

# ARTI FACT

# ON THE GRIDDLE

**FOR 56 YEARS, RESIDENTS OF WASHINGTON, DC HAVE ENJOYED BREAKFAST** at the Waffle Shop, a Doo-Wop-era diner across the street from Ford's Theater. But now that part of the the block has been purchased to build an office tower, they will soon have to eat their waffles elsewhere. Regulars are already mourning the loss of one of the capital's cultural institutions.

**THE ART MODERNE ESTABLISHMENT LOOKS LIKE IT'S SEEN BETTER DAYS** and it has. One can glimpse those days in the gleaming photographs on the back wall, taken shortly after the opening in 1950. The formica counters shined, the stainless steel gleamed, and the air-conditioning—a novelty—epitomized high-tech. Nowadays, even though the neon no longer blazes and signs cover the double-height windows, the atmosphere still packs them in, friends and strangers elbow to elbow sitting around a horseshoe-shaped counter.

**THAT'S WHY SEVERAL GROUPS ARE FIGHTING TO SAVE THE PLACE.** The Committee of 100 on the Federal City, the Recent Past Preservation Network, the Downtown Arts Coalition, the Art Deco Society of Washington, and the Society for Commercial Archeology are rallying to sponsor a DC landmark nomination, and the Historic American Buildings Survey—anticipating possible demolition—took the photograph shown here. **IF SAVING THE DINER ISN'T POSSIBLE**, preservationists would like to see elements of it incorporated into the new building. "So much of the texture of the downtown shopping district has been swept away by large office buildings," says Sally Berk, a DC architectural historian. "It's a rare example of small-scale retail."

