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## An award-winning teardown

New owners won't discuss plans for the razed double lot

The house at 1 Waverly Court, designed in 1999 by Carrie Glassman Shoemake, won architecture awards. It was torn down.

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By LISA GRAY

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DRIVING down Bissonnet, heading from the museums toward Rice Village, you couldn't help but grin at the house at 1 Waverly Court.

The main part of the house was a three-story brick box, but you hardly noticed that. What you noticed was the stair tower, a jaunty silver parallelogram, bigger at the top than the bottom, with an enormous bank of windows. Its cheerful outline lingered in your head even after you'd turned off Bissonnet — a little improvement to your day, sweet as an unexpected smile.

The house on Waverly Court was one of those works that please both architects and regular people. The American Institute of Architects gave it two awards, and it earned a photo in what architects refer to as "the guide," Stephen Fox's *Houston Architectural Guide*. The neighbors liked the place, too.

But the house's second owners apparently weren't among its fans. The house, built in 1999, disappeared early this fall, razed to make way for something new. Houstonians have grown used to seeing historical houses torn down to make way for newer ones. But 1 Waverly Court was a surprise. That house? Only 8 years old?

"It's so Houston," laments Susan Garwood, the original owner. "To be torn down for its lot. Everything here is all about the dirt."

Garwood appreciates that Waverly Court is a terrific piece of dirt.

She charged architect Carrie Glassman Shoemake with designing a modern house that respected its neighborhood. Shoemake chose brick that matched the brick of the architect-

designed house across the street and corrugated metal that matched the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, only a couple of blocks away. The metal was also a sly salute to Garwood, a former president of the CAMH board.

She went to five places searching for the perfect doorknobs and spent even longer looking for the perfect 1 to serve as her house number. She planted a garden of rare plants, many of them Texas natives, and labeled them with their Latin names. She was deeply happy there.

But in 2003, not long after the garden had grown in, she inherited another house: a 1920s mansion in River Oaks designed by Birdsall Briscoe. Its architecture also merited a photo in "the guide."

Garwood's grandparents had lived there. She loved the place and hated seeing that kind of graceful old mansion disappear from River Oaks. Determined not to let it be a teardown, she moved her family and put her Waverly Court house up for sale.

News that the Waverly House was going down stunned her.

"I thought that house would be there forever," Garwood says. "I never thought it would be torn down."

Friends have been giving her long meaningful hugs and sending condolence cards. On Friday, Garwood held a wake. Former neighbors and people who helped build the house dropped by Garwood's place in River Oaks to light candles, look at photos and trade stories.

"It was cathartic," she says. "I don't know that I've moved on, but that helped."

Amy and Michael Cosgrove, the lot's current owners, say they prefer not to discuss their plans. At one point, they hired Shoemake to make alterations to the 3,500-square-foot house, which had been valued at roughly \$1 million by the county tax assessor.

Shoemake, like all architects, is leery of discussing clients. She says gingerly that the house was a source of pride for her firm and that she's sad it was demolished. But she won't discuss the Cosgroves' intentions.

Perhaps they wanted more space. Or maybe they just wanted something different. Last October, the Cosgroves bought the house next door, a 1920s teardown. Around the same time, they began working with architect Francois de Menil, planning whatever it is that they'll erect on their freshly razed double lot.

De Menil, the son of art patrons Dominique and John de Menil, has won his own share of awards (among them, several for the Menil Collection's Byzantine Fresco Chapel). Reached at his office in New York, he politely declined to discuss the project.

Judging by his work, it's likely he'll build something beautiful. But it'll be hard to beat the previous house.

And at least one tart-tongued neighbor is appalled. "There goes the neighborhood," she told a friend.

She paused a beat, then finished: "In a multimillion-dollar kind of way."

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ent/arts/gray/5207509.html>

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