

MICHIGAN MODERN™

East Lansing Modern Driving/Biking Tour



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Grand River Avenue, running east and west, divides East Lansing in two. Michigan State University is to the south; the majority of the city is to the north. The city grew enormously in the 1940s and 1950s as the GI Bill of Rights brought thousands of returning veterans to the university. Housing was required not only for the students and their young families, but also for the expanding faculty. Most bought modest traditional homes within walking distance of the campus, yet some embraced modernist principles and worked primarily with local architects to design their residences. The Lantern Hill area is a singular example of planning initiated by a group of faculty. In 1950 the corporation purchased a large tract of land just outside the city limits and subdivided it into forty-one plots.

Hugh Stubbins, a Massachusetts architect, was commissioned to supply three different residential plans. Of the twenty-four members who worked with Stubbins, most chose the same design, achieving economies of scale that enabled these young faculty members to build affordable architect-designed homes. Lantern Hill was not the first attempt by MSU faculty to develop a cooperative community. In the late 1930s a small group commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to design houses for them in nearby Okemos. Unable to secure financing the group disbanded; however, Alma Goetsch and Katherine Winckler eventually built their home in 1940. While there are no Wright-designed buildings in East Lansing, a local admirer built a mirror image of the Goetsch-Winckler house on Oakland Road.

Commercial, religious, and organizational buildings are among the city's most modern. Although the majority of these are modestly modern, several striking high-style examples can be found on Abbot Road. The East Lansing Public Library was designed by the local firm, Manson, Jackson & Kane. The firm also designed a number of residences in East Lansing, many featuring a butterfly roof and an open plan. Farther north at the intersection of Abbot and Saginaw Highway are two of East Lansing's finest buildings. On the northwest corner, Minoru Yamasaki's Michigan State Medical Society building has a graceful presence. The façade features delicate, two-story arches and floor-to-ceiling glazing. Inside, the quiet spaces and original Knoll and Herman Miller furniture still reflect Yamasaki's original design intent.

Just east of Abbot is the Michigan Education Association building, designed by the Warren Holmes Company, another local firm. The original reflecting pools have been removed, and the interior has undergone several renovations; however, the building's central focus—the interior courtyard, designed in a Japanese style—remains unaltered. Further north along Abbot Road, Alden B. Dow's Eastminster Presbyterian Church sits comfortably atop a rising slope. The sensitive addition on the east side, designed by Manson, Jackson & Kane, reflects Dow's strong horizontal lines and makes the church an excellent example of his organic approach to architecture. Dow also designed several residences in East Lansing and Okemos. Many people in mid-Michigan were exposed to modernist design at Liebermann's in downtown Lansing, Betty Price's glass-fronted gift store designed by George Nelson. Thoroughly a modernist, Price commissioned Kenneth C. Black Associates, a local firm better known for its commercial buildings, to design her East Lansing home.

Throughout the city the flat roofs and horizontal lines of East Lansing's modern architecture present a modest impression from the street, hiding the spaciousness within. Unlike its traditional counterpart, modern architecture surprises and delights through the manipulation of space, light and unexpected design.

Architects

Kenneth C. Black Associates, Inc.

Kenneth C. Black joined his father's Lansing architecture firm in 1932. The firm designed Lansing's International-style City Hall (1956-58) and the Lansing Central Public Library (1964). In 1973 it merged with the Warren Holmes Company, forming the Warren Holmes-Kenneth Black Company.

John Crouse

John Crouse was employed in the 1940s by Mayotte Webb Architects of East Lansing, which became Mayotte, Crouse, and D'Haene Architects. The firm worked on numerous projects for Michigan State University and in mid-Michigan. In 1962 Crouse built his own ranch-style residence in East Lansing featuring a brick wall with thin vertical windows that shelters the house from the road.

Alden B. Dow

Alden B. Dow studied architecture at Columbia University and then apprenticed with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin for a short time. He opened his Midland, Michigan, practice in 1934. Dow designed more than 350 structures in Michigan, including Eastminster Church and two residences in East Lansing. His patented Unit Block system was used at 929 Roxburgh.

The Warren Holmes Company

Warren Samuel Holmes founded his firm in 1920 in Lansing, Michigan. The firm first designed educational buildings and over time expanded to commercial office and municipal buildings. In 1973 it merged with another prominent Lansing firm, Kenneth C. Black Associates. Warren Holmes designed Pinecrest Elementary and the Michigan Education Association building in East Lansing.

Laitala and Nuechterlein

Walter Mathew Laitala (1917-1992) was first employed in Lansing by Kenneth and Lee Black, then by Warren Holmes. He formed a partnership with Wilmar (Nick) Nuechterlein (1920-2009). They were best known for designing churches and schools, many in mid-Michigan, including Edgewood Church and Glencairn Elementary School in East Lansing.

Adrian Langjous

From 1939 until he retired in 1971 architect Adrian (Gus) Langjous (1903-1991) was employed by the State of Michigan. As the state architect, he made an impact in preservation, planning, and construction codes. His modernist design approach is evident in two adjacent East Lansing homes.

Manson, Jackson & Kane, Inc.

The Lansing firm of Manson, Jackson & Kane, Inc. began as a sole practice founded in 1941 by Elmer J. Manson. Edward Jackson and William J. H. Kane later joined Manson. By 1965

the firm had designed more than one hundred educational, commercial, and residential buildings in mid-Michigan, primarily in the Lansing metropolitan region. In addition to the East Lansing Public Library, it was responsible for many spacious ranches in the Whitehills and Walnut Heights areas of East Lansing during the late 1950s and 1960s.

Alfred Browning Parker

Inspired by the organic architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Alfred Browning Parker (1916-2011) established his practice in south Florida in 1946. Three of his houses were featured in *House Beautiful* in the 1950s, and in 2006 *Wall Paper* magazine selected a Parker residence for inclusion in the "Top 10 Houses of the World," the only North American home selected. He designed homes for the Harold Good family in Florida and East Lansing (1967).

Smith, Hinchman & Grylls

Smith, Hinchman & Grylls was established in Detroit in 1853. In the mid-1940s, the firm turned to contemporary designs, assisted by its chief designer, Minoru Yamasaki. The firm's design for Shaarey Zedek Synagogue in East Lansing, built in 1969, features a one-story, low, flat building culminating in a tower accented by a steeply sloping roof.

Hugh Stubbins

Hugh Stubbins studied architecture at Harvard under renowned Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius. In 1949 Stubbins formed Hugh Stubbins, Architect. The following year, at the request of a Michigan State University faculty cooperative, he supplied three house designs for the Lantern Hill neighborhood. Stubbins went on to become internationally known, designing buildings in Germany, Singapore, and Iran.

Malcolm Mills Williams

After receiving his architecture degree from Cornell University in 1935, Malcolm (Mal) Williams (1912-1991) worked for Walter H. Whitlock, an architect in New York, until 1941. The next year Williams accepted a teaching position with the College of Engineering, Michigan State College (now Michigan State University). Two years later he joined the Warren Holmes Company, and in 1946 was made a partner.

Minoru Yamasaki and Associates

Minoru Yamasaki came to Detroit in 1945 to become chief of design for Smith, Hinchman & Grylls. In 1949 he co-founded Leinweber, Yamasaki & Hellmuth. He designed the Lambert-St. Louis Municipal Air Terminal (1956) along with several Michigan buildings before founding his own practice in Troy in 1959. The Michigan State Medical Society building represents one of Yamasaki's earliest forays into New Formalism, a developing branch of Modernism. He is most well-known for the World Trade Center (1971) in New York City.



1. Edward Hertel Residence
1631 Walnut Hills Drive
Manson & Jackson, 1958



2. John and Marguerite Crouse Residence
1792 Walnut Hills Drive
John Crouse, 1962



3. Edgewood United Church
469 Hagadorn Road
(Corner of Beech)
Laitala and Nuechterlein, 1957
Gordon Cornwell, 1965



4. Lantern Hill Subdivision
Lantern Hill Drive and Knoll Road
Hugh Stubbins, 1952



5. Malcolm and Harriet Williams Residence
550 Whitehills Drive
Malcolm Williams, 1951



6. Harold and Wilma Good Residence
812 Applegate Lane
Alfred Browning Parker, 1967



7. Michigan Education Association
1216 Kendale Boulevard
The Warren Holmes Company,
1964



8. East Lansing Public Library
950 Abbot Road
Manson, Jackson & Kane, 1963



9. Michigan State Medical Society
129 West Saginaw Street
Minoru Yamasaki and Associates,
1959



10. Eastminster Church
1315 Abbot Road
Alden Dow, 1961
Manson, Jackson & Kane,
addition, 1969



11. C. Donald and Betty Price Residence
417 Clarendon Road
Kenneth C. Black Associates, Inc.,
1946



12. Charles and Grace Bachman Residence
929 Roxburgh Avenue
Alden Dow, 1937



13. 901 Rosewood Avenue
Adrian Langius, 1952



14. Richard and Cheryl Maury Residence
809 Harrison Road
Manson & Jackson, 1955



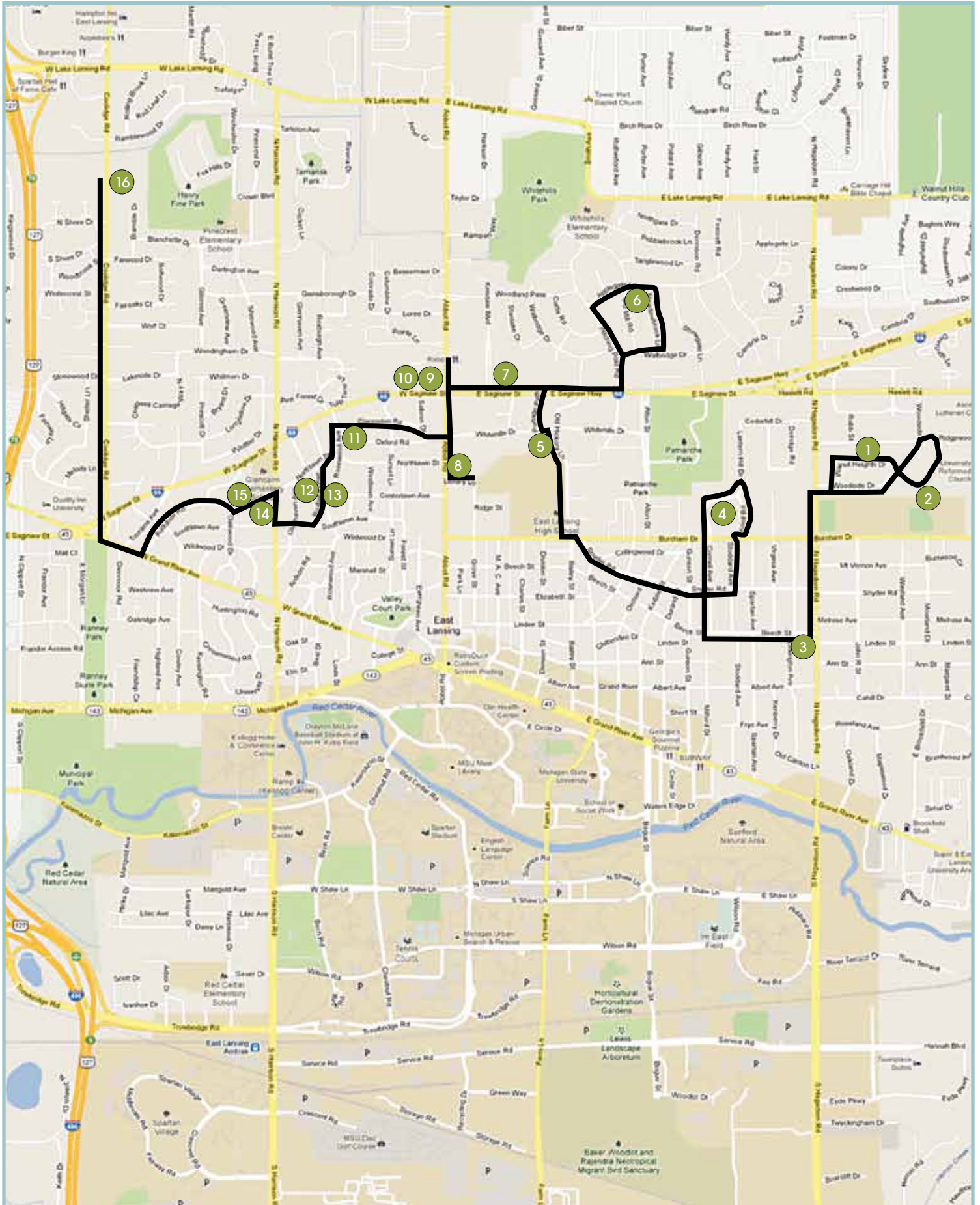
15. Dr. Mahlon Samuel and Mary Potter Sharp Residence
950 Audubon Road
Laitala and Nuechterlein, 1952



16. Shaarey Zedek Synagogue
1924 Coolidge Road
Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, 1969

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Please be considerate of private property and view the buildings from the public right-of-way. Map courtesy of Google Maps



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Photos courtesy of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

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