most by demolition. Citizens and local officials suggested an extensive lid over the freeway, but the double-height, eight-lane interstate has remained an open concrete scar for over four decades. The State Department of Transportation has recently begun a noise abatement effort with construction of tall, sound-blocking, concrete walls on both sides of the freeway.

Development in the immediate vicinity of the Egan House has not been as dramatic as in other areas of North Capitol Hill or Eastlake. This may be due to the cost of steep-slope construction and negative impacts of the nearby freeway. The area around the house that makes up St. Mark's Greenbelt remains visually pastoral, despite the presence of Interstate 5. In 2003 the Egan House property and the surrounding greenbelt were rezoned to SF5000, a single-family residential zone, with a variance to allow for the park greenbelt. (Nearby properties to the north and south along Lakeview boulevard East were zoned L-2 for multi-family residences.)

### **Modernism in the Northwest**

Modern architecture gained prominence throughout the nation after World War II, and its appeal was both ideological and aesthetic. While Europe lay in ruins, the United States experienced unprecedented economic growth. The renewed availability of materials, new construction methods, and technical innovations sparked a building boom across the country. In the United States, post-war Modernism had a significant influence on popular culture in the 1950s, during the optimistic period of the "American Dream." Mid-century architectural achievements of the era, such as suburban houses corporate and industrial parks, glass curtain-wall skyscrapers, and shopping mall, etc., used design to change the environment of everyday life.

In the Northwest, Pietro Belluschi of Portland and Paul Thiry of Seattle led the way. Both men had completed significant Modern architectural work before the war and they aided the transformation of Modernism to fit the Northwest context. The “Northwest Style” was quickly adopted by a new generation of Seattle architects. Inspired by a variety of modern sources, as well as traditional Japanese and Scandinavian architecture, these architects favored a wood timber-built architecture and designs that complemented the local landscape and linked the buildings with their sites.

Modernism began to influence commercial architecture in the city’s downtown area, where notable examples of the new sensibility were constructed, such as the Norton Building. This steel framed skyscraper, at 801 Second Avenue, was designed in a Miesian fashion, using advanced aluminum and glass curtain-wall technologies. Other buildings, designed for Seattle’s World Fair of 1962 reflected the power of Modernism as exemplified in the Fair’s symbol, the Space Needle, which embodied faith in technology and progress.

Northwest residential design that emerged during this period had features distinctive response to the topography, climate, and landscape of the region. The typical mid-century Modern dwellings in Seattle and the surrounding region were one story, but some had multiple levels in response to the topography as they often were located on open, sloped lots with views. Most of the houses of this era had patios and decks, which seemed to extend interior spaces outward, promoting outdoor living and easy contact with the landscape. The designs featured rational, systematic structures with exposed wood and timber framing (often utilizing a post and beam system), extensive use of glass, flat or simple shed roof forms, sliding and pocket doors, horizontal bands of windows and large glazed openings, and extensive use of wood as an interior and exterior finish material. Interiors were characterized by informal room arrangements with intersecting volumes, and open plans with centralized service cores. Interior spaces featured built-ins and crafted furnishings, finishes, and textiles.

### **The Neighborhood’s Modernist Heritage**

There are several impressive, low-scale, Modern-era office buildings in the Eastlake neighborhood that provide a visual context for the Egan House design. The visual scale and character of the neighborhood, availability of relatively low-cost land, and desirable mix of uses attracted a small community of architects, engineers and related professionals who felt at ease with the existing population of artists, teachers, students, and bohemians. Eastlake was a welcoming area for the construction of design offices where designers could experiment with Modernist principals. Many of these professionals were graduates of the University of Washington and became the leading designers of the post-war period. Modern style buildings in the vicinity of the Egan house include the following:

- Gene Zema Office and Asian Gallery (1953 – 1961), located at 2000 East Boston Street, was built three years after Zema graduated from architecture school at the University of Washington, and featured emerging Northwest Regional wood framing and details based on Japanese design precedents.
- In 1956 the Office of Steinhart Theriault & Anderson was constructed at the intersection of Fairview Avenue East and Eastlake Avenue East. It attracted considerable attention as a striking example of post-war International Style with its innovative cantilevered glazed pavilion.



- The Elmec Building was built at 1920 Eastlake Avenue in 1960. The two-story, 4,000 square foot office building was designed by Durham, Anderson and Freed.
- At 1949 Yale Place East is a notable building with a striking folded plate roof structure, constructed for Pacific Architect and Builder Magazine as its publishing office/printing facility. It was designed by architect Al Dwyer of A. O. Bumgardner & Partners and built in 1960.
- In 1961, the Office of Architects Paul Hayden Kirk and Associates moved into their new building (designed by Kirk) at 2000 Minor Avenue East. Kirk later designed the neighboring building, a clinic at 2009 (currently the office of Bush Roed and Hitchings).

The value of Eastlake's Modern heritage has been recognized. Several of the aforementioned buildings in the neighborhood are noted in publications, such as Victor Steinbrueck's *Seattle Cityscape* (1961) and *Seattle Cityscape 2* (1973), Sally Woodbridge's *Guide to Architecture in Washington State* (1980), and *Shaping Seattle Architecture - A Historical Guide to the Architects*, edited by Jeffrey Ochsner (1994). The Egan House is cited by Woodbridge as "one of Seattle's most arresting houses." (Woodbridge, p. 161)

### **Stylistic Aspects of the Egan House**

The Egan House is similar to many post-war era architect-designed houses in that it stressed economy and material innovation, which remain among its most appealing qualities. Post war American architects were inspired by Wright's Usonian houses of the 1930s, the International Style houses of the Bauhaus, works by iconic Modern masters Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, and the case study houses of California. They worked expressively within modest one or two-story programs of 1,000 to 2,000 square foot dwellings for their own homes and those of like-minded clients.

The Egan House differs from many mid-century Northwest Modern houses in that it is more hermetic and tightly enclosed. (The building's original design did not include the large deck on the north side.) The site's steep topography and dense vegetation also contrast with typical open, suburban sites with cultivated landscaping. Instead of integration, Reichert addressed the surrounding landscape through placement and juxtaposition in an ideological rather than experiential approach to dwelling design.

Within the larger context of Modern era design principles, Reichert's designs may be aligned with the work of others who experimented with innovative sculptural forms. Examples include Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes, the National Congress in Brasilia by architect Oscar Niemeyer, or the sweeping triangular houses of Eduardo Catalano. In Reichert's use of high contrast colors and two-dimensional decoration, there seems to be a link to the Robert Venturi's early "decorated sheds." In the Northwest, sculptural forms are evidenced by thin shell concrete and steel framed structures remaining from the World's Fair era of the late 1950s and early 1960s, such as Paul Thiry's design of the Coliseum/Key Arena, the Pacific Builder and Engineer's headquarters designed by the Bumgardner Partnership, or the shaped building forms of Wendell Lovett.

In the Egan House and his other houses of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Reichert confronted Modern design principles as well as popular taste. Modern style buildings are based typically on a rational structural system expressed in architectural form. A defining feature of Modernism is repetition: "[D]etails depend on their common interplay... Thus, repetition is not undesirable - the

same construction for the same requirements, for which exceptions should only be made in the case of exceptional requirements” (Taut, p. 9).

Despite its conventional wood-framing, the Egan House is not characterized by rationality and repetition. It is a far more dramatic structure, with the strident geometry of its wedge-shaped massing, the two-dimensional simplicity of the triangular north facade, and the use of contrasting vertical wood siding and plywood panel cladding, which are bisected by narrow windows and openings with flush planes of glazing.

The interior is more consistent with some of the formal aspects of Modernism as exemplified by the use of contemporary materials, built-in interior cabinetry, and stairs that are detailed to read as floating, semi-transparent element. The interior also expresses the Modern tradition of flowing and open space, but diverges from the typical horizontal volumes with its compelling and dramatically angles.

### **The Building’s Original Construction**

The Egan House was designed in 1958 and built in 1958 – 1959 by Stanford Mokelbust for retired Admiral Willard Egan, U.S. Navy, at a cost of \$10,762. Architect Robert Reichert created an unusual, non-conforming design that attracted both admiring and critical attention.

Willard Egan was actively involved in the project during both the design process and construction. Reichert's records note many reductions in scope during the bidding process, prior to selection of Sanford Mokelbust as the general contractor, as well as after construction began. The initial contract, for instance, was reduced by eliminating the fireplace, full plumbing installation in one toilet room, a built-in General Electric kitchen (later added back into the work scope), and interior and exterior paint. Egan subcontracted out the kitchen and exterior painting, but undertook the interior finishes himself. Reichert's field records indicate his frustration with the owner’s workmanship, but the Egan’s were pleased with the resulting house.

### **The Original Architect, Robert Reichert**

Seattle architect Robert George Chase Reichert (1923 – 1996) was born in Fargo, North Dakota, and lived and worked in Seattle for most of his adult life. Reichert had two strong passions—architecture and music. He began studies in these fields at the age of fourteen when he was first employed by an architect and began playing the organ professionally. (Reichert noted in interviews that he had declared his goal of becoming an architect at the age of four.) He attended the University of Minnesota in St. Paul, where he received an undergraduate degree in architecture in 1947.

Reportedly, Reichert’s family moved to Seattle shortly after he began college at the University of Minnesota, which may be the reason he later moved to the Northwest. During his early years at UM he also enrolled in the Mac Phial College of Music in Minneapolis. He was a member of the American Guild of Organists, and was designated as a Colleague in the organization in 1947. In 1950 Reichert attended an international meeting of organists at Westminster Abbey, Canterbury, and then traveled throughout Europe. He also studied at the Royal College of Organists in London.

His architectural education continued at Harvard University, where he studied with European émigré and Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius and received a Master’s in Architecture in 1951. Reichert’s personal philosophy of design could not have differed more from than of his teacher when he noted that “architecture is an art, art is an attitude and therefore metaphysical and romantic . . . We must

have romance in architecture and design, and this must triumph over the present-day emphasis and drama of structure, techniques and function.”

Reichert's professional career included a private architectural practice in Seattle from 1951 to 1996, which focused primarily on residential projects. During this period he was also the organist for the Church of Christ, Seattle. In 1948 – 1949, 1956 – 1957, and 1962 – 1963, he was on the faculty of the University of Washington's Architecture Department where he taught architectural design studios. In 1950 – 1952 he served as a design critic, and in 1952 he attended classes in the University's School of Art. Reichert was a well respected by students for his commitment to design.

Throughout his life, Reichert retained strong interests including church organs, motorcycles, art, and architectural design. He was open in his commitment to his Episcopal faith, noting in a local newspaper article that he “would like to think of himself not so much as an architect, teacher, or organist, but as a Christian who uses these things to express his Christianity.”

Before coming to the Northwest, Reichert worked on federal government buildings in Washington, D.C., Massachusetts, Cuba, and Columbia. In Seattle he was briefly employed by NBBJ and helped plan a new wing of Swedish Hospital. He also helped with the design of the University Congregational Church with Seattle architects Jones and Bindon, building plans for Fort Lewis with Seattle architect J. Lister Holmes, and planning of a housing project in Boston with Sam Glazer. Additionally, Reichert worked on remodeling spaces within the downtown Labor Temple on Second Avenue, and several buildings on the University of Washington campus.

Four of Reichert's houses received national and international attention through articles in newspapers and architectural publications:

- The Egan House, 1500 Lakeview Boulevard East, 1958 - 1959
- Reichert's own residence at 2500 3rd Avenue West, on the north slope of Queen Anne Hill, built in 1952 (Tax Parcel No. 2652500126). This 1,400 square foot dwelling has been so changed that the original design is no longer recognizable, although it retains its original shed-roof massing. It was designed originally to accommodate Egan and his mother, and also contained his studio and an organ. Like the Egan House, this residence expressed Reichert's Christian spirituality and his love of pipe organ music. A singular piece of self expression, his house was also a wedge-shaped building and painted with “super-graphics.” It stood “in stark contrast to its neighborhood context, as did the ‘shadow painting’ executed on the building's south elevation. Reichert's abstraction of architectural forms in two dimensions served as a billboard for the designer's view of art and life.” (Weiss)
- The Mario Torre / Kremen-Willnar Residence, 5524 South Dawson Street, built in 1959. A 1,940 square foot, two-story house on a 21,780 square foot (half-acre), center-block parcel between 55<sup>th</sup> and 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue South in the Seward Park neighborhood (Tax Parcel No. 3723800171). This house remains intact and its original features have been retained. The present owners, Sonia Kremen-Willnar and her husband, are family members of the second owners, Sam and Rae Kremen, who purchased the house from Mr. Torre in the early 1960s.

- The Fernandez / Nordell Residence, also known as the Eckmann House at 8615 26th Avenue Northwest, built in 1956 (Tax Parcel No. 0439000165). This 2,880 square foot, one-story building with a large daylight basement on a 6,495 square foot lot was cited originally in a local newspaper article as “the Personality House.” It’s located in the Ravenna / Wedgewood neighborhood. This house appears intact, although it was not toured as part of the research for this report. Its exterior appearance is very similar to the original published design.

In addition to these buildings, Reichert had designed nine other residential projects by 1963:

- Keith Miller House, Warm Beach, Camano Island. (Information about this house has not been discovered.)
- The Jorgenson Apartments, 111 Aloha St., Queen Anne Hill, between 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North and Warren Avenue North, built in 1962 (Tax Parcel No. 5457300355). This six-unit building, known currently as the 1st and Aloha Apts., sits on a small 3,744 square foot lot. The relatively straightforward two-story structure has several distinctive features of Reichert design, such as plywood railings with cut-outs, unusual window shapes and sizes, and battered masonry-clad fin walls.
- The Fredrick Schmidt / Tellefson House, 5705 South Dawson Street. (King County Parcel Viewer notes a construction date of 1929. The existing dwelling does not appear to be a Reichert design, and his involvement may have been limited to an interior remodel project.) The 1,800 square foot, one-and-a-half-story house is on a 7,525 square foot lot one block east of Lake Washington Boulevard South.
- The Philippe Hosterman / Larry Booker Residence, 5224 Seward Park Avenue South at the corner of 55<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, built in 1957. A one-story house with a basement, it represents 1,820 square feet on an 8,060 square foot lot. (This house has not been identified on-site.)
- Martin Gray House, 5224 Oakhurst Place, in the Uplands area of the Seward Park.
- The Water Elliott / Mayes House, at 76<sup>th</sup> and South Lakeridge Drive. (Reference to this house cited its address as this intersection. Its exact address was not identified in research documents, and it has not been toured.) Located four blocks west of Rainier Avenue South in the Rainier Beach neighborhood, this is a one-story dwelling with a basement, totaling 2,290 square feet on a 7,680 square foot lot.
- The Margaret Norvel Duplex Houses, 2514 and 2516 2nd Ave. West, built in 1950 (Tax Parcel No. 2652500395). Located in Queen Anne, the two “mirrored” 1,190 SF one-story dwellings are on a single 6,600 square foot lot. This assembly of two buildings appears unremarkable except for its low massing and common materials.

- Ivan Hanson Residence, 1109 Northwest 85th Street (no longer extant).

Of these buildings, the Egan House, Fernandez / Nordell Residence, Torre / Kremen-Willnar Residence, and Jorgenson / Aloha and 1st Apartments retain their original features. Reichert's Seattle houses, though few, were well publicized and well known because of their unique formal qualities, which differed from other Northwest Modern style dwellings of the time. In 1959, the downtown Seattle Frederick and Nelson department store displayed drawings of Reichert's Seattle and Western Washington houses. The exhibit, sponsored by the local AIA chapter, featured his concepts of windows as "elements of light diffusion and transparency." Reichert articulated other differences in his projects in a 1964 article where he described his buildings as "romantic rather than functional . . . sculptural in form and traditional in mannerism." In this article he also cited his use of liturgical symbols in his work. (*Architecture/West*, May 1964, p. 26).

### **Property Ownership**

The Egan House has been owned by a number of individuals prior to its acquisition by the City and Historic Seattle in 1998. Past owners have included:

Admiral Willard Egan, 1958 – 1972  
 Michael Santoro, 1973  
 Dale Jorgensen, Architect, 1974 – 1986  
 Dillis W. Knapp, 1987– 1992  
 Nancy Harriss, 1993  
 Thomas and Kate Meadowcroft, July 9, 1993 – May 25, 1994  
 Gary M. Ernsdorff, May 24, 1994 – February 26, 1998

In 1993 the City adopted a "Green Space Policy" that encouraged preservation of green spaces in the city. Policy goals included the preservation of habitat and natural landscapes, provision of natural buffers between land uses, mitigation of noise and air pollution; and preservation of natural drainage with a reduction of storm sewer systems. The Egan House property and surrounding greenbelt that surrounded it, was one of 30 green spaces identified by the City for acquisition. In 1998 the Department of Parks and Recreation acquired the property and created the present St. Marks Greenbelt. The greenbelt buffers Capitol Hill (and the Egan House) from 1-5, and provides wildlife habitat, dense vegetation and steep trails. (Seattle Dept. of Parks and Recreation website)

Initially the Egan House was threatened by demolition as part of the City's property acquisition. In response to community concerns, Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority (PDA) worked with the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation to resolve the issue. The Historic Seattle PDA acquired the building on February 26, 1998, under a 50-year Statutory Warranty Deed (Recording No. 9802272145), which was granted by the former property owner, Gary M. Ernsdorff. (Mr. Ernsdorff, the last private owner, purchased the property for \$177,000 and sold it to the City of Seattle for \$240,000.)

The Statutory Warranty Deed included 50-year easements for access, and maintenance and preservation of the house. In a separate transaction, the City acquired the property, subject to the deed and easements. According to Mark Batter of Historic Seattle, the conditions of the Deed were modified by an agreement between the Historic Seattle PDA and the Department of Parks and Recreation dated May 15, 2002, which clarified the PDA's responsibilities for preservation and replacement. (The City of Seattle acquired the property subject to the conditions of this deed, a copy of which is provided in the graphic section of this report.) As part of their ongoing stewardship of the

Egan House, the Historic Seattle PDA is supportive of this landmark nomination, which has been prepared by members of the local Modernist advocacy group, DoCoMoMo\_WeWa.

#### Recent Preservation Activities by Seattle Parks and Historic Seattle

Former Historic Seattle Advocacy Director, Heather MacIntosh, described activities in the late 1990s that have led to the preservation of the Egan House:

The site attracted the city's attention as a potential green belt near the highway. With the support of an elected official (Peter Steinbrueck, the son of Victor Steinbrueck, savior of Seattle's beloved Pike Place Market) Historic Seattle successfully shaped a public-private partnership resulting in the stewardship of the natural environment, and an architectural jewel... (Historic Seattle's subsequent) rehabilitation strove, to the greatest degree possible, to uphold Reichert's vision, and preserve the building for many years to come. All damaged structural materials were replaced. In the interim, the (west) cantilever was shored by wooden posts to keep it from falling off. (It) is now supported by a single steel column that preserves the visual expression of the cantilever, but is considerably stronger and safer in earthquakes. A new roof was installed, including the original variegated shingle design. The building was repainted, using Reichert's original black, white and red color scheme. The renovation included upgrades to the kitchen and bathrooms, and to the heating system to maximize energy efficiency. (Historic Seattle, *Preservation Seattle* online magazine, November 2003)

Historic Seattle raised funds to start the needed, first-stage repairs soon after it acquired the Egan House in 1998. In 2001 it began a phased project initially under the direction of architect Lee Stanton, and with technical assistance from DoCoMoMo\_WeWa. The repair project cost approximately \$102,000. It included replacement of plumbing fixtures, upgrading of the electrical system, new railings at the upper floor level, interior painting, and creation of a new utility room in a former crawl space. This space is used presently as an office and laundry room.

Structural work in 2002 - 2003 included new cast-in-place reinforced concrete perimeter foundations and internal foundations, pier footings at the back of the building, repairs to structural framing at the cantilever over the entry (with insertion of the new column at its western end), provision of wood-framed and clad sheer walls, and cladding repairs. The composition shingle roofing was replaced over a new plywood diaphragm. Upon completion of the rehabilitation, Historic Seattle leased the house to residential tenants.

As previously noted, another phase of repair and restoration work is ongoing under the direction of Historic Seattle. The non-original north deck is being reconstructed to address structural deterioration, along with cladding repairs on the north facade. The project team includes structural engineer Ira Gross, of I. L. Gross, and general contractor James Sprague of Sprague Construction.

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***The features of the Landmark to be preserved, include:***

- the exterior of the building, and
- the interior of the building excluding both bathrooms and excluding the office/bedroom on the lower (entry) level.

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