



# HAMMOND MODERN

*Lesson Plans Inspired by the Local History  
of Modern Architecture for Grades K - 12*

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Prepared for the Hammond Historic District Commission

# 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

## *Lesson – Writing about the Historic Built Environment in Hammond*

Length of Lesson: 60 minutes

### *Summary*

Students will write about the historic built environment (the buildings in the city and how they relate one another) in Hammond, Louisiana in a narrative manner in preparation for the LEAP 2025 Grade 8 English Language Arts Assessment.

### *Architectural Principles*

- **Design** is accomplished by composing the physical characteristics of size, shape, texture, proportion, scale, mass and color.
- **Order** is the arrangement and organization of elements to help solve visual and functional problems.
- **Visual** relationships are determined by light, shadow, edges and contrast.
- **Balance** is the creation of visual harmony through the use of color and the manipulation of form.
- **Form follows function** is a design approach where the form of the building is determined by the function of its spaces and its parts.
- **Nature is a model** for architectural forms and shapes.
- Mass creates form, which occupies space and brings into being a **spatial articulation**.
- **Symbolism** is an important means of visual communication for architecture.
- **Visual thinking** is a key to awareness of the built environment.
- **Sustainable design** of the built environment protects the natural environment.
- **Social structure, culture and the built environment** have a direct influence on one another.
- Design is experienced through **human sensory perception**.
- **The creative process** is basic to design.
- **Aesthetics** is the artistic component of architecture.
- **Climate and the natural environment** influence design decisions.
- Architecture satisfies **emotional** and **spiritual** needs in addition to **physical needs**.
- Past, current and future **technologies** influence design decisions.

### *Materials*

1. Images of the historic built environment in Hammond, LA with several images of the Hammond Historic District (Included)
2. Handout of the Hammond Historic District National Register Nomination (Included)
3. Handout about John Desmond and Modernism in Hammond (Included)

### *Activity*

1. Begin by showing students images of the Hammond Historic District over time. Ask students what their first impressions of this neighborhood and streetscape are. How would they describe them? How do the buildings compliment and interact with one another? What feeling does this kind of historic built environment evoke?
2. Give students the Hammond Historic District National Register Nomination handout and the John Desmond and Modernism in Hammond handout to provide context to the streetscape images they've just seen.
3. Students should write a narrative essay response using the preceding material as source material. The narrative essay should be written in accordance with Leap 2025 benchmarks and style guides.

### *Teacher's Evaluation*

1. Teachers should evaluate if the essay properly incorporates material from the Hammond Historic District National Register nomination and the history of modern architecture handout.
2. Essays should be evaluated in accordance with the Leap 2025 standards.

# WHAT IS HISTORIC PRESERVATION?

*Preservation of historic buildings is important in maintaining community culture and identity*

**1. What makes buildings or neighborhoods “historic” and therefore worth preserving? This can be a complicated question, but in simple terms, historic preservation is essentially about saving and maintaining old buildings and places because they have value to us today, in one way or another.**

- In some cases, old buildings may be aesthetically pleasing to look at and therefore provide visual enhancement to an area.
- Old buildings are worth preserving if they have sound structure and can be adapted to a new use. This is known as “adaptive re-use” and is a form of recycling, avoiding unnecessary demolition and new construction. This contributes to a reduction in land use and therefore aids in preserving the environment.
- In other cases, old buildings have played an important role in history and are worth preserving because they provide a link to the past or to some historical event. They provide a place for people to visit, remember and learn about their history. In some instances, it may be appropriate to restore these buildings to their original condition, perhaps to serve as a museum. Their value may be as a record of a historic architectural style, of which there are few remaining examples.

**2. What should we preserve? Any kind of building, from factories to mansions, can be considered worth preserving, as can any size or scale of building, structure or neighborhood.**

**3. What are the advantages of historic preservation?**

- Old buildings enhance the appearance of the streetscape by introducing character through their variety of styles and texture of materials.
- “Adaptive re-use” of suitable old buildings into new functions is usually more economical than demolishing them and constructing new buildings.
- Successful historic preservations can often draw visitors to an area, enhancing tourism and contributing to the local economy.
- Historic places inform communities about their roots and their past. They also can be a means of passing memories from one generation to the next.

*Source: Michigan Architectural Foundation*

# HISTORY OF HAMMOND

*A pioneering railroad town, Hammond, LA, has been a staple of Northshore* life since 1830 when Peter Hammond decided to make his new home 55 miles outside of New Orleans. Hammond was originally from Sweden, and moved to this area to manufacture products from resin in pine trees, shipping them to New Orleans to sell.

In 1854 the New Orleans, Jackson and Great Northern Railroad began pumping people and money into this small, pioneer town. A flag station just a block away from the current train depot was called “Hammond’s crossing” and brought in handfuls of new people. Peter Hammond was so convinced that the railroad was crucial to the growth of city that he signed a contract with the rail company, forcing the trains to stop every time they passed through Hammond.

Five years after the railroad came to town, another important piece of Hammond’s development arrived. Charles Emery Cate moved his family into the area in 1859 from New Orleans because of the natural springs, lush pine forests, and desirable climate. Cate immediately began to help the city grow, building a factory, selling crossties, tar and turpentine, as well as laying out city streets and planting oak trees along the curbs. During the Civil War, Cate owned a shoe factory that made and shipped shoes to the Confederate Army. His factory sent nearly 45,000 shoes to the solders before it was found and destroyed by Union soldiers.

At the turn of the 20th century, Hammond struck gold – in the form of red. With the development of the strawberry industry, Hammond saw another explosion in growth. The city became a center for growing, processing, and shipping strawberries. Boxcar loads of strawberries became a staple of the area. As the trains left the city headed north, the money flowed south. Hammond has never ceased its long history of prosperity. Planes began flying into the area as the airport was developed, and the founding of Southeastern Louisiana University has brought thousands upon thousands of students through the city. Industry has moved in, and with it, more people. And the development of the interstate corridors of I-55 and I-12, Hammond’s footprint has only expanded.

As the city is located only 30 miles from the state capitol and 55 miles from New Orleans at the crossroads of the two major interstates, many people are choosing to locate in Hammond and commute to their big-city jobs. Hammond offers its own cultural offerings courtesy of the Columbia Theatre, Hammond Regional Arts Center and the Downtown Development District, numerous restaurants and an ever-growing selection of shops and stores. Still, with less than an hour drive, a Hammond resident can have access to even more shops, restaurants and culture. Small-town living with big-city flare gives Hammond a lifestyle edge.

Our city grew up around the junction of Thomas Street and the railroad tracks, and the downtown became a shipping center for the prosperous timber industry. In the 1890's a hardy variety of strawberries was developed, and local farmers were able to ship their strawberry crops to points all over the nation from Downtown Hammond. As the farmers and merchants began to prosper, they began to replace their downtown wooden structures with proud brick buildings. These buildings have remained in Downtown Hammond through the years, giving the city the unique flavor it has today.

# WHAT IS THE HAMMOND HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION?

*Historic resources contribute to the sense place, identity, and cultural heritage* of the community. They are an integral part of the quality of life and economic stability of vibrant communities. Hammond's twenty block historic district is evidence of this.

When Hammond's historic preservation ordinance was adopted in 1978, downtown Hammond, like many other cities across the country, was suffering from the effects of economic decline and suburban migration. Photographs from the 1981 standing structures survey of downtown reveal many vacant storefronts and boarded up windows.

Today, the same historic district buildings boast restaurants, coffee shops, clothing stores, professional offices, and many other businesses. This success has come through the hard work of many residents and business people with the support and guidance of the Historic District Commission, the Downtown Development District Authority (formed 1987), and the Main Street Program (since 1986). All of these people realized the inherent value of Hammond's historic building stock and by preserving it, secured the bright future that Hammond's downtown has today.

The Hammond Historical District promotes the educational, cultural, economic, and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of buildings, sites, monuments, and structures of historic interest or importance through their protection, maintenance, and development as historic landmarks and their recognition as such in the history and traditions of the state and nation; to establish and improve property values; and to foster the economic development of the areas affected.

# HISTORIC DOWNTOWN HAMMOND



Historic Downtown Hammond circa late 1950s. Hammond Historic District Commission.



Historic Downtown Hammond circa early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hammond Historic District Commission.



Historic Downtown Hammond circa 2017. Latter & Blum.



Historic Downtown Hammond circa 2017. Hammond Historic District Commission.



Historic Downtown Hammond circa 2017. Louisiana Office Of Cultural Development Division of Historic Preservation.

# WHAT IS MODERN ARCHITECTURE?

*Modernism in architecture is characterized by its emphasis on form over ornament; appreciation of materials and structure instead of idyllic revival constructions; and the adroit, methodical use of space.* Several different styles of modern architecture in the United States developed between 1930 and 1970 such as the International, Expressionist, Brutalist, New Formalist, and Googie movements. The roots of modern architecture can be traced to the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, which was composed entirely of cutting-edge buildings and cemented the United States' role as a world leader in art, architecture, and technology. The head architect was Daniel Burnham, who recruited the most prominent American architects, including Louis Sullivan's firm Adler and Sullivan, to design the temporary buildings for the Fair. Louis Sullivan is most well-known for his aesthetic philosophy "form follows function," which became the rallying cry for the modern movement. Sullivan's rejection of ornamentation and clarity of structural function embodied the value of democracy, the importance of nature, the autonomy of the individual, and the earnest expression of function without extravagance. One of the many young architects inspired by the 1893 Chicago World's Fair was Frank Lloyd Wright, the leading force in shaping modern American architecture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the Fair, Wright encountered Japanese architecture in its traditional form at the Japanese government's official pavilion. The building featured a half-scale reproduction of a Japanese temple. The open plan, horizontality, broad roofs, carefully wrought craftsmanship, and non-structural walls used in the temple would inform Wright's design aesthetic for the rest of his career.



**AMERICAN MODERNISM: Frank Lloyd Wright. The Kaufmann House known as Fallingwater, Mill Run, PA, 1939. Photo by Walter Bibikow. Getty Images.**



**EUROPEAN MODERNISM: Walter Gropius. Exterior of the Bauhaus, Dessau, Saxony-Anhalt, Germany, 1925-1926. Photo by Gili Merin. Arch Daily.**

Young European architects were enraptured by Wright's bold abstract forms stripped of ornament. In addition to the bevy of young American architects influenced by Wright and practicing in the Prairie Style, European Modernists Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, who would become major fixtures of the Bauhaus, began to incorporate some of Wright's more abstract forms into their own work. Staatliches Bauhaus, known simply as the Bauhaus, was the epicenter of the modern movement in Europe. The Bauhaus was a German school of architecture, sculpture, painting, design, and craft, led by Walter Gropius, in operation from 1919 to 1933 that brought the modern movement to international prominence. Bauhaus leaders Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe left Germany in the late 1930s to escape growing Nazi aggression against its European neighbors. Gropius and Breuer began teaching at the Harvard University School of Design, where

Gropius was chair, and Mies van der Rohe became a professor at Chicago's Armour Institute, now the Illinois Institute of Technology. Prior to the arrival of other European modernists dispersed by escalating tensions in Nazi Germany, Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra came to the United States and began working with Frank Lloyd Wright. Schindler and Neutra became well known on the West Coast for their expert blend of European rationalism with Wrightian organicism. These expats greatly influenced generations of American architects, popularizing the European modernist aesthetic throughout the United States. Architects such as Philip Johnson, Paul Rudolph, IM Pei, Edward Durell Stone, and were educated with modernist ideals which evolved into regional iterations of modern architecture.

## IS THERE MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN LOUISIANA?

*YES!* While Louisiana is well-known for its French, Spanish, and Acadian architecture, Louisiana is also home to many beautiful modern buildings. Modernism first began to take hold in Shreveport, Louisiana with the construction of 3 Samuel Wiener International Style homes in the early 1930s. By the 1950s, Shreveport was home to dozens more Wiener buildings, a Richard Neutra home, and Edward F. Neild skyscrapers. Modernism began to become popular in New Orleans in the 1950s. The greatest practitioners of modernism in New Orleans were Curtis & Davis, who designed the Superdome, and Albert Ledner, who designed many houses in the area. New Orleans was a little slow to catch on to modernism, but its popularity soared as architects developed conscientious methods to blend modern architecture with historic streetscapes. Scale, local materials, and the natural environment were important factors in the design of modern buildings in New Orleans. Over in Baton Rouge, architect John Desmond designed buildings like the Student Union at Louisiana State University and in his hometown of Hammond he designed dozens of homes, churches, schools, and other civic buildings. Desmond incorporated local historic design elements into his New Formalist modern designs in Hammond. Louisiana modern architecture is distinct because of its keen relationship to the Louisiana historic built environment and natural surroundings.



**SHREVEPORT:** Samuel Wiener. The Samuel Wiener House, Shreveport, LA, 1937. Louisiana National Register of Historic Places Database.



**NEW ORLEANS:** Curtis & Davis. Louisiana Superdome, New Orleans, LA, 1967-1975. Photo by Franck - Bertacci circa 1975. The Historic New Orleans Collection.



**NEW ORLEANS:** Albert Ledner. The Sunkel House known as the Ashtray House, New Orleans, LA, 1961. Curbed.



**HAMMOND:** John Desmond. St. Albert Catholic Student Center at Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA, 1962. Photo by Anna Marcum.

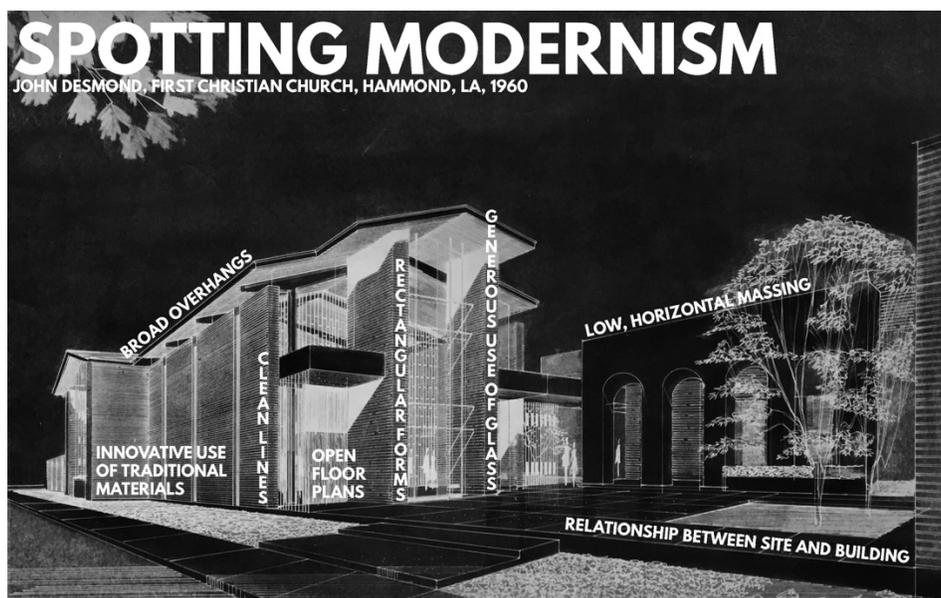
# HOW DO I SPOT A MODERN BUILDING?

*It's easy! First, look for the big 3 modern characteristics:*

1. **Clean lines** lacking ornament
2. Emphasis on **low, horizontal** massing with **horizontal** planes and **broad** roof overhangs
3. Generous use of **glass** to allow **natural light** into **open, flowing floorplans**

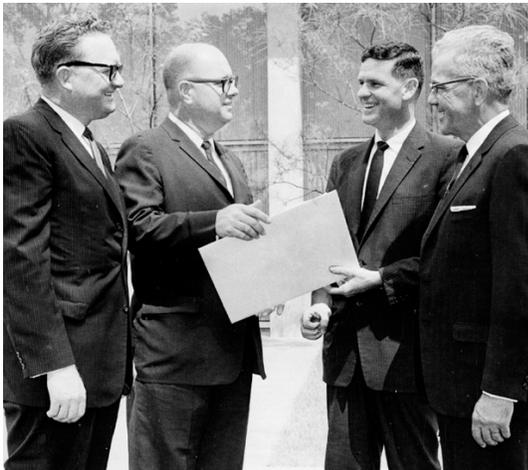
*Got it? Here are a few more common features of modern architecture:*

4. Emphasis on well-defined, **rectangular forms**
5. Use of **modern materials and systems** like steel columns, exposed concrete block, stained concrete floors, column-free spaces, and radiant heating systems
6. **Innovative use of traditional materials** like wood, brick, and stone in simplified ways that showcase their natural features and are installed in large smooth planes
7. A **thoughtful relationship between the site and the building** where interior space is planned to best compliment the surrounding natural environment



# WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT HAMMOND MODERNISM?

*Beginning in the late 1950s, John Desmond designed over 100 modern buildings* in his hometown of Hammond, Louisiana. John Desmond (1922-2008) was born in Denver, Colorado and raised in Hammond, Louisiana. Desmond graduated from Hammond High School in 1937 and Tulane University with a degree in architecture in 1941. He earned a Master of Architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he studied under W.W. Wurster and Alvar Aalto. Desmond worked at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in New York City and with A. Hays Town in Baton Rouge before starting his own practice in Hammond, Louisiana in 1953. In the early 1970s, John Desmond closed the Hammond practice and began operating John Desmond & Associates exclusively out of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Desmond retired from architectural practice in 2002. John Desmond was awarded numerous professional honors throughout his career, most significantly the American Institute of Architects Fellowship for Significant Contribution to Design and the Louisiana American Institute of Architects Gold Award Lifetime Achievement Award.



**John Desmond receiving an American Institute of Architects award for his design of the new State Library building in Baton Rouge, LA. Photo circa 1958. Louisiana Historical Photographs of the State Library.**

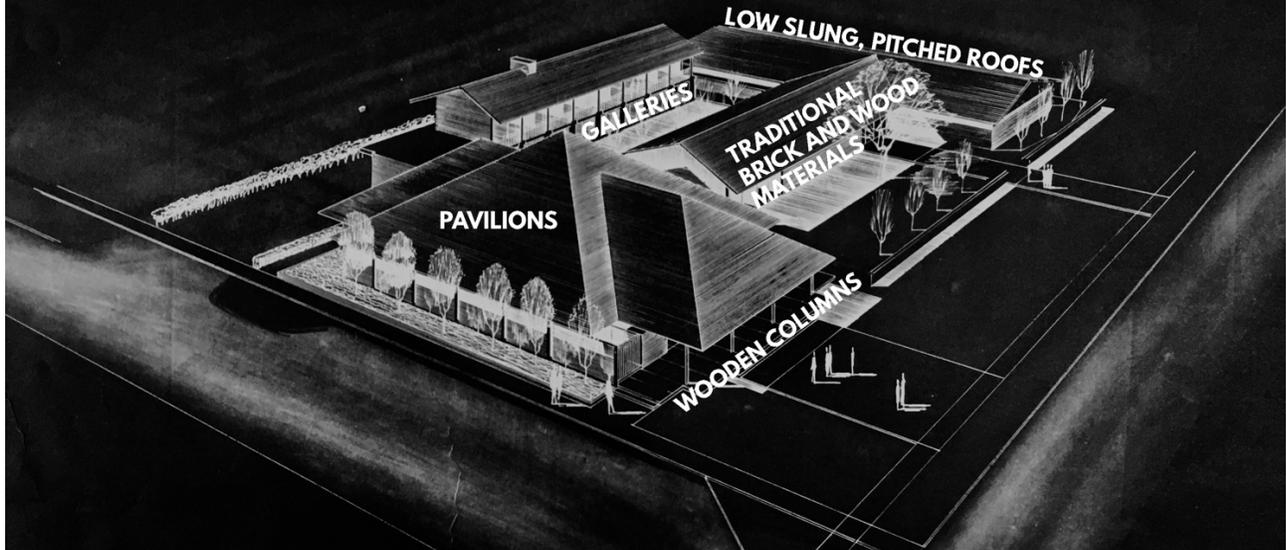


**John Desmond. The Desmond Residence, Hammond, LA, circa 1960s. Photo by Frank Lotz Miller. John Desmond Papers, Mss. 4792, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.**

John Desmond's modern buildings in Hammond differ from the pure modernism of the International Style in that they incorporate the decorative elements and design concepts with historical precedent. Architectural historians refer to this style of modernism as New Formalism since many architects incorporate the rational, streamlined principles of classical architecture. John Desmond adapted New Formalism to southern Louisiana by incorporating features and materials popular in regional architecture. Desmond's early career Hammond buildings can be described as Acadian Modernism – New Formalist structures that conspicuously incorporate Acadian architectural features and materials such as pitched roofs, galleries, pavilions, large overhangs, timber framing with brick, and wooden columns. John Desmond expertly fuses Acadian design elements with the clean lines and broad forms of modernism in his residential and commercial architecture.

# ACADIAN MODERNISM

JOHN DESMOND, BAPTIST STUDENT CENTER - SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY, HAMMOND, LA



**HAMMOND: John Desmond. Miller Memorial Library, Hammond, LA, 1956-57. Photo by Frank Lotz Miller circa 1958. Louisiana National Register of Historic Places Database.**



**HAMMOND: John Desmond. First Christian Church, Hammond, LA, 1960. Photo by Frank Lotz Miller circa 1960. Louisiana National Register of Historic Places Database.**

Two of John Desmond's Hammond buildings, Miller Memorial Library and First Christian Church, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is remarkable for any city to have such a great density of one architect's work. In southern Louisiana, it is unique to have so many residential and commercial works of high modernism in one place. Louisiana is well known for its many iterations of French Creole architecture. Modern architecture of the quality and concentration of John Desmond's work in Hammond is truly unparalleled in the American South.

# WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT MODERN ARCHITECTURE?

*There are a wide variety of organizations and publications that offer diverse perspectives and histories on modern architecture in the United States. Here are a few resources to get started:*

1. **National Trust for Historic Preservation:** <https://savingplaces.org/modern-architecture#.WmgQIPjwZ-U>
2. **Docomomo US:** <http://www.docomomo-us.org/>
3. **Preservation Resource Center New Orleans:** <https://prcno.org/5-favorite-mid-century-modern-structures-new-orleans/>
4. **New Orleans Architecture Foundation:** <http://www.noaf.org/>
5. **Conserving Modern Architecture Initiative, The Getty Conservation Institute:** [http://www.getty.edu/conservation/our\\_projects/field\\_projects/cmai/](http://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/field_projects/cmai/)

# HOW CAN I HELP SAVE MODERN ARCHITECTURE?

*The most effective preservation efforts begin with passionate people just like you.*

There are so many ways to help save modern architecture in Hammond and Southern Louisiana. Here are a few ways to get started:

1. **LEARN:** Start with the above resources and learn a little bit more about modern architecture and its relationship to your community. Understanding the significance of modern architecture is crucial in preserving modern buildings.
2. **SHARE:** Get the word out! If you see a cool modern building, snap a picture and post it to Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat. If you loved reading this crash course in modern architecture, share the link with your friends and family. Anything you can do to make your community more aware of modern architecture will be so helpful in advocating to save and maintain modern buildings.
3. **JOIN:** Become a member of the New Orleans/Louisiana Chapter of Docomomo US to learn more about modern architecture in Louisiana and kept abreast of any possible threats to modern gems in the region.
4. **RENOVATE:** Do you own a mid-century modern home or thinking about buying one? If so, be sure to renovate thoughtfully with architectural integrity in mind. Be sure to check out our **Guidelines for Modern Preservation** brief to assist in developing your renovation plan.

# REFERENCES

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“Modern Architecture: Explore Icons of the Recent Past,” *Saving Places: The Website of the National Trust for Historic Preservation*, (Washington, D.C.: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2018), <https://savingplaces.org/modern-architecture#.WmgQIPjwZ-U>.

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## *Is there modern architecture in Louisiana?*

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## *How do I spot a modern building?*

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## *What is special about Hammond modernism?*

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