

To the Board of Architectural Review & Historic Preservation:

As the regional advocate for historic preservation on Long Island, Preservation Long Island submits this letter in support of the historic designation of the five modern and post-modern residences by the Village of Southampton.

The five homes identified represent Modernist residences of "exceptional importance" to the Village. They meet or exceed the local landmark criteria as outlined in Village Code Chapter 65, Historic and Landmark Preservation. While four out of the five homes do not meet the typical minimum 50-year age requirement, they all meet the qualifications necessary to be granted designation under the Code's exception (§ 65-3.E2), which states that they must be of "exceptional importance". The modernist residences built from the 1960s through the 1980s in the Hamptons represent work by architects of significance, including works of those represented today: Norman Jaffe, Myron Goldfinger, and Designer Ward Bennett.

These architects, as noted by architecture critic Paul Goldberger, have adeptly fused modernist design principles with the unique landscape of the Hamptons, creating residences that seamlessly integrate with their surroundings. Goldberger's insights underscore the significance of these modernist homes as a departure from traditional architectural styles prevalent in the area, reflecting a progressive and contemporary architectural language. Too many of these buildings have already been lost; the time to act and save these treasures of the recent past is now.

The report, "Southampton Modernist Homes – Recommendations for Designation," is a well-crafted document that effectively demonstrates that these five structures meet and exceed the Village Code Chapter 65 as local landmarks. Preservation Long Island is pleased to support these local designation nominations and the efforts to save modernist and post-modernist architecture in Southampton.

Sincerely,

Tara Cubie
Preservation Director, Preservation Long Island

Attached: Letter of Support from Caroline Zaleski, Preservation Long Island Board Member and Author of Long Island Modernism 1930 to 1980. Submitted on her behalf and at her request since she is out of the country.

Subject: Letter for Southampton Board of Architectural Review hearing Monday March 11

In email sent to Alex Wallach planning Director for Southampton Village

Dear Members of the Southampton Historical Review Board:

I am the author of an illustrated history, Long Island Modernism 1930 to 1980, W.W. Norton 2012 with the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities (now Preservation Long Island). The book was supported with two grants from the New York State Council on the Arts and several Long Island based foundations. It is based on an all Long Island field survey and evidence of this work is in the appendices of the book, a series of essays on representative architects and their built commissions.

What an important opportunity is now with you, to provide landmark protections for the five highly significant houses described in the report prepared by the preservation architect and historian Kate Reggev.

I applaud the decision to hold this hearing, an important first step towards getting these rare and highly significant houses the documentation and protections they deserve. They meet the criteria for designation full on, in spades, as Reggev carefully attests.

Obvious and frank eligibility besides, the houses are a thematic collection of Post Modern expressions, particularly suited to Southampton. Each is an original, bold architectural feat meant to turn away from the copying of 19th c Shingle Styles, the Colonial Revival or the historicism Styles of Old Europe and also more basic modern architecture, present on the East End during the 1960's.

The houses are designed with especially American expressions in bold geometries and for an informal way of living at or near the beach with an appreciation for Nature and the Arts and Crafts, as well as modern materials. The houses address the theoretical concerns of their time, including witty references to architectural tropes long used and peculiarly American art emanating from the New York art world.

It is a good time to consider how the governments in and around Palm Springs, California have made a great contribution to the understanding of their 20th c architecture and culture, what with their careful work getting landmark protections for their rich troves of modern architecture. The result has been a boon to property values and business improvement districts.

Please do go ahead with local landmark designation of the five houses, all. To only designate one or two would be a travesty and with loss of a thematic context, the collection.

Real estate business interests are not necessarily a higher public purpose and in the case of these important houses, their protection involves a higher public purpose serving a growing interest in architecture of the Recent Past and the rich and diverse history of Southampton as a unique locale.

Thank you. Caroline Rob Zaleski