

Landmark Nomination
The Egan House
Seattle



prepared by

DoCoMoMo_ WeWa
Seattle, Washington

February 24, 2009

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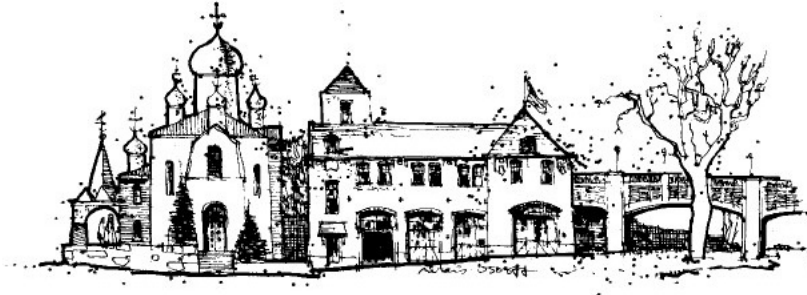
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Cover: The Egan House in 1958. (Photograph from the University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, provided by Historic Seattle)



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

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

Landmark NOMINATION Application

Name (common, present, or historic): Admiral Willard Egan Residence

Year built: 1958 (1959 according to King County Assessment records)

Street and number: 1500 Lakeview Boulevard East, Seattle, WA 98102

Assessor's file no.: 2025049049

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)

Plat name: N/A Block: N/A Lot: N/A

Present owner: Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation (land)
Historic Seattle PDA (building)

Present use: Park and Single Family Residence

Owner's address: Historic Seattle PDA, 1117 Minor Ave., Seattle, WA 98101
Seattle Dept. of Parks & Rec., 800 Maynard Ave, 3rd Floor, Seattle 98134

Original owner: Admiral Willard Egan

Original use: Single Family Residence

Architect: Robert Reichert

Builder: Sanford Mokelbust

See the attached report for physical description, statement of significance, and photographs.

Submitted by: Susan Boyle, Member, DoCoMoMo_WeWa Board of Directors

Address: c/o BOLA Architecture + Planning, 159 Western Avenue West, #486
Seattle WA 98109

Phone: (206) 447.4749

Date: February 24, 2009

Reviewed (Historic Preservation Officer): _____ Date: _____

The Egan House, Seattle
Landmark Nomination Report
February 24, 2009

Seattleite Robert Reichert may be the only American architect to create buildings that double as freestanding abstract modern paintings. This crisp, wedge-shaped private residence pops out from its surrounding wooded hillside. In the language of modern art criticism, it is a composition of black and white in motion.

- Glenn Weiss, "Stars in the Skyline," December 2000.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

This report provides historic and architectural information about the Egan House, a single-family residence located on a steep, wooded slope on the east side of Lakeview Boulevard East. The property is situated between two neighborhoods—Eastlake and north Capitol Hill—and is east of the I-5 freeway. The house was designed by Seattle architect Robert Reichert and was constructed in 1958 – 1959. It is a Modern design of striking simplicity and form.

This nomination is the first of several being prepared for small-scale, mid-century buildings in Seattle's Eastlake neighborhood by volunteer members of the local advocacy group DoCoMoMo_WeWa. The buildings, including the Egan House, were included in a "Modernism in Eastlake" public tour organized and presented by the group in June 2001. The nomination of the Egan House has the support of its owner, Historic Seattle.

DoCoMoMo is an international non-profit organization that advocates for the appreciation and preservation of post-World War II Modern-era buildings. Susan Boyle, a member of the local Western Washington chapter, prepared this nomination in July 2008 –February 2009.

Research for this nomination began as far back as the early 1990s, when independent curator Glenn Weiss organized an exhibit at the Seattle Art Museum on Reichert's work and assembled articles on his career and the Egan property. In 2004 Susan Boyle and local preservationist Angie McCarrel gathered additional records. Additional input on the report came from DoCoMoMo_WeWa members Guy Besner, Beth Dodrill, and Andy Phillips, and from Heather MacIntosh, Christine Palmer, and Mark Blatter of Historic Seattle. Assistance in finalizing the report was provided by Brendan Healy of BOLA Architecture + Planning.

This nomination describes the architectural features of the house and site and physical changes to the property over time. It places the Egan House in its historic context, including the development of the Eastlake / North Capitol Hill neighborhood; the career and work of the original architect, Robert Reichert; and the emergence of Modernism as an architectural style in post-war Seattle. It also provides information about the original property owner, Admiral Willard Egan and the building's construction history. A description of the acquisition of the property and its preservation by the City of Seattle and Historic Seattle is included. The text is accompanied by historic and contemporary maps, photos and plans.

Research

Information for the report came from the following sources and documents:

- Seattle Art Museum: Original drawings and information about the work of Robert Reichert collected by Seattle Art Museum curator Glen Weiss.
- Historic Seattle: A file of unpublished reports, copies of Reichert's sketches, correspondence, cost estimates, construction field notes, and other documents assembled by Historic Seattle in November 2002 for its 2003 rehabilitation of the building. Historic Seattle also provided a lengthy article by the organization's former Advocacy Director, Heather MacIntosh, in its on-line newsletter.
- Architectural Sketches also provided by Historic Seattle: These included original ca. 1958 sketches and plans for the building by architect Robert Reichert, 1992 record drawings by Seattle architect Jeffrey Hubbell, and drawings for the 2003 restoration project by Seattle architect Lee Stanton.
- Seattle Public Library: Publications and newspaper articles on the neighborhood and the life and career of Robert Reichert.
- City of Seattle Department of Planning and Design (DPD): Permit files to identify construction dates, original design, and documented changes
- UW Suzzallo Library Special Collections: Digital historic photo collection, including the Dearborn Massar collection, and unpublished reports and publications from the Art and Architecture Libraries.
- City of Seattle Clerk's Municipal Archives: Digital photo collection.
- City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Program: Files, nomination forms for other designated Modern era landmark buildings, and other buildings in Eastlake and North Capitol Hill.
- Architecture histories and guidebooks on post-World War II Modernism in Seattle.

The Landmark Process in Seattle

The City of Seattle's process for designating a historic landmark is a multi-part proceeding comprised of three sequential steps:

1. Submission of a nomination, and its review and approval by the Landmarks Preservation Board (hereinafter "the Board").
2. Review and approval of the property's designation by the Board.
3. Negotiation of controls and incentives by the property owner and the Board staff.

After successful completion of these steps, a designation ordinance is passed by the City Council. Each of these steps involves a public hearing for input from the owner and/or

applicant, members of the public, and other interested parties. Seattle's landmark process is quasi-judicial, with the Landmarks Board making binding rulings, rather than serving as an advisory body to another agency.

Under its ordinance, over 310 individual properties have become designated landmarks in the City of Seattle. Several hundred other properties are designated by their presence within one of the city's special review districts or historic districts—the Harvard Belmont, Ballard, Pioneer Square, Columbia City, Pike Place Market, and International Special Review Districts. Designated landmark properties in Seattle may be individual buildings and structures, building assemblies, landscapes, and objects.

In Seattle, a landmark nomination may be prepared by a property owner, the city's Historic Preservation Office, or by an interested party or individual. The ordinance requires that the Landmarks Board consider a nomination if it is adequate in terms of its information and documentation. The process does not require the owner's consent, nor is there any city ordinance requiring an owner to nominate a property, or to preserve, maintain or restore it once it is designated. Seattle's landmark process does not include consideration of future changes to a property, the merits of a development proposal, or other specific uses.

Only the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board has jurisdiction to officially recognize local landmarks through the nomination and designation process. The Board makes its evaluation in accordance with the City's Landmark Preservation Ordinance (SMC 25.12.350). The ordinance cites threshold requirements that a potential landmark must meet. In addition to a minimum 25-year age requirement, a property must "have significant character, interest or value, as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, State or Nation." This threshold standard suggests that a building's significance must rise above that of the neighborhood or community, and that it must be valued at the citywide level. A property must have integrity: a sufficient amount of its original fabric and features must remain to convey its historic and architectural significance. In addition to the threshold standards, a landmark property must also meet one of the following six designation criteria:

Criteria A. It is the location of, or is associated in a significant way with, an historic event with a significant effect upon the community, city, state or nation.

Criteria B. It is associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the history of the city, state or nation.

Criterion C. It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, city, state or nation.

Criterion D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style or period or of a method of construction.

Criterion E. It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder.

Criterion F. Because of the prominence of its 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.

2. PROPERTY DATA

Historic Name: Willard Egan Residence
Current Name: The Egan House
Address: 1500 Lakeview Boulevard East, Seattle, WA 98102

Location: The property is within the St. Marks Greenbelt, west of 10th Avenue East and east of Lakeview Boulevard East and I-5.

Tax Parcel ID: No. 2025049049
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)

Design: February 10, 1958 (drawing set date)
Construction Date: 1958–1959 (1959, per King County Tax records)

Original Designer: Robert Reichert, Architect, Seattle
Original Builder: Sanford Mokelbust
Later Designer: Lee Stanton, Architect (September 2002 remodel)
Ira Gross, I. L. Gross, Structural Engineer (current repair project)
Later Contractors: Buchanan Construction (2002)
James Sprague, Sprague Construction (2008 – 2009 repair project)

Original Use: Single Family Residence
Present Use: Park and Single Family Residence

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

Present Owners: Seattle Dept. of Parks and Recreation (land)
800 Maynard Avenue South, 3d Floor
Seattle, WA 98134
&
Historic Seattle PDA (building)
1117 Minor Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

Property Size: 10,350 square feet (0.24 acres), per King County
Building Size: 1,880 square feet (sf), per a 1987 DCLU permit
1,190 gross square feet (gsf), per King County
1,390 gsf (per a 1987 permit including a 187.5 sf deck)

3. 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 North Capitol Hill neighborhood and above the southeastern edge of the Eastlake neighborhood, which is defined by the I-5 freeway as it runs along the west side of Lakeview Boulevard East. This street meets one of the freeway's northbound off-ramps approximately one-quarter mile north of the Egan House. Lakeview Boulevard East becomes Boylston Avenue East after it passes through a freeway underpass approximately three blocks north of the house. To the south the boulevard leads to the Cascade neighborhood and leads to Capitol Hill via Harvard Avenue East, which intersects it approximately six blocks south of the Egan House.

Nearby 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 its neighbors by its specific siting deep within an inside curve of the street where it is partially obscured further by a dense tree canopy and topography.

One of the nearest 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. This building is approximately 800 yards to the northwest of the Egan House. Approximately 400 yards to the southwest at 1338 Lakeview Boulevard East there is a large, wood-framed, single-family dwelling that dates from 1909. St. Marks Cathedral was built in 1929 on a large site at 1245 10th Avenue East, east of the Egan House and the present St. Marks 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 nearby I-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 an 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. Marks 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 included the house site and the surrounding property that make up the present St. Marks 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, and surrounds the Egan House property. (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. Exterior dimensions are 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 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 sides. 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, ivy, and other persistent ground covers. The 8' wide driveway acts also as a walkway and leads from the parking lot to the house. (The original driveway was unpaved. Later, brick paving was installed on the drive and near the northwest side 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 wood-framed building is approximately 1,190 square feet according to King County Tax Records for parcel No. 2025049049. The house contains the three stores 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.

From the exterior, the western two-thirds of the building steps up with the slope of the grade, exposing the poured-in-place concrete foundation wall below the siding. The eastern third is supported above grade with an open area below it. The crawlspace below the enclosed center section has been finished with a slab and access doors to a storage space east of the small first floor area.

The object-like building form has a taut roof and siding surfaces and no overhangs with exception of the dramatic west end (originally a cantilever). Original composition roofing was applied in wide sheets to provide a bold appearance of wide red and green stripes. Similar composition roofing and striped appearance was provided 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 cedar channel siding, with vertical grooves creating a narrow pattern of 1.5" on the west and north and rough-textured, horizontal cedar boards with a 7.5" exposure on the east and south. The grooved siding was used as a cladding and as a soffit material below the roof overhang at the west end. A lower 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 other cladding on the primary facades. The painted, horizontal wood siding on the east and south facades is a dark gray color.

The rectangular and linear shaped windows bisect the different types of siding in a geometric composition which was created for its exterior impact rather than interior function; many of the lower level windows require a seated position for outward views. In addition Reichert placed symbolic decorations at both ends of the roof. A pole with a small sculpture, "Starship Enterprise," sits above the upper east end, and a Christian symbol was placed above the entry door. Both Reichert and the Egans were religious, and the entry element has been cited as referring to Episcopal liturgy.

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.

Original windows were wood-framed. These were articulated as simple shapes, with minimal projections on the exterior facade, some dramatic in their narrow geometry. The original windows have been replaced by double-glazed aluminum-framed 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 and a sense of transparency that is evident only within the interior.

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 addition to the deck on the north side of house, which was accessed by a new, non-original 8'-wide aluminum sliding door unit installed in an original window opening at top floor, north facade. The deck was supported by a single 3"-diameter steel pipe column on a concrete footing, and was clad in wood siding to match that of the adjacent walls. 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. The deck perimeter is clad with grooved cedar boards to match adjacent walls. (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 accessing 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 1st floor, above the entry floor, 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, 20' +/- by 27' +/- living room on the 2nd floor. Both the first and second floor levels are held back from the west to overlook the space below. Thus the floor levels are visually linked by the open volume and plane of the ceiling, which corresponded to the steep shed roof shape, creating multi-level views. 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 with white 4"x4" ceramic floor tiles, wood strip cladding on the monolithic, sloped ceiling, pocket doors, and built-in stainless steel kitchen fittings and cabinetry. The kitchen features a single cabinet unit with integral GE 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 Sera's, 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 openings at the upper levels were open, with only minimal X-braced railings. (The openings on the top floor have been fitted with open mesh panels to meet safety code requirements.) Interior finishes include painted plaster and gypsum wallboard. Interior lighting is supplied by several suspended fixtures as well as utilitarian ones. 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.

The house currently has non-original skylights, which provide additional daylight. The addition of skylights appears to have been necessary, in part, because of the limited number of window openings and their shape and locations reinforced the hermetic nature of the

interior space. Several windows, for example, require a seated position to allow views to the outside, while others are narrow shapes with glazing of less than 9" in width, designed 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 that noted as follows:

Date	Description
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 was then set up for single family residences as a GB5000 zone. The present zoning is RS5000, with a variance for a park.)

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 conceptual report, Knapp agreed to a scheme for the building's remodel in September 1992. However, he did not go forward with the project, and shortly after that sold the house.

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 deterioration impaired the roofing, foundation, and cladding (due in part to poor original detailing). Hummel reported problems with the steep entry walk and inaccessible driveway. His report called for the regrading of the walk and 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, all of the upgrade concepts were not carried forward, and thus the original and existing floor plans remain relatively consistent.

In April 1994, engineer K. Donald Solvang, P. E, provided a visual inspection of the house. The report noted areas of continued dampness and potential deterioration in the siding, soffit, and framing. He noted 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.

4. HISTORIC CONTEXT

Historic Development of the Eastlake Neighborhood

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

The 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 areas north of the city (such as the University District, Roosevelt, Northgate, and Lake City) with downtown and the nearby towns of Kenmore and Bothell.

Like many of Seattle's old neighborhoods, 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 (presently Zymogenetics) was at the south end. Fairview Avenue and the lake housed businesses such as Lake Union Dry Dock, Sound Propeller Company, William Boeing's 1916 airplane facility, as well as numerous marinas (some of which held the Alaskan fishing fleet). A few of these businesses remain today, interspersed with offices, specialty retailers and services, taverns, and restaurants and cafes along Eastlake Avenue East. In contrast, the blocks that parallel the freeway to the east are made up primarily by residential properties.

The surrounding blocks retain examples of its 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; remodeled and expanded in 1997), and the Lake Union Steam Plant at Fairview Avenue East and Eastlake Avenue East (1909 – 1921).

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 relocated, 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 the west side 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 pastoral, despite I-5. In 2003 the Egan House property and immediate surrounding blocks were rezoned to RS5000, a single-family residential zone, with a variance to allow for the park greenbelt.

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 America, 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—the suburban house, the corporate arcadia, the glass curtain-wall, the shopping mall, etc.—were specifically experimental in their goal, using 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 architecture, these architects favored a wood timber-built architecture and a design approach that complemented the local landscape. They began to link architecture and site together in a completely new way.

Modernism significantly influenced commercial architecture in the city's downtown area. (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.

Residential design that emerged during this period in the Northwest had distinction based on the topography, climate, and landscape of the region. Many mid-century Modern houses in Seattle and the surrounding region often were located on open and sloped lots with views. The designs featured exposed wood and timber structures (often of post and beam), 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.

The typical mid-century Modern dwelling was one story, but some were multi-level in response to topography. They were characterized by informal room arrangements, with intersecting volumes and open plans with centralized service cores. They featured built-ins and crafted furnishings, finishes, and textiles and frequently had landscaped patios that provided easy contact with the outdoors.

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 their own offices where they could experiment with Modernist design 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 area west of the Egan house include the following:

- Gene Zema Office and Asian Gallery complex (1953 – 1961), located at 2000 East Boston Street, was built three years after he graduated from architecture school at the University of Washington. It featured emerging Northwest Regional style wood detailing 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 glass structure.
- 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 opened their new office building at 2000 Minor Avenue East. Later, Kirk designed the neighboring building, a clinic at 2009 (currently the office of Bush Roed and Hitchings).

The value of Seattle's Modern heritage has long been recognized. Several of the aforementioned buildings in the Eastlake 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). In addition, 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. In post war America architects were inspired by Wright's Usonian houses of the 1930s, the International Style houses of the Bauhaus leaders, 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 site's dense vegetation—rather than an open landscape—also demonstrates a contrast. The original design did not include the large deck on the north side. Instead of integration, Reichert addressed the landscape through placement and juxtaposition in an ideological rather than experiential approach to dwelling design.

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 exception requirements” (Taut, p. 9).

Despite its conventional wood-framing, the Egan House is not characterized by such 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 use of contrasting vertical wood siding and plywood panel cladding—both bisected by narrow window openings with flush planes of glazing. The interior is more consistent with some of the formal aspects of Modernism with its use of contemporary materials, built-in interior cabinetry, and flights of stairs, which are detailed to read as a floating, semi-transparent elements. The interior also retains the Modern tradition of flowing space, but diverges from the typical horizontal volumes with its compelling and dramatically angled space.

Within the larger context of Modern era design principles, Reichert's designs may be aligned with the work of those who experimented with innovative structures in sculptural form. Examples of such common principals are Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes or the work of South American architects as exemplified by the National Congress in Brasilia by Oscar Niemeyer. Another would be 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, these principles are evidenced by thin shell concrete and plywood 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 or the Pacific Builder and Engineer's headquarters designed by the Bumgardner Partnership.

The Building's Original Construction

The Egan House was designed in 1958 and built in 1958 – 1959 by Stanford Mokelbust for Admiral Willard Egan, Ret. US 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 G.E. kitchen (later added back into the work scope), and interior and exterior paint. Mr. 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 Egans 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 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 made 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. 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 than his teacher, however. 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 also studied at the Royal College of Organists in London.

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

Throughout his life, Reichert retained strong interests including church organs, motorcycles, art, and architectural design, as well as a commitment to his Episcopal faith. In one local article about his work, Reichert noted 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 worked on the design of the University Congregational Church with Seattle architects Jones and Bindon, building plans at Fort Lewis with J. Lister Holmes, and a housing project in Boston with Sam Glazer, in addition work on portions of the Labor Temple on Second Avenue and several buildings on the University of Washington campus.

In Seattle, Reichert was employed briefly by NBBJ where he 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 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 local newspapers and architectural publications. They included:

- The Egan House, 1500 Lakeview Boulevard East
- 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 to accommodate Egan and his mother, and it also contained his studio and organ. Similar to the Egan House, this residence expressed his Christian spirituality and his love of pipe organ music. A singular piece of self expression, his house was also a wedge-shaped building 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 55th and 57th 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 (This house was not toured.)
- The Jorgenson Apartments, 111 Aloha St., Queen Anne Hill, between 1st Avenue North and Warren Avenue North, built in 1962 (Tax Parcel No. 5457300355). A six-unit building, it’s known currently as the 1st and Aloha Apts., on a small 3,744 square foot lot. This relatively straightforward two-story building has distinctive features of a Reichert design, with plywood railings with cut-outs, unusual window sizes, and battered masonry 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 it may have been an interior remodel project by him.) 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 55th 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 was not identified or toured.)
- Martin Gray House, 5224 Oakhurst Place, in the Uplands area of the Seward Park neighborhood
- The Water Elliott / Mayes House, at 76th 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 their low, flat roof 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.

In 1959, the downtown Seattle Frederick & Nelson department store displayed drawings of Reichert's Seattle and Western Washington houses. The exhibit, sponsored by the local AIA chapter, featured his concepts on windows as "elements of light diffusion and transparency."

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. Reichert articulated these differences in a 1964 article where described his buildings as "romantic rather than functional . . . sculptural in form and traditional in mannerism." In this article he specifically cited symbols in liturgical art (*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 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

Gary M. Ernsdorff, the last private owner, purchased the property for \$177,000 and sold it to the City of Seattle for \$240,000.

In 1993 the City had 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 greenbelt that surrounded it was one of 30 green spaces identified by the City for acquisition. The Department of Parks and Recreation acquired the six-acre parcel, which included the Egan House and the present 2.9 acre St. Marks Greenbelt, in 1998. The greenbelt buffers Capitol Hill (and the 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 action. 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 Statuary Warranty Deed (Recording No. 9802272145), which was granted by the former property owner, Gary M. Ernsdorff. (The City of Seattle acquired the property subject to the conditions of this deed, a copy of which is in this report's graphic section.)

The Statuary 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 HSPDA and Parks Dept dated May 15, 2002, which clarified HSPDA responsibilities for preservation and replacement. As part of

their ongoing stewardship of the Egan House, the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation and Historic Seattle are 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 first-stage needed 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 under the second floor overhang from a former crawl space with dirt floor. The former crawl space is presently used as an office/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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