

A Bauhaus Bathroom

Design Competition For a Public Restroom at Gropius House

HISTORIC
NEW ENGLAND



INTRODUCTION

Utilitarian and mass-produced, the portable toilet at Gropius House unexpectedly echoes Bauhaus values. But it was always meant to be a stop-gap solution that is clearly inelegant and does not meet contemporary accessibility standards. It fails to adequately welcome visitors to this iconic property.

Through this competition, Historic New England is soliciting thoughtful, inventive ideas to solve this problem for future generations of visitors.



The competition focuses on the garage area east of the driveway. This area is the entrance to the property, the start of the pedestrian pathway to Gropius House, and a key part of the viewshed to the house's notable north elevation. The Gropius-designed garage, original to the house, is now used as the site's visitor center.

INTRODUCTION



Gropius-designed garage (now the visitor center)

The competition invites designers to channel the Bauhaus spirit – experiment with materials, push boundaries, and collaborate across disciplines from architecture to landscape to graphics to industrial design – to create a permanent restroom solution and to reimagine the visitor arrival experience at one of Historic New England’s most celebrated museums.

The winning team will receive a cash prize, a place in the Gropius House archives, and an exhibition at the property. Historic New England aspires to ultimately build the selected design.

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KEY DATES

HNE Summit/Competition Launch: November 13 & 14, 2025

Optional Site Walk: January 5, 2026

Requests for Information Due: January 9, 2026

Submission Deadline: February 6, 2026

Finalists Announced: February 27, 2026

Virtual Finalists Presentations: Mid-March 2026

Winner Announced: March 27, 2026

Winner Exhibition: Summer 2026

COMPETITION WEBSITE

www.gropiuscompetition.info

COMPETITION GOALS

Gropius House Public Restroom Competition is an effort to revisit Walter Gropius's legacy, find design solutions for a critical need at the site, and appropriately welcome visitors.

The competition has two key goals:

Research and reflection: The competition celebrates the legacy of Walter Gropius and his impact on the Modern Movement, both globally and in New England, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the Bauhaus Dessau in 2025. Historic New England invites fresh thinking and research that engage with Gropius's ideas and their continued relevance today, creating a survey of contemporary Bauhaus inspiration and influence.

Creative responses to a longstanding site challenge: The competition aims to tackle a persistent practical need at Gropius House: the lack of a thoughtfully designed, accessible, public restroom. Since the site became part of Historic New England's holdings over forty years ago, no solution has successfully resolved this functional requirement. This competition initiates a deeper exploration into how such a facility can be creatively and sensitively integrated into the site and its existing architecture. This design solution will also play a critical role in creating a sense of arrival for visitors to the site and framing the viewshed to the main house.



PARTICIPATION PARAMETERS

The competition celebrates the Bauhaus spirit of collaboration, by welcoming designers from all disciplines to contribute creative perspectives. In the same spirit, collaboration across design fields is strongly encouraged, including participation from graphic designers, industrial designers, and other aligned professionals.

Professionals

A wide-range of practicing design professionals may participate. While focused on architecture, teams can include graphic designers, industrial designers, and other disciplines influenced by Gropius.

Students

Students in architecture and related design disciplines, are encouraged to explore this challenge through bold, imaginative proposals.

- **Teams/partnerships are acceptable. Collaboration is encouraged.**
- **Historic New England welcomes a range of responses from pragmatic to conceptual depending on the designer's interests, abilities, and interpretation of Gropius's legacy.**
- **Participating teams shall register and submit proposals through the competition website www.gropiuscompetition.info.**

Gropius House viewed from garage (1938). Courtesy of Harvard Art Museums.

DESIGN PARAMETERS

This competition is intended to offer respondents broad creative freedom; however, a few key constraints should be considered:

Location

The new restroom should be either free standing and located near the existing garage or be a modification of, or addition to, the existing garage. See “Site Plan” on page 7. The restroom design should consider this location’s significance as an entryway to the site, framing the sense of arrival to the main house.

Accessibility

The restroom design must reflect a broad understanding of accessibility. It should meet or exceed ADA standards, ensure single-stall configurations that are inclusive of all genders, and thoughtfully consider ease of use for people of all ages and abilities. The facility should embody the values of openness, dignity, and universal access.

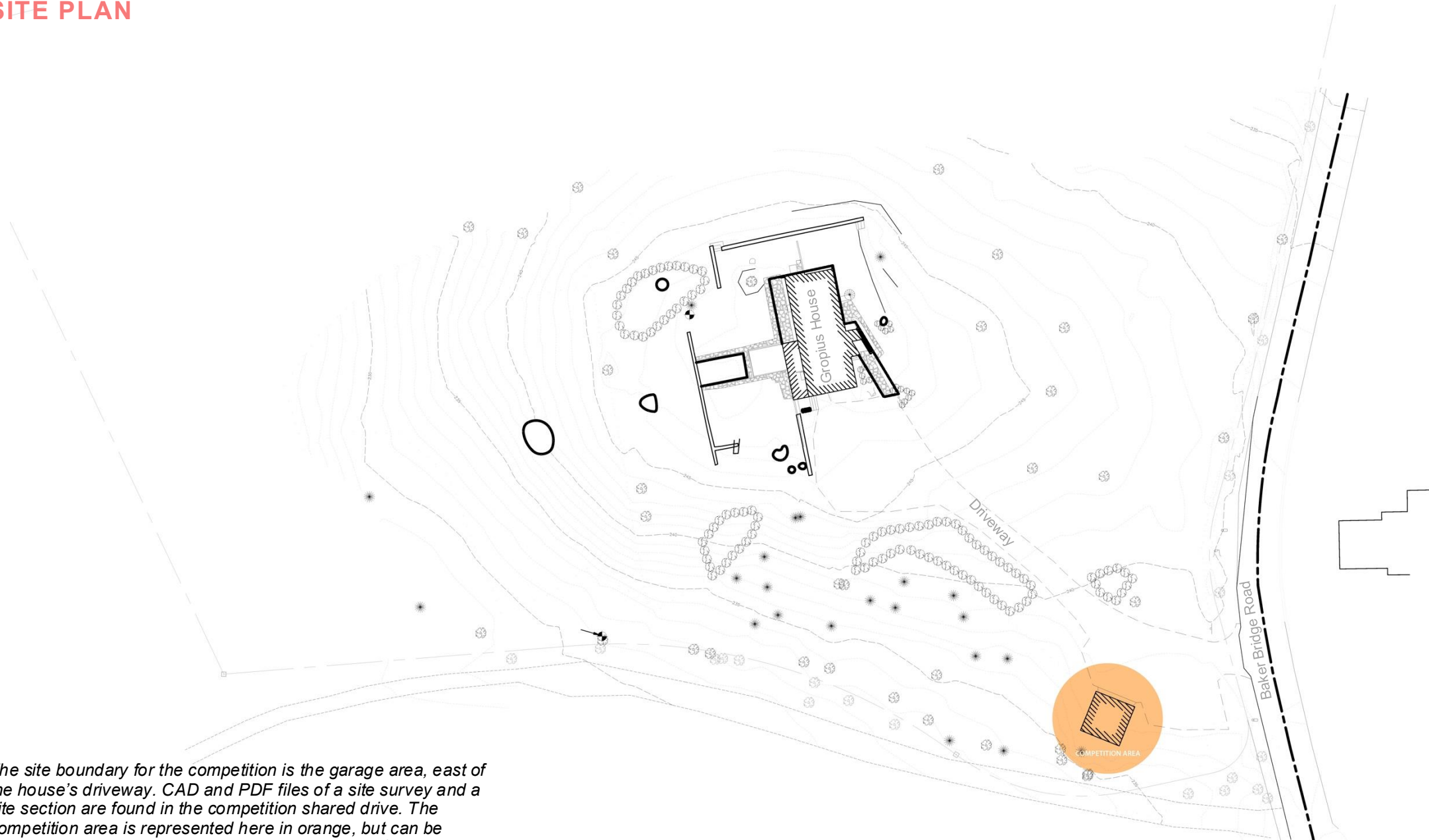
Configuration

The restroom should consist of two toilets and two wash stations. The visitor center, currently within the garage, is part of this scope, either to be relocated or to remain within the garage with an improved design. The visitor center should remain its approximate current size and include current uses: ticket sales, space for patrons waiting for tours, modest storage, and space for several kiosks for merchandise and paper handouts. A Matterport tour of the building is found at the competition website.

Contemporary Methods

In keeping with Gropius’s commitment to innovation, the restroom design must embrace the building technologies, materials, and construction methods currently at the forefront of contemporary architecture and design. The structure should reflect a forward-thinking approach that respects Gropius’s Modern design legacy and demonstrate how contemporary practices can be integrated thoughtfully into an iconic site.

SITE PLAN



The site boundary for the competition is the garage area, east of the house's driveway. CAD and PDF files of a site survey and a site section are found in the competition shared drive. The competition area is represented here in orange, but can be situated more broadly within the northeast corner of the site.

SITE SECTION



Site Section showing the garage area (in orange) in relationship to Gropius House. A CAD file can be found in the project drive. This site section graphic was created courtesy of NADAAA.

JURY

The jury's combined expertise will ensure a thoughtful and informed evaluation of submissions, balancing respect for the site's legacy with appreciation for innovative, forward-looking design solutions.

Tanja Hwang, Juror



Tanja Hwang is Curator, Department of Architecture & Design, at The Museum of Modern Art. Shortlisted for Hyundai Blue Prize Design, she oversees early modern and mid-century modern collection galleries, and the Contemporary and Modern Art Perspectives (C-MAP) East and Southeast Asia initiative.

Nader Tehrani, Juror



Nader Tehrani is Founding Principal of NADAAA, the former Head of the Department of Architecture at MIT (2010-14), and the Dean of The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture of The Cooper Union (2015-22). He is widely exhibited at MoMA, LA MOCA and the Venice Biennale, NADAAA's work is also in the permanent collections of the Nasher Sculpture Center and the Canadian Centre for Architecture.

Philip Kennicott, Juror



Philip Kennicott is the Pulitzer Prize-winning Senior Art and Architecture Critic of *The Washington Post* and the author of *Counterpoint: A Memoir of Bach and Mourning*, published by Norton in 2020. He lives in Washington, D.C.

ADVISORS

Jacob Albert, Competition Advisor



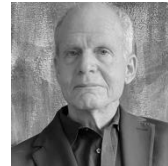
Jacob Albert is an architect at Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects in Boston. He received a B.A. and M. Arch. from Yale and is a trustee of Historic New England.

Antoine Picon, Juror



Antoine Picon is G. Ware Travelstead Professor of the History of Architecture and Technology at Harvard Graduate School of Design. He has published extensively on the relationship between architecture, cities, landscapes, and technology.

Allen Kolkowitz, Competition Advisor and Sponsor



Allen B. Kolkowitz is an architect, educator, and philanthropic advisor, and co-founder of KOLKOWITZ KUSSKE Architects Landscape Architects. He serves on the board of the KHR McNeely Family Foundation and as a trustee of Historic New England.

Suzanne Stephens, Juror



Suzanne Stephens is a former deputy editor of *Architectural Record*, and has been a writer, editor, and critic in the field of architecture for decades. She has a Ph.D. in architectural history from Cornell University, and teaches seminars in the history of architectural criticism at Barnard and Columbia colleges.

Dietrich Neumann, Competition Advisor



Dietrich Neumann is the Christopher Chan and Michelle Ma Professor for the History of Modern Architecture and Urbanism at Brown University, and President of Docomomo New England.



COMPETITION BACKGROUND

Gropius House, set on five pastoral acres in Lincoln, Massachusetts, is a National Historic Landmark and one of Historic New England’s most visited and celebrated sites – an intimate window into the life of Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus and one of the most influential architects of the 20th century.

As one of the most architecturally significant properties in the Historic New England portfolio, Gropius House continues to inspire visitors and design professionals alike. Yet, despite its renown, public restroom facilities at the site have long been limited to use of a portable toilet. After forty years under Historic New England stewardship, the organization has determined that the property merits a permanent solution—one that reflects the same spirit of thoughtfulness, innovation, and design excellence embodied by Walter Gropius himself.

To advance this vision, Historic New England Trustee and architect Allen Kolkowitz, founder of Kolkowitz Kusske Architects and Landscape Architects, and former designer with Marcel Breuer and Associates, has encouraged the organization to engage the design community through an open call for creative proposals. This initiative, generously sponsored by Mr. Kolkowitz, invites architects and designers to reinterpret and extend Gropius’s legacy through a contemporary architectural response to this iconic site.

Coinciding with the 100th anniversary of Bauhaus Dessau, Historic New England is launching a competition for a new restroom and a reimagining of the visitor center. The project is a significant opportunity to rethink the experience of arrival for thousands of visitors every year. This is the first time a competition of this nature has been undertaken by Historic New England in its 115-year history.



GROPIUS HOUSE

Gropius House in Lincoln, Massachusetts, was designed by Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus and then a newly appointed professor at Harvard's Graduate School of Design.

Completed in 1938, the home combined New England vernacular materials (such as wood, fieldstone, and brick) with emerging modern elements (like glass block, flat roofs, open floor plans, and industrial finishes). Gropius intended the house to serve as a family residence for himself, his wife Ise, and daughter Ati. It was also used teaching tool, illustrating the principles of functional design and the integration of residential architecture with adjacent gardens and the surrounding agricultural landscape.

Over the years, the house became a gathering place for prominent figures in art and architecture, including Marcel Breuer, Alexander Calder, and Joan Miró. In 1979, Ise Gropius donated the home, complete with original furnishings, artwork, and personal items to Historic New England, and it opened to the public in 1984. Recognized for its architectural and historical value, Gropius House was designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior in 2000.

Gropius House Second-Floor Foyer. Photo by Eric Roth.

GROPIUS HOUSE GARAGE & VISITOR CENTER



Gropius House garage - current interior

The garage at Gropius House was constructed concurrently with the main house in 1938. It functioned as a garage for the Gropius family until being converted by Historic New England into a visitor center. A small building of approximately 320 square feet, the visitor's center now contains space for ticket sales, patrons waiting for tours, a modest amount of storage, and for several kiosks for merchandise and paper handouts.

The area for competition responses is east of the driveway, near this garage. Responses may include alterations or additions to the garage, or simply adjacencies to it, but the garage shall not be demolished or lose its core historic architectural integrity.

Historic New England intends to maintain a visitor center at the site. Competition respondents may choose to keep the visitor center within the garage or integrate it into a reimaged design for a bathroom.

A virtual tour of the garage interior, along with floorplans and elevations are found at the competition website.

HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND

Historic New England is the oldest, largest and most comprehensive preservation organization in the United States.

Historic New England welcomes the public to thirty-eight exceptional museums and landscapes, including several coastal farms. The organization operates a major collections and archives center in Haverhill, Massachusetts, and has the world's largest collection of New England artifacts, comprising more than 125,000 decorative arts and objects, and 1.5 million archival documents including photographs, architectural drawings, manuscripts, and ephemera. Engaging education programs for youth, adults, and preservation professionals, and award-winning exhibitions and publications are offered in person and virtually. The Historic New England Preservation Easement Program is a national leader and protects 128 privately owned historic properties throughout the region.

The organization serves as a steward of innovation and design that continues to inspire forward-looking creative endeavors. It has begun a global initiative to reimagine its Haverhill Center as a cultural catalyst, where collections and archives are shared with visitors from around the world at a state-of-the-art destination that reinvigorates the region.

Burgess and Lang Buildings – now the Haverhill Center - home to Historic New England's collections and archives and being reimaged as a cultural catalyst.

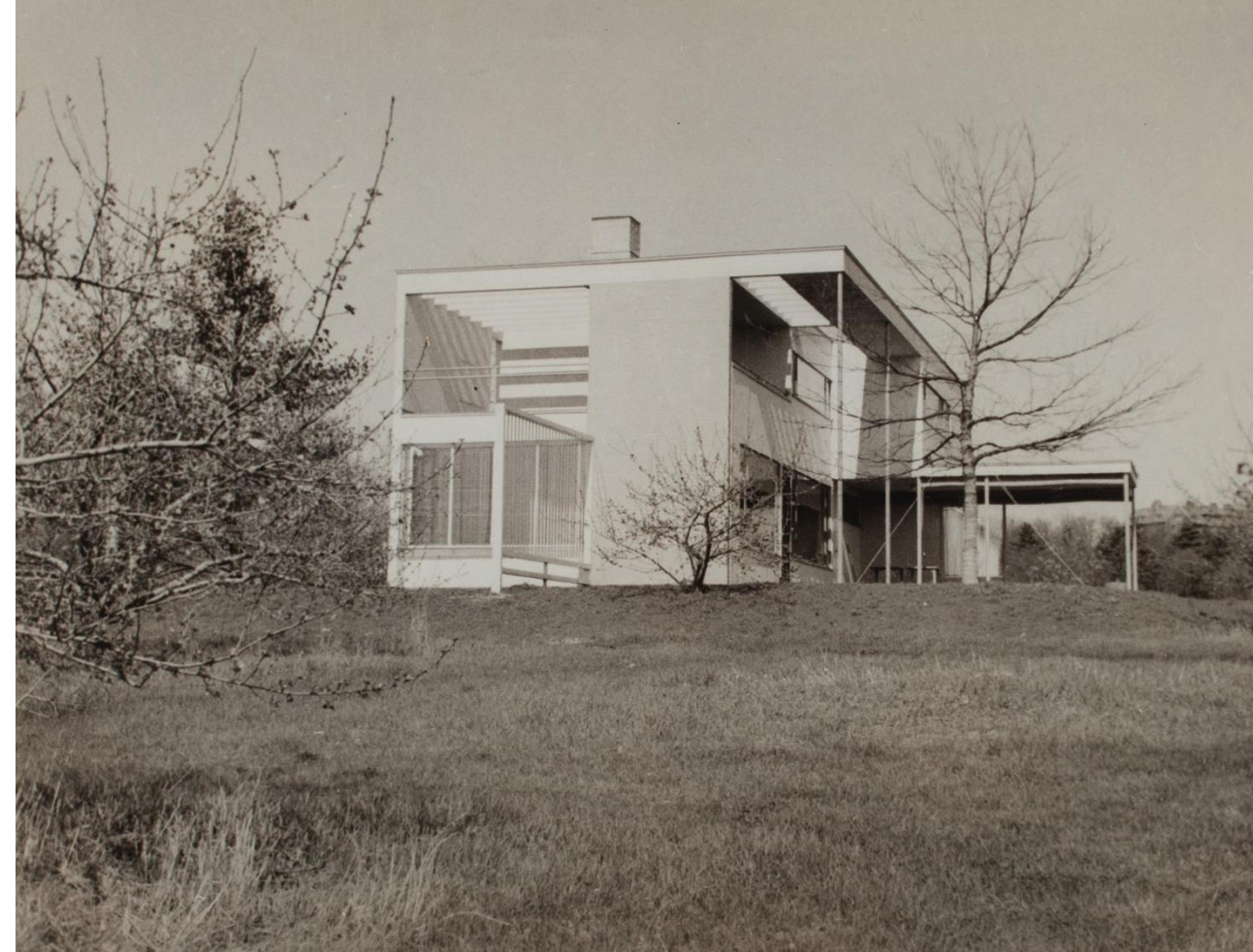


THE SITE

Gropius House is located in Lincoln, Massachusetts, a rural town west of Boston known as a significant center for Modern architecture.

In addition to Gropius House, Lincoln is home to the Marcel Breuer House and the Ford House, among others. Gropius House sits on a gently sloping site featuring meadows, mature trees, and wetlands. Gropius carefully selected and shaped the site to reflect his belief in harmonizing architecture with nature, including the construction of thoughtfully integrated garden “rooms” that blur the boundary between the landscape and the house. He intentionally retained historical elements of the site’s agricultural history, such as stone walls and an existing orchard, and incorporated these elements into the landscape design.

A key experience of the site is its approach from Baker Bridge Road, where the house emerges at the top of a gently curved driveway. Visitors currently park at the base of the driveway near the garage and walk up to the house. A virtual tour and site photos are found at the competition website.



Landscape and rear elevation of Gropius House (1939)

Address: 68 Baker Bridge Rd,
Lincoln, MA 01773

5.51 acres

Sited within local “Woods End
Road Historic District”

Photos, maps, drawings, etc. can
be found in the competition shared
drive.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

1. Process
 - a. Submissions shall be PDFs and made through the portal at the RFP website link provided to respondents upon registering.
2. Registration
 - a. Teams must register at the RFP website at www.gropiuscompetition.info. After registering, teams will receive an email link and instructions for submission.
3. Materials:

Teams must submit a single PDF file containing:

 - a. Team information cover page:
 - i. Contact information for all firms/students
 - ii. Primary point of contact
 - iii. Optional descriptions of team members' backgrounds, and their interest in the competition

Do not place firm/team names anywhere other than the cover/background page, as submissions will be judged anonymously.
 - b. Design Materials for Review and Potential Exhibition:

Materials shall be fit to Arch D (24" x 36") landscape-oriented boards, with each of the following items on its own page:

 - i. Site Plan
 - ii. Floor plans
 - iii. Building Sections
 - iv. Site section, drawn on the enclosed CAD/PDF file
 - v. At least one rendering; teams may choose to submit additional renderings to convey their design intent

These materials may be displayed at a related exhibition and should be formatted accordingly.
 - c. A concise narrative outlining the design intent, guiding principles, and how the proposal responds to the site, the use, and Gropius's design philosophy

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- a. Design excellence
- b. Responsiveness to the context of the main house, garage building, and surrounding site
- c. Innovation and creativity
- d. Accessibility
- e. Connection to Gropius's legacy and philosophy

JURY PROCESS

The process for review is as follows:

- Initial submissions will be judged anonymously.
- Finalists will be selected and have the opportunity to refine their proposals.
- Virtual presentations will be made to the jury.
- The winning team will then be selected and announced.
- The winning team will receive a \$5,000 prize, have their work included in the Gropius House archives, and included in an exhibition.
- While this is primarily an ideas competition, Historic New England may wish to proceed to construct the winning proposal or a modified design thereof, following fee and contract negotiations with the winning team, selection of sub-consultants, review and approval of key considerations (such as proper licensing and insurance), and Historic New England's internal financial capacity and strategic direction. Historic New England reserves the right to hold an architect selection process, separate from this competition, at its own discretion.

APPENDICES

Appendices are found at the competition website at www.gropiuscompetition.info, including:

- a. Site Plans and Sections
- b. Existing Building Floor Plans and Elevations
- c. Photographs and Background
- d. Existing Building Material Palette
- e. Virtual Tours



Photo by Charles Forberg

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