

Explore mid-century design during upcoming home tour

A tour of homes next month will take visitors back to the age of the space race, burgeoning rock 'n' roll acts and, most importantly, modern design.

The Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation, in honor of its 50th anniversary year, is featuring seven Athens-area homes built in the 1950s and '60s. The houses on the self-guided tour feature authentic architectural and interior design elements from the era, lovingly preserved and on display.

"There's a thread that goes through art history that shows how time is changing, and that is also reflected in architecture," said tour co-organizer Kendell Turner. "It's going from compartmentalized box to homes that are more open and free and inviting the outdoors in."

The tour includes homes in the Five Points, Beechwood and Glenwood neighborhoods and is in two parts: A self-guided tour during the day followed by an evening cocktail reception at a seventh home.

The Tour of Mid-Century Modern Homes takes place 10:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 7. Tickets are \$20 for members of the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation, \$25 for non-members. The evening reception takes place 4:30-7 p.m. on Oct. 7 at the preservation award-winning home of Didi Dunphy and Jim Barsness; tickets are \$35 for members and \$40 for non-members. (Attendees who purchase tickets for both events will receive a \$5 discount.)

To purchase tickets, visit achfonline.org.

Ignited by returning GIs, ready to get married and start families, mid-century homes rose in popularity following a demand for affordable housing. While many were happy with cottages and small colonial homes, others wanted something more—homes that reflected a simpler, cleaner style of living from modern building materials and building techniques.

The homes featured on the tour are a chance to see how these once-radical, even controversial, homes have stood the test of time, said tour co-organizer Teresa Friedlander. Some have been completely renovated and remodeled, others updated, and one remains almost as it was built. "What all of these homes share is several generations of local history to remind us that some buildings are here to connect us to a past we must strive to preserve," added Friedlander.

Amy Kissane, executive director of the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation, said mid-century homes represent an important, iconic part of architectural history. "There is something exceptionally creative and stimulating about these homes. Maybe it's the colors, the angles, the openness. I guess they just scream 'modern,'" she said. "Even 50 years later, they represent what most people today think of as

modern because so much contemporary development is not modern but faux early-20th century. I love mid-century modern, and I am very happy that ACHF is highlighting these exceptional homes.”

In addition to the tour, the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation is also sponsoring a lecture on Sept. 26 that further celebrates modern design. Taking place 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the College of Environment and Design on Jackson Street, the Mid-Century Modern Lecture features renowned architectural photographer Robin Hill of Miami and Joseph Smith, architect with Bork Design Inc. of Athens. The event will be emceed by Wayde Brown, an associate professor at the University of Georgia College of Environment and Design specializing in the history of historic preservation.

The lecture adds depth to the tour of homes, which feature the original "open concept" floorplans, natural elements such as large windows and rock fireplaces, and a connection with the natural world. For example, one Five Points home features louvered windows so the homeowners could leave them open when it rained, and a south-facing view to take advantage of passive solar heat in the winter.

"The living room was open, and occasionally the family would push the furniture aside for dances or sock hops, with food on crystal trays and punch in punch bowls," said Turner. "In telling the story of the architecture, you're talking about the evolution of the way people think. That's why it's important to bring the human element into it—it's somebody's house."

Event details:

What: Tour of Mid-Century Modern Homes

When: 10:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 7; evening cocktail reception 4:30-7 p.m.

Where: The Five Points, Beechwood and Glenwood neighborhoods

How much: \$20/\$25 for the tour, \$35/\$40 for the reception (\$5 discount for both; visit achfonline.org for membership discounts)

Tickets: achfonline.org

What: Mid-Century Lecture

When: 6:30-8:30 p.m. Sept. 26

Where: UGA College of Environment and Design (Lecture Hall 123)

How much: Free

More details: achfonline.org