

# 2400 Princess Anne Street

Fredericksburg, VA, 22401

Nestled in the heart of Fredericksburg is the 2400 Diner. Locals and tourists are beckoned into the restaurant by a large neon sign proclaiming “Let’s Eat”. As well as being a popular local hangout, the 2400 Diner is a rare example of modernism in architecture in an architecturally conservative town. Typically, in the 1950s, diners were constructed to attract motorists in stainless steel and were freed from “form follows function”. At this time, the Space Age was becoming an obsession with the American public;

**Architect:** unknown

**Built:** 1955

**Primary Material:** Concrete, stucco

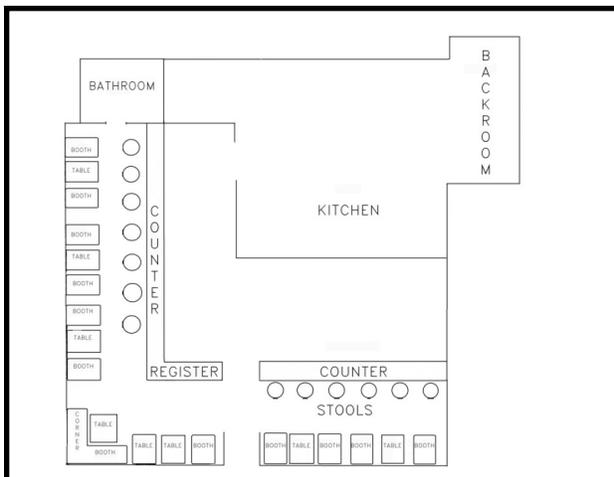
**Square Footage:** 1,123 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Surveyor:** Melissa Kobiela

diners were built to reflect mobility and movement with sleek and curvy designs.<sup>1</sup> However, despite its construction in the midst of this new Space Age craze, the 2400 Diner maintained modernism design elements.

The building’s silhouette is long and flat broken only by the big neon sign and chimney. Geometrically, the structure is very square. Set close to the road, the diner is far but regularly spaced from surrounding structures. As a restaurant, the diner is located in a commercial district along with other eateries including Carl’s, an ice cream stand. To the side of the building is a small parking lot.

According to Philip Johnson, modernism architecture is based on planning and are built to be lived in.<sup>2</sup> He wrote that in temperate climates extensive wall areas are made of glass.<sup>3</sup> The 2400 Diner embodies this by its extensive use of windows. The spacing of the windows are very regular, two on each side of the building of the same size. These windows are very large and take up about 3/5 of the wall space.



**Inside the small cramped space, costumers enjoy the food and atmosphere of a family owned and operated diner. The interior decoration was kept simple, most of the objects in the building functioned mainly as needed for a restaurant business such as the soda fountain and grills.**



The understated front door fits in nicely in spacing with between the large windows and is recessed into the building. Considerably slimmer, the front door is shorter than the windows. The proportions are very square and regular. The windows line up on the same plane. Short, squat and square are terms that can be used to describe the massing of the structure. According to Philip Johnson, modernism buildings make a conscious effort to make flat surfaces and a square building belongs on a square lot.<sup>4</sup> The 2400 Diner is very flat, very square, and built on a square lot.

A heavy horizontal line created by the large deep eaves balances the many vertical lines made by the windows and the door. It is here that the influences of Frank Lloyd Wright can be seen. Wright was known for his low proportions, broad overhanging roofs, projecting eaves, and use of natural materials such as stone.<sup>5</sup> The surface material of the exterior wall is half stucco with the bottom half stone.<sup>6</sup> There is an additional wall about a little less than halfway up the height of the building constructed of rusticated stone used as a flowerbed. The landscaping surrounding the building is mostly pavement except for the flowerbeds. The building is regulated by geometric lines, lots of small vertical lines balanced by the heavy horizontal line of the eave. The 2400 Diner while not high style, embodies the heart of modernism keeping to the core stylistic elements in its own understated way.

1.American Diner Museum. "Diner History and Culture." American Diner Museum. N.p n.d. Web. 27 Apr. 2011. <<http://americandinermuseum.org/site/history.php>>.

2.Johnson, Philip. Philip Johnson Writings. Ed. Helen M. Frank. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979. Print.

3. Johnson 30

4. Johnson 30-31

5. "Frank Lloyd Wright: 1867-1959." Grey Cells Technology: n. pag. Web. 27 Apr. 2011. <[http://anc.gray-cells.com/p\\_fw.html](http://anc.gray-cells.com/p_fw.html)>.

6. "Virginia Mass Appraisal Network." VamaNet. N.p., 2011. Web. 27 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.vamanet.com>>.