

## California: A Paradise of Mid-Century Design

Modern Architecture and Design In the Post World War II Period

### Three Facets of Midcentury Modernism in the Golden State:

- The Case Study Houses from Arts and Architecture magazine in the period 1946 – 1966. There were plans for some three dozen homes primarily in the Los Angeles area.
- Joseph Eichler a fan of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, built more than 11,000 Modern Homes throughout California
- Palm Springs as a magnet for Modernist designs and well-known architects and often famous clients

### Modern Architecture After the First World War

Implementation of the Principles Developed Before the War  
Asymmetry, Clarity of Function, Use of Modern Materials,  
Honesty in Use of Materials, Simplified Ornamentation

- The Bauhaus 1919 - 1933
  - architecture, art, graphic design, interior design, industrial design, and typography.
  - Walter Gropius founder
- The International Style Major Practitioners
  - Le Corbusier
  - Mies van der Rohe
  - Richard Neutra
  - Walter Gropius
  - Rudolph Schindler
  - Marcel Breuer
  - *Philip Johnson*
  - *Richard Meier*

### Mid Century Design Principles

- Desire to craft a uniquely American style
- Desire to develop quality homes that the average person could afford
- Design should be *of the site* **not** *on the site*
- Design to reflect contemporary life-style
- Design to incorporate latest technology
- Design to avoid clutter and incorporate simplicity

### Opening the Way to the Mid-Century Housing Boom

Federal Housing Administration (FHA)

Established in the National Housing Act on June 27, 1934

Goals:

- To encourage improvement in housing standards and conditions,

- To facilitate sound home financing on reasonable terms, and
- To exert a stabilizing influence on the mortgage market

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (known as:  
GI Bill of Rights)

Provisions

- Funds for college education
- Job training and job-finding assistance
- Government backing on loans for homes
- Many other programs to address other issues and concerns

### **Achievements of the FHA and the GI Bill of Rights**

- Foreclosures: from 250,000 in 1932 to 18,000 in 1951
- Housing Starts and Sales
  - 1933 = 93,000, 1937 = 332,000, 1938 = 399,000,  
1939 = 458,000, 1940 = 530,000, 1941 = 619,000,  
1944 = 114,000, 1946 = 937,000, 1948 = 1,  
183,000, 1950 = 1,692,000
- Government Backed Home loans
  - By 1955, 4.3 million home loans worth \$33 billion had been granted to veterans, who were responsible for buying 20 percent of all new homes built after the war.
- Home Ownership
  - 1934 = 44% -- 1972 = 63%

## **The Post War Housing Boom**

### **Factors that fostered the Housing Boom**

- Returning GI's New to the Housing Market
- Acute housing shortage
- Mass-production Techniques, new or new uses for materials
- Government Financing
- High Wages, and Low Interest rates
- Cheaper to buy new housing in the suburbs than it was to rent

Other Considerations

- Motor Vehicles -- fundamentally restructured the pattern of everyday life in the United States.
- Interstate Highway System

Rise of the Corporate Builders

- Adapted factory/assembly line techniques to mass produced housing
- Cheap land in outlying areas