



Home > Residential Real Estate

August 31, 2018 06:00 AM

Buyer to restore landmark modernist house in Jackson Park Highlands

Built in 1936, the brick house in a modernized take on the Prairie Style is one of the early works of Paul Schweikher, who would go on to head the architecture schools at Yale and Carnegie Mellon.

DENNIS RODKIN

TWEET
 SHARE
 SHARE
 EMAIL

REPRINTS



The buyer of a 1930s modernist house designed by Paul Schweikher in the Jackson Park Highlands neighborhood said he's a longtime admirer of the architect and plans to update the house for only the second time in its life.

"I'm a fan of Schweikher's work," said De Shun Wang, who with his wife, Marissa Tucker, bought the house on Bennett Avenue a few blocks south of historic Jackson Park for \$515,000 on Aug. 29. Wang said he has spent time at the [Paul Schweikher House in Schaumburg](#), a masterful wooden modernist house, which the architect designed for himself and his wife, Dorothy, and is now on the National Register of Historic Places because of its design.

Wang and Tucker, South Loop residents, started looking for a house to buy in the Jackson Park Highlands this spring after friends moved there, and "when I saw the Schweikher house, that was the one," said Wang, an interior architect and principal in the firm DWDW, based in Douglas Park. "He designed a modern-looking Prairie Style home, and this was very early in his career, before his designs became more contemporary."

The couple bought the home from a family who owned it since the early 1970s and "did renovations about 40 years ago," Wang said. Climate systems, plumbing and other utilities will need to be updated.

Built in 1936, the Bennett Avenue house is one of the earliest works by Schweikher, [according to the trust that owns the Schaumburg house](#), which he completed in 1938. The Bennett Avenue house, with windows on its corners and geometrical cutouts in its brick facade, bears a strong resemblance to his other 1936 project, [the Third Unitarian Church](#) in the Austin neighborhood.

With designs influenced by his travels in Japan and working for edgy Chicago designers including Buckminster Fuller and George Fred Keck, Schweikher earned a reputation as an avant-garde architect early in his career. In 1933, when he was 30, he was featured in an exhibit at New York's Museum of Modern Art called "[The Work of Young Architects in the Middle West](#)."

Schweikher designed several other residential buildings in the Chicago suburbs before becoming the chairman of the Yale School of Architecture in 1953. He later headed the Carnegie School of Architecture in Pittsburgh, where one of his buildings was for [WQED](#), the educational TV station that produced "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood."

The home's interior has many original finishes inside, including its original kitchen cabinets (under layers of paint) and crisp blond wood paneling, said Alice Jennett, the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices KoenigRubloff Realty Group agent who represented the sellers, the family of Cannutte and Lucille Russell. Wang said he's also fond of the square-shaped chimney, which resembles one in the Schaumburg house.

The restoration of the 3,000-square-foot house, Wang said, "will take as much inspiration as possible from Schweikher's buildings." Details of the interior work are not yet complete, Wang said.

Wang and Tucker were the sixth homebuyers so far in 2018 to pay more than half a million dollars for a Jackson Park Highlands home, compared to two in each of the previous two years.

"There's been a real revival there," said Michael Zuker, the [@properties](#) agent who represented them. "It's a beautiful pocket of houses near one of the most gorgeous parks in Chicago." Many of the buyers have been drawn by prices, Jennett said. "They can't afford this much house on the North Side or in Hyde Park, so they come here," she said.

The house is on the equivalent of about 2.2 standard 25-by-125-foot Chicago lots. The family listed it for sale July 3, asking \$529,900, and Wang and Tucker put it under contract July 20. The sale closed Aug. 29.

RECOMMENDED FOR YOU