

# Wright house, right place and the right vision

**W**e call the house that Zach Rawling saved from bulldozers in 2012 the “David and Gladys Wright House.” But it is formally identified in a way chosen by the great architect himself, Frank Lloyd Wright.

Its plans are titled “How to Live in the Southwest.”

Like Wright’s Pennsylvania masterpiece, “Fallingwater,” the house in Arcadia is inextricably aligned with its environment.

As we have known since at least November 2013, when Rawling first applied for a special-use permit, the property’s savior has a plan for the house and the surrounding property that invites the public to visit.

It is a vision that will present the genius of Frank Lloyd Wright in a majestic, environmentally appropriate setting.

More than that, it will be a spectacular asset to the Arcadia neighborhood, in much the same way that Huntington Library and Gardens is an asset to San Marino and nearby Pasadena, Calif. Or the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, in a residential neighborhood on the Grand Canal in Venice, Italy, is an asset to that beautiful space.

The Arcadia-area neighbors need to view the proposed zoning changes with open minds.

Right now, it is clear by the forest of “Wright House, Wrong Place” signs in the neighborhoods south of Camelback Road that many residents do not yet see the reality of what Rawling has planned.

The well-financed campaign to stop the resurrection of the Wright house contemptibly distorts that vision. Crude website depictions notwithstanding, there will be no lines of enormous tour buses on side streets, or hordes of sweaty, tawdry tourists running amok through neighborhoods.

The hysterical, manipulative anti-Rawling PR campaign is, simply, a false vision.

The project, as designed, projects the quiet beauty of Arcadia. It hardly tramples it.

“How to Live in the Southwest” is the spiraling precursor to the Guggenheim

Museum in New York City. It provides a visitor with an infinite variety of sight lines of the Valley’s landmark horizons.

Camelback is majestically in view to the north. Piastewa to the northwest. The Papago rock formations to the southeast. Before the incursion of high-rising foreign palms, one could see the South Mountain range to the southwest.

Every sight line in the home is carefully calibrated by the nation’s greatest architect to harmonize with the mountainous monuments that are surrounding it.

Rather than accommodate a plan for architectural-art lovers to see and appreciate this great work, opponents of the plan have proposed moving it out of the neighborhood. Frankly, that would be an act of artistic philistinism too horrifying to contemplate.

In 2013, Rawling was the hero of every Valley resident who blanched at the image of Phoenix as a shallow, rootless desert town indifferent to its own history.

Now? In the wake of a mean-spirited publicity campaign intended to stop development of the Wright house as a public place, Rawling — a life-long Frank Lloyd Wright devotee raised in the neighborhood — is being vilified as a “Las Vegas lawyer.” A craven outsider intent on reaping fortunes from this “commercial” enterprise.

If Rawling is guilty of anything, it is of loving the legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Arcadia neighborhood near to where he grew up a bit too much. And his personal fortune, perhaps, not quite enough.

There are issues regarding the development of “How to Live in the Southwest” that need to be seriously addressed. A solid, long-term commitment for parking at the church on Camelback Road is at the top of the list. Development of adequate sound barriers on the property’s periphery, second.

But the Arcadia neighbors so opposed to this development have a duty too: To soberly consider the possibilities of this project. And to not be taken in by the hysterics.