

**Farnsworth House Management Transfer**  
**Statement from Jim Peters, President, Landmarks Illinois**  
**July 10, 2009**

On January 1, 2010, Landmarks Illinois will transfer management of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House to the property's owner, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which had worked with Landmarks Illinois, Friends of the Farnsworth House, and others to acquire this internationally-known modernist icon nearly six years ago.

After years of operating this historic site, however, our board of directors has decided to focus more fully on being the leading advocate for historic preservation in the State of Illinois. Nonetheless, our grassroots effort—along with our various partners—to save Farnsworth House at a private auction in December 2003 will always remain a jewel in the crown of our organization.

Although plans for the management transfer were underway before the current economic conditions, the tightening economy has verified the organization's need to focus on its core preservation mission, including other threatened buildings like the Farnsworth House from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. These "recent past" efforts include our ongoing *Recent Past Survey of Cook County*, as well as the numerous Mid-Century Modern listings on our statewide *10 Most Endangered* and *Chicagoland Watch* lists.

We would invite supporters of the Farnsworth House to help underwrite these ongoing preservation efforts by becoming a member and supporter of Landmarks Illinois (see [www.Landmarks.org/membership.htm](http://www.Landmarks.org/membership.htm)).

Our operation of the Farnsworth House during the past six years has accomplished many significant goals to preserve and maintain the site for the public. Shortly after the purchase of the house in December 2003 to prevent its relocation out of state, we hired a skilled, professional staff to plan and implement a six-day-a-week volunteer-guided tour program from April through November. As a result, tens of thousands of visitors from over 40 countries have experienced Mies' masterpiece during those six years. We also upgraded the Visitor Center to make it more attractive and useful, including a new orientation presentation, resource center, and museum store focused on Modern design and architecture. We implemented a disaster preparedness plan to respond to the increased flooding of the Fox River and other emergencies. We also worked with our partners at the National Trust for Historic Preservation to secure grants and donations for maintenance, restoration, and interpretation.

In this new arrangement, the Farnsworth House will benefit greatly from the sixty years of experience the National Trust for Historic Preservation has in managing and operating historic places. It will also benefit from the National Trust's newly created Modernism + Recent Past program, which focuses on the significant architecture of the mid-20th century, as well as those places of social, economic, and cultural importance. Farnsworth House will have the opportunity to work in even closer association through collaborative programming and interpretation with its "sister" property, the Philip Johnson Glass House (another Modernist site owned and operated by the National Trust). Philip Johnson was inspired in his design of the Glass House by plans Mies van der Rohe developed for the Farnsworth House.

I sincerely and profoundly thank the many generous donors, our dedicated volunteer board of directors, and our committed volunteers and staff for their tireless work over the past six years to preserve the Farnsworth House and share it with visitors from around the world. The National

Trust, which operates other National Trust Historic Sites throughout the country, is committed to building on the work of Landmarks Illinois in presenting the Farnsworth House to the public.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation will continue to open the Farnsworth House on a regular basis in the same manner that Landmarks Illinois has for the past six years. Indeed, as a national organization, we anticipate that its status as an international icon will be further enhanced by its management by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and bring an increased appreciation for Illinois' architectural masterpieces. I hope you will join me in supporting the National Trust for Historic Preservation as it continues our work to preserve and interpret the Farnsworth House.

As a statewide partner of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Landmarks Illinois will continue to cooperate with the National Trust in the long term preservation of Farnsworth House as well as other historic places throughout Illinois.

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# Press Release



For Immediate Release

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## **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF FARNSWORTH HOUSE, ICON OF MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE, WILL BE ASSUMED BY NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN 2010**

*Landmarks Illinois will transfer management of Farnsworth House in order to focus on its core preservation mission across the state of Illinois*

**Washington, D.C. (July 8, 2009)**— On January 1, 2010, operation and management of the Ludwig Mies van der Rohe-designed Farnsworth House—a masterpiece of modernist architecture located in Plano, Illinois—will transfer from Landmarks Illinois to its owner—the National Trust for Historic Preservation. After six years of operating this historic site, Landmarks Illinois board of directors made the decision to transfer operation of the Farnsworth House in order to focus its efforts more fully on its role as the leading voice for historic preservation in the State of Illinois. The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Landmarks Illinois, and Friends of the Farnsworth led the efforts to save the Farnsworth House at auction in 2003. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has over 60 years experience in the management and operation of historic sites, and made clear that the visitor experience would be unchanged after the transfer.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, which also owns and operates the Philip Johnson Glass House, recently launched a Modernism and Recent Past program, which focuses on the significant architecture of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. By owning and operating both the Glass House and its “sister” property (Philip Johnson was inspired in his design for the Glass House by plans for Farnsworth House developed by Mies van der Rohe) Farnsworth House, the National Trust for Historic Preservation plans to use the properties to build awareness of the need to preserve significant mid-century architecture.

“In 2003, the National Trust for Historic Preservation joined forces with Landmarks Illinois to secure funding for Farnsworth House and ensure that this modernist masterpiece stayed where it belongs,” said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. “We are very proud of our partnership with Landmarks Illinois, and are committed to maintaining the outstanding visitor experience that they have created at Farnsworth House. I sincerely and profoundly thank the dedicated board of directors and staff at Landmarks Illinois and our generous donors for their tireless work over the past six years to care for and manage the Farnsworth House and share it with visitors from around the world.”

Moe also noted that one of the National Trust’s core goals moving forward is to establish a broader financial base of supporters in the Chicago area to assist in the long term care and interpretation of Farnsworth House. Whitney French will continue to serve as Farnsworth’s Site Director and will become an employee of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Plans for Landmarks Illinois’ refined focus were underway before the current economic conditions occurred, however, the tightening economy has verified the organization’s need to focus on its core mission. Landmarks Illinois has an ambitious mission to advocate for the preservation of historic places throughout Illinois. To fulfill this mission, the board and staff are focusing their efforts on these areas and not operating a historic site.

“This was a difficult decision, but after six years of operating this historic site, our board of directors has decided that Landmarks Illinois needed to focus on its core mission of historic preservation,” said Jim Peters, president of Landmarks Illinois. “We are pleased to hand off daily operations of this venerable site to such a strong partner as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which I know is committed to building on the work of Landmarks Illinois in presenting Farnsworth House to the public. Our grassroots effort—working with the National Trust and Friends of Farnsworth—to save the Farnsworth House will always remain a jewel in the crown of our organization.”

### **About Farnsworth House**

Farnsworth House is one of three residences in the United States designed and built by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, one of the leading architects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dr. Edith Farnsworth commissioned the house as a weekend retreat in Plano, Illinois—sixty miles southwest of her home and medical practice in Chicago. With its white steel frame and glass walls, the simple yet elegant house immediately became an international icon of Modern architecture when it was completed in 1951. In 2003, the house was put on the market, and potential buyers were proposing to dismantle the structure and relocate it outside of Illinois, removing it from its unique setting on the banks of the Fox River. Landmarks Illinois, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and Friends of Farnsworth led the efforts to save the Farnsworth House through an intensive fundraising. On December 12, 2003, the National Trust purchased the Farnsworth House for \$7.5 million at an auction in New York City.

### **About Landmarks Illinois**

Landmarks Illinois is the state's leading voice for historic preservation. Since its founding in 1971, the 2,500-member statewide organization has gone on to save countless architectural and historic treasures throughout Illinois. Landmarks Illinois' mission today focuses on saving building, facilitating preservation, and educating the public through innovative programs and promotion. For more information, visit [www.Landmarks.org](http://www.Landmarks.org).

The National Trust for Historic Preservation ([www.PreservationNation.org](http://www.PreservationNation.org)) is a non-profit membership organization bringing people together to protect, enhance and enjoy the places that matter to them. By saving the places where great moments from history – and the important moments of everyday life – took place, the National Trust for Historic Preservation helps revitalize neighborhoods and communities, spark economic development and promote environmental sustainability. With headquarters in Washington, DC, nine regional and field offices, 29 historic sites, and partner organizations in all 50 states, the National Trust for Historic Preservation provides leadership, education, advocacy and resources to a national network of people, organizations and local communities committed to saving places, connecting us to our history and collectively shaping the future of America's stories.

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