

Maggie Finegan Team Blog

Real Estate Expert in Northern Chicago Communities

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GREEN GREENE ARCHITECTURE

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Imagine a day when a rehabbed vintage 1912 theatre marquee lights up using the energy equivalent of a toaster oven. That day is already here. That energy-efficient marquee belongs to **The Morse Theatre**, the historic Rogers Park gem brought back to life - in green - thanks to **Thom Greene**, Principal Architect, Greene and Proppe Design, Inc. Greene transformed this diamond-in-the-rough former nickelodeon theater and vaudeville house into a sustainable yet vintage-feeling building, now a live music venue, its front a restaurant reminiscent of old-style Chicago.



Greene and Proppe Design, Inc., founded in 1980 by architect Thom Greene and interior designer, Rick Proppe, takes on projects that run the gamut from small scale residential additions to million-dollar renovations. "**Honest architecture**" is their promise, with an emphasis on enhancement of structures. The Morse Theatre is a notable example of their mission accomplished. Greene and Proppe converted the theatre without altering its original character while updating the structure and mechanicals to fit a sustainable paradigm almost 100 years after its original construction.

Greene's work must feel like play, with **city beautification and community preservation** among his favored hobbies. How did Greene's passion for beauty and sustainability in architecture transform The Morse to one that conserves resources and is environmentally gentle? What's more sustainable than reusing an existing building and making it a vital cultural destination within a community that values the local business? When you freshen up in the Morse facilities during an evening of dinner and a concert, remember that the water runs **from low-flow plumbing fixtures** (this type of plumbing uses an average of 600 gallons per day less than conventional plumbing). That water is also **heated by solar panels**. The 340 square foot panels located on the theatre's north end can heat up to 550 gallons of water per day (stored in basement holding tanks). That satisfies about **70% of the restaurant and theatre's daily water heating needs** and makes yesterday's energy-sapping water heaters a part of history not revisited in the revitalized Morse. Want to see The Morse's landscape of native plants? They're on the roof. The **extensive green roofing system**, which takes up about half of the total roof, requires no irrigation. This type of roofing system is a natural insulator and temperature regulator, not to mention requires lower maintenance than an intensive roofing system. The **elevator is also energy efficient**. Conventional models using twice the energy it takes to run this elevator.

Greene and Proppe continued to walk their green design mission talk with choices in finish products, like **carpet tiles that are 56% recycled content**, wool or PVC-free-vinyl covered chairs and booths, **bamboo and wheat board millwork and trim**, and drywall/ceiling tiles made from **recaptured gypsum**, recycled paper, fly ash and slag. If only every building possessed the indoor

Home



Maggie Finegan

[email me](#)
[773-502-1673](tel:773-502-1673)

KELLER WILLIAMS
<http://www.movewithmaggie.com>
2156 W. Montrose Ave.
Chicago, IL 60618

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air quality. Greene and Proppe's design allows, with only low VOC paints and adhesives used, people would be much healthier for it. The **carpet meets strict emissions standards**, with low chemical emissions and a Green Label Plus stamp of approval.

When work feels like play, it's not work anymore-it's passion. Greene's passion for beautification and preservation at work and play is reflected in the **Andersonville community design** from the sidewalks to the street lamps. Greene's influence here makes sense: Greene and Proppe created **the design guideline manual for facades and storefronts for Andersonville**. Take a stroll or sit on a bench on North Clark in Andersonville to appreciate Greene's influence on awnings as an architectural complement, sun shield, and customer amenity. Also, be sure to visit the **Bryn Mawr Historic District** to view the streetscape and community identifiers designed by Greene and Proppe. Bryn Mawr Avenue is on the list of the **National Register of Historic Places**.

Visit the Greene and Proppe **website** to view innovative **residential projects** before and after. You'll see new porches **fueling life into historic buildings**, which will certainly help

buildings continue to appreciate and provide a generous return on project investment for you as a homeowner. Be sure to check out Greene and Proppe's transformation of a **Lakewood Balmoral renovation of a two-flat into a single family**, with form and function, color and texture skillfully chosen to achieve a **vintage yet modern feel**. You'll see bronze fittings, granite countertops, glass tile mosaic flooring, limestone counters, hand painted silk shades and more.

Greene and Proppe are part of **Chicago Metropolitan's Agency for Planning**, which works with existing Chicago municipalities with urban planning scenarios. Check out the website for more details on **The South Shore Concept** (plans to finish the 2 southernmost miles of the lakefront), **The Calumet Genesis Energy Park concept** (silos on the Calumet river would be transformed into a clean energy resource).

As a local neighborhood resource and one of our **trusted providers** Greene and Proppe continue to help form the personality of Chicago and its unique neighborhoods.

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