

# PRESERVATION CHICAGO

CITIZENS ADVOCATING FOR THE PRESERVATION OF CHICAGO'S HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

January 11, 2023

Chairman Ernie Wong  
Commission on Chicago Landmarks  
Department of Planning and Development  
121 N. LaSalle St.  
Room 1000  
Chicago, IL 60602

RE: Letter of Support for Greater Union Baptist Church Landmark Nomination

Dear Chairman Wong and Commissioners:

Preservation Chicago is honored to support the Landmark nomination for Greater Union Baptist Church. Designed by the “Father of the Skyscraper” William LeBaron Jenney, its grand and glorious architecture is only one small part of the church’s stature was an institution of hope, community, and faith for nearly a century.

The community around this remarkable Richardsonian house of worship has changed dramatically over time. Greater Union flourished in its mission of providing hope, education, and opportunity to families in the area. Their youth programs gave children a solid foundation on which to build their lives in faith and prosperity.

Greater Union now stands as a surviving structure amongst a sea of United Center parking lots. Yet in its doors people can feel find that peace and sanctuary. This Landmark designation can help ensure it remains for decades to come.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this nomination. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Mary Lu Seidel  
Director of Community Engagement

January 9, 2023

Dear Landmark Commissioners:

This is a request that you please consider preliminary landmark designation for the Walter & Dawn Clark Netsch House at 1700 N. Hudson in the Old Town Triangle Historic District. Back in 2016 when some of you were on the Commission, the Triangle Board and the Historic District Committee opposed the request to demolish 1638 N. Sedgwick, a 1966 mid-century modern single family designed by architect Edward Marks. The Commission approved its demo.

At that time some of us voiced our fear of what would happen to all these post-1928 structures in our district. We laughingly said how when we obtained our designations in 1977 and 1984 we paid little mind to these modern houses. But we came to see how they fit the district's fabric and need to be saved. It was Commissioner Houlihan who that day stated that action needs to be taken. To make a long story short, Terry Tatum was hired by the Triangle to complete a mid-century context statement. The document, which included over 50 structures, or about 45 that should be considered, was presented to the Commission staff in 2018.

The Netsch House was one; it is a treasure and today is the first to be offered for your vote. We know of Netsch's talent and his many commissions. Matt Crawford and Preservation Chicago will detail how the house fits criteria for designation. We add that in Old Town not only is Walter Netsch revered as a talented architect who designed and resided in his own home for many years, but his wife Dawn Clark Netsch is also a part of Chicago and Illinois history. She was an attorney who served as state comptroller and state senator. To us in Old Town she and Walter were neighbors. Dawn served as auctioneer during the Old Town Art Fair. Historical significance fits Dawn as well as Walter Netsch.

Finally as you know we lost Terry Tatum in 2020. A superb researcher and former Landmarks staff member, Terry would be pleased that you read his report where he described the house and its architect which meet the criteria for landmark designation.

Thank you,

Diane Gonzalez,  
Old Town resident since 1974

# PRESERVATION CHICAGO

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January 12, 2023

Commission on Chicago Landmarks

Chicago City Hall

121 N. LaSalle Street

Chicago, Illinois 60606

c/o Chairman Ernest Wong

Re: Netsch House, 1700 North Hudson Avenue

Dear Chairman Wong and the Commission on Chicago Landmarks,

Preservation Chicago is elated to see the inclusion of the Netsch House at 1700 North Hudson Avenue on this month's agenda. The Netsch Home, completed in 1974, was designed by Walter Netsch, one of the most notable partners of legendary architectural firm Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM)—a rare example of residential architecture by an architect mostly known for awe-inspiring public design.

Walter lived in his masterpiece of Modernism with his wife, Northwestern University professor and Illinois state politician, Dawn Clark Netsch, for many decades until Dawn's passing in 2013. Deceptively simple from the street, the home was painstakingly restored by SOM after the house was sold, further highlighting the house's incredible spatial mastery, a product of Netsch's revolutionary "field theory" which used geometric shapes to inform a design's massing and floorplan. The interior space of the Netsch House is wonderfully complex, with multiple levels of floors and angular walls working together to create a home that is every bit as astounding as Netsch's grandest works.

Walter Netsch's impact on the world of architecture and built environment both in Chicago and throughout the United States cannot be overstated. After joining SOM in 1947 and moving to their Chicago office in 1951, Netsch was involved in or responsible for the following works, among many others: the Inland Steel Building (1954), the U.S. Air Force Academy and Cadet Chapel in Colorado Springs (1954-1964), the campus of the University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC) (1965), University of Chicago's Regenstein Library (1970), and Northwestern University's University Library (1970). At the same time, Dawn Clark Netsch was a powerful and influential figure in Chicago and Illinois politics for many decades, a legacy that we are hopeful will be enshrined and recognized by the Landmark designation of this home. Among her many important accomplishments, Dawn Clark Netsch worked to desegregate

Northwestern University's undergraduate dorms, served Illinois for eighteen years as state senator and then state comptroller, and led a historic bid for governor in 1994.

The Netsch Home also functions as a symbol of Old Town's history as a neighborhood of terrific architecture, revolutionary Modernism, and widespread urban renewal. Old Town is known for being an eclectic mix of the old and new, a product of a complicated past that saw the demolition of historic structures in favor of new homes by some of Chicago's most in-demand Modernist architects. Today, as we see a renewed wave of demolition of housing in Old Town and across Chicago as a whole, it is encouraging to learn that actions like the Landmarking of the Netsch House are being pursued to maintain our city's rich architectural and human story for all time.

We would also like to specifically voice our support for the tentative designation of the Netsch House's interiors. The singular indoor layout is integral to the architectural significance of the home, making it essential that it is retained for good. We are hopeful that this is the first of many other similar Landmark designations, as there are countless interior spaces across Chicago that are certainly worthy of official Landmark status.

Thank you to Landmarks staff, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, and the homeowners for this exciting potential Chicago Landmark.

Sincerely,

Max Chavez

Director of Research & Special Projects, Preservation Chicago