

FULLERTON HERITAGE

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There is Something About An Eichler

Owners of Eichler homes often cannot put their finger on what it is, but there is something different about these modernist gems. Eichlers have covered carports, sunny atriums, floor-to-ceiling windows, flowing interiors, and a sense of openness not found in conventional cookie-cutter homes. A recent wave of interest in mid-20th century modern homes has sparked renewed interest in Eichlers, decidedly out of favor in the 1970s and 1980s, and homebuyers have been snatching them up the minute they go up for sale. Young buyers in particular are attracted to the cool retro-style of an Eichler home that offers an alternative to the endless sea of bland McMansions crammed into suburbs.

In 1947, pioneering San Francisco developer Joseph Eichler, a retired butter and egg wholesaler, began building high quality and affordable middle-class homes throughout California. While the Ranch House, the single most prolific architectural design in Southern California after World War II, looked to the past California rancho period, Eichler's homes looked to the European modernist tradition, avoiding any hint of nostalgia or romanticism. The Eichler legacy became the modern contemporary home with a high quality design. For his homes, Eichler relied on talented and progressive architects such as Ashen & Allen, Jones & Emmons, and Claude Oakland, whose goals were to bring affordable modernism to the masses. The architects worked on large tract developments as well as small enclaves of nine or ten homes. Known for his stubbornness



and singleness of vision, Eichler never wavered from the modernist vision of his architects. Despite protests from potential homebuyers, Eichler was also the first mainstream tract home developer to sell to minority families. Eichler's homes were a critical and financial success for 20 years, but when he overextended his business, his building company collapsed in 1966, although he continued to build homes until his death in 1974.

Eichler's homes were affordable, but they always incorporated both quality and cutting-edge design. His homes were designed to take advantage of California's climate and were noted for bringing the outdoors inside through the innovative use of glass and atriums. The unique Eichler style, which relied on the ready availability of large tracts of undeveloped land in the suburbs, could not be duplicated today. The low-slung dwellings featured simple, plain facades with

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Advocacy Issues

by Katie Dalton

Requests for New Preservation Zones

Fullerton Heritage and the City have received two requests from residents to consider establishing new Residential Preservation Zones in their neighborhoods. One area is the 300 and 400 blocks of West Brookdale Place and the other is the Upper Golden Hills area including roughly the 500 and 600 blocks of North Fern Dr. and Valleyview Dr. The two areas will of course be considered separately and there are different issues and concerns in each. The process in the Golden Hills area got off to a difficult start with distinct differences of opinion voiced, in some cases with less than civil dialogue. Due to some misunderstandings and erroneous information circulated, the process is temporarily on hold and will proceed at a later date after resolution of issues presented.

The Brookdale neighborhood is proceeding, with an informational workshop held with the neighbors, Fullerton Heritage and City staff on Thursday July 20, 2006. The purpose of the workshop is to provide factual information about the details of the Preservation Zone Ordinance and the accompanying Design Guidelines that apply to all properties within an historical preservation zone in Fullerton. Only then can residents comfortably decide whether or not they are supportive of rezoning their neighborhood. There is no intent on the part of the City or Fullerton Heritage to impose the protection provided by this rezone unless a majority of the homeowners support

it. Our goal is to promote historic preservation whenever possible and we see education as the first and most important piece of any advocacy. Based on homeowner questions and feedback at the workshop there is strong support for applying preservation zone status to the Brookdale area. We have designed a questionnaire to be sent to all affected property owners that will give them yet another opportunity to ask questions to clarify any issues and to indicate whether or not they are in favor of proceeding with a rezone. We are awaiting word from City Staff regarding the next step. We will keep you posted.

Design Review News

Numerous projects have gone through review by the Redevelopment Design Review Committee (RDRC) in the past few months. Most were relatively good projects that with review and “tweaking” met the requirements of the Preservation Zoning Ordinance and the Design Guidelines and will be an asset to their respective historic neighborhoods. Two projects that required significant advocacy ended with positive resolution. A property owner in the 100 block of North Cornell Ave., without permit, removed all of the original windows in his classic California Bungalow and replaced them with poor quality aluminum ones while also changing window style and configuration to one incompatible with the design of the original house. (This is one of the most frequent and frustrating changes made to historic homes and if any of you can figure a way to get window companies as well as property owners to be more sensitive, let us

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Eichler

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few windows and a flat roof. Carports were situated front and center, an acknowledgement of the car as a symbol of social status. Interiors featured open-beam ceilings, glass walls, atriums, wood cabinetry, built-ins, and open floor plans with living and dining areas separated from kitchens by breakfast bars. Over the years, homeowners have altered or fussed-up their sleek Eichler homes, changes that would have horrified the developer, but new owners are restoring them to their original style. A well-maintained and unmodified Eichler can now sell for hundreds of thousands or even a million dollars.

The majority of Eichler homes were built in Northern California, but Eichler also built hundreds of homes in Southern California,

most notably in Granada Hills (100 homes), Thousand Oaks (100 homes), and Orange (350 homes). While many Orange County residents are aware of the three Eichler tracts in the city of Orange—Fairhaven, near Fairhaven and Prospect Streets, Fairhills, off Santiago Canyon Road, and Fairmeadow, near Taft and Cambridge—few know that Fullerton also has a development of these quintessential California homes.

In 1954, Eichler, a merchandising wizard, convinced architects A. Quincy Jones and Frederick E. Emmons to appear on the “House that Home Built” segment of the NBC *Home* television show that came on daily after the *Today Show* from 1954 to 1957. On the nationally syndicated show, hosted by Hugh Downs and Arlene Francis, Jones

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Eichler

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and Emmons offered to create house plans for any developer that could come up with \$200. The plans were designs that Jones and Emmons had created earlier for Eichler. The local building firm of Pardee-Phillips took up the challenge and constructed over 100 Eichler homes—called the Fullerton Grove development—west of Richman between Valencia and Orangethorpe, on Adams, Ash, Elm, Maplewood, Oak, Rosslenn, Washington, and West Avenues. Advertised as the “Forever House” model, the aluminum, glass, steel, and masonry dwellings sold from \$12,950 to \$19,500 for the deluxe model, requiring a \$1250 to \$2000 down payment (with little or no down payment for veterans). The architects offered seven floor plans for the three- and four-bedroom, two-bath homes that featured floor-to-ceiling fireplaces and glass walls, color coordinated kitchens and bathrooms, birch cabinets,



sliding glass doors, and an electronic weather control system. Advertising extolled the “Dream Kitchen of Tomorrow” that contained 14 major built-in items. A unique touch was orange trees in front and backyards, a tribute to Fullerton’s agricultural past. The Fullerton Grove development quickly sold out. Although some of the homes have been modified or fallen into disrepair over the decades, the well-maintained ones still reflect the elements of modernism and high design that Eichler was seeking.

Those interested in reading more about Joseph Eichler and his modernist vision will find two excellent books in the Fullerton Public Library: Jerry Ditto’s *Eichler Homes: Design for Living* and Paul Adamson’s *Eichler: Modernism Rebuilds the American Dream*. The websites www.eichlernetwork.com for Northern California and www.eichlersocal.com for Southern California are devoted to all things Eichler and provide a network for homeowners to share tips on maintenance and restoration. Additional information on the Fullerton Grove development will be found in the Launer Local History Room of the Fullerton Public Library, open 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday.



First Person: Living in An Eichler Home

Fullerton Heritage asked a homeowner living in a Forever House— Pamela Nevius—to survey her and her neighbors homes and report back on what are the pluses and minuses of living in a Jones and Emmons designed dwelling. Here are her thoughts.

I've spoken with some neighbors from Phases I, II and III of the Forever Homes, most of whom have lived here at least 30 years, and here is what they've shared.

The greatest appeal seems to be the terrific natural lighting, especially in the living and dining rooms of Phase II and III homes. Those rooms are totally window from floor to ceiling, facing the backyard, and since there's no attic space, windows follow the pitch of the roof, in some cases angling up past 10 feet in height. Another positive is good circulation when all windows are open in homes that have been kept at their original layout. However, this is rather unusual, as most homes have room additions or extensions.

The greatest negative feature in the homes is the lack of insulation in Phases II and III, due to zero attic space and walls that do not seem to be insulated. In fact, one owner I spoke with placed insulation over all wood-faced exterior walls and covered the insulation with a second interior wall of wood, thereby retaining the original look. He told me that now, when there's a fire in the fireplace, he needs to open a window so there's enough air movement inside to push the smoke up the chimney! In the interest of better insulation, another resident made a point, while having a roof replaced, to have the plywood board lifted so insulation could be blown in between the ceiling and newly replaced plywood roof backing. Another negative feature in some of the Phase III designs is a flat roof. Although there's undoubtedly a slight pitch, it's very slight and invites water buildup with lack of efficient runoff in a rainy season like the winter of 1995.

The Phase I concrete cinder block homes apparently remain coolly insulated, despite the heat, during summer. One neighbor says completely, another says to about 100 degrees, but once over that temperature, the heat gets into the house and does not quickly depart. In winter it's cold inside the cinder block homes, which are limited to a wall unit heater. Unlike the Phase II and III homes, with floor to ceiling windows looking out over the backyard, the cinder block homes, for the most part, have more traditionally scaled and placed windows. However, they do have windows covering the area between the high pitch of the roof line and the top of an 8-foot wall, bringing light into rooms which share that exterior wall.

Original features retained by some Forever Homes include:

- Ceramic tile counters in kitchens
- Oven doors with porthole windows into both the ovens and broilers, either a pastel color to match the pastel color sink, or a stainless steel finish if the sink tile is gray
- Bathroom ceramic tile walls in both showers and baths, some in mint green, yellow or blue, with matching color toilets and sinks
- Carports, when at their original size, remain wide enough to park a car next to the garage. Next to the car is a walkway to the front door of the house, and between the walkway and exterior wall of the house is a garden area
- Rock roofs
- Linoleum tile floors
- Orange trees in front yards

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Annual Meeting Held

Fullerton Heritage held its annual meeting on Sunday, June 25.

FH President presided over the festivities held in the courtyard of the historic California Hotel (now known as the Villa del Sol).

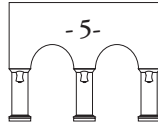
Neighborhood activist Sharon Lewis-Bultsma received the Fullerton Heritage Preservationist of the Year Award for her efforts to establish a preservation zone in the Golden Hills area.

Golden Hammer awards went to Helen Green and Doug Cummings and to Rosie and Bob Jones. The Golden Hammer is awarded to homeowners for their efforts, especially "sweat equity" in preserving their homes.

Architect Carol Minning received a special award recognizing her firm's design for the new Fullerton College Library which fits so well with the campus's buildings of the 1930-40 period.

Artist Tony Trasport was recognized along with Carl Gregory of Fullerton Community Bank for the murals of Fullerton on display inside the bank's main branch at West Commonwealth and Malden. Tom Dobbins of Fullerton Community Bank was on hand to accept the award on Gregory's behalf.

Local journalist and historian Bob Ziebell addressed the audience on aspects of early history of the City of Fullerton. His book on the subjects is available for purchase at the Fullerton Museum Center.



President's Corner

by Tom Dalton

The Amerige Court saga continues to be our main focus and we have been writing letters, speaking at RDRC and Planning Commission meetings, and meeting with City Staff and the developers to ensure our position is clear. As we have stated over and over, we are not opposed to development in our downtown, if it is done correctly.

The original plan to build 4 and 5 story buildings with combined residential and commercial space and a reasonable number of parking places seemed to be a good one with little or no opposition from the public. Now that the project has morphed into twin 9 story towers there are a number of groups and individuals who have been speaking out against it. In addition to the excessive height and mass of the project, the main concerns of many citizens are the lack of open space, poor pedestrian access, and funding.

Our concern continues to be the effect it will have on our historic downtown. We believe that if 8 or 9 story towers are allowed to be built in the core of our downtown it will be very difficult for us to tell the next developers they can't build 10 or 12 story buildings next door. As we have stated many times, this is not a bad looking project; it just does not belong in the heart of downtown Fullerton. There are many places in our city where this project would fit in beautifully. Once again, we recognize that new development in our downtown

Walking Tour Set for Nov. 4

Autumn is here and it's time for another downtown historic tour for a look at local history dating back to 1904. We will meet at the flagpole by the Fullerton Museum Center at 9:am; the tour will end at approximately 12:15pm. The informally narrated tour will offer a close-up look at downtown Fullerton sites and allow time for questions and input from walkers. It is either nostalgia or discovery or both! Handicap access is o.k. except for a couple of brief stops. Street parking on Saturday is usually available, or use the E. Wilshire parking structure (free). The tour is free to Fullerton Heritage members; it's only \$5.00 for others and children are free with adults. One may join FH at the beginning of the tour. Bring a friend or a new member and come!

can have a very positive effect on our community.

All we are asking, really, is that our City leaders respect the work that has been done over the years by their predecessors to protect the heart of our beautiful, historic downtown. It would be helpful for as many members as possible to either send e-mails, letters or phone calls to City Councilmembers to voice concerns about this project in our historic downtown: (738-6311; 303 W. Commonwealth Ave. Fullerton 92832; council@ci.fullerton.ca.us)

Heritage, Arboretum Partner in Historic Marker

El Camino Real. The King's highway, historic path of the Franciscan friars and Spanish soldiers moving from mission to mission passed through Fullerton. Copies of the bell markers abide along US Hiway 101 up and down the coast including one of the originals in our city. Now Fullerton Heritage has discovered that a copy of the original bell markers is here as well! In cooperation with the Fullerton Arboretum, which has the bell, we will be erecting it on the Arboretum grounds near the new historic Orange Co. Agricultural Museum. Watch for the dedication of this fine example of local history in February.

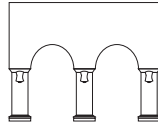
Living in an Eichler

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Changes made to some of the Forever Homes include:

- Ceiling lights installed in various rooms (originally, only kitchens had ceiling lights)
- Skylights added to areas not as naturally well lit as the living and dining rooms
- Insulation added into walls and between the ceiling and roof boards
- Replacement of linoleum flooring
- Carports converted into additional living rooms or extended garages
- Updated kitchens and bathrooms

Paint applied over original exterior finish, which was a natural stain applied to the redwood (used in Phase II and III homes).



Advocacy

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know). A call to City Staff resulted in a stop work order and a complete review of the property by RDRC. As a result of the review the owner was required to remove the inappropriate windows, restore the original configuration and install high quality windows similar to the original. Other exterior changes were also restored, salvaging the historic home from a tragic "remuddle" and preserving a part of the historic streetscape in the College Park Preservation Zone.

A similar thing happened in the 100 block of East Glenwood Ave. While awaiting RDRC review of a second unit on the property, the owner, without his architect's or contractor's knowledge removed the original windows and siding and began replacing them with poor quality and incompatible new materials that significantly affected the historic quality of the residence. Through our advocacy we think the issue will be resolved with the owner removing the inappropriate materials and replacing them with higher quality, more compatible ones. Still, there is no substitute for not losing those historic elements or materials in the first place. The home will never again be as historically significant as it could have been.

And the list goes on. There is never an end to the need to be vigilant in our historic neighborhoods that have preservation protection, but hopefully through ongoing education and the pride of fellow property owners, the protection will have a positive and cumulative effect.

Consider giving a friend a gift membership in Fullerton Heritage

Yes, I want to support Fullerton Heritage in preserving Fullerton's historic cultural and architectural resources. Please check one:

- \$10 Student
- \$15 Senior (65 & over)
- \$20 Individual
- \$25 Non-profit
- \$30 Family
- \$50 Small Business
- \$100 Friend
- \$250 Corporate
- \$500 Patron
- \$1000 Benefactor
- \$_____ Additional Contribution

I would like to be active in Fullerton Heritage, and am interested in the following activities:

- Restoration Resources
- Historic home tours
- Downtown walking tours
- Historic Survey Update
- Other interests (please list): _____
- Advocacy/Issues
- Programs/Education
- Newsletter
- Publications
- Landmark Nominations
- Fundraising

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE (H): _____

(W): _____

E-MAIL/FAX: _____

DATE: _____

- Renewal
- New Member
- Gift Membership

Send your check along with this form to:
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