

Setting Precedent in Oakwood?

During the Society for the Preservation of Historic Oakwood (SPHO) community meeting this past April, one presenter talked about the precedent that approving the Linden addition and Euclid house might set for future approvals... some of the supporters of modernism reacted by saying this was unrealistic or far fetched. In light of what Pratt Cassity promotes, is this **really** so unrealistic in Oakwood if the RHDC starts to allow non-

contributing structures to serve as precedent?



In addition to empty lots, fire and tornados can take out existing homes... the modern homes inserted into the two photos to the left are actual modern homes built in NC.

Our point of view on this as summed up by Steven W. Semes:

"Traditional architects and neighborhood activists have found common cause in opposing aggressively modernist new construction in such settings proposed by high-profile "star" architects. That such interventions are winning approval from leading preservation authorities is dismaying, but the reasons given for these decisions are even more disturbing."

"Rather than seeing the Commission's role as defender of the character of the historic district, (the Chairman) apparently sees its role as promoter of avant-garde architectural experimentation."

See more at: <http://www.nccsc.net/legacy/new-buildings-among-old#sthash.BCRzQ3LN.Xvk9LD2W.dpuf> - *New Buildings Among Old* - Steven W. Semes - Francis and Kathleen Rooney Chair in Architecture, University of Notre Dame.

What Can You Do Right Now?

One of our primary objectives right now is making sure that the RHDC Design Guidelines remain intact and to garner support for strengthening them to be sure that Linden and Euclid houses will not be used as precedent in Historic Oakwood. We are afraid this might be a real possibility.

In fact, we feel that in the case of the Euclid COA, the RHDC's misuse of precedent led to the application being approved in the first place. We also hope the RHDC will mandate that the character essay of each historic district must be used to determine if a design plan or addition is "congruous" within the neighborhood - built to blend in with the contributing homes built within the **period of significance** of that district.

There is a huge push to significantly diverge from this time-honored approach and preservation philosophy. As you can see by the examples discussed here, the potential for significant change is real and we need your support.

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR

(RHDC) Community Conversation on
Raleigh Historic Development Design Guidelines

Monday, September 22 6-8:30 pm

Raleigh Convention Center Room 304

Monday, October 20 6-8:30 pm

Meymandi Hall Lobby

Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts



Please consider joining our group or financially supporting the Oak City Preservation Alliance. You can visit our website at www.OakCityPA.org.

Oak City Preservation Alliance



The Oak City Preservation Alliance (OCPA) is a group of Raleigh citizens dedicated to preserving the integrity of what makes Raleigh's historic neighborhoods some of the most sought after places to live and visit in the country.

Our Position

The Oak City Preservation Alliance rolls into one organization several important roles previously not fully met in Raleigh:

- Advocating for the preservation of historic neighborhoods and structures with an important heritage.
- Contributing our voice to the history and philosophy of preservation efforts.
- Serving as an ombudsman with city officials, residents, developers and others to ensure that the established rules for historic preservation are taken seriously and fairly executed.

Why We Are Contacting You

We are asking for your solidarity. There are several organizations forming alliances regarding modernist homes in Historic Districts. The Raleigh Historic Development Commission (RHDC) is seeking input from the community on this matter. Some organizations originally formed to foster historic preservation are promoting to allow modernist architecture in Historic Districts as infill or additions. We need the support of others who disagree that the current Historic Guidelines set forth by the RHDC allow this. If the concerns expressed in this pamphlet resonate with you please contact us - we welcome new members and would be glad to answer any questions.

Community Needs to Hear Both Sides of the Issue

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Pratt Cassity



The Raleigh Historic Development Commission (RHDC) has invited Pratt Cassity, a professor at the University of Georgia, to be the keynote speaker at a public discussion of this issue on September 22nd. From his link in social media, Cassity promotes starkly modern structures as infill for historic neighborhoods to "separate the old from the new" as well as modernist additions to historic homes. We feel this is not a positive sign for the future of historic neighborhoods.

More importantly – we are concerned with the RHDC's single keynote speaker and the fact that this is only one side of the debate. This keynote speaker is likely to only support the decisions the RHDC has already made on the Linden and Euclid COAs – but there is not someone with the opposing viewpoint speaking. This is why we feel it's so important for people in the community who disagree with these decisions to be at this meeting.



To see more on Cassity's point of view...

<http://www.pinterest.com/harpertruman/>



We agree with Semes again – do not rupture the integrity of the character of the district or structure: "When additions or new construction are appropriate at all, they should be added in such a way that the new is distinguishable from the historic fabric by informed observers or trained professionals. No differentiation should be made that would result in an incongruous appearance or ruptured integrity."

Sense of Place, Steven W. Semes - Francis and Kathleen Rooney Chair in Architecture at the University of Notre Dame.

Protecting the "Historic Experience"

What the Oak City Preservation Alliance strives for is protection of the "historic experience".

There have been over 40 homes built in Historic Oakwood over the last 40 years. These new homes are not "historic" but they are congruous with the neighborhood and protect the character of the neighborhood and the residents and visitors historic experience.



600 Leonidas Ct. Built in 1994



521 Watauga St. Built in 1994



415 N. Bloodworth Built in 2003



505 Watauga St. Built in 1989

What these new houses have in common with most contributing structures of Historic Oakwood: Lap or brick siding, gabled roof, front door facing the road, front porches, similar roof pitches and window sizes to comparable neighboring homes. Congruous in "height, form, size, scale, massing, proportion and roof shape" at the same time using similar materials as outlined in the RHDC Guidelines.

Let's clear something up... we have heard some of the proponents of modernist architecture who want to build in designated historic districts often say that we want only "faux old" homes built, or that just because we don't agree with the approvals on Linden and Euclid that we are striving to preserve a "museum-like" quality for Oakwood consistent with Old Salem, NC, or Williamsburg.

Modern, eco friendly, sustainable materials and technology can be used in new homes which still look congruous in style to contributing homes. Geothermal heat, spray foam insulation, tankless water heaters, energy efficient windows and other options can be used in any new construction.

It is also worth noting that Oak City Preservation Alliance (OCPA) is not against modern architecture. OCPA supports the preservation of some historic mid-century modern structures under threat. At issue in Oakwood is the introduction of the modern architectural style in a protected historic district that dates back to the mid 1800's. There are plenty of unrestricted areas of Wake County where modern architecture would fit into the fabric of the neighborhood.

There is a lot at stake for many people regarding this issue, not just people who live in Oakwood. Visiting Oakwood is part of a **historical experience** that the visitor is seeking and expecting. When people tour the neighborhood they want to see what a Nineteenth-Century neighborhood looked and felt like. A shockingly different home amid the contributing and congruous homes "jolts" people out of that historical experience. People visit to take carriage rides, the Segway tours, the Historic Candlelight Tour, different walking tours through Oakwood Cemetery, strolls to see the historic designation plaques, front porches, holiday decorations and more. It's part of what makes Oakwood Historic District a special destination - and a city treasure.