

# My Turn: Wrong approach to the Wright house

Paul Barnes, AZ I See It 3:16 p.m. MST October 2, 2015

**My Turn: Preservation is one thing. Using the David and Gladys Wright House for commercial purposes is a whole other animal.**



(Photo: Patrick Breen/The Republic)

As someone who has dedicated much of his life to preserving Phoenix neighborhoods, and fending off inappropriate uses, I feel compelled to respond to your recent editorial about the David and Gladys Wright House in Arcadia ("[No Wright House deed goes unpunished](#)," Sept. 28.)

To do so, allow me to utilize the phrase “gerrymandering.” In politics most people know this as the attempt to draw bizarre legislative or congressional lines to rope in certain voters to ensure an incumbent politician will be protected at election time. It’s a racket, by politicians for politicians.

What does that have to do with the Wright House?

The developer behind it is wrongfully attempting to convince the City of Phoenix that not just the 2.4 acres where the home is located should be designated “historic,” but all of the land and homes he has subsequently purchased around it, and razed, should be included as well. This will allow the developer to do several inappropriate things.

The evidence for doing this is specious. Your editorial suggested guest quarters, which it incorrectly didn’t recognize as also being located on the original 2.4 acres where the home sits, somehow justifies giving another 4 acres of unrelated property the ability to conduct commercial activity.

But absent in this newspaper's and the developer's logic is this: the Wright property was never utilized for commercial weddings, concerts, a wine bar and other commercial uses as is now being proposed.

The developer wants the "historic" designation beyond the home itself to enable new commercial uses. I oppose this, as do the vast majority of Arcadia residents.

Anyone in Phoenix concerned about protecting neighborhoods should be concerned as well. If it can happen here, it will open the door for it happening in your neighborhood. Fortunately, the Phoenix City Council seems to get it because the only people there who have proffered an opinion to date have said preservation is good, but commercialization is not.

A good example of what can and should be our standard lies just a few miles away in Paradise Valley.

After Barry Goldwater passed away, there was a lot of discussion of what was to become of his home. Fortunately, it was purchased by a family who respected his legacy. Their renovation maintains the integrity and spirit of how Goldwater lived there.



Paul Barnes is a longtime neighborhood activist in Phoenix. (Photo: Mark Henle, Mark Henle/The Republic)

They haven't sought to commercialize the home, nor would Paradise Valley ever allow it. Certainly, they host charity, family, and political events - just as any homeowner may - but not once have they suggested holding commercial activities.

There's a difference between generosity and opportunism. Arcadia would universally celebrate the preservation of this home if it stopped there.

Instead, this project has become an exercise in seeking unprecedented and inappropriate commercial development rights that no one reading this article would ever support if it were proposed next to their home. That it is being done in the name of a famous architect does not make it right.

*Paul Barnes is a longtime Arcadia neighborhood activist.*