



# City of Chicago



O2023-1495

Office of the City Clerk

## Document Tracking Sheet

<b>Meeting Date:</b>	4/19/2023
<b>Sponsor(s):</b>	Misc. Transmittal
<b>Type:</b>	Ordinance
<b>Title:</b>	Historical landmark designation for Clark Netsch House at 1700 N Hudson Ave
<b>Committee(s) Assignment:</b>	Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
CITY OF CHICAGO

April 11, 2023

The Honorable Anna M. Valencia  
City Clerk  
City of Chicago  
Room 107, City Hall  
121 North LaSalle Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60602

**RE: Ordinance designating the Clark Netsch House (1700 N. Hudson Ave.) as a Chicago Landmark**

Dear Clerk Valencia:

We are filing with your office for introduction at the April 19, 2023, City Council meeting as a transmittal to the Mayor and City Council of Chicago the recommendation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks that the Clark-Netsch House be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

The material being submitted to you for this proposal includes the:

1. Recommendation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks; and
2. Proposed Ordinance.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Dickhut  
Deputy Commissioner  
Bureau of Citywide Systems and Historic Preservation

Chicago City Clerk - Council Div.  
2023 APR 11 PM 3:18

encls.

cc: The Honorable Timothy R. Knudsen, Alderman, 43rd Ward (*w/o enclosures*)

## ORDINANCE

### Clark-Netsch House

#### 1700 N. Hudson Avenue

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the procedures set forth in the Municipal Code of Chicago (the "Municipal Code"), Sections 2-120-620 through -690, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") has determined that the Clark-Netsch House (the "Building"), located at 1700 N. Hudson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, as more fully described in **Exhibit A**, attached hereto and incorporated herein, satisfies four criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (3), (4) and (5) of the Municipal Code; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building reflects the architectural heritage of Old Town in the 1960s and 1970s, a neighborhood that had established itself as a place for artists and the creative community. Walter Netsch was one of several Chicago architects of the modern era that designed residential buildings for themselves and for clients in Old Town. The Building is one example how modern design was adapted for smaller, urban residences in Old Town; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is significant as the residence of Dawn Clark Netsch, a progressive politician and lawyer who served as an Illinois State Senator, Comptroller, and Northwestern University professor; and

**WHEREAS**, Dawn Clark Netsch's career was marked by a number of superlative achievements: she was the first woman to serve on the faculty at Northwestern University School of Law, she was the first woman to be elected to the Illinois state senate, she became in 1990 the highest-ranked woman in the state government when she was elected Illinois comptroller, and she was the first woman to campaign for governor of Illinois; and

**WHEREAS**, during her long career in law and public service, both in and out of office, Dawn Clark Netsch championed progressive government reforms, funding for public education, civil rights and social justice; and

**WHEREAS**, during her 18 years in the state senate, Dawn Clark Netsch helped advance the Equal Rights Amendment and the Family and Medical Leave Act. She was also an early and vocal supporter of the gay and lesbian community, she worked to establish state funding for HIV/AIDS care in the 1980s and also sponsored gay rights legislation; and

**WHEREAS**, as a delegate to the Illinois Constitutional Convention in 1969, Dawn Clark Netsch played an influential role in modernizing state government; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is constructed with economical and off-the-shelf materials, resulting in an innovative example of a small modern house set within a historic residential setting; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is significant as the residence of its designer Walter Netsch, a prominent Chicago architect who worked for the internationally-renowned firm Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill for over thirty years and designed such well-known works as the U.S. Air Force Academy Cadet Chapel (a National Historic Landmark) and the University of Illinois at Chicago campus; and

**WHEREAS**, Netsch became known during the 1960s for his "Field Theory" of design, where he created floor plans and general building parti from the manipulation of superimposed geometric figures. Netsch's design theory influenced the design of his Hudson Street house in Old Town; and

**WHEREAS**, consistent with Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code, the Building has a significant historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value, the integrity of which is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 9, 2023, the Commission adopted a resolution recommending to the City Council of the City of Chicago (the "City Council") that the Building be designated a Chicago Landmark; now, therefore,

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO:**

**SECTION 1.** The above recitals are hereby adopted as the findings of the City Council.

**SECTION 2.** The Building is hereby designated a Chicago Landmark in accordance with Section 2-120-700 of the Municipal Code.

**SECTION 3.** For purposes of Sections 2-120-740 and 2-120-770 of the Municipal Code governing permit review, the significant historical and architectural features of the Building are identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building.
- On the interior, the overall spatial volume of the residential portion of the Building. Aspects of Netsch's Field Theory on the interior that are significant include the central tower and the arrangement of living spaces extending from it.

**SECTION 4.** The Commission is hereby directed to create a suitable plaque appropriately identifying the Building as a Chicago Landmark.

**SECTION 5.** If any provision of this ordinance shall be held to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the invalidity or unenforceability of such provision shall not affect any of the other provisions of this ordinance.

**SECTION 6.** All ordinances, resolutions, motions or orders in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict.

**SECTION 7.** This ordinance shall take effect upon its passage and approval.

## EXHIBIT A

### **Building Address**

1700 N. Hudson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois

### **Permanent Index Numbers**

14-33-322-016-0000

### **Legal Description**

THE EAST ½ OF LOTS 45 AND 46 IN C.J. HULL'S SUBDIVISION OF BLOCK 51 OF CANAL TRUSTEES' SUBDIVISION OF THE NORTH ½ AND THE NORTH ½ OF THE SOUTHEAST ¼ AND THE EAST ½ OF THE SOUTHWEST ¼ OF SECTION 33 TOWNSHIP 40 NORTH, RANGE 14, EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

CITY OF CHICAGO  
COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

March 9, 2023

RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL OF CHICAGO THAT  
CHICAGO LANDMARK DESIGNATION BE ADOPTED FOR THE

CLARK-NETSCH HOUSE

1700 N. HUDSON AVENUE

Docket No. 2023-03

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**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago:**

Pursuant to Section 2-120-690 of the Municipal Code of the City of Chicago (the "Municipal Code"), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") has determined that the Clark-Netsch House (the "Building"), is worthy of designation as a Chicago Landmark. On the basis of careful consideration of the history and architecture of the Building, the Commission has found that it satisfies the following four (4) criteria set forth in Section 2-120-620 of the Municipal Code:

1. *Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*
3. *Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*
4. *Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*
5. *Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

**I. BACKGROUND**

The formal landmark designation process for the Building began on January 12, 2023, when the Commission approved a preliminary landmark recommendation (the "Preliminary Recommendation") for the Building as a Chicago Landmark. The Commission found that the Building meets four of the seven criteria for designation, as well as the integrity criterion, identified in the Chicago Landmarks Ordinance (Municipal Code, Section 2-120-580 *et seq.*).

As part of the Preliminary Recommendation, the Commission preliminarily identified the “significant historical and architectural features” of the Building as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building.
- On the interior, the overall spatial volume of the residential portion of the Building. Aspects of Netsch’s Field Theory on the interior that are significant include the central tower and the arrangement of living spaces extending from it.

Also, as part of the Preliminary Recommendation, the Commission adopted a Designation Report, dated January 12, 2023, the most current iteration of which is dated March 9, 2023, incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit A** (the “Designation Report”).

At its regular meeting of February 9, 2023, the Commission received a report incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit B** (the “Department of Planning and Development Report”) from Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development, stating that the proposed landmark designation of the Building supports the City’s overall planning goals and is consistent with the City’s governing policies and plans.

On February 12, 2023, the Commission received written consent to landmark designation of the Building in a form dated February 12, 2023, and signed by William Forrest, owner of the Building.

## **II. FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Section 2-120-690 of the Municipal Code, the Commission has reviewed the entire record of proceedings on the proposed Chicago Landmark designation, including the Designation Report and all of the information on the proposed landmark designation of the Building; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building reflects the architectural heritage of Old Town in the 1960s and 1970s, a neighborhood that had established itself as a place for artists and the creative community. Walter Netsch was one of several Chicago architects of the modern era that designed residential buildings for themselves and for clients in Old Town. The Building is one example how modern design was adapted for smaller, urban residences in Old Town; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is significant as the residence of Dawn Clark Netsch, a progressive politician and lawyer who served as an Illinois State Senator, Comptroller, and Northwestern University professor; and

**WHEREAS**, Dawn Clark Netsch’s career was marked by a number of superlative achievements: she was the first woman to serve on the faculty at Northwestern University School of Law, she was the first woman to be elected to the Illinois state senate, she became in 1990 the highest-ranked woman in the state government when she was elected Illinois comptroller, and she was the first woman to campaign for governor of Illinois; and

**WHEREAS**, during her long career in law and public service, both in and out of office, Dawn Clark Netsch championed progressive government reforms, funding for public education, civil rights and social justice; and

**WHEREAS**, during her 18 years in the state senate, Dawn Clark Netsch helped advance the Equal Rights Amendment and the Family and Medical Leave Act. She was also an early and vocal supporter of the gay and lesbian community, she worked to establish state funding for HIV/AIDS care in the 1980s and also sponsored gay rights legislation; and

**WHEREAS**, as a delegate to the Illinois Constitutional Convention in 1969, Dawn Clark Netsch played an influential role in modernizing state government; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is constructed with economical and off-the-shelf materials, resulting in an innovative example of a small modern house set within a historic residential setting; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is significant as the residence of its designer Walter Netsch, a prominent Chicago architect who worked for the internationally-renowned firm Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill for over thirty years and designed such well-known works as the U.S. Air Force Academy Cadet Chapel (a National Historic Landmark) and the University of Illinois at Chicago campus; and

**WHEREAS**, whenever an architect designs their own residence, they have essentially the ideal client and the ultimate proving ground for their individual expression. The Building is no exception and reflects Netsch's Field Theory in its expression of rotated squares on its interior and exterior; and

**WHEREAS**, Netsch became known during the 1960s for his "Field Theory" of design, where he created floor plans and general building parti from the manipulation of superimposed geometric figures. Netsch's design theory influenced the design of his Hudson Street house in Old Town; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building meets four criteria for landmark designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (3), (4) and (5) of the Municipal Code; and

**WHEREAS**, consistent with Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code, the Building has significant historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value, the integrity of which is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value; now, therefore,


**THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS HEREBY:**

1. Adopts the recitals, findings and statements of fact set forth in the preamble and Sections I and II hereof as the findings of the Commission; and
2. Adopts the Designation Report, as revised, and dated this March 9, 2023; and



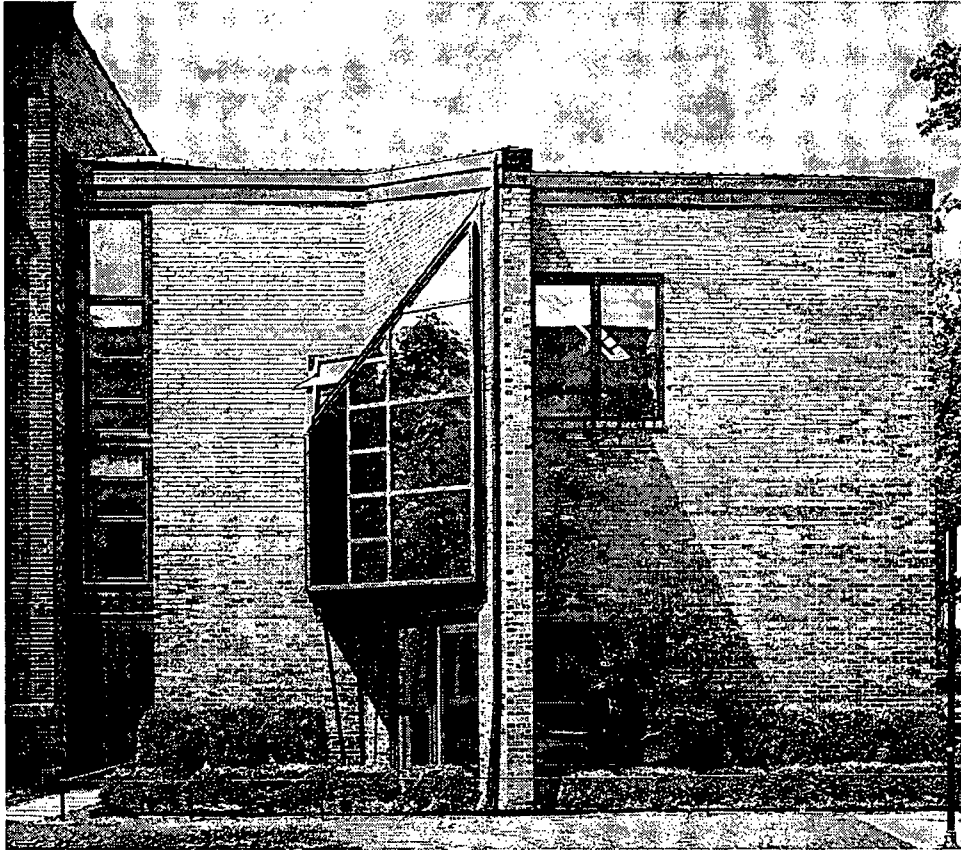
3. Finds, based on the Designation Report and the entire record before the Commission, that the Building meets the four criteria for landmark designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (3), (4) and (5) of the Municipal Code; and
4. Finds that the Building satisfies the "integrity" requirement set forth in Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code; and
5. Finds that the significant historical and architectural features of the Building are identified as follows:
  - All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building.
  - On the interior, the overall spatial volume of the residential portion of the Building. Aspects of Netsch's Field Theory on the interior that are significant include the central tower and the arrangement of living spaces extending from it.
6. Recommends the designation of the Building a Chicago Landmark.

This recommendation was adopted unanimously (8-0).

  
Ernest C. Wong, Chair  
Commission on Chicago Landmarks

Dated: March 9, 2023

# LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



Dawn Clark Netsch



Walter Netsch

## CLARK-NETSCH HOUSE

1700 N. HUDSON AVENUE



CITY OF CHICAGO  
Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development  
Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner

**Cover Illustrations:**

**Upper right: Dawn Clark Netsch, 1964, as legal advisor to Governor Kerner.** (Credit: Illinois Digital Archives, Eddie Winfred "Doc" Helm Photograph Collection).

**Lower right: Walter Netsch at the University of Illinois at Chicago campus, circa 1965.** (Credit: SOM archives).

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## **THE CLARK-NETSCH HOUSE**

**1700 N. HUDSON AVENUE**

**CONSTRUCTED: 1974**

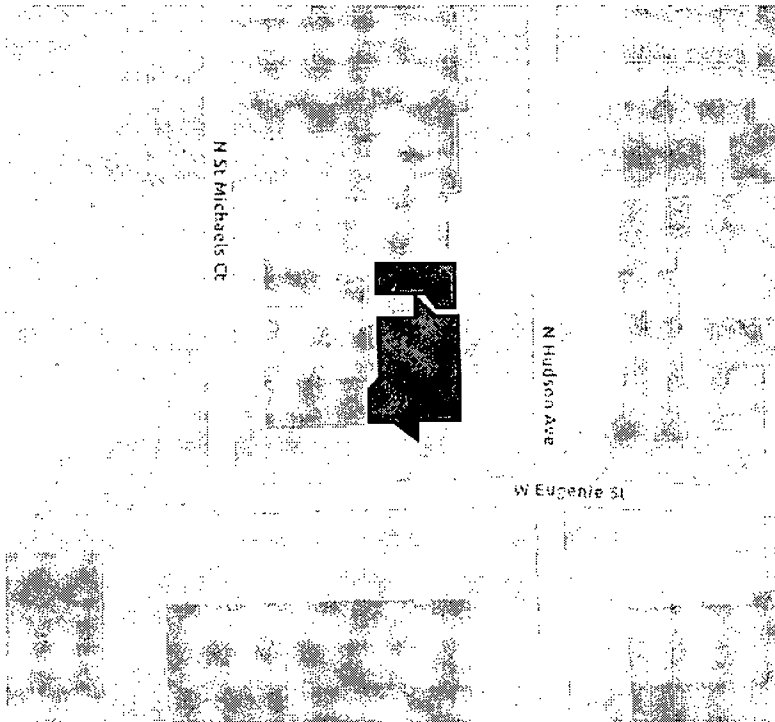
**ARCHITECT: WALTER NETSCH, F.A.I.A.**

The Clark-Netsch House is a single-family home that was constructed in 1974 as the personal residence of its designer, architect Walter Netsch, and his wife, state politician Dawn Clark Netsch. The Netsches were a well-known and influential couple who made significant contributions to their respective fields.

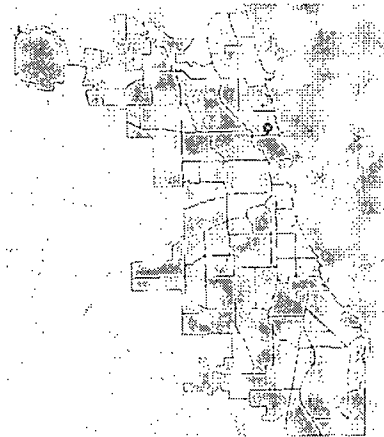
Walter Netsch was of a generation of Chicago architects that played a national role in architecture after World War II. While Chicago's Mies van der Rohe and his disciples had an influential role in the modern movement, Netsch sought a more individual interpretation of what modern architecture could be. The answer for Netsch was his Field Theory, a personal design philosophy that took root in his 1963 design of the Cadet Chapel at the U.S. Air Force Academy and that Netsch developed for government and institutional clients across the nation as a partner at Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill. Netsch's theory employed rotating geometries with functional and aesthetic qualities that resulted in signature buildings that clearly identify their designer. The Clark-Netsch House is an important example, both on its exterior and interior. As with any architect, the homes designed for themselves can be regarded as the best expression of their design philosophy.

Dawn Clark Netsch was a trailblazing lawyer and politician who served as an Illinois State Senator and Comptroller. In 1965 she was the first woman to join the law faculty at Northwestern University School of Law. In 1972, she was the first woman to be elected as Illinois state senate. During her 18 years there she championed progressive reforms and social justice. In 1994 she was the first woman to run for Governor of Illinois, challenging incumbent Governor Jim Edgar.

The Clark-Netsch House is located in the Old Town Triangle District, which was designated as a Chicago Landmark in 1977, three years after the house was built. At the time of the district's designation, there was insufficient perspective of time to evaluate buildings built after 1930s and the Clark-Netsch House is regarded as a non-contributing building in the landmark district. With the passage of time since 1977, the house's historic and architectural significance has become clear. Designation of the building will ensure that it is preserved.



**The Clark-Netsch House is a single-family home located at Hudson Avenue and Eugenie Street in the Old Town neighborhood of the Lincoln Park Community Area on Chicago's North Side.**



## **BUILDING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION**

Since their marriage in 1963, the Netsches lived in an apartment at 20 E. Cedar Street in the Gold Coast. As their art collection grew, the couple sought to build a new house, designed by Walter, to better accommodate the collection. Other requirements were that the new house had to be within Dawn's senate district and that it would not require demolition of an existing building. After some searching, a vacant lot was found at the northwest corner of Hudson and Eugenie in Old Town.

During the design of the house, the Netsches graded the vacant lot and invited friends, neighbors and colleagues to a picnic there. Using white spray paint, Walter marked the ground with the outline of the house and interior partitions. As people arrived and walked around the site, Netsch evaluated the functionality of the interior layout and made adjustments to the final plan.

Netsch's first designs for the house called for a metal structure and aluminum-faced exterior walls. Bids to build it came in at \$125 a square foot, well above the \$45 per square foot average at the time for residential construction. Despite the couple's professional success, they also wanted the house to be affordable. To this end, Netsch redesigned the house with simple materials that were readily available in Sweet's, an architectural trade catalog. The metal wall structure gave way to concrete block and brick with a wood frame roof and floor plates. Though the design remained cutting edge, the choice of off-the-shelf materials reduced the cost of the to \$34 per square foot, a figure below average for residential construction. Construction was completed in 1974.

The Clark-Netsch House is located at the northwest corner of N. Hudson Avenue and W. Eugenie Street in the Old Town neighborhood within the larger Lincoln Park community area. The building occupies most of its 40' x 75' lot with minimal landscaping between the building and the sidewalk. The main volume of the house is a three-story cube at the south end of the parcel with a one story attached garage entered from Hudson Avenue. The garage is connected to the main residential wing of the house by a one-story entryway, with the primary entry door situated at an angle to the street.

The building's structural system is clearly visible and consists of simple, standard materials. The exterior walls are brick veneer over concrete block, which is painted white on the interior. The roof structure, also exposed on the interior, is framed with fitch beams, or steel-reinforced dimensional lumber.

The exterior character of the house is sharply geometric and unadorned. The dark reddish-brown brick walls are primarily flat planes relieved by large sliding casement window openings located high on the facades for privacy. The seeming arbitrary fenestration pattern on the exterior was driven by the architect's desire to create large wall surfaces for the display of art works, as well as the intention of highlighting specific views, indeed one window frames a view of SOM's John Hancock Center on North Michigan Avenue, over 1 mile to the south.

The discreet entrance to the house and the garage are located in the one-story portion of the building facing Hudson Avenue. A triangular skylight above the entrance marks the transition to the main volume of the house. The flat roof of the garage is topped with a sundeck which is reached by a raised walkway from the interior of the house.

The Eugenie Street elevation, facing south, features an angular projecting bay, a clear expression of Netsch's Field Theory. Around 1990, Netsch added a cantilevered steel and glass window bay to this elevation which serves as a sunny alcove for sitting on the interior. A vertical strip of windows on the Eugenie elevation frames views from the interior of the spire of St. Michaels Church across the street.

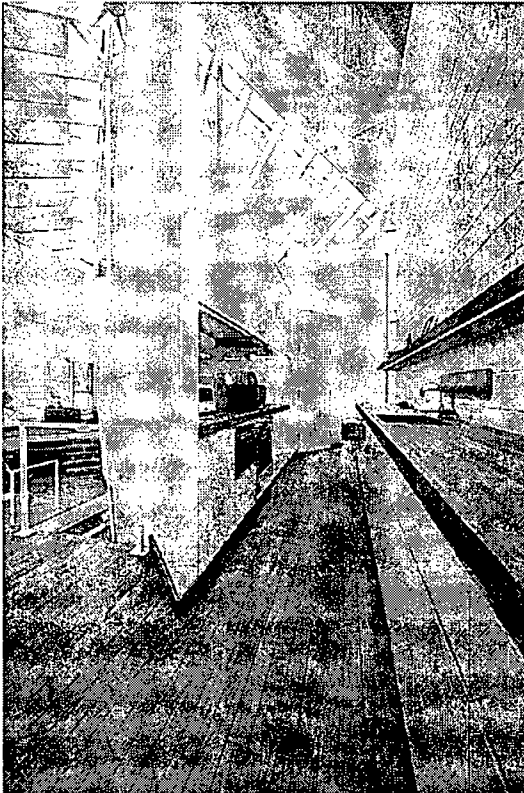
The west elevation of the house and the north elevation of the garage are not visible from the public way as they directly face the neighboring homes. An outdoor terrace to the west of the house is also not visible from the public way.

While the exterior of the house is a study in restraint, the interior stands in dramatic contrast. Passing through the entrance and a low vestibule, the triple-height volume of the interior comes into view. The eye is drawn up to the ceiling with its exposed wood frame structure that in its geometry of two overlaid squares expresses Netsch's Field Theory. Large strips of skylights define the ridge of the hipped roof and provide ample interior illumination.

The expansive white perimeter walls are 8" by 16" concrete blocks with a false joint in each block creating a gridded appearance often mistaken for tile. In addition to this geometric aesthetic and economy, the concrete block wall had the functional benefit of providing a secure mount-



The south elevation of the Clark-Netsch House with its sharply angled bay.

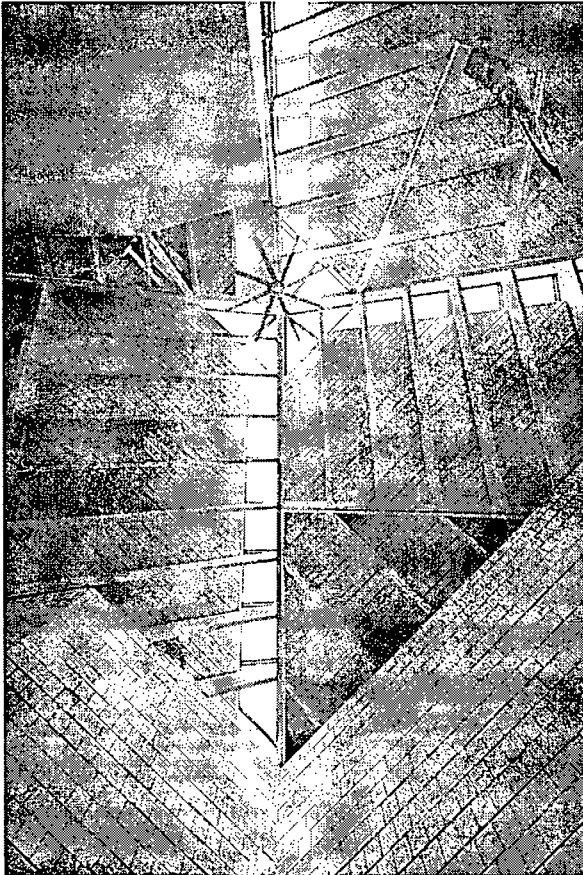


View of the kitchen. Skylights flood the interior with light.

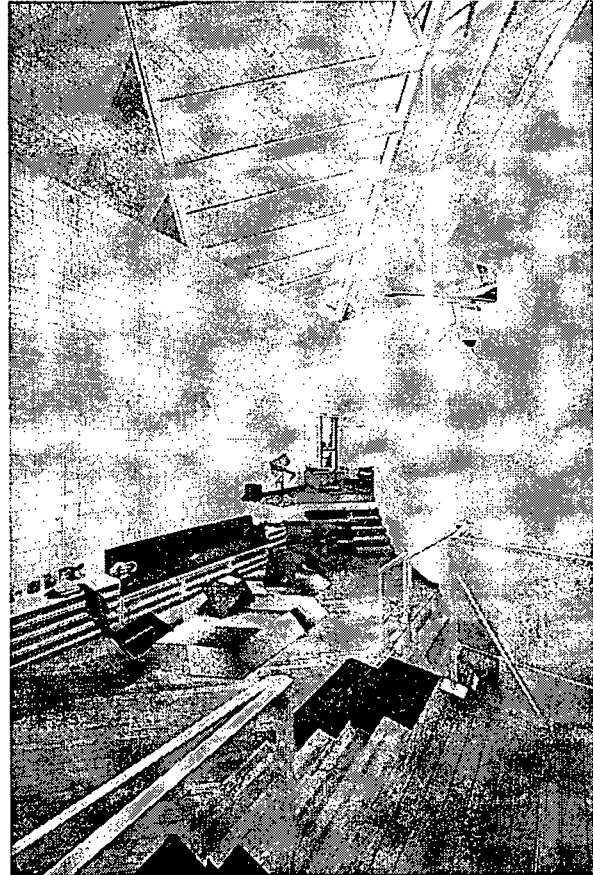


Open riser stairs access the multiple split levels of the interior.

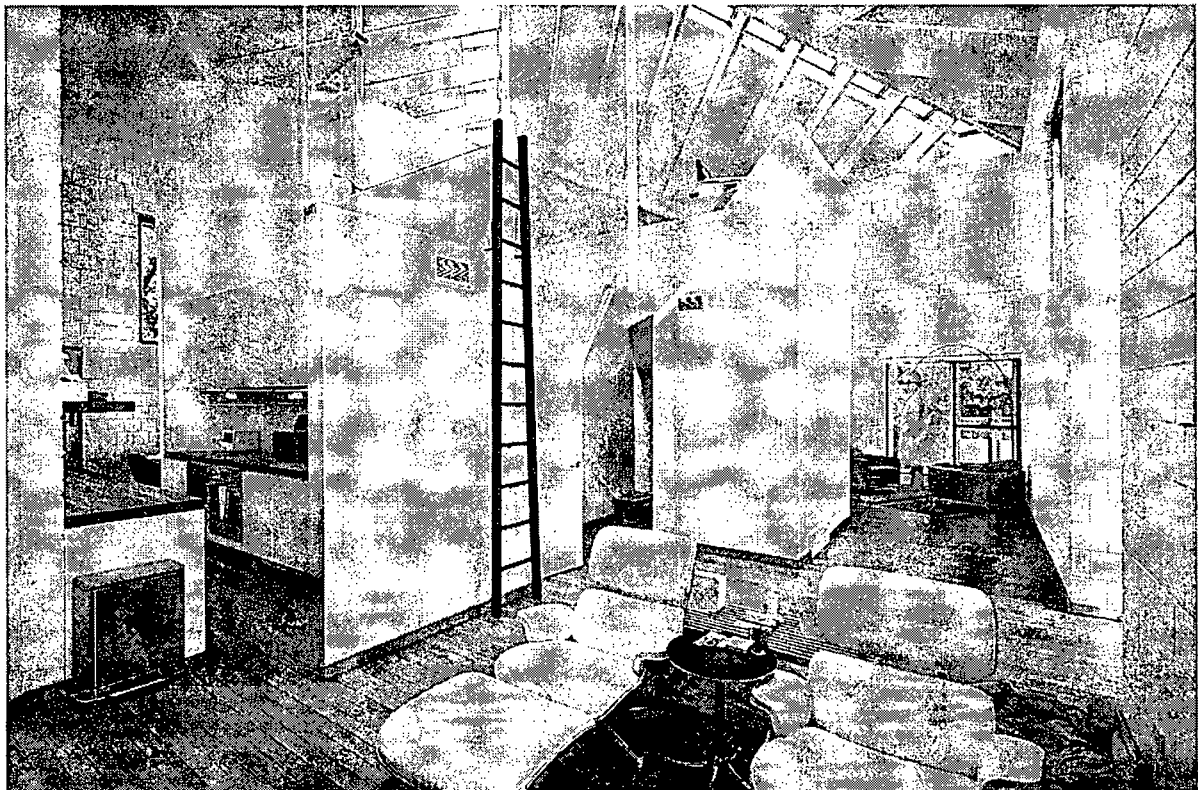




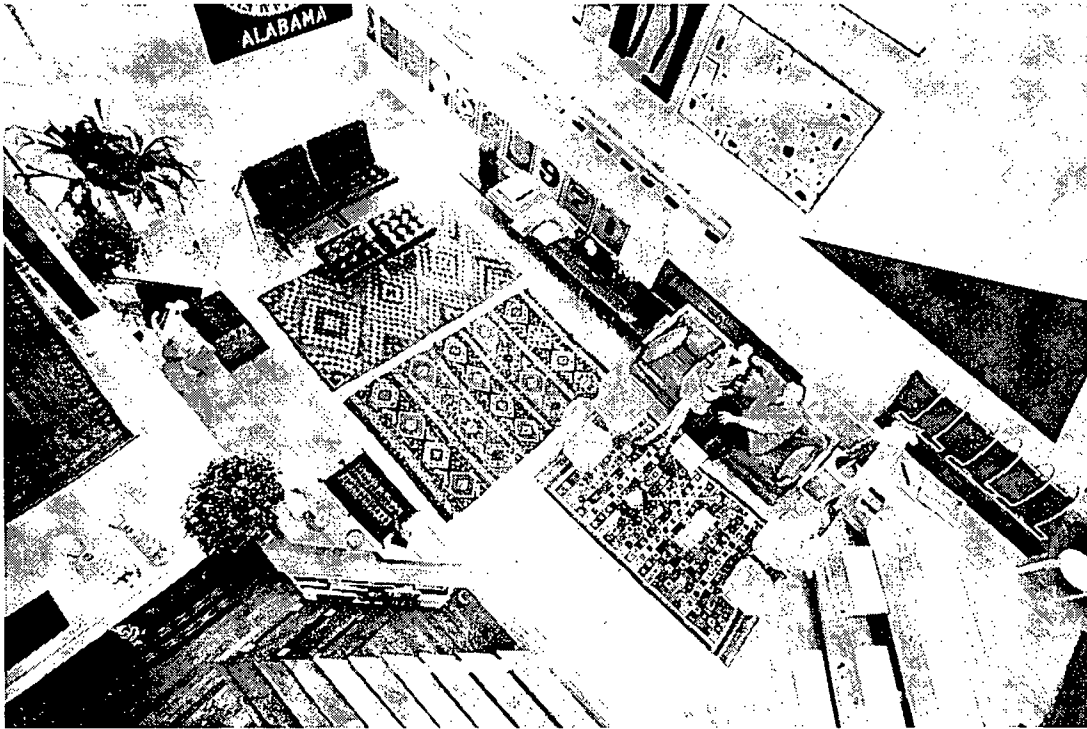
The exposed roof structure reveals the rotated geometries of Netsch's Field Theory.



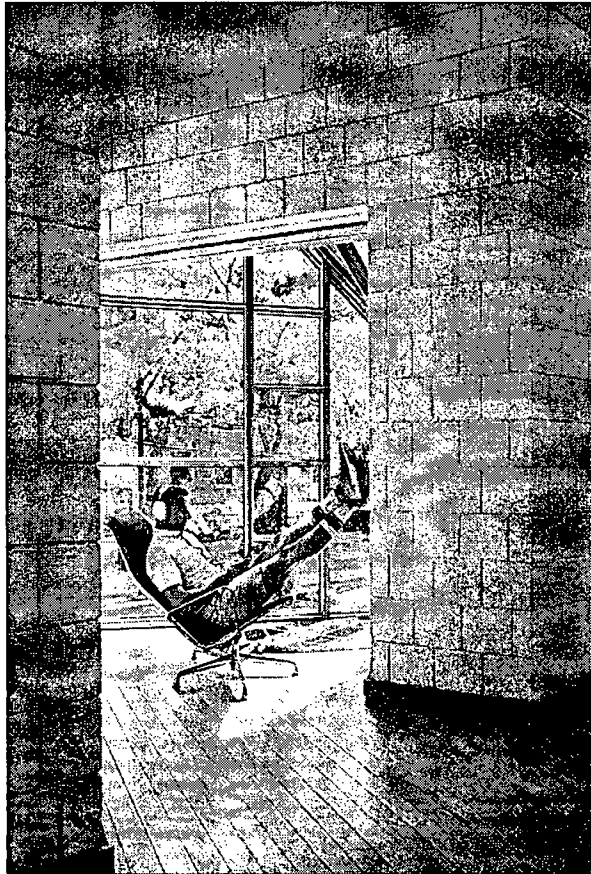
The living room and small raised alcove beyond.



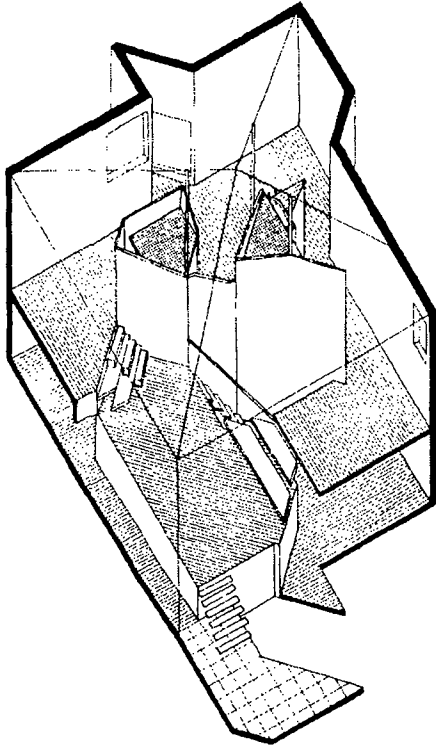
The ladder accesses one of two raised platforms designed for viewing the Netsch's large art collection.



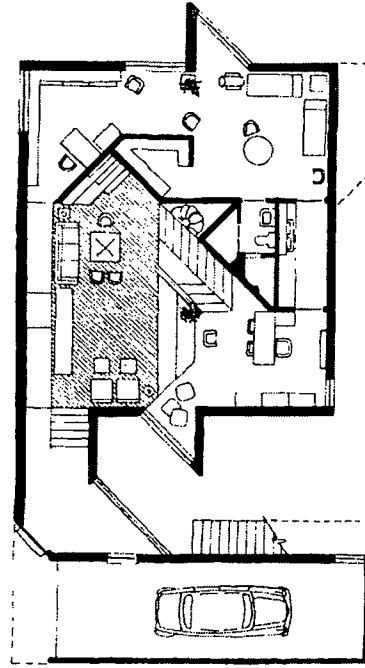
The Netsches relaxing in their art-filled home. Credit: Chicago Tribune



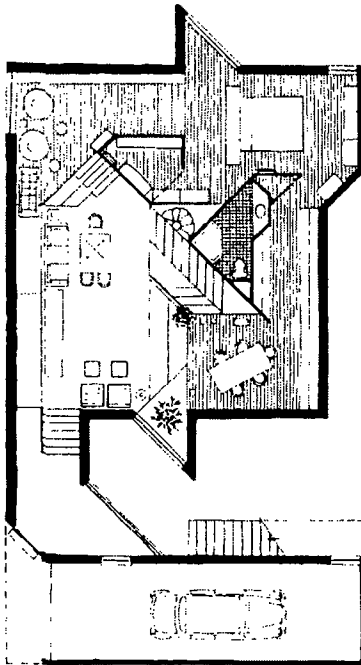
A sunny alcove was added to the house by Netsch around 1989. The walls are concrete block.



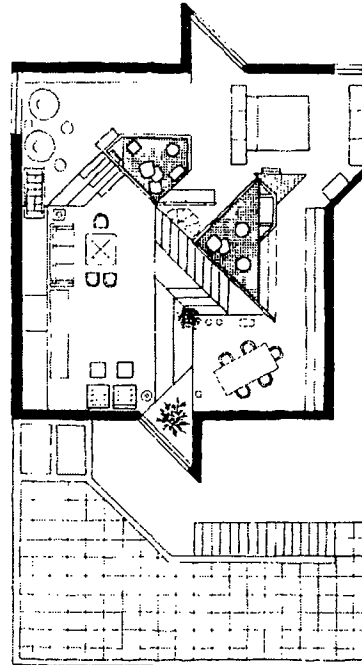
ISOMETRIC



LIVING - LEVEL 4



ALCOVE - BEDROOM - KITCHEN - DINING - LEVEL 5



LOFT - SUNDECK - LEVEL 6



Drawings of the Clark-Netsch House. The axonometric at top left shows living spaces arranged around a central tower. The plan drawings illustrate the geometric complexity of the house. Dark shaded floor areas indicate the level shown, unshaded floors are above or below. Credit: SOM archives.

ing surface for the Netsches' large artworks. Interior partition walls are wood frame finished with painted gypsum board. The interior stairs and floors are hardwood.

The arrangement of living spaces within the house reflects the Field Theory in their spiraling arrangement from a vertical axis. The vertical structure is a tower at the center of the cubic volume. Multiple levels rotate outward from the tower to provide living spaces across five levels. Most of the living spaces are set on stage-like platforms. Tall open-backed stairs provide communication between these levels. The stairs functioned as 'bleacher' seating during gatherings in the house. Indeed, the house was designed for social gatherings, as Walter hosted presentations for architectural students and Dawn used the space for community and fundraising meetings during her political career.

Though it is a three-story volume, the house contains six levels, split by half-flights of stairs or ramps. The first level is below grade and contains mechanical, laundry and storage functions. Level two has a master bedroom, bath and study. This level sits partially below grade and is reached by a ramp leading down from the entrance vestibule. Level three is at grade and contains the entrance vestibule, garage and access to an exterior terrace behind the house. A half flight of stairs up from the entrance vestibule leads to the main living space which is set on an open platform within the large volume of the house. From the living room, two half flights of stairs lead up to the fifth level which contains the kitchen, dining platform and two window alcoves. Perhaps the most whimsical aspect of the interior are two platforms located at the sixth level. Accessed only by built-in ladders, these cantilever out from the central tower and functioned merely as viewing platforms for sculpture. Outside the main volume of the house, the sixth level also encompasses a roof-top deck atop the garage.

After its completion, the Clark-Netsch House was featured in architectural journals, including *Progressive Architecture* in the United States, *Architettura* in Italy and Britain's *Architectural Review*. It is also published in *AIA Guide to Chicago*. Over the years, the house and its art collection have been featured in a multitude of architectural and modern art publications. Several of these include photographs of the house during the Netsch's tenure showing the couple living with their large collection of fine art hung salon style from floor to ceiling. Walter Netsch, who as a boy thought of becoming a painter, began his collection in the 1950s visiting galleries exhibiting emerging American artists such as Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Motherwell, Hans Hoffman, Donald Judd, Robert Indiana and Ellsworth Kelly.

## OLD TOWN IN THE MODERN ERA

As a stylish, contextual home designed by a well-known Chicago architect of the modern era, the Clark-Netsch House represents a larger historic context that shaped the Old Town neighborhood in the 20th century. Beginning in the 1930s, artists and artisans began to settle in Old Town to take advantage of affordable housing. Some artists acquired historic buildings in the neighborhood and renovated these in highly imaginative ways. An excellent example stands at 1734 North Wells Street. Originally built in the 1880s as an apartment, between 1928 and 1930 the building was substantially rehabilitated and remodeled by artists Sol Kogen and Edgar Miller as live-in artist studios. Other examples of these artisanal buildings in Old Town are found in the West Burton Place District which was designated as a Chicago Landmark in 2016.

The artists established Old Town as a place for the creative class throughout the 20th century. In 1947 the Old Town Triangle Association was established to support the artistic character of the community and to resist large scale urban renewal that would have diminished the qualities of the neighborhood. Old Town enjoyed close proximity and good public transportation to the city center, yet its housing stock was relatively low-density, primarily made up of single-family cottages and small apartment buildings constructed in a variety of historic architecture styles shortly after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

From the 1950s through the 1980s Old Town transformed into a unique and sought-after Chicago neighborhood. Though it retained its reputation as a supportive environment for artists and creatives, the handsome stock of historic buildings coupled with increased demand in the area presented a unique opportunity for renovation and infill projects, drawing in local architects ea-

Visitors to the Old Town Art Fair strolling on N. Lincoln Park West on June 3, 1950. The fair, and its sponsor, the Old Town Triangle Association helped establish the cultural quality of the neighborhood that attracted couples like the Netsches to reside there. Credit: [www.oldtowntriangle.com](http://www.oldtowntriangle.com).



ger for interesting work. Through the 1970s, artists and architects in Old Town experimented with trends in modernism, a style marked by striking geometric yet minimalistic design. The form in Old Town was unique, as architects were exploring how the tenets of modernism could be adapted for smaller, urban residences.

In addition to Walter Netsch, Harry Weese, another well-known Chicago modernist architect designed his home in Old Town, specifically a row of townhouses, including one for himself, at 318 West Willow Street in 1973. If not for themselves, other noteworthy Chicago architects designed homes for clients in Old Town, including Bruce Graham, who designed a home at 310 West Willow Street (1972); Ben Weese designed the apartments at 235 West Eugenie Street (1962); Bauhs & Dring who designed a single-family home at 423 West Eugenie Street (1977); and next door at number 425, Booth, Nagle & Hartray designed another single-family house.

### ARCHITECT WALTER NETSCH

1700 N. Hudson Avenue is significant as a design by architect Walter Netsch. He was born in 1920 in Chicago's South Shore neighborhood. His father was an executive in the meatpacking industry and his mother descended from family wealth. As a boy, Walter exhibited a strong interest in arts and music which his parents supported. After graduation from Hyde Park High School in 1937, he enrolled in the architectural program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), in Cambridge. MIT's emphasis on master planning of large projects with novel conditions would serve Netsch well in his career with institutional and government clients.

During summers he returned to Chicago to intern at the architectural firms of Patton & Fisher and Faulkner & Faulkner. As World War II intensified, MIT accelerated the schedule of its architecture program to hasten students' availability for military service, so in January 1943 Netsch graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture degree in architecture.

He immediately enlisted in the Army. Due to his status as a college graduate and the high scores he earned on the Army's aptitude tests, Netsch was referred to the U.S. Army Corps of Engi-



**Walter Netsch in 1967.** Credit: Diane Komiss, "Walter Netsch." *Chicago magazine*, 1967.

neers at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. He proved himself to be an adept student and was subsequently recommended for Officer Candidate School, however he did not pass the school's physical exam due to arthritis. Netsch had the option of leaving the military without penalty but decided to stay on as a noncommissioned officer. From 1943 to 1946 he served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Aleutian Islands, building a landing strip and hospital there during World War II.

After the war, Netsch returned to Chicago and began working in the office of architect Lloyd Morgan Yost in Kenilworth, Illinois. This small practice focused on suburban residences which combined traditional and Prairie influences while also being economical. Later in life, Netsch credited Yost's interest in economy as influencing the design of his own home.

Though Netsch enjoyed learning new techniques and the nuances of the industry at Yost's office, he still aspired to work at a large firm. And so, after earning his architecture license, Netsch left to interview with the booming downtown firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM). In 1947 he was hired and Netsch would remain with SOM for his entire career.

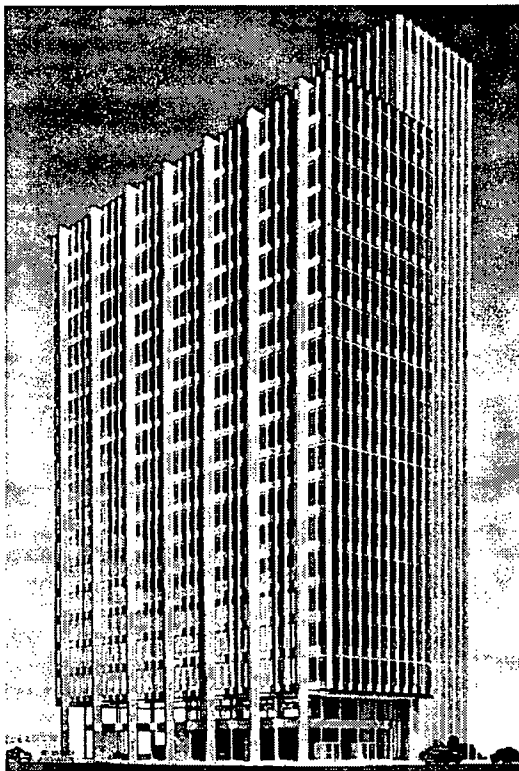
When Netsch was hired, SOM was a relatively young firm but growing fast. The firm began as Skidmore and Owings, an architectural partnership founded in Chicago in 1936 by Louis Skidmore (1897-1962) and Nathaniel Owings (1903-1984). Skidmore was born in Indiana, worked his way through architecture school at M.I.T., and then travelled through Europe on a fellowship. There he met Eloise Owings, who was in Paris studying fashion design. Her studies were financed by her older brother, Nathaniel Owings, a graduate of Cornell's architecture school. After hearing about the "dynamic, impetuous Nat" from his sister, Skidmore was anxious to meet this man "who wanted to be the 'greatest architect in the world,' but who also had a flair for cost figures, balance sheets, and sales." The two young architects met and became friends after Skidmore's marriage to Eloise.

In 1936, the two brothers-in-law formalized an architectural partnership and opened an office in the Monroe Building on South Michigan Avenue. The following year, Skidmore and Owings received a commission for alterations to the American Radiator Building in New York. The client insisted that one of the partners remain in New York to supervise the work. Skidmore decided to go, leaving Owings in charge of the firm's three-person Chicago staff. Skidmore remained in New York and opened a branch office. The move marked the beginning of the firm's national, decentralized character which would be a distinguishing feature in the coming decades.

Two other decisions made in the 1930s significantly influenced the development of the firm. The two partners decided that the firm would only design in the "contemporary" style based on the work of the proponents of the International Style. They also decided that they would employ specialists in a variety of architectural fields, as well as engineers. Their goal was to offer a broad range of expertise packaged in one firm. It would allow the firm to access large-scale commissions from government and corporations. Engineer John O. Merrill (1896-1975) was brought in as a limited partner in 1939, and the firm became Skidmore, Owings and Merrill.



**U.S. Navy Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 1952, one of a group of five drawings prepared under the supervision of Walter Netsch. Credit: <https://www.som.com/topic/legacy/>**



**Circa 1954 rendering of the Inland Steel Building showing the service core of the building separated from the main volume. Credit: Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Historic Architecture and Landscape Image Collection, c.1865-1973.**



During the Depression and World War II, many architecture firms had trimmed staff. SOM's gamble on expansion bore fruit during the war when the federal government needed to build an entire town from scratch to accommodate the Manhattan Project. Because of the secrecy required for the project, an isolated site in Oak Ridge in Tennessee was chosen. SOM's work in Oak Ridge continued after the war, and Netsch's first project at the firm was designing homes, apartments and dormitories for the new town.

Oak Ridge established SOM's ability to work at scale and quickly, and it led to the firm's first major Chicago project, the Lake Meadows complex of ten high-rise apartments, an office building and a shopping center along King Drive between 31st and 35th streets. In 1949 Netsch designed the steel-and-glass shopping center at Lake Meadows.

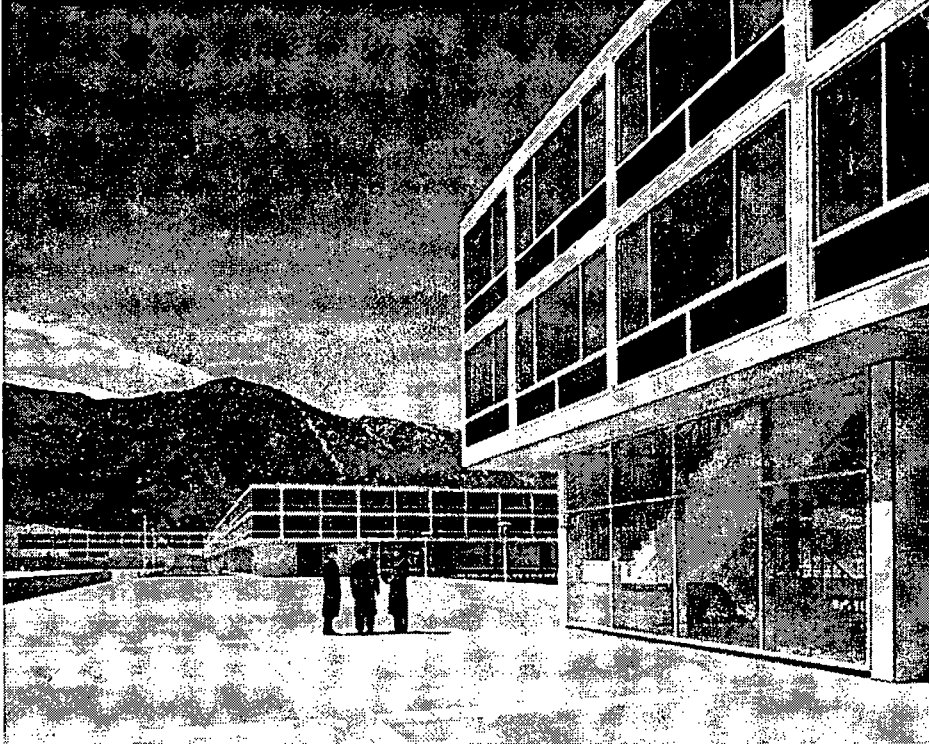
In 1951, SOM was hired to work on a new campus for the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, on the site of a historic hotel with a designed landscape. Netsch was sent to SOM's San Francisco office to create the working drawings for the project based on site plans provided by the Navy. Netsch found the Navy's initial plan lacking, particularly in its destruction of the site's landscape design. He deeply analyzed the school's educational program and persuaded the naval admiral in charge of the project to grant him a month to fully develop a new master plan for the campus which the Navy approved.

Netsch later referred to the Naval Postgraduate School as his "big break." It established him as an invaluable asset at SOM and pointed him on a path he would follow for the entirety of his career, working almost exclusively on large-scale, non-commercial projects for government, universities and hospitals.

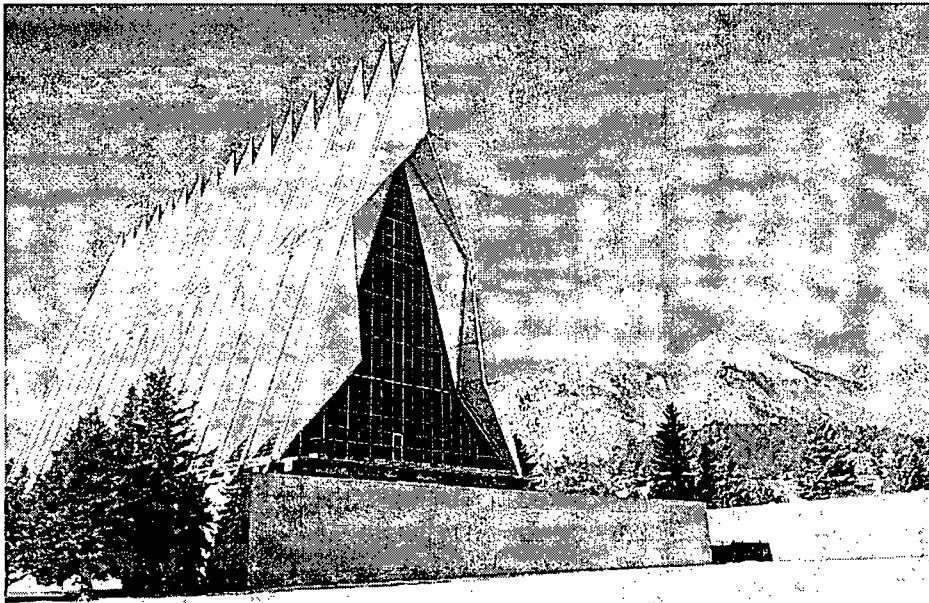
In 1953 Netsch landed a coveted role as part of an SOM team that traveled to Japan to create master plans and building designs for U.S. military air bases in Okinawa. He found his experience abroad very inspiring and would credit Japanese design as an influence for his Field Theory.

Netsch returned to SOM's Chicago office in 1954 where he completed the conceptual design for the Inland Steel Building, the first building to be constructed in the Loop since the Great Depression and an icon of postwar modernism. While Bruce Graham executed the final form of the building in 1957, Netsch's innovative concept design placed the elevator and service core of the building into a separate tower to create open floor plans on each floor. Though the building was only one year old, in 1958 the Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks—the precursor to the current Commission on Chicago Landmarks—designated the Inland Steel Building as a Chicago Landmark.

During the design of the Inland Steel Building, SOM pulled Netsch onto a new project. The firm had been pursuing an extremely competitive commission to design the U.S. Air Force Academy's new campus in Colorado Springs, Colorado. SOM was competing with 300 firms for this commission. Given Netsch's success in designing the Naval Postgraduate School and



1959 photo of the Terrazzo Level of the United States Air Force Academy with Cadet Quarters at right and Administration Building beyond. Credit: Chicago Historical Society; Hedrich Blessing #22362j.



Walter Netsch designed the Cadet Chapel at the academy using tetrahedrons. The use of unusual geometry started Netsch on a lifelong path to develop a personal design philosophy known as his Field Theory. Credit: United States Air Force Academy, [www.usafa.af.mil](http://www.usafa.af.mil)

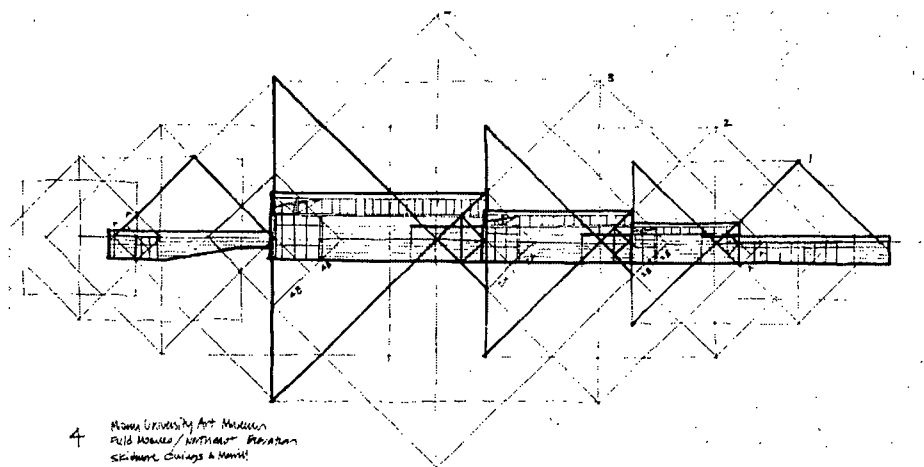
other military projects, he was tapped to develop and present SOM's proposal. When they were awarded the project, Netsch took the helm as the lead of the design team, a role that would prove to be one of the major highlights of his career, spanning nearly a decade from 1954 to 1963.

The Air Force sited its new academy on 17,500 acres at the base of the Rampart Range of the Rocky Mountains. Netsch and his team pored over the site on foot, jeep and helicopter. The master plan placed expansive, modernist structures that highlighted views of the natural setting from within and without. The showpiece of the campus was to be the multi-faith Cadet Chapel, which was planned to sit tall above the campus and its low-slung buildings like a monument. But when Netsch presented his initial design to the project advisory board, it was not well-received. Crushed, he spent several weeks traveling through Europe studying Gothic cathedrals for inspiration.

When he returned, Netsch began experimenting with geometric patterns, determined to infuse a sense of awe and light into his chapel. He designed the outer walls of the chapel as a series of geometric tetrahedral space frames clad with aircraft aluminum, evoking a grouping of fighter jets. Netsch was extremely enthusiastic about this new concept, which he felt merged the distinctive, modernist style of SOM with traditional religious architecture to create something altogether new. However, the Cadet Chapel design was wildly controversial, and its construction was even delayed when the U.S. House of Representatives threatened to pull funding until the design was reviewed. But Netsch was unwavering, working himself to the bone to refine every last detail, and the chapel was completed in 1963 according to his design.

The chapel was the first major building from SOM credited to an individual architect, this established Netsch's reputation as an independent designer of the first order within the firm's corporate structure. In 2004, the Cadet Chapel was listed as a National Historic Landmark by the United States Secretary of the Interior.

**A sketch of the Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio, showing geometric "field modules" superimposed over an elevation. Netsch regarded the museum, completed in 1978, as one of his most successful designs. Credit: SOM archives.**



The iconic design of the Cadet Chapel was born from the early phases of Netsch's Field Theory, a concept that he continued to develop further and eventually came to define his life's work as an architect, including his house in Old Town. This self-described "signature design aesthetic" drew from Netsch's lifelong fascination with geometry and the repeating patterns found in nature. As a signature theory developed by a single architect, Netsch's Field Theory is comparable to Le Corbusier's *Modulor* or Buckminster Fuller's domes.

Netsch applied Field Theory at the drafting table. The process began with a linear grid printed on transparent acetate film that was then overlaid with another rotated grid to produce a lattice. This geometry was then used to explore how parts of a building and its users relate to each other in plan. In addition to function, Netsch's Field Theory resulted in an iconic aesthetic marked by heavy massing and complex forms. The buildings are easily identified as his own and offered a clear break from the glass boxes that had dominated the modern movement.

Just like the Cadet Chapel, Field Theory buildings have not been without criticism and controversy. Interiors have been described as convoluted; heavy exteriors are often lumped together with brutalist architecture and scorned for their fortress-like quality. And though Netsch believed that any architect could use Field Theory, none have taken up the torch since he retired.

Nevertheless, from 1957 until his retirement in 1979, clients sought Netsch out and he established what he called the "Netsch Niche" at SOM. Working in a separate building from SOM's main office in Chicago, Netsch established a studio focused on master plans for campuses, university libraries, academic buildings and museums, all designed with Field Theory. The studio offered institutional clients a specialized alternative to SOM's commercial practice.

The semi-independence from the corporate office also allowed Netsch to support social causes. Netsch reached out to architecture schools to recruit minority architects and offered them financial aid with their studies. He also pursued architectural commissions with social impacts, such as St. Matthew United Methodist Church at 1000 N. Orleans in Chicago, a combined church and social service center which served the residents of Cabrini Green.

While Netsch's studio at SOM designed buildings across the nation, this designation report selects important highlights in Chicago. The most complete expression of Netsch's work is his master plan and several buildings at the University of Illinois at Chicago (originally known as the University of Illinois Circle Campus) from 1961 to 1970.

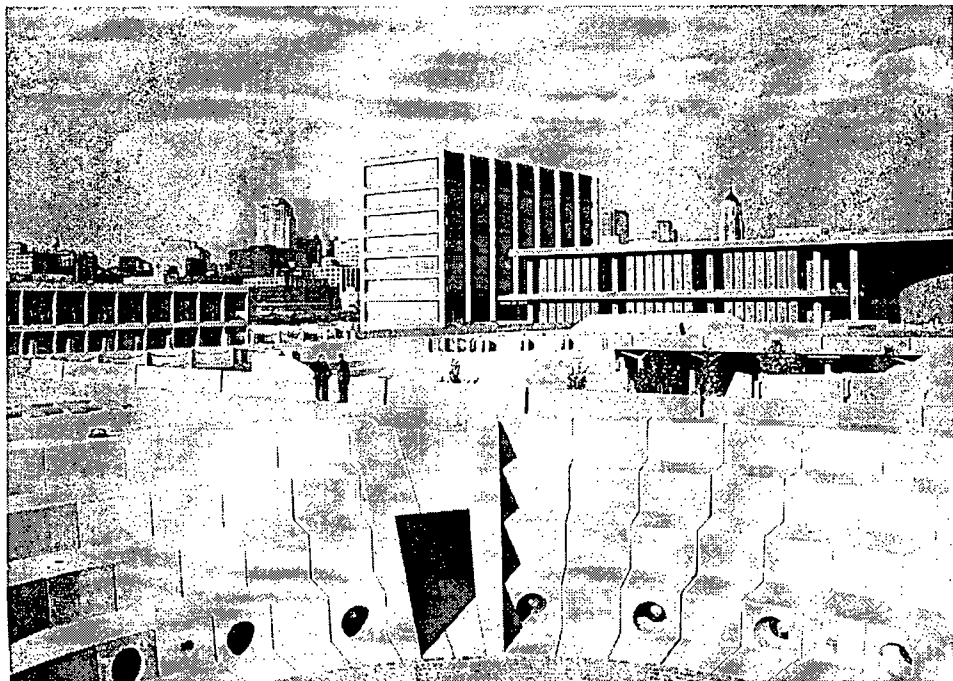
In 1960, Chicago was one of only three major American cities that lacked a public university. After a long debate about displacement of an existing ethnic neighborhood, in 1961 the administration of mayor Richard J. Daley moved forward with plans for a new campus extending from the Eisenhower Expressway to Roosevelt Road, and Halsted to Racine Streets on the Near West Side.

Netsch presented his master plan for the campus in 1961. Construction began in 1963 with the first students arriving in 1965. Netsch designed other buildings on the campus through 1970 as enrollment increased.

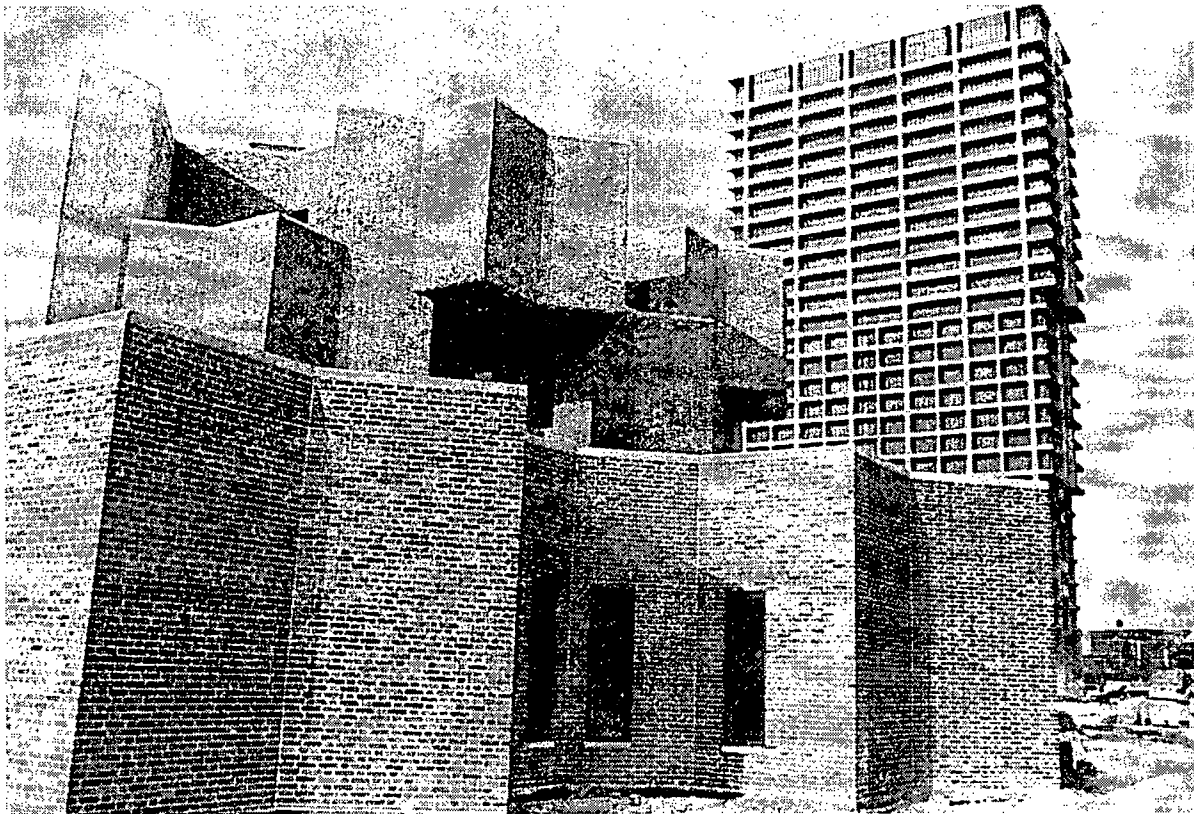
**Walter Netsch designed the master plan for the University of Illinois at Chicago. Elevated walkways (top) and amphitheaters at the Circle Forum (bottom) were features of the plan that have not survived the test of time, and Chicago's climate.**



Credit: University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections and University Archives Department (Richard J. Daley Library)



Credit: University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections and University Archives Department (Richard J. Daley Library)



**In addition to the master plan, Netsch designed several buildings on the UIC campus. At the rear in this photo is University Hall (1965) at 28 stories, and in the foreground is the Behavioral Sciences building (1970) designed with the Field Theory. Credit: University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections and University Archives Department (Richard J. Daley Library) .**

Few college campuses have been so influenced by the vision of a single architect. As originally designed and built, Netsch's plan centered on a raised concrete plaza, or Circle Forum, surrounded by the most heavily used buildings. Conceived as the social gathering place of the campus, the forum included four *excedras*, or amphitheater structures adapted from Classical Greece. To facilitate movement across the campus, Netsch developed a pedestrian walkway system elevated above grade.

In addition to the master plan, Netsch designed several buildings on the campus. At 28 stories, University Hall from 1965 is the most visible. The exposed reinforced-concrete structure with narrow windows, widens as it rises to evoke Carl Sandburg's evocation of Chicago as the "City of the Big Shoulders." The Behavioral Sciences building of 1970 is perhaps one of the most-developed examples of Field Theory.

The *AIA Guide to Chicago* has described the campus as "one of Chicago's strongest individual architectural statements—and one of the most violently disliked" when it opened and in the "succeeding decades saw no softening of opinion" which led to renovations to the campus beginning in the 1990s that resulted in removal of the raised walkways and the Circle Forum that

were part of the master plan, and changes to some of the Netsch-designed buildings.

In addition to the University of Illinois at Chicago, Netsch designed noteworthy university libraries at two other Chicago-area campuses in 1970: the Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago, and the Northwestern University Library in suburban Evanston. Both of these libraries sought to give researchers greater access to book stacks across disciplines, and both were designed to pick up on contextual cues from the earlier Collegiate Gothic buildings on their respective campuses, such as lancet windows, irregular massing and grooved façades.

Health issues forced Netsch to retire from SOM in 1979, though he remained active in the design community, consulting clients in Algeria and Saudi Arabia. He also remained in civic life, serving on the Commission on Fine Arts in Washington, D.C., and as president of the Board of Commissioners of the Chicago Park District from 1986 to 1987 where he called for more equitable distribution of capital improvements. He remained politically active, often assisting his wife with her political campaign and fundraising activities. In addition to collecting art, retirement offered him time to create his own.

Many examples of Netsch's work have been recognized and honored for their bold and innovative design, and he is forever credited for playing a significant role in SOM's rise to becoming an architectural powerhouse. Walter Netsch died in 2008, leaving behind a lasting local and global legacy as a revolutionary architect.

#### **DAWN CLARK NETSCH**

The Clark-Netsch House is also significant for its association with Dawn Clark Netsch (1926-2013), a trailblazing Illinois state politician and professor of law. She was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio where from a young age she was keenly aware of the economic and racial inequalities around her and felt called to correct them.

Dawn excelled in school and was involved in many extracurriculars, including serving on student council and authoring a

regular political opinion column in the school newspaper. Although this career path was largely uncharted for young women in the 1940s, Dawn decided she wanted to work in government.



**Dawn Clark Netsch campaigning for Governor of Illinois, November 23, 1993. Credit: Chicago Tribune.**

and moved to Illinois to study political science at Northwestern University.

In college, Dawn grew increasingly passionate about fighting racial injustice and found ample opportunity at Northwestern to cut her teeth as an activist, including lobbying against racist admission quotas and helping lead a vigorous campaign to integrate student housing. She also participated in the university's model United Nations program and mock political convention and volunteered for the real-life gubernatorial campaign of Adlai Stevenson. After graduating, Dawn got a job with the Illinois chapter of the League of Women Voters where she gained valuable insight on the importance of state and local politics and grassroots organizing. Soon after, Dawn returned to Northwestern to earn her law degree in hopes of continuing towards a career in government. She graduated in 1952 as the only woman in her class as well as first in her class, then spent several months as a full-time staff member of Adlai Stevenson's presidential campaign.

After the election, Dawn moved to Washington, D.C. and worked as an associate at the law firm of Covington & Burling, where she had interned the previous summer. This was an impressive first job for a newly minted lawyer, particularly given how rampant sexism was in the workplace. Although Dawn was not the only woman at her firm, she still experienced challenges due to her gender, like being omitted from business meetings that were often held in men-only clubs. Dawn spent two years at Covington & Burling, during which she became the firm's go-to expert on immigration law despite her having no prior experience in this field. She worked tirelessly to fight against xenophobic and overly restrictive immigration policies, and helped many clients maintain their right to live in the United States. Although she enjoyed this work, Dawn's real career goal was to work in politics, and she was aware that some of her peers were organizing a group they called the Committee on Illinois Government (CIG) with the goal of reforming the state government by unseating the "Democratic machine" in favor of more progressive candidates and policies. So, when Dawn was offered a job as a clerk with a federal judge in Chicago, she took the opportunity to return to the city she had come to view as home.

Dawn returned to Chicago in 1954 to start her two-year clerkship and joined her colleagues in the CIG. The group focused on monitoring governance throughout the state in order to research and report on any practices they perceived to be deficiencies of the system or specific politicians. They also did pro bono legal work drafting documents for Democratic legislators and aiding Democratic candidates. Dawn balanced this work for CIG with her paid employment; after her clerkship ended, she staffed Adlai Stevenson's second presidential campaign and then worked at the Chicago law firm of Snyder, Chadwell, Keck, Kayser, & Ruggles. Though working in law again, Dawn was still determined to work in government, and her career trajectory finally changed when Otto Kerner became governor of Illinois in 1960. Dawn had supported his campaign, but other CIG members were dubious and felt that Kerner would need persuasion to advance any progressive legislation. CIG agreed that the best way to try to enact this change would be with one of their own working from the inside, and selected Dawn for this role. With her legislative knowledge and some industry connections, Dawn was able to secure



a position as a chief aide to the new governor, and she moved to Springfield in 1961 to start her new job at the state capitol.

Dawn worked for Governor Kerner through the entirety of his first term and had some success in helping to facilitate progressive new legislation in line with CIG's goals. However, by 1965 she had grown frustrated by other members of the governor's staff and was weary of her frequent travel between Springfield and Chicago, where she had a home with her now-husband Walter Netsch. Dawn resigned from her position on good terms with the governor and moved home to consider her next career move. Feeling inclined to try something new, Dawn took a job as a professor at Northwestern, where she was the first female faculty member of their Law School. She enjoyed this change of pace, and the more abundant free time she had to continue her work with CIG, as well as a new role serving on the board and the legislative committee of the ACLU of Illinois where she focused on matters of abortion rights, civil rights, and fair housing.

However, Dawn couldn't stay out of state politics for long. For many years, there had been a growing movement in Illinois calling to revise the state constitution, as the original 1870 document that was still in use was horribly outdated and the process of passing amendments was needlessly complicated. By the late 1960s, this demand had reached a fever pitch, and the state government was finally able to present voters with the option for the formation of a Constitutional Convention which would serve to rewrite the state constitution. In preparation for this vote, a commission was created to determine the best process for this task. Dawn was appointed to this commission by her old boss, Governor Kerner, and worked to streamline their strategy and clearly state the need for a new constitution to voters. When Illinois passed the measure for a new Constitutional Convention, Dawn was determined to serve as a delegate. She was already extremely invested in this undertaking, and knew the convention was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. After a strong campaign, Dawn won her election and went on to serve as a delegate to the Illinois Constitutional Convention in 1969, where she often struggled to reach agreement with Republicans and machine Democrats but found commonality with a group of fellow independent Democrats. Dawn worked on the Revenue and Finance Committee and proved to be an influential figure in the process of drafting the new state constitution, which was approved by voters in late 1970.

After the convention's successful end, Dawn went back to her teaching position at Northwestern, but her passion for state politics had been stoked again. While helping her friend Jim Houlihan campaign for a seat in the Illinois House of Representatives, he asked if she would be interested in running for the Illinois Senate on a joint ticket. Dawn agreed although she did not feel very certain about her chances of winning; she felt it was the right time to try. The following months of campaigning were grueling, but Dawn excelled at connecting with people from all walks of life in her district. Her hard work paid off when, to her surprise, she beat the Democratic machine-endorsed incumbent in the primary. She handily won the general election and was sworn in as an Illinois state senator in 1973.

In the senate, she quickly fell in with a crowd of other progressive Democratic senators from throughout the state, and they created a study group focused on advancing many of the same ideals she had championed as part of CIG. Though the Democratic machine tried its best to oust her, Dawn won re-election in 1974 and her group of fellow progressives established an informal alliance with the Black Caucus, forming a bloc of independent Democrats that were nicknamed “the Crazy Eight” (despite the number of members having grown). By aligning their votes, they were able to wield a fair amount of power against the machine. In 1977, the Crazy Eight made the news when they forced a five-week stalemate in the vote for senate president as they successfully demanded operational reforms. Dawn was particularly proud of this rebellion and built off this momentum to pass several related amendments.



**During her first campaign for state Senate in 1972, Netsch gets help from her husband. Credit: Chicago Tribune.**

Through her eighteen years on the senate, Dawn developed a reputation for her tenacity. She was willing to challenge anyone, and often went toe to toe with downstate Republicans and Chicago machine Democrats alike. However, she was also known for her openness to working respectfully with anyone who was willing to do the same. This afforded her more opportunities for success in passing legislation she believed in, primarily around civil rights. During her tenure, she was successful in helping establish the Regional Transit Authority, codifying tenants’ rights and consumer protections, increasing funding for public schools and other social services, and reforming antiquated sexual assault laws, as well as many other endeavors. She also worked extensively to help advance the Equal Rights Amendment and the Family and Medical Leave Act, two hot-button issues that did not see success until after Dawn had left the senate but bore her influence. Dawn was also an early and vocal supporter of gay rights at a time when most politicians opted to ignore the gay community. She actively reached out to local gay and lesbian organizations to better understand the issues they were facing, attended their community events, and publicly touted their endorsements during her campaigns. In the 1980s, she worked to establish state funding for HIV/AIDS care and also sponsored gay rights legislation.

In this way along with many others, Dawn was seen as a true civil servant that cared deeply for all of her constituents.

In 1990, Dawn became the first woman elected as Illinois state comptroller and the first woman elected to the executive branch of the Illinois state government. She left the senate to serve as comptroller, during which she also ran for governor. After her unsuccessful campaign and the completion of her comptroller term, Dawn left Springfield to move home and resume her position as a professor at Northwestern Law. Although retired as an elected official, she maintained an involvement in government and politics for the rest of her life through work on local campaigns, serving as a board member for various political organizations, consulting on legislation, and continuing to advocate for governmental ethics and tax reform. Dawn Clark Netsch died in 2013 but is still remembered as an accomplished politician, a trailblazer for women in government, and a fierce advocate for civil rights for all.

#### **CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION**

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for designation” and that it possesses a significant degree of historic integrity to convey its significance. The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Clark-Netsch House be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

#### **Criterion 1: Value as an Example of City, State, or National Heritage**

*Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The Clark-Netsch House reflects the architectural heritage of Old Town in the 1960s and 1970s, a neighborhood that had established itself as a place for artists and the creative community. Walter Netsch was one of several Chicago architects of the modern era that designed residential buildings for themselves and for clients in Old Town. The Clark-Netsch House is one example how modern design was adapted for smaller, urban residences in Old Town.

#### **Criterion 3: Significant Person**

*Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The Clark-Netsch House is significant as the residence of Dawn Clark Netsch, a progressive

politician and lawyer who served as an Illinois State Senator, Comptroller, and Northwestern University professor.

- Dawn Clark Netsch's career was marked by a number of superlative achievements: she was the first woman to serve on the faculty at Northwestern University School of Law, she was the first woman to be elected to the Illinois state senate, she became in 1990 the highest-ranked woman in the state government when she was elected Illinois comptroller, and she was the first woman to campaign for governor of Illinois.
- During her long career in law and public service, both in and out of office, Dawn Clark Netsch championed progressive government reforms, funding for public education, civil rights and social justice.
- During her 18 years in the state senate, Dawn Clark Netsch helped advance the Equal Rights Amendment and the Family and Medical Leave Act. She was also an early and vocal supporter of the gay and lesbian community, she worked to establish state funding for HIV/AIDS care in the 1980s and also sponsored gay rights legislation.
- As a delegate to the Illinois Constitutional Convention in 1969, Dawn Clark Netsch played an influential role in modernizing state government.

#### **Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture**

*Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*

- The Clark-Netsch House is rare in Walter Netsch's body of work as being his only residential commission.
- Whenever an architect designs their own residence, they have essentially the ideal client and the ultimate proving ground for their individual expression. The Clark-Netsch House is no exception and reflects Netsch's Field Theory in its expression of rotated squares on its interior and exterior.
- Built with economy and off-the-shelf materials, the Clark-Netsch House is an innovative example of a small modern house set within a historic residential setting.

#### **Criterion 5: Work of Significant Architect**

*Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The Clark-Netsch House is significant as the residence of its designer Walter Netsch, a prominent Chicago architect who worked for the internationally-renowned firm Skidmore,

Owings, and Merrill for over thirty years and designed such well-known works as the U.S. Air Force Academy Cadet Chapel (a National Historic Landmark) and the University of Illinois at Chicago campus.

- Netsch became known during the 1960s for his "Field Theory" of design, where he created floor plans and general building *parti* from the manipulation of superimposed geometric figures. Netsch's design theory influenced the design of his Hudson Street house in Old Town.

### **INTEGRITY CRITERION**

*The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architecture or aesthetic interest or value.*

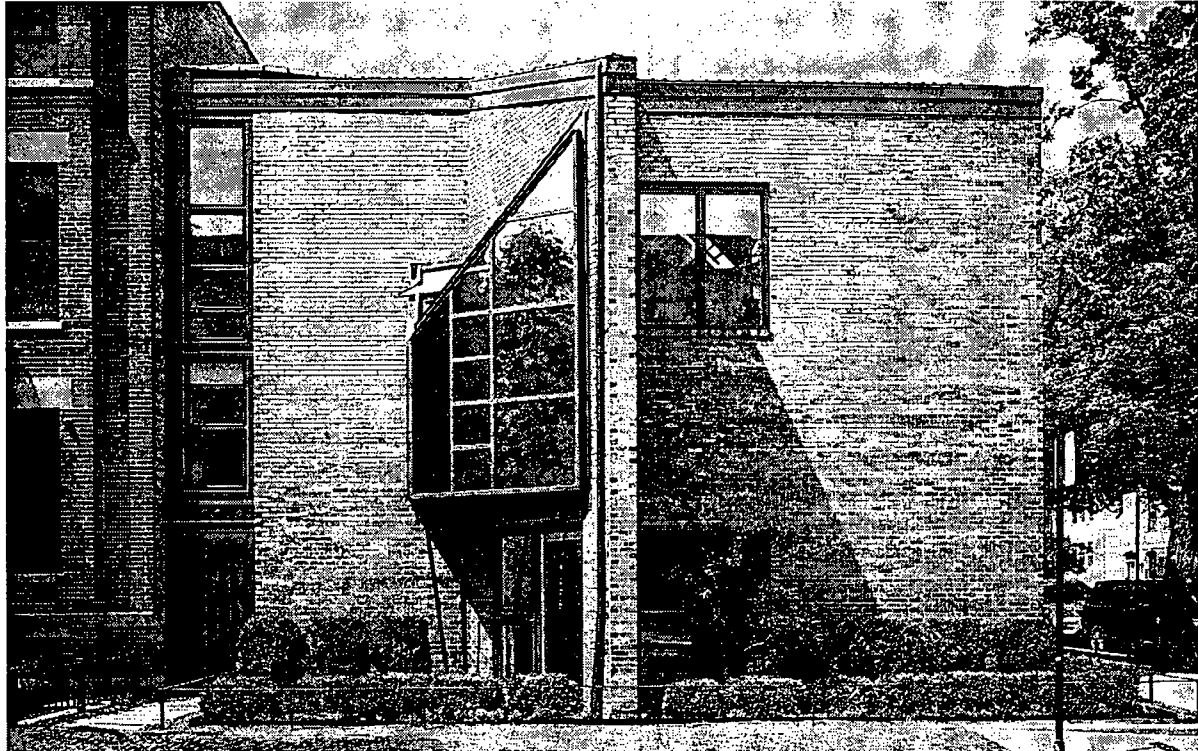
The Clark-Netsch House retains more than sufficient historic integrity to express its historic and architectural value to the City of Chicago. It remains in its original location and the residential setting around the building has changed little since the building was constructed in 1974. Walter Netsch made some changes to the design that are significant in their own right. Around 1990 he added the window bay to the Eugenie Street elevation, forming a sunny south-facing alcove. At the same elevation Netsch also extended the windows above the secondary entrance.

The current owners purchased the house in 2013, becoming the second owners of the property. They hired SOM to restore and update portions of the house while maintaining Netsch's design intent on both the exterior and interior. The restoration maintained sight lines and spatial volumes of the interior, while updating appliances, cabinets, bathroom finishes and lighting.

In the kitchen, a new wood counter, sink, appliances and cabinets were added, but Netsch's original plan for the space has been retained. New tiles and counters were added to the master bathroom. Sliding doors were also added to the master bathroom and the study space. An elevator that the Netsches had added was also removed.



Circa 1974. Credit: SOM archives.



2022. Changes to the exterior include the addition of a cantilevered bay window and an expanded vertical window on the Eugenie Street elevation. These were designed by Netsch around 1990 and are significant.

## **SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES**

Whenever an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant historical and architectural features” of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark. Based on its evaluation of the Clark-Netsch House, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.
- On the interior, the overall spatial volume of the residential portion of the building. Aspects of Netsch’s Field Theory on the interior that are significant include the central tower and the arrangement of living spaces extending from it.

## Select Bibliography

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

### **CITY OF CHICAGO**

Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

### **Department of Planning and Development**

Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner

Kathleen Dickhut, Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Citywide Systems and Historic Preservation

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*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual building, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, First Deputy Commissioner's Office, City Hall, 121 North LaSalle Street, Room 905, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200); [www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks](http://www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks)*

*This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.*

## **COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

Ernest C. Wong, Chair

Gabriel Ignacio Dziekiewicz, Vice Chair

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Suellen Burns

Jonathan Fair

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Alicia Ponce

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Exhibit B

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
CITY OF CHICAGO

February 9, 2023

Report to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks  
on the  
**Netsch House**  
**1700 N. Hudson Avenue**

**The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) finds that the proposed landmark designation of the Netsch House supports the City's overall planning goals for the surrounding neighborhood and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.**

The Netsch House is a single-family home that was constructed in 1974 as the residence of its designer, architect Walter Netsch, and his wife, state politician Dawn Clark Netsch. The Netsches made significant contributions to their respective fields. As a general partner at Skidmore Owings & Merrill, Walter Netsch is well known for his design of the U.S. Air Force Academy and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Dawn Clark Netsch was a trailblazing State politician who advocated for good government principles.

The Netsch House is located in the Lincoln Park Community Area and the Old Town neighborhood. The house is also located in the Old Town Triangle District, which was designated as a Chicago Landmark in 1977, three years after the Netsch House was built. When the district was designated, there was insufficient perspective of time to evaluate buildings built after 1930s and the Netsch House is regarded as a non-contributing building in the landmark district. With the passage of time, the Netsch House's historic and architectural significance has become clear. Designation of the building will ensure that it is preserved. The Department encourages the Commission to identify other recent properties in Old Town that may now be worthy of designation.

Our planning work at the Department of Planning and Development, is committed to Design Excellence which includes strengthening the culture of our communities, committing to cultural longevity and environmental sustainability. These goals are also consistent with landmark designation of historic works of high-quality design exemplified by the Netsch House.

Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner  
Department of Planning and Development