

OPEN LETTER TO THE ARCADIA NEIGHBORHOOD

RE: THE DAVID AND GLADYS WRIGHT HOUSE

Dear Neighbor

The David and Gladys Wright House is one of the greatest treasures of Arizona's architecture, and I am pleased to have the privilege to be able to visit and use this masterpiece of desert living. I am Aaron Betsky, President of the School of Architecture at Taliesin, and your new neighbor. Through a generous act of philanthropy by Zach Rawling and his family, the David Wright House – the iconic spiral home in Arcadia – has been pledged as a gift to benefit the School of Architecture at Taliesin for our use as in the 85-year-old educational program founded by Frank Lloyd Wright. We look forward to being able to work with all of you in that process.

The School's fully-accredited graduate curriculum is based on the notion of learning by doing, and on working with the land rather than just building on it. Historically, the School has been based at two Wright-designed campuses: Taliesin in Spring Green, Wisconsin, and Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona. The gift of the David and Gladys Wright House to benefit the School will expand the School's graduate educational footprint into Phoenix, serve as an environment for the experience and learning of architecture, and allow the school to more powerfully continue its legacy of finding solutions to living well with our Sonoran Desert environment.

Frank Lloyd Wright titled the plans for the David Wright House "How to Live in the Southwest". The School believes we can learn from Wright how to live with the desert, not just in it. We can celebrate the beautiful place the Valley is, and plan for a future that is sustainable, open, and beautiful.

At present the School has seventeen Master of Architecture students. The School is poised to grow its enrollment to between forty-five to sixty Master of Architecture students in the next five years, creating future leading architects from across the world inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's legacy.

The School's campus will remain at Taliesin West; however, once permitted, the School plans to use the David and Gladys Wright House in its future curriculum as a hands-on design learning environment where students can study Frank Lloyd Wright's legacy and engage in design projects. The School will take over planning for the preservation of the house and citrus groves immediately, and future restoration will involve our faculty and students. The School and the David Wright House Foundation, under the guidance of architect Victor Sidy, have already begun a full restoration of the 260-square foot guesthouse on the property. The team of master craftsman and restoration experts plan to complete their work by November of this year.

As to the formal aspects of all of this: the David and Gladys Wright House will be formally gifted to a new supporting organization of the Arizona Community Foundation for the benefit of The School of Architecture at Taliesin. That new foundation, which is wholly separate from and without any formal, business, or financial ties to the Frank Lloyd Wright

Foundation that owns and operates Taliesin West, has as its purpose to sustain the educational mission of the School of Architecture at Taliesin by raising the funds needed to achieve the School's purpose and vision. The pledge of the House to the Foundation for The School of Architecture at Taliesin is contingent upon it securing a \$7 million endowment by December 31, 2020. Those monies will be spent on restoring and maintaining the David Wright House. The new organization would own the House and manage the endowment for the benefit of the School, while the School would operate the property, educational curriculum, and all community and cultural activities.

In the near term, beginning this Fall, we are planning small, invitation-only symposia, talks, and gatherings and lectures that further the mission of The School of Architecture at Taliesin. All parking for these events will be in the Camelback Church of Christ parking lot. The events will take place during the day and early evening and will not include amplified music or excess noise.

In the future, the School will pursue any required land use permits with the City of Phoenix. The School will share a draft site plan with the Arcadia Camelback Mountain Neighborhood Association and other interested parties once a draft concept has been prepared, likely this Winter. It is important to me to note that all earlier draft site plans attributed to the David and Gladys Wright House are no longer relevant.

I would like to assure you of three important items: 1) the School will not be proposing an outdoor Garden Pavilion (which some have referred to as an "amphitheater"), 2) the School will not be proposing the large underground museum contemplated four years ago, and 3) the School is committed to negotiating and securing a long-term agreement with the Camelback Church of Christ, to ensure secure, committed access from Camelback Road to existing parking at the Church, and direct access to the David Wright House.

I could not be more enthusiastic about restoring the past and securing the future of both the School and the David and Gladys Wright House. I look forward to meeting all of you, and to continued discussions with Arcadia Camelback Neighborhood Association. I am committed to building an honest, candid relationship and believe together we can create a thoughtful learning and cultural opportunity for Arcadia, as well as for future generations of architecture students, architects, and our greater Phoenix community.

Aaron Betsky

From the editor:

Mr. Betsky received his Masters of Architecture from Yale University in 1983. He was appointed Dean of the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture in 2015 and appointed as the President earlier this year.

For more information on Taliesin please visit:

<http://taliesin.edu/>

