

# MILWAUKEE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION APPLICATION

*An application fee of \$25 (cash or check) is required with this application*

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## 1. Name

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Historic: Forest Home Library

and/or Common: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 2. Location

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Street & number 1432 W Forest Home Ave

Aldersperson(s): Alderman José Pérez

District Number(s): District 12

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## 3. Classification

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Category	Ownership	Present Use			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> park	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> structure(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> cemetery	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vacant
<input type="checkbox"/> object(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> religious	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence	<input type="checkbox"/> museum	

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## 4. Owner of Property

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Name: City of Milwaukee

Address: 809 N Broadway

City: Milwaukee. State WI. Zip 53202

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## 5. Representation in Existing Surveys

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Inventory: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  federal  state  county  local

Depository for survey records:

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Street & number \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**Previous historic designation:**

- National Register      Date \_\_\_\_\_ Historic Name \_\_\_\_\_
- City of Milwaukee Landmark      Date \_\_\_\_\_ Historic Name \_\_\_\_\_
- Other      Name of Program \_\_\_\_\_ Date designated \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. DESCRIPTION

**Condition:**

- excellent
- good
- fair
- deteriorated
- ruins

- altered
- unaltered

**Location:**

- original site
- moved, date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Building form:**

**Number of stories** 1

**Foundation**

- stone     brick     concrete block     concrete
- other \_\_\_\_\_

**Roof**

- gable ( flank;  end;  cross)
- gambrel ( flank;  end;  cross)
- hip     mansard     flat
- other \_\_\_\_\_

**Walls:**

- clapboard;  brick;  stucco;  stone;  wood shingle;  slate;  terra cotta;  asphalt siding;
- asbestos tile;  aluminum siding;  artificial stone;  other \_\_\_\_\_

**Written description:** (Continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

The Forest Home Library is a single story, flat roofed structure of approximately 14,560 sqft. The interior architecture is emblematic of the midcentury period and features an open floor plan with exposed post and beam lattice construction that casts striking light conditions across the space.

The building is clad in precast concrete panels and features large spans of glass and exposed structural weathering (Corten) steel framing. At the Northwest and Southwest corners of the building the corten steel framing extends beyond the roofline to create a partially covered outdoor porch. At the South facade, the structural steel lattice likely functions as a kind of brise soleil to the interior space, regulating daylight and temperature. A raised portion of the roof at the center of building creates a clerestory of windows that also enhances passive daylighting.

The building occupies a trapezoidal site bordered by S 15th St and W Forest Home Ave. A parking lot occupies the North end of the site. The South end of the lot features three mature trees, two raised, triangular concrete planting beds, and a freestanding sign for the former library. All original signage and landscaping is intact.

**Please see the images on the following page.**



## 7. SIGNIFICANCE

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### Areas of significance:

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> economics              | <input type="checkbox"/> law                 | <input type="checkbox"/> science             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education   | <input type="checkbox"/> literature          | <input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> military            | <input type="checkbox"/> theater             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> music               | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy          | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify):    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> community planning      | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion            |  |

**Date built or altered:** 1966

### Builder/architect:

Von Grossmann, Burroughs, & Van Lanen Architects (Milwaukee)

### Written statement of significance: (continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

In 1967 the design of the Forest Home Library was recognized with an AIA Wisconsin with an Honor Award AND a Design Excellence Award from the American Institute of Steel Construction. A Milwaukee Sentinel article from February 18, 1967 wrote that AIA judges called the Forest Home Library design "an alive and creative solution to small scale public architecture." Further comments from the jury published in this article include: "There is very good detailing on this project and some nice spaces have been created. The building is a totality in a sense that exterior and interior mesh fully. This building demonstrates a great deal of competence in technology. There is unity through the building. The interior and exterior relate to each other, and the consistency in detail implies that it had a strong hand in control of it." The Forest Home Library also formally appears to express sympathy with trends in passive design. A raised roof portion at the center of the building creates a clerestory of windows which allows for passive daylighting and extended steel structural steel framing at the south façade acts as a brise soleil, controlling light and temperature.

The history of the architectural applications of corten steel reveals that the Forest Home Library is far more distinct and important than it might first appear. The Forest Home Library is an excellent example of precast concrete and exposed weathered (Cor-ten) steel framing which, at the time, was significantly more expensive than conventional steel framing. While Corten Steel became famously popular among contemporary artists in the 1950s and 60s. Beverly Pepper's Cleopatra's Wedge is currently on display at Burn's Commons near the south end of Prospect Ave. Richard Serra's contentious use of Corten Steel for his public sculptures while misunderstood and hotly debated at first, are now among the most popular large scale public sculptures of the twentieth century. Widespread use by mid-century artists and architects later influenced an architectural renaissance in the use of Corten as an exterior cladding material in contemporary buildings of the early twenty-first century. Weathered steel was first developed in the 1930s for use in the manufacturing of railroad hopper cars. The first use of weathering steel in an architectural application is seen on the John Deere World Headquarters in Moline, Illinois, completed in 1964 and designed by Eero Saarinen (and less than 10 years prior, Saarinen's War Memorial Center opened to the public here in Milwaukee). This renders the very early use of corten steel at the Forest Home Library in 1966 significantly more important. It might be the first (and only?) building of the era in Milwaukee that utilizes the material.

This building was designed by the Milwaukee based mid-century architecture firm von Grossmann, Burroughs, & Van Lanen. Frederic Richard (Fritz) von Grossmann, Charles W Burroughs, and Robert Van Lanen started their firm in 1955. Before joining with Burroughs and Van Lanen, Fritz von Grossman had a noteworthy career on his own. Von Grossmann received his Bachelor's in Architecture from the University of Minnesota in 1928 and a graduate degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1932. Von Grossman practiced architecture independently from 1939 until 1955. In 1957 he won an AIA Honor Award for his design of the Masons of Wisconsin Grand Lodge Headquarters located on Milwaukee's East side (another building of significant midcentury architectural merit, though it is also not historically designated).

**The Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office stated that the Forest Home Library is preliminarily eligible for listing in the State and National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in 2018.** SHPO also stated that there is possibility that the Forest Home Library is eligible under criterion A in the area of Education, but that more research needs to be done to make the argument.

## 8. Major Bibliographical References

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See attached Newspaper Articles

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## 9. Property Description

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Acreage: 0.96311

Obtain from <http://assessments.milwaukee.gov/>

Legal property description:

**BURNHAM, ROGERS & BECHER'S SUBD NO 2 OF NE 1/4 & SE 1/4 SEC 6-6-22 BLOCK 14  
LOTS 8 TO 17 INCL**

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## 10. Form Prepared By

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**Name/Title:** Kelsey Kuehn (Director of Research) & Eric Vogel (Design Principal)

**Organization:** Vogel Design Group LLC

**Street:** 2405 E Wyoming Pl

**City:** Milwaukee **State:** Wi **Zip:** 53202

**Telephone (days)** 414.588.3125 OR 414.416.7080 (**evenings**) same **Date:** 10/15/2020

**Email** kelseynkuehn@gmail.com & fvogeliv@gmail.com

**Signature** *Kelsey N Kuehn*

**Return to:** **Historic Preservation  
Common Council/City Clerk  
200 East Wells Street Room B-4  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
(414-286-5722)  
HPC@milwaukee.gov**