# Bames House Conservation Management Plan Overview

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# Introduction



To excel in the structuring of a problem, we must be committed to a concern for quality in everything in the world around us. We must learn to care **deeply.** –CHARLES EAMES

Figure 1 Ray and Charles Eames, photographed outside the living room on a rainy day in March 1978, nearly thirty years after taking up residence.

Figure 2 Iconic view of the Eames House building complex and eucalyptus row in 1950. The overall layout integrates indoor and outdoor spaces and uses an innovative selection of diverse finishes and experimental building fabric. Images such as this inspired pilgrimages to the site by architects and designers worldwide.

Figure 3 Flowchart of the conservation planning process, involving a sequence of investigations, decisions, and actions that provide a methodology for managing places of cultural significance.

> This overview provides a visual summary of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the Eames House, an internationally renowned work of modern architecture. A CMP is a document that assesses the significance of a place and develops policies to guide decision making about its use and conservation to ensure that its significance is retained and interpreted for the future. The Eames House CMP provides a framework for the care. management, and conservation of the House. This overview presents key aspects of its heritage significance, including its contents and collections as well as its landscape and setting, and details a selection of the most important conservation policies that were developed in the CMP.

The Eames House, also known as Case Study House No. 8, is in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles, California. Constructed in 1949, it was designed by Charles and Ray Eames, who occupied it for the remainder of their lives. The Eames family feels a keen responsibility to preserve it as Charles and Ray left it. To do so, the

family established the nonprofit Charles and Ray Eames House Preservation Foundation (the Eames Foundation), which provides ongoing public access to the site and educational experiences that celebrate the creative legacy of Charles and Ray Eames.

The first phase of the Eames House CMP process encompassed the analysis of documentary and physical site evidence to craft a comprehensive understanding of the place. It included preparation of a detailed history of the development of the site; analysis of its current physical layout, form, condition, and fabric; and a comparison of the Eames House to other sites that share similar characteristics. This analysis informed the significance assessment, which examined the site's tangible and intangible values (or qualities) and resulted in the creation of a concise statement of significance.

The next phase of the CMP process involved analysis of the opportunities, threats, and vulnerabilities faced by the Eames House, as well as requirements for its ongoing management and conservation. Together, these assessments provided the foundation for development of policies to guide the conservation, interpretation, and management of the site while preserving its significant values.

The Earnes House CMP was developed using a values-based methodology that follows the philosophy and principles of international benchmarks such as The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013 (the Burra Charter) (Australia ICOMOS 2013) and Approaches for the Conservation of Twentieth-Century Architectural Heritage: Madrid Document 2014 (the Madrid Document) (ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Twentieth-Century Heritage 2014), as well as the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (US Department of the Interior, US National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services 2017), which guide preservation practice in the United States.

The CMP provides policy recommendations for implementing detailed conservation projects and a framework for prioritizing maintenance work, which require periodic review and updating; the CMP does not include detailed work programs or specifications.

The pages that follow present an illustrated overview of the significance of the Eames House and a selection of the policies developed in the CMP. Many of these policies are general and apply to all elements and components of the site, while others are specific to a particular element. Together, they are intended to guide the conservation, interpretation, and management of the site in a manner that preserves its cultural significance for future generations.



### **The Conservation Planning Process**





**Conservation is about** the care and continuing development of a place in such a way that its significance is retained or revealed and its future is made secure. The objective of the conservation plan is to set out how that aim may best be achieved. In doing so it seeks to relate the proposed conservation action to the procurable resources.

-JAMES SEMPLE KERR

# **Statement of Significance**

➤ The statement of significance succinctly explains why the Eames House is important, synthesizing the documentary research and physical evidence to analyze and summarize the many different aspects of its importance, or significance. It is the foundation on which conservation policies are based. The statement of significance and policies as developed in the CMP should guide all planning for and implementation of work for the conservation, interpretation, and management of the Eames House.

#### **Eames House Statement of Significance**

>> The Eames House is an outstanding international exemplar of postwar modern residential design and exhibits many of the hallmarks of the period. These include the innovative selection and use of industrial materials in a residence; the integration of indoor and outdoor living and working spaces; an open-plan layout and flexible-use spaces; the honest expression of materials and structure; and an emphasis on the use of prefabricated and experimental construction materials.

>>The Eames House is one of the most **intact and internationally recognized** works designed under *Arts and Architecture* magazine's influential **Case Study House Program**.

>>As the home that world-renowned designers Charles and Ray Eames designed for themselves, the Eames House provides a visceral experience of their lives, work, and aesthetics, and demonstrates their attitude toward the interrelated nature of life and work. The site's exceptional integrity sustains the Eameses' legacy as innovators and communicators of a wide range of ideas.

## The Eames House is a place of international pilgrimage for architects and designers.

>> The Eames House has had an **exceptional continuity of ownership, occupation, and ongoing care**, with Charles and Ray in residence from Christmas Eve 1949 until their deaths in 1978 and 1988, respectively. Their descendants' ongoing stewardship through the Eames Foundation facilitates public access and research.

>>The Eames House, with its contents and collections, embodies the Eameses' reflective, iterative approach to design. The contents and collections include important furniture prototypes and production models that demonstrate Charles and Ray's constant evolution of designs through use and iterative experimentation. >> The Eames House, with its contents and collections, including carefully composed assemblages of objects, textiles, and artifacts, provides **evidence of the Eameses' humanization of industrial modernism**. This includes the interplay between craft and machine work, the use of the found object as art, the relationship between building and landscape, and the celebration of the ordinary and utilitarian.

>> The evolution of the Eames House design from the Bridge House to the final design (as built) demonstrates the deepening of the Eameses' **understanding and appreciation** of the natural qualities of the site over time, including its topographical character, the open meadow with its views out to the Pacific Ocean, the preexisting row of eucalyptus trees, and the play of light and shadow. The placement of the building complex embodies a sympathetic understanding of the spirit of the place. It respects and retains the site's natural qualities and, through careful design, integrates the natural with the human-made.

>> Since the time of its construction, the Eames House has been extensively photographed, filmed, and written about, internationally transmitting the influence of the Eames House and its creators as icons of twentieth-century modernism.

>> The Eameses' practice of welcoming visitors and guests, which has come to be known as the guest-host relationship, is evident in the Eames House and its contents and collections. The continuing practice of welcoming visitors and guests honors Charles and Ray's way of living and socializing at the Eames House, and communicates their spirit of the place.





> The pages that follow present excerpts from the statement of significance arranged thematically and illustrated with images of site elements and components. These are accompanied by a selection of paraphrased policies aimed at conservation of the site and its significance. Figure 4 The Eames House in 1950, shortly after construction was completed. Set behind the historic row of eucalyptus trees, the building is a steel-frame structure with unusual exterior cladding made up of steel industrial windows and a variety of infill materials and colors.

Figure 5 Guests at a tea ceremony in 1951. Known as gracious hosts, the Eameses configured the living room in the manner of a Japanese teahouse for the occasion. From left: Isamu Noguchi, Ray Eames, Yoshiko (Shirley) Yamaguchi, Sosei Shizuye Matsumoto, Charlie Chaplin, Henrietta Lederbom, Iris Tree, Betty Harford, Christian Lederbom, and Ford Rainey.

**Figure 6** View of the living room alcove in 2013, showing the rich array of materials in the Eamesee' collections. Few surfaces are unadorned, and objects remain arranged much as they were during Ray and Charles's lifetimes.



# **The Home of Charles and Ray Eames**

#### Significance

- The Eames House is one of the most intact and internationally recognized works designed under Arts and Architecture magazine's influential Case Study House Program.
- As the home that world-renowned designers
   Charles and Ray Eames designed for
   themselves, the Eames House provides a visceral experience of their lives, work, and aesthetics, and demonstrates their attitude toward the interrelated nature of life and work. The site's exceptional integrity sustains the Eameses' legacy as innovators and communicators of a wide range of ideas.

### Policy

- Conserve, manage, and interpret the site in accordance with the CMP's statement of significance and best practice conservation principles.
- Adopt the CMP conservation policies as the framework for coordinating and implementing future conservation, interpretation, and management decisions, and regularly review the plan and policies.
- Conserve all elements, components, and attributes that contribute to the Eames House site's heritage significance in accordance with the policies of the CMP.
- Appoint an honorary architect, honorary collections conservator, and honorary landscape architect to provide the Eames Foundation with consistent technical advice and guidance.
- Monitor all uses, activities, and proposals for adaptation to identify, avoid, and mitigate heritage impacts on significant site elements, values, and attributes.
- Avoid new development on the site as much as possible. Essential new development should be sited and designed to conform to all relevant policies of the CMP and should be reversible.





Figure 7 The Eameses at work on their film Toccata for Toy Trains in the studio in 1957. Charles and Ray used the residence and studio as a "creative incubator" to develop new ideas in a variety of fields of interest from architecture to film. Figure 8 Graphics addressing client needs for Case Study Houses Nos. 8 and 9, published in *Arts and Architecture* in December 1945. The clients are not named, but they are "married couple" Charles and Ray Eames (*left*) and the magazine's editor, John Entenza (*right*).







**Figure 10** A 1949 design of the Eames House, showing an open-plan layout and flexible-use spaces in a residence for living and a studio for working, separated by an open court that is fully engaged with the site and landscape.

Figure 11 Charles and Ray in 1946 on the bluff above Santa Monica Bay, eventual site of the Eames House, with John Entenza (*right*), who launched the Case Study House Program and whose residence would also be sited on the bluff. The house is strongly associated with all three.

Cultural significance is a simple concept. Its purpose is to help identify and assess the attributes which make a place of value to us and to our society. An understanding of it is therefore basic to any planning process. Once the significance of a place is understood, informed policy decisions can be made which will enable that significance to be retained, revealed or, at least, impaired as little as possible. –JAMES SEMPLE KERR

# **The Building Complex**

### Significance

- The Eames House is an outstanding international exemplar of postwar modern residential design and exhibits many of the hallmarks of the period. These include the innovative selection and use of industrial materials in a residence; the integration of indoor and outdoor living and working spaces; an open-plan layout and flexible-use spaces; the honest expression of materials and structure; and an emphasis on the use of prefabricated and experimental construction materials.
- Since the time of its construction, the Eames House has been extensively photographed, filmed, and written about, internationally transmitting the influence of the Eames House and its creators as icons of twentieth-century modernism.

### Policy

- Carry out planning and decision making to conserve the building complex in accordance with the policies and philosophical approach outlined in the CMP.
- Ensure that conservation projects (including reconstruction and adaptation) retain, respect, and maintain the authenticity of original and early elements and fabric, and that alterations and new work are appropriately identified.
- > Prepare an integrated Maintenance Plan for the site, contents and collections, and landscape, including a cyclical maintenance plan and priority maintenance work requirements, together with appropriate time periods and priorities for their implementation.
- Develop a comprehensive Site Drainage and Water Management Plan and regularly monitor roof drainage to ensure watertightness of the building complex.
- Monitor and maintain concrete components and steel framing elements.









Figure 12 View of the east facade of the residence in 2017. The layout and articulation of materials in the facades demonstrate the aesthetic choice of modern industrial materials and construction methods as customized by the Eameses.

Figure 13 View from the east-facing living room windows toward the Pacific Ocean in the early 1950s. The building's thin steel frame and large expanses of glass create a minimal barrier between indoors and outdoors.

Figure 14 The studio in 2013, another example of flexibility in design. The double-height space, which maximizes natural daylight, proved to be very adaptable and has seen many changes in use over the years.

**Figure 15** View of the master bedroom from the guest bedroom in 2017, showing maximization of spatial flexibility. When open, the large sliding panel at left integrates the bedrooms into one large space. At right, sliding panels close off the bedrooms from the living room below. Ray and Charles experimented with new materials and detailing, as seen in the window shades of translucent fiberglass (Plyon) in custom-made wood frames at the back of the room.

# **The Building Complex**

#### Significance

The Eames House, with its contents and collections, including carefully composed assemblages of objects, textiles, and artifacts, provides evidence of the Eameses' humanization of industrial modernism. This includes the interplay between craft and machine work, the use of the found objects as art, the relationship between building and landscape, and the celebration of the ordinary and utilitarian.

### **Policy**

- Ensure that conservation, restoration, and reconstruction of key significant elements and fabric are the preferred methods of interpretation.
- Ensure that the elements and attributes of the Eames House that contribute to its most significant historic, aesthetic, social, and technical values are appropriately conserved, interpreted, and managed as part of its future use.
- Develop plans for specific conservation projects within the context of the CMP philosophy and approach, and prioritize these plans to address urgent needs.
- Prepare a Building Envelope Condition Survey and implement high-priority repairs and maintenance work.

Eventually everything connects people, ideas, objects...the quality of the connections is the key to quality per se. -CHARLES EAMES









Figure 16 The spiral staircase leading from the entry hall to the second floor in 2013. Spatially efficient, aesthetically elegant, and lit by a glazed skylight, it embodies the Eameses' humanization of industrial modernism with its skillful blend of modern industrial design and materials (steel and plywood) and traditional craftsmanship.

**Figure 17** The kitchen in 1949. Outfitted with prefabricated steel cabinets, an accordion door, and rubber floor tiles, the kitchen celebrates ordinary, off-the-shelf building materials. The corrugated glass screen at right provides privacy (with light transfer) to the rear utility room.

**Figure 18** The central court and pathways in 2017, which integrate the flow of indoor-outdoor living and working spaces.

**Figure 19** The studio north elevation, as seen from the upper pathway above the retaining wall in 2013. The Eames House is nestled between a steep hillside at right and the row of historic eucalyptus trees, visible at left.

# **Contents and Collections**

#### Significance

The Eames House, with its contents and collections, embodies the Eameses' reflective, iterative approach to design. The contents and collections include important furniture prototypes and production models that demonstrate Charles and Ray's constant evolution of designs through use and iterative experimentation.

### Policy

- Prepare and implement a Collections Management Plan as a matter of priority to guide access to and conservation of the interiors and contents and collections of the Eames House.
- Assess and prioritize the conservation needs of the contents and collections to direct preventive and longer-term conservation work. Focus attention on the most vulnerable objects, including textiles and clothing.
- Complete and maintain an object identification inventory.
- Record Eames family knowledge about contents and collections and housekeeping practices.











Any time one or more things are consciously put together in a way that they can accomplish something better than they could have accomplished individually, this is an act of design. -CHARLES EAMES

**Figure 20a** The living room, photographed by Julius Shulman in 1950. The relatively sparse furnishings and tatami mat floor coverings provided space for the Eameses' collections to develop and grow.

**Figure 20b** The living room, photographed by Julius Shulman in 1958. In their first eight years in residence, Charles and Ray filled the room with objects, textiles, and artwork. These artifacts need to be conserved and managed through the development of a Collections Management Plan.

**Figure 21** Installers hanging pleated draperies in the living room in 1949. As a method of controlling light and shade, the draperies' regular operation is an essential element of the environmental management program to protect the collections and furnishings.

**Figure 22** An early view of the living room alcove from above. The sofa later served as a prototype for the Sofa Compact, demonstrating the continuing evolution of the Eameses' design practice through use and iterative experimentation.

Figure 23 Assemblages of objects in the kitchen in 2017. The display of the collections, which remain much as they were when the Eameses inhabited the residence, provides an immediate experience of their lives, work, and aesthetics.

# Landscape and Setting

#### Significance

The evolution of the Eames House design from the Bridge House to the final design (as built) demonstrates the deepening of the Eameses' understanding and appreciation of the natural qualities of the site over time, including its topographical character, the open meadow with its views out to the Pacific Ocean, the preexisting row of eucalyptus trees, and the play of light and shadow. The placement of the building complex embodies a sympathetic understanding of the spirit of the place. It respects and retains the site's natural qualities and, through careful design, integrates the natural with the human-made.



**Figure 24** The meadow next to the Eames House, green and verdant during a wet season in 2013. Ray and Charles sowed the meadow in rye grass and wildflowers and enjoyed seeing it reflect the passing of the seasons. The Eames Foundation continues this practice except in periods of drought.

**Figure 25** Early view from the south court across the meadow to the ocean, framed by a variety of trees. The wide-branching peppercorn tree at center predates the Eames House and may be a remnant from an earlier use of the site.

**Figure 26** The eucalyptus row and building complex in 2013. This view, when compared with the photo of 1950 (see fig. 2), shows the significant increase in the trees' girth and foliage over the years. This has altered the play of light and shadow on the facade and interiors and obscured views toward and away from the Eames House.



We surveyed the land ourselves and found ten eucalyptus trees in a row on the edge of a hill by a flat part. So we decided to follow the straight line. We dug out the hill (we had to have a costly retaining wall) and kept the meadow which we all loved. It is wonderful to see all the changing seasons in it—even here in California. –RAY EAMES







#### Policy

- Prepare and implement a Landscape Management Plan that develops detailed management and conservation policy recommendations for the site's ongoing care and interpretation.
- Conserve significant views to and from the site as much as possible. A detailed analysis of existing views and original and intended views should be undertaken and the stability and interpretation of the earthen berm investigated.
- Retain the location and screening function of the eucalyptus row through selective thinning, replanting, and tree management by specialist arborists.
- Maintain the open meadow with seasonal grasses fringed by trees.
- Ensure that all excavation-related work on site, including demolition or removal, new construction, modification of open spaces, and provision of underground services, takes into account the site's potential to retain archaeological evidence of past use and that, if found, the appropriately qualified professionals are consulted.
- Maintain and interpret the legibility and character of the early configuration and layout of the site including the open meadow, berm, and arrival sequence.
- Investigate, rectify, monitor, and manage the stability of the upper slope.

Figure 27 A 1950 view across the south court, showing Case Study Houses Nos. 9 and 18 in the background, which share the original landscape. The view to these homes has been lost to later development and privacy screening.

Figure 28 The steep, vegetated upper slope behind the Eames House in 2013, requiring regular drainage management and maintenance by a professional arborist. Due to the size and location of the trees, leaf litter and falling branches are also significant vulnerabilities for the building complex.

# **Managing the Place**

### **Significance**

- > The Eames House is a place of international pilgrimage for architects and designers.
- > The Eames House has had an exceptional continuity of ownership, occupation, and ongoing care.... [The Eameses'] descendants' ongoing stewardship through the Eames Foundation facilitates public access and research.
- > The Eameses' practice of welcoming visitors and guests... is evident in the Eames House and its contents and collections. The continuing practice of welcoming visitors and guests honors Charles and Ray's way of living and socializing at the Eames House, and communicates their spirit of the place.



At all times love and discipline have led to a beautiful environment and a good life. -- CHARLES EAMES





We work because it's a chain reaction, each subject leads to the next. -CHARLES EAMES



Figure 29 Members of the Eames Foundation board, photographed in 2004. The continuity of ownership and ongoing stewardship by the Eames family through the Foundation is significant. From left: Llisa Demetrios. Eames Demetrios. Byron Atwood, Lucia Eames (seated), Carla Atwood Hartman, and Lucia Dewey Atwood.

Figure 30 Diagram of the Conservation Management Plan, which provides the framework and central reference point for a range of research, plans, policies, and actions in support of conservation of the Eames House

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### **Policy**

- > Prepare and implement an Interpretation Plan for the site to facilitate community and visitor understanding of the heritage values and conservation management objectives.
- > Prepare and implement a Visitor Management **Plan** for the site that identifies objectives and specific goals for use, carrying capacity, and visitation.
- >Complete **archival recording** of the existing site layout and key elements as a permanent record of the Eames House at this point in time.
- ► Continue to use the place as a house museum. Related activities and proposed adaptations should be compatible with the conservation of its cultural significance and interpretation.
- > Prepare a Heritage Risk Management Plan to address the range of vulnerabilities and risks faced by the Eames House, and include disaster preparedness and wildfire emergency plans.
- Implement environmental improvement recommendations developed by the GCI between 2011 and 2017 (Maekawa forthcoming; Henry 2017).
- Plan for and implement specific conservation projects and studies in accordance with the priorities identified in the CMP.
- >Implement annual pest inspections.
- > Regularly check existing services and utilities and repair/upgrade as necessary.
- >Interpret conservation work to engage visitors and promote understanding of the Eames Foundation's stewardship.

Figure 31 Interpretation panels at the edge of the meadow in 2017. In addition to these panels, other means of engaging visitors and promoting understanding of the site's significance should be developed through an Interpretation Plan.

Figure 32 View from above of a tea ceremony in the living room, organized by the Eames Foundation in 2012, an homage to the one hosted by the Eameses in 1951 (see fig. 5). Such ongoing events and uses honor Ray and Charles's way of living and socializing at the House.

#### Authors

The Eames House Conservation Management Plan and this overview were prepared by a cross-disciplinary and multi-skilled project team of heritage specialists. GML Heritage, in Sydney, Australia, was commissioned by the Getty Conservation Institute's Conserving Modern Architecture Initiative to prepare the CMP and provide advice and peer review on conservation management of the site. The authors include Sheridan Burke and Jyoti Somerville of GML Heritage, and Gail Ostergren, Laura Matarese, and Chandler McCoy of the GCI.

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