

Johnson House
1515 W Main

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide general information about the existing site and residence. This document is not part of the PUD.

General House History

1. In 1939 Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Johnson built one of the largest homes constructed in Norman that year on a 4-acre tract west of Norman. The house is 74 years old.
2. Mr. Johnson, known by friends as Big Boy, due to his 6'6" stature, first bought a concrete company and then began construction of the house, which has 14" thick reinforced concrete walls.
3. The house is designed in an Art Moderne style—one of only a few remaining such structures in Norman.
4. Art Moderne was very streamlined and was most commonly in use between 1930s-1950s.
5. Big Boy Johnson was a founding member of the Touchdown Club and according to town lore, legendary OU Football Coach Bud Wilkinson was hired in the basement bar of the Johnson House in 1946.
6. As the town grew around and past it, the Johnson house has become a Norman landmark.

Historic Preservation

Given its architecture, its setting and the sheer size of the lot, the Johnson House makes a significant contribution to Norman's sense of place.

Sense of place refers to the feelings emotions and attachments that people have for a particular location—a site, a district, a community. Sense of place is the feelings and emotions we have about buildings, neighborhoods and features that we value and that make our community different from everywhere else.

The Johnson House's style and setting are a stark contrast to the suburban setting where all of the surrounding houses face away from Main Street and are hidden behind privacy fences.

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The house's landmark role in Norman is due to its size, its distinctive Modernistic architecture and the fact that it faces Main Street surrounded by a 4-acre parcel. A canopy of mature oak trees lines the sidewalk. Coupled with the open expanse of lawn, the Johnson House feels like a park to everyone who passes whether by car or on foot.

The Rose Rock School is seeking to preserve all of those elements of the landmark—the house, the grounds and the setting—not just for the school but for the benefit of the entire Norman community.

The notion of adaptive reuse of buildings is quite common in historic preservation. Throughout the country and the world, historic buildings often outlive one use and are adapted for a new and productive use. Adaptive reuse allows community landmarks to remain in place and community history to survive

Historic preservation is the ultimate green activity. After all, the greenest building is the one already built!

Investing in historic preservation conveys value not only on the property itself but that reinvestment creates value for surrounding properties.

Preserving such a landmark that contributes to Norman's sense of place creates value for everyone.

Imagine the site without the Johnson House. Imagine the site as an office park or a collection of single family houses, none of which could address Main Street but would all turn inward aware from the arterial street as current subdivision regulations require.