



National Preservation Institute

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Identification and Evaluation of Mid-20th-Century Buildings

Seminar Overview

Discuss how post-World War II structures fit into today's and tomorrow's historic preservation patterns. With an emphasis on the 1950's and 1960's, examine era-specific factors that help to identify and evaluate post-war buildings in terms of their significance for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, with consideration of Section 106, Section 110, and Section 4(f) issues.

Agenda

Key topics include:

- Review emerging and surviving styles and building types of the late 1940's to the 1970's and identify character-defining features.
- Discuss materials and construction methods of the mid-20th century from pre-fabs to Lustron Steel, concrete, panel-wall, and aluminum construction.
- Examine building types that came to maturity during this era: airports, gasoline stations, fast-food restaurants, motor hotels, office towers, suburban office parks, split-level and ranch houses, etc. How do corporate-franchise buildings fit in here? How important is any single McDonalds?
- How should we judge the significance of huge post-war housing developments and their site plans, such as work by Levitt and Bohannon?
- How do buildings and building types of the recent past contribute (or do they?) in areas of older historic buildings and historic districts?
- What is the legacy of Urban Renewal in historic areas? How should we assess the historical significance of urban renewal projects themselves?
- How did post-war developments in HVAC, plumbing, electrical service, bathrooms, and kitchens affect the construction, use, and appearance of the era's buildings?
- What architectural treatments for additions and alterations are appropriate under the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation?
- How should alterations, additions, infill, and facadism be assessed in the evaluation process?
- Look briefly at major examples of mid-20th-century architecture as a means of seeing how extraordinary concepts were adapted for popular use. Generally, stress mass-merchant designs as opposed to architect-designed buildings.
- Identify some emerging ideas of the 1950's and 1960's that came to maturity in later in the century.
- Case studies and discussions illuminate these issues.