

10 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES IN NJ 2020

By calling attention to our state's most threatened historic treasures, **Preservation New Jersey's 10 Most Endangered Historic Places** list increases public awareness of historic preservation issues and focuses critical attention on selected properties to assist in their preservation. We hope these listings will create awareness and action for preservation solutions for historic resources in the Garden State.

FUTURO HOUSES

GREENWICH, CUMBERLAND COUNTY; WILLINGBORO, BURLINGTON COUNTY



Contact:

Simon Robson
simon@thefuturohouse.com
www.thefuturohouse.com

The Futuro House was conceived in 1968 as a "portable" ski chalet by Matti Suuronen, a pioneer in the processing of reinforced plastic for construction. Futuro structures are made of fiberglass reinforced plastic as to be light and easy to transport to remote locations, easy to construct once on site, and efficient to heat and cool. The House was manufactured in sixteen prefabricated, mass-produced pieces. It could either be transported by helicopter pre-assembled or be assembled on site with little more work than simply bolting the pieces together. The assembled Futuro House would sit on a steel frame that rested on concrete piers. The floor plan featured living and dining areas that were open with a fireplace and hood in the center. The entry staircase was retractable which helped with insulation and added to the "spaceship" feel of the house.

Less than 100 of these alien-like Futuro Houses were built, and today they are located all over the world. Because of their durable construction and unique design, they have survived in form. How they should be used now, however, is not as clear. Two of the chalets have survived in New Jersey, and they are located in Greenwich and Willingboro. It is unclear how they first came to the United States and to New Jersey, but we do know some of the history of how they ended up where they are today.

390 Hancock Harbor Road, Greenwich, NJ

This Futuro House first appears in photos of Morey's Pier in Wildwood during the early 1970s as part of an amusement ride. It was purchased in 2003 for \$1500 and relocated to the Bait Box Restaurant in Greenwich, possibly to become a gift shop. At this point, the house was in bad condition. In 2009, a New Jersey furniture dealer purchased it. Several years later, in 2014, the home was listed on eBay and Craig's List for \$20,000. Today, it sits in a Greenwich boatyard awaiting its fate -- somewhat worn, vacant, and in need of care, but still entirely intact. While still salvageable, the house may see further damages if unable to be properly

restored and maintained.

310 Beverly Rancocas Rd, Willingboro, NJ

This Futuro House is currently owned by Willingboro Township. In 1973, it arrived by helicopter into Mill Creek Park, where it was used as an information center and for storage. According to an Arcadia book, it had also been used as the "Space Bank" for City Federal Bank at some point. Other locations that this Futuro House called home include the Village Mall in Willingboro, and Lakewood Shopping Plaza. For the last 20 years, it has sat in Willingboro's Franklin Park. The Township Parks and Recreation Department is seeking funding and direction for the future of this important piece of architectural history. While still intact, the house is empty and unused, desperately in need of refurbishing and ongoing maintenance. Without intervention, the Futuro House will see continued degradation.

Given the state of these two New Jersey Futuro Houses, it is imperative that these architecturally historic pieces be preserved for generations to come. While built from strong durable materials, they are showing signs of deterioration. If the neglect continues they are very likely to end up at a junkyard in the near future.

A little bit of loving care would go a long way to preserve them. A first step is to determine eligibility for the State and National Registers of Historic Places. If listed on the Register, the Futuro Houses could be eligible for NJ Historic Trust grants. Efforts should also be undertaken to develop reuse plans for the structures. They would make a wonderful vacation home, an Airbnb, an office, a classroom or a unique addition to an existing structure. The only limit to what to do with them is the owner's imagination!

For more information and world-wide examples of Futuro Houses visit:
thefuturohouse.com.



Founded in 1978, Preservation New Jersey is a statewide nonprofit organization that promotes the economic vitality, sustainability, and heritage of New Jersey's diverse communities through advocacy and education. Preservation New Jersey produces this annual list of New Jersey's 10 Most Endangered Historic Places in addition to other advocacy programs; provides educational workshops; publishes an interactive website; serves as a resource for technical assistance and general advice for the public; and addresses legislation and public policies that impact New Jersey's historic places and communities.

Visit Preservation New Jersey's websites at www.preservationnj.org for more information regarding the organization and the 10 Most Endangered program. For details about national Preservation Month, visit the National Trust for Historic Preservation's website at www.preservationnation.org.

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