



# 2025 Cultural Heritage Awardees

## **Cultural Ambassador**

This is the highest form of recognition bestowed by the Preservation Commission

### **Stuart Cohen and Julie Hacker – Hacker Cohen Architects**

*Awarded under the themes of research, education and advocacy, design, and art.*

Julie Hacker and Stuart Cohen are recognized as Cultural Ambassadors for the city. Their highly influential and inspiring work across multiple decades reflects architecture as an art and affirms that Evanston's rich architectural heritage and association with some of the country's foremost architects continues to this day. Their commitment to historic preservation, design excellence, education, public service, and architectural history underpin their contributions to the community. Cohen and Hacker have worked in Evanston and Chicago, and Chicago's Northshore suburbs, as well as nationally, to highlight and to educate architects and the public about the importance of built and cultural heritage within their communities. Understanding history, the cultural significance of structures, and the context in which these structures exist has nurtured and enriched the historical continuity and cultural meaning of Evanston for the benefit of future generations.

### **Jack Weiss**

*Awarded under the themes of research, education and advocacy, and design.*

Jack Weiss is recognized as a Cultural Ambassador for the city. From the outset of his involvement in Evanston, Weiss has been committed to fostering a deep appreciation for the city's cultural and architectural legacy. His efforts have centered on transferring knowledge and traditions through a variety of projects that not only celebrate Evanston's history but also build capacity within the community to recognize, celebrate, and nurture its heritage. His lifelong commitment exemplifies the highest ideals of civic responsibility and creative stewardship. His contributions to the city include his capacity to transfer knowledge, advocate for our collective cultural heritage, and to craft sensitive and innovative design solutions that give new life and enriched meaning to our cultural landscape.

## **Outstanding Individual Achievement**

### **Paula Scholl**

*Awarded under the themes of education and advocacy, and climate resilience and stewardship.*

A steadfast environmental advocate, Scholl has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to advancing Evanston's climate goals with tangible connections to advancement of the city's cultural heritage. Throughout our history, there has never been a shortage of energetic, and enthusiastic Evanstonians willing to experiment and eager to carry out programs that benefited the broader city and its future generations. Scholl's work, specifically on the *Healthy Buildings Ordinance*, but also her many efforts generally involved with sustainability, reflect a continuation of this history, one intimately tied to Evanston's identity. Her commitment, knowledge, and passion provides an opportunity for Evanston to meet the needs of today while mutually nurturing our past and collective memory of place for future benefit.

## **Outstanding Group Achievement**

### **Evanston ASPA**

*Awarded under the themes of research, education and advocacy, equity, and art.*

Evanston ASPA is recognized for their exceptional commitment to celebrating, communicating, documenting, and interpreting the rich history of Asian Americans in Evanston – a community that despite little recognition has been living and contributing to the evolution and success of Evanston for over 130 years. The work of Evanston ASPA has fostered social connection, identified less tangible histories, strengthened multicultural dialogue and understanding, and celebrated Evanston's diversity. This work has deeply enriched the cultural heritage of the City for all Evanstonians and lays a foundation rooted in art, history, and culture, for future generations of Asian Americans to build upon.

## **Honor Award**

### **Matt and Shannon Omori – 200 Burnham Place**

*Awarded under the theme of design.*

Recognized for an unwavering commitment to the restoration and stewardship of their 1893 home located at 200 Burnham Place, Matt and Shannon have demonstrated a significant contribution to the cultural heritage of the City. The home, designed by Handy and Cady, with later work by Daniel Burnham Jr. was one of Evanston's earliest landmark designations (1978). During a recent rehabilitation of the home, the two embodied the responsibility that comes with taking title to a landmark property that is deeply associated with the community's memory of place. Their meticulous efforts to not only respect the past embedded within the home, but sensitively imprint their own legacy upon it, have enhanced and given renewed life to the home for the enjoyment of future generations of Evanstonians.

### **Evanston Public Library – Newspaper Memory Project**

*Awarded under the themes of research, education and advocacy, and equity.*

Recognized for their impactful and enduring work to improve access to our past and put 150 years of Evanston history at our fingertips. The memory project, which includes a digital and searchable collection of Evanston's historic newspapers, including those not circulated widely, provides current and future generations the opportunity to identify and interpret our diverse history, including the perspectives and histories of lesser acknowledged communities and identities. The significant work by the library deeply enhances and stimulates the ability for community conversation and story telling.

### **Lake Street Church – Archives Committee**

*Awarded under the themes of research, education and advocacy, and equity.*

Representing the power and importance of maintaining history as an objective and indifferent arbiter for the truth, the Lake Street Church and its Archives Committee are recognized for safeguarding and documenting a deep history dating to 1858 as the oldest remaining house of worship in Evanston. These records were used to overcome constructed histories that often avoided aspects that were painful or uncomfortable to acknowledge – notably the church's relationship with its 19th century African American members who left to form Second Baptist Church of Evanston. As the archives were explored anew, they were used as a foundation for redemption, and of reconciliation. To formalize a commitment to dismantling systemic racism and striving for healing a painfully divided world, a sister church relationship was officially established in 2018 and it was decided to share ownership of the historic property. Those initial ministerial efforts were recognized in 2023 with the national Edwin T. Dahlberg Peace & Justice Award, an award first given to Martin Luther King Jr. in 1964.

## **About the Cultural Heritage Awards**

The Evanston Preservation Commission was pleased to receive ten nominations for the second annual Cultural Heritage Awards. This new program is unlike past Preservation Commission awards programs, which focused exclusively on built heritage and physical project design. By contrast, the Cultural Heritage Awards program and its nominees represent the breadth of historic preservation which – in addition to built heritage – includes living heritage, the arts, intangible cultural heritage, and less tangible stories and histories.

The purpose of the citywide Cultural Heritage Awards Program is to:

1. **Promote** best practices in historic preservation.
2. **Celebrate** those who embody, safeguard, or advance significant themes within the broader field of historic preservation and heritage conservation.
3. **Educate** and increase public awareness and appreciation for Evanston's cultural heritage.
4. **Encourage** future excellence through the power of example.

Nominations are reviewed and judged by an independent selection committee. These jurors include three from outside the community and one Evanston representative, reflecting varying professional backgrounds. Jurors for the 2025 awards program included:

- **Cray Kennedy**

Cray Kennedy has been an ardent admirer of architectural history and preservation since high school and satiates her appetite by involvement with Landmarks Illinois' Skyline Council, the Society of Architectural Historians, and CAC's Open House Chicago. When she's not out staring at buildings, Cray works at Wiss, Janney, Elstner, Associates, Inc.

- **Gabe Jacobs**

Gabe is an associate at Antunovich Associates in Chicago with a focus on production of early design concepts, drawings, and presentation imagery for a variety of projects including architecturally and culturally significant structures. Gabe is a member of the Landmarks Illinois Skyline Council and has served as a juror and presenter for the Landmarks Illinois Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Preservation Awards. Gabe is a graduate of the Notre Dame School of Architecture where he continues to stay involved – serving on panels talking with students, participating on project juries, teaching for a semester as an adjunct teaching professor, and he is in the last year of his term as a member of the School of Architecture Advisory Council.

- **Paul Steinbrecher**

Paul is a retired architect, previously a principal at Interactive Design Architects, the architect of record for the Obama Presidential Center as well as the Modern Wing of the Art Institute. He oversaw historic preservation projects for the firm, including initiating the comprehensive Heritage Strategy program for the University of Chicago to provide architectural and cultural background for guiding preservation throughout the Hyde Park campus. He also executed numerous renovation projects on Chicago Landmarks buildings, including at Lincoln Park Zoo. Currently he is continuing as trustee of the Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago, which is housed in an historic building on campus.

- **Nicholas Kalogeresis**

Nick is an Associate Principal with MKSK, a planning, landscape architecture, and urban design firm based in Chicago. Nick brings more than three decades of diverse planning experience, with expertise in comprehensive plans, downtowns, commercial corridors, neighborhoods, and urban design management. Nick has a specialized knowledge and award winning background in historic preservation and arts and culture planning. Nick's approach to planning focuses on energetic community engagement and thoughtful storytelling in conveying planning possibilities and opportunities. Nick received his master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and writes his own blog, the Places of Sense Chronicles.