

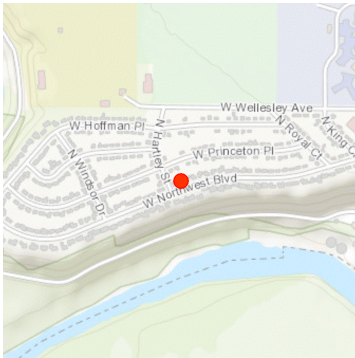


Historic Property Report

Historic Name: Better Living Home

Property ID: 181479

Location



Address: 5024 W NORTHWEST BLVD, SPOKANE, WA 99205
Tax No/Parcel No: 25031.0525
Plat/Block/Lot: RIVER RIDGE ADD L25 B5
GeographicAreas: Spokane County,SPOKANE NW Quadrangle,T25R42E03

Information

Construction Dates:

Construction Type	Year	Circa
Built Date	1951	<input type="checkbox"/>

Number of stories: N/A

Historic Use:

Category	Subcategory
Domestic	Domestic - Single Family House

Historic Context: Architecture

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Architect/Engineer:

Category	Name or Company
Architect	Bruce Walker
Builder	Elmer Nelson

Project Number, Organization, Project Name	Resource Inventory	SHPO Determination	SHPO Determined By, Determined Date
2011-06-00089, , Assessors Data Project: Spokane Residential 1	7/5/2011	Not Determined	
2016-12-08751, , Spokane Mid- 20th Century Modern Survey 2016	2/3/2017		

Photos



Front (south) facade, looking north



Front (south) facade



Front (south) and east facades



East facade

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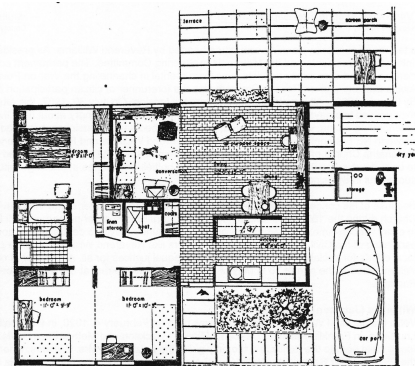
West facade



House and front yard

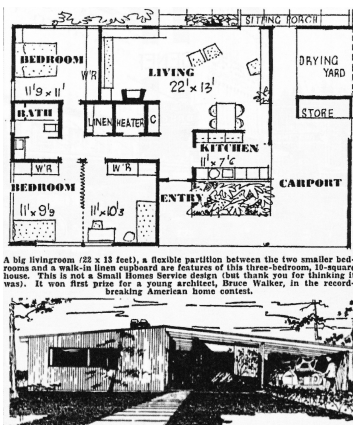


Setting, looking northeast on W Northwest Blvd

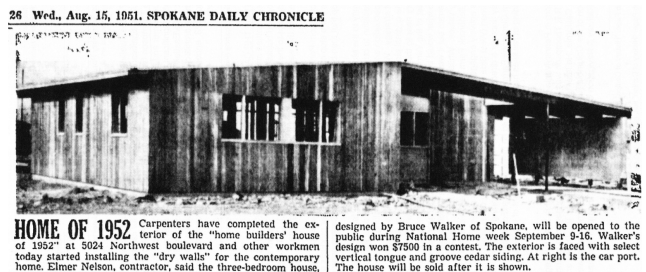


This plan is one of the best of 2727 designs submitted throughout the nation to the "Better Living Home" design contest cosponsored by Architectural Forum, the magazine Building and the National Association of Home Builders. Bruce Walker, young Spokane architect who designed the plan, now is a graduate student at Harvard university. Judges also awarded this plan top regional honors for the entire Northwest area.

Spokesman Review Article, 1951



Plans published in Melbourne paper



Spokane Daily Chronicle photo, 1951



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Inventory Details - 2/3/2017

Common name: Home Builders Home
Date recorded: 2/3/2017
Field Recorder: Diana Painter
Field Site number:
SHPO Determination

Detail Information

Characteristics:

Category	Item
Foundation	Concrete - Poured
Form Type	Single Dwelling
Roof Type	Gable - Front
Roof Material	Asphalt/Composition - Built Up
Cladding	Wood - Vertical Boards
Structural System	Wood - Platform Frame
Plan	Square

Surveyor Opinion

Property appears to meet criteria for the National Register of Historic Places: Yes

Property is located in a potential historic district (National and/or local): Yes

Property potentially contributes to a historic district (National and/or local): Yes

Significance narrative: History. In the post-war era, the popularity of home shows, exhibits and open houses reflected the pent-up demand for new housing on the part of consumers. The economic hardships of the Great Depression and the diversion of resources toward fighting World War II had depleted the housing building stock and made building materials scarce (Friedel, 1995: 51). At the same time, returning GIs were eager to start families, which had been delayed for many people by the war, and they needed houses. Low cost mortgage loans were available to returning servicemen through the Veteran's Administration and Federal Housing Administration, allowing them to borrow money at a reasonable rate. This further drove the demand for new housing.

Research into developing affordable housing and a higher standard of housing quality had been undertaken during the New Deal and architectural competitions became a widespread way to generate new ideas. This continued in the post-war era.

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Collaborations between architects and builders that resulted in model home designs and model homes became an increasingly popular way to develop and showcase new housing ideas.

The home shows also drove the post-war desire on the parts of both men and women to experience a return to normalcy. As expressed by the historian Robert Friedel, the intervening war years resulted in the desire of men and women "... to be at home, to feel comfort, to experience a measure of well-being" (Friedel, 1995:45). According to a Spokesman Review article at the time, Bruce Walker's house design for the Better Living Home "... was thought by the judges to contain the greatest merits on the basis of acceptability by the home-owning public, warmth, economy of construction and general comfort."

The 1951 competition for the "Better Living Home" was described by the Australian press as "... an important milestone along the road to widespread architect-builder collaborations and better house design for the average family" (Boyd, 1951:5). With respect to this competition, an Indiana newspaper extolled, "... it was thought that through this medium more architects and builders will be encouraged and inspired to work together with the increased understanding of the problem involved in giving Mr. and Mrs. America more useful and beautiful homes" ("Better Living Home' Prize Won By Young Architect," 1951:6). An article in the Spokane Daily Chronicle stated that thousands had visited the 13 model homes on display during Spokane's national home week in 1951, and that the Home Builder's Home at 5024 W Northwest Blvd. was one of the most popular ("Thousands Visit Exhibited Homes," 1951:5).

Architect Bruce Walker. The original plans for the house were developed by Bruce Morris Walker for the "Better Living Home" competition. The competition, which garnered Walker \$8250 in prize money, was co-sponsored by the magazines Architectural Forum and Building, and the National Association of Home Builders, and attracted 3000 entries (Boyd, 1951:5). Parameters were that the house had to be 1,000 square feet in size or smaller and be suitable for building on a 60 by 100 foot lot. It was to include three bedrooms and no basement, and meet VA and FHA mortgage loan requirements. It was also required to exhibit "ease and economy of construction and general acceptability by the home-buying public" ("Better Living Home," 1951:5).

Walker was 28 at the time and studying architecture at Harvard University after having served in the military in World War II and been awarded a BA in Architecture from the University of Washington in 1947. Born in Spokane in 1923, Bruce Walker was awarded a Masters Degree in Architecture from the Harvard School of Design in 1951, where he studied under Walter Gropius. The Better Living Home prize was one of several that he won while attending Harvard. After traveling and studying in Europe on the Appleton Traveling Fellowship – given in recognition of his scholastic performance – Walker returned to Spokane in 1952. A year later, at the suggestion of fellow Spokane architect Royal McClure, he formed a partnership with John W. McGough.

Walker & McGough received national awards for design excellence from the AIA in 1959 and 1969; the firm's designs were included twice in Progressive Architecture's annual review of American architecture, in 1967 and 1969. Walker & McGough's residential work was also featured extensively in a number of design textbooks, including Inside Today's Home by Ray and Sarah Faulkner and The Art of Interior Design: A Text in the Aesthetics of Interior Design by Victoria Kloss Ball. Walker was named a fellow of the AIA

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in 1979. He died in Spokane in 2005. The firm continues today, with offices in Spokane and Seattle, as Integrus Architecture.

Architectural Context. The Better Living Home is designed in what was often called the “Contemporary” style in the 1950s and 1960s. A Contemporary-style or simply Modern house offered few traditional stylistic features or details, relying on its overall form and simple modern details to convey its style. A post-and-beam house, for example, would be considered a Contemporary house. These houses were often designed by architects and were considered “high style,” in contrast to the more common Ranch style home of the era. Common features included a shallow sloped or flat roof; overall asymmetry; expansive window walls; and the use of clerestory windows under the eaves where privacy was important. Other features of the Contemporary house were shared by the Ranch-style house, including an open floor plan, an orientation toward the rear, rather than front yard or street, and use of windows, courtyards, and other devices to “bring the outdoors in.”

Physical description:

Location and Setting. The house at 5024 W Northwest Blvd is located within the River Ridge Addition subdivision that was developed on a peninsula of land that extends into a bend in the Spokane River. It is located on the north side of W Northwest Blvd., which is an extension of Northwest Blvd., a busy arterial at its source at the intersection of N Monroe Street and W Indiana Avenue. The Better Living Home is near the terminus of the street and one lot from the intersection of W Northwest Blvd. and N Hartley Street. The main entrance to this mid-20th century subdivision is at the intersection of Wellesley Avenue and N Assembly Street. While the subdivision is exclusively residential, its entry is framed by a small strip mall in the southwest quadrant of the intersection and the Spokane Medical Center (the VA hospital) in the northwest quadrant. Wellesley Avenue, a major arterial that extends from the Hillyard neighborhood in northeast Spokane to the Ball & Dodd Funeral Home and Fairmount Memorial Park, north of the subdivision, bounds its north side. Joe Albi Stadium is also north of the subdivision. Below the subdivision, at the level of the river, is W Downriver Drive/N Riverside State Park Drive/N Aubrey White Parkway, which parallels the Spokane River. At the end of the peninsula is Riverside State Park Bowl and Pitcher, a natural rock formation within the larger park. Southeast of the subdivision, at the river level, is the Spokane Waste Water Management facility. The subdivision is sited on a bluff; residents of this pleasant, post-war neighborhood enjoy views of Riverside State Park across the river. Streets within the subdivision are two lanes with on-street parking and no sidewalks.

Materials. The wood-frame house is sided with vertical tongue-and-groove siding and has a concrete slab foundation and a built-up roof.

Massing and design. The former model house is one story in height, with a largely square footprint and a shallow-sloped, asymmetrical gable front roof with moderate eaves and exposed rafters on the east and west sides. The house is centered within an 8,250 square foot lot and faces south, overlooking W Northwest Blvd. The entry to the house is on the back wall of a small, landscaped courtyard that is located between the attached garage and the main body of the house. A chimney rises from within the house on the west side. A slightly curved sidewalk extends from the street to this courtyard. Front yard landscaping is simple; a large Maple tree is located southwest of the house. A second mature Maple tree is located northwest of the house, in the rear yard. The Contemporary house, designed by architect Bruce Walker, was constructed in 1951.

Front (south) façade. The front façade of the house displays a centered entry court, with

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a simple paneled entry door on the back wall and a tall, narrow sidelight to its left. This is surmounted by a clerestory window that continues to the ceiling of the porch. To its right, also on the back wall of the entry court, is a two-light, fixed and casement window. Above is an open [unglazed] skylight, which allows sunlight to reach the small garden here. To the left and on a wall perpendicular to the door is a three-light clerestory window. The wall on which the windows are mounted falls directly under the apex of the gable roof. The front façade to the left (west) of the entry court displays two, two-part fixed and casement windows. To the right (east) is a single car garage, which is enclosed by a paneled wood overhead door.

East façade. The east façade of the house displays no openings. The rafters here are exposed, with a portion of the rafters visible under the fascia.

Rear (north) façade. The rear façade of the house historically looked onto two patios. The patio on the east was referred to as a screen terrace and was accessed via a walkway that extended from the carport. The one on the west, which was separated from the easterly porch and separated by a fence, was referred to as a terrace. There is no evidence of these patios today and it is unknown whether they were developed when the house was constructed. The patio on the left would have been highly visible through the large, three-light window of the living room, on the east side of this façade. Centered in the façade is a two-light, fixed and casement window that lights the living room area. To the left or west is another three-light window that lights the master bedroom.

West façade. There are three windows on the west façade. Two narrow windows are located toward the center of this façade, and a two-light window is located toward the south. The exposed rafters of the house are visible above.

Changes over time. The house originally had a small carport on the east side that was open to the entry courtyard. The footprint of the carport was enlarged toward the west, brought forward toward the street, and enclosed in 1982. The house's original 4" tongue-and-groove cedar siding appears to have been re-clad in T 1-11 on the front façade; the original siding is visible elsewhere on the building. The new cladding continues the vertical board pattern of the original siding and does not detract significantly from the historic character of the house. Today the house features two bedrooms, rather than the original three. (The original competition entry noted that the two bedrooms at the front of the house could be converted to one bedroom).



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Bibliography:

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Schanken, Andrew M., 194X, Architecture, Planning, and Consumer Culture on the American Home Front. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

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Spokane County Assessor, <https://www.spokanecounty.org/219/Assessor>, accessed January 2017.

"Spokane-Drawn Kitchen is Tops," Spokesman Review, January 28, 1951:8.

"Thousands Visit Exhibited Homes," Spokane Daily Journal, September 10, 1951:5.

"Top Award Goes To Spokane Man," Spokane Daily Chronicle, January 23m 1951:1.



Historic Property Report

Inventory Details - 7/5/2011

Common name: 7/5/2011
Date recorded: Artifacts Consulting, Inc.
Field Recorder:
Field Site number: 25031.0525
SHPO Determination Not Determined

Detail Information

Characteristics:

Category	Item
Foundation	Concrete - Poured
Roof Material	Asphalt/Composition - Built Up
Form Type	Single Dwelling
Roof Type	Gable
Form Type	

Surveyor Opinion

Significance narrative: Data included on this historic property inventory form (HPI) detail stemmed from County

Assessor building records imported by the Washington State Department of Archaeology of Historic Preservation (DAHP) into WISAARD in 2011. This upload reduces data entry burden on community volunteers and historical societies participating in the survey and inventory of their communities. The intent of this project is directed specifically to facilitating community and public involvement in stewardship, increasing data accuracy, and providing a versatile planning tool to Certified Local Governments (CLGs).

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Currently survey and inventory projects at the local level produce a field form for each property surveyed and include digital photographs. Volunteers doing the survey track down and manually enter all the owner, parcel, and legal data manually. Manual data entry diminishes accuracy and quantity of resources volunteers can survey. Recognizing this, DAHP uploaded building data for each Certified Local Government (CLG) on properties that were built in or before 1969 to provide an accurate and comprehensive baseline dataset. Volunteers doing survey work need only to verify data, add in photographs and extent of alterations and architectural style data, as well as expand upon the physical description and significance statement as new data is collected. For planning purposes, the attrition rate of properties built in or before 1969 can start to be measured to guide stewardship priorities.

Project methodology entailed use of the University of Washington's State Parcel Database (<http://depts.washington.edu/wagis/projects/parcels/development.php>) to provide the base parcel layer for CLGs. Filtering of building data collected from each county trimmed out all properties built after 1969, as well as all current, previously inventoried properties. Translation of building data descriptors to match fields in HPI allowed the data upload. Calculation of point locations utilized the center of each parcel. Data on this detail provides a snapshot of building information as of 2011. A detailed project methodology description resides with DAHP. Project team members: Historic Preservation Northwest, GeoEngineers, and Artifacts Consulting, Inc. (project lead).

Physical description: The house at 5024 W Northwest Boulevard, Spokane, is located in Spokane County. According to the county assessor, the structure was built in 1951 and is a single family dwelling. The 1-story building has a gable roof clad in built-up asphalt. The single-family form sits on a poured concrete foundation.