

# Designation Report on the Foard House

7410 Shady Ln, Charlotte, NC



## General Information

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<b>Historic Names of Property:</b>	Foard House
<b>Address of Property:</b>	7410 Shady Ln, Charlotte, N.C.
<b>PIN:</b>	10717219
<b>Most Recent Deed Book &amp; Page:</b>	Mecklenburg County Deed Book 37798, Page 238
<b>Amount of Land/Acreage to be:</b>	0.840 Acres
<b>Ad Valorem Tax Value:</b>	The 2025 Real Estate Assessed Value of parcel 10717219 which includes the Foard House is \$418,700.
<b>Recommendation for Designation:</b>	The exterior and interior of the house and the entire parcel of the land.
<b>Current Property Owner:</b>	Virginia Walker 7410 Shady Ln Charlotte, NC 28215
<b>This report was produced:</b>	February 17, 2026

## Interior Designation Parameters

In support of their request for landmark designation of the interior of the Foard House, the property owners have provided written consent for interior review of the house pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 160D-947(b). Specific interior elements of the Foard House which are to be included in designation are

- Brick fireplaces
- All interior trim and exposed structural members
- Windows and doors
- All elements of the staircase
- Lower story bar including counter and bamboo under trim
- Ceiling and wall materials and finishes
- All interior brickwork
- Existing Globe Lamps on the back patio and right porch





This report contains a historical sketch of the property prepared by Nakyra Sykes and Stewart Gray.

This report contains a physical description of the property prepared by Nakyra Sykes and Stewart Gray.

This report includes documentation as to why and how the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S. § 160D-945.

## **Statement of Significance**

The Foard House is a striking example of the Contemporary Modernist style and is significant for its adherence to the tenets of “high style” modernist architecture. The flat-roof design, the use of modernist materials on the exterior and throughout the interior, the integration of the house into the landscape, and the efficient design of the relatively modest-sized house make the Foard House an important artifact of post-WWII architecture in Charlotte. The property is also a significant artifact of the swift and radical transition of East Charlotte from rural to suburban after WWII. This modernist and progressive house design seems to reflect the progressive and creative personalities and work of the builders/owners, Cecil Jerome Foard and Nancy Foard. As the owners of Sign Arts, they were responsible for producing, designing, and installing signs for the burgeoning banking industry in Charlotte, as well as many of the other commercial enterprises in the city.

## **Integrity**

### **Materials - High**

The material integrity of the Foard House does much to preserve the historic character of the property. All prominent features including the original cream-colored bricks found on the exterior and interior, the T111 siding, windows, and interior trim are original.

### **Association - High**

Due to its high level of integrity, the property retains a high level of association with Zeke and Nancy Foard who, as the owners of Sign Arts, made enduring contributions to the city’s civic and cultural life by creating signage for major banks and other institutions during Uptown Charlotte’s building boom in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, and in their restoration of major historic properties such as the North Carolina Medical Building and the Mint Museum.

### **Design - High**

This house is an excellent and intact example of a mid-century modern house built in the mid-1960s and it retains many of its original features such as windows, lighting fixtures, and materials. The Grove Park neighborhood is largely composed of Ranch houses. The Foard House the only example within the neighborhood of high-style midcentury modern architecture.

**Feelings – High**

The Foard House captures the feeling of the Mid-Century Modern style of architecture within Charlotte, North Carolina. It stands as a prominent example within the east side of Charlotte North Carolina.

**Workmanship – Medium**

The workmanship on the Foard House is well preserved, however the workmanship associated with the terraced site has been compromised due to neglect.

**Location - High**

The house is on its original parcel.

**Setting- Medium**

Nearly all of the original neighboring properties have been preserved, but some recent in-fill construction has impacted the integrity of the setting.

## Historical Significance

Charlotte experienced explosive growth during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, largely based on good transportation, the development of textile mills beginning in the late 19th century, and access to hydroelectric power. Charlotte became the largest city in North Carolina in 1930. World War II brought more industrial and residential growth and the city's population doubled to over 200,000 from 1940 to 1960.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenal growth is clearly reflected in the post-World War II suburban development in east Charlotte.

Grove Park, Burtonwood/East Forest, North Sharon Amity, Becton Park/Marlwood Acres, and Sherwood Forest are East Charlotte neighborhoods built after World War II. The neighborhoods are dominated by Ranch and American Small style houses and contain many split-level form houses. Many of these houses feature Colonial Revival or Contemporary Modern elements, often in a minimal fashion. Of the hundreds of houses that make up these sprawling suburban neighborhoods, eight significant Contemporary Modern style houses dating from 1959-1969 have been identified.<sup>2</sup> While many ranch or split-level houses in these East Charlotte neighborhoods incorporate some Contemporary Modern elements, few truly embody the forms and elements of the style.

Contemporary Modern houses (1945 – 1970) feature “clean” lines and utilize geometric shapes that had not traditionally been associated with houses. Contemporary Modern houses are typically asymmetrical, roofs are typically low-pitched or flat, glass panels or windows frequently make up wall sections, and in higher style examples, the houses complement the landscape.



One exceptional example of the Contemporary Modern house in East Charlotte is the Foard House in the Grove Park neighborhood. Constructed in 1968 for Cecil Jerome

“Zeke” Foard and Nancy Foard, the single-family residence is located on a sloped, lake-side parcel on a cul-de-sac/small loop, in the Grove Park neighborhood. The house was constructed by Jack Dagenhart of Eastern Construction Company.<sup>3</sup> The architect is unknown, but may have been Murray Whisnant, who worked for Zeke Foard on a commercial building, or possibly an architect with Odell Associates, which had a relationship with Eastern Construction Company.<sup>4</sup>

The house’s flat roof and vertical siding immediately identify the property as a Contemporary Modern style house. Additional significant elements of the style, such as floor to ceiling glazing, asymmetrical fenestration, exposed beams (interior and exterior), and shallow horizontal windows just below the roofline, allow the house to be classified as a high-style example of a Contemporary Modern house. The integrity of the house is quite high with original exterior brick and panel siding. The open floorplan of the primary story has been preserved and the interior features original wood and cork flooring, brick fireplaces, and a prominent minimalist staircase.

### **Other Identified East Charlotte Contemporary Modern Houses**



Cohen-Fumero House, 1154 Cedarwood Lane

The most comparable property in East Charlotte to the Foard House is the flat-roofed, high-style Contemporary Modern Cohen-Fumero House in the North Sharon Amity neighborhood. This house was designated as a Local Historic Landmark in 2013.



Biggs House, 1200 Burtonwood Circle

Other identified East Charlotte Contemporary Modern houses include the 1960 Biggs House at 1200 Burtonwood Circle, and the 1964 Arant House at 7212 Benita Drive (below), both in the Burtonwood/East Forest neighborhood.



Arant House, 7212 Benita Drive



5601 Riviere Drive

This low-slung house at 5601 Riviere Drive, and the prominent shed-roofed house (not pictured) at 5601 Riviere Drive, both high style, both designed by architect Alan Ingram, were built in 1961 in the Sherwood Forest neighborhood.



Winecoff House, 6631 Williams Road

Architect Donald Winecoff's high-style, asymmetrical, front-gabled home at 6631 Williams Road in the Grove Park neighborhood was built in 1960.



1808 Marlwood Circle

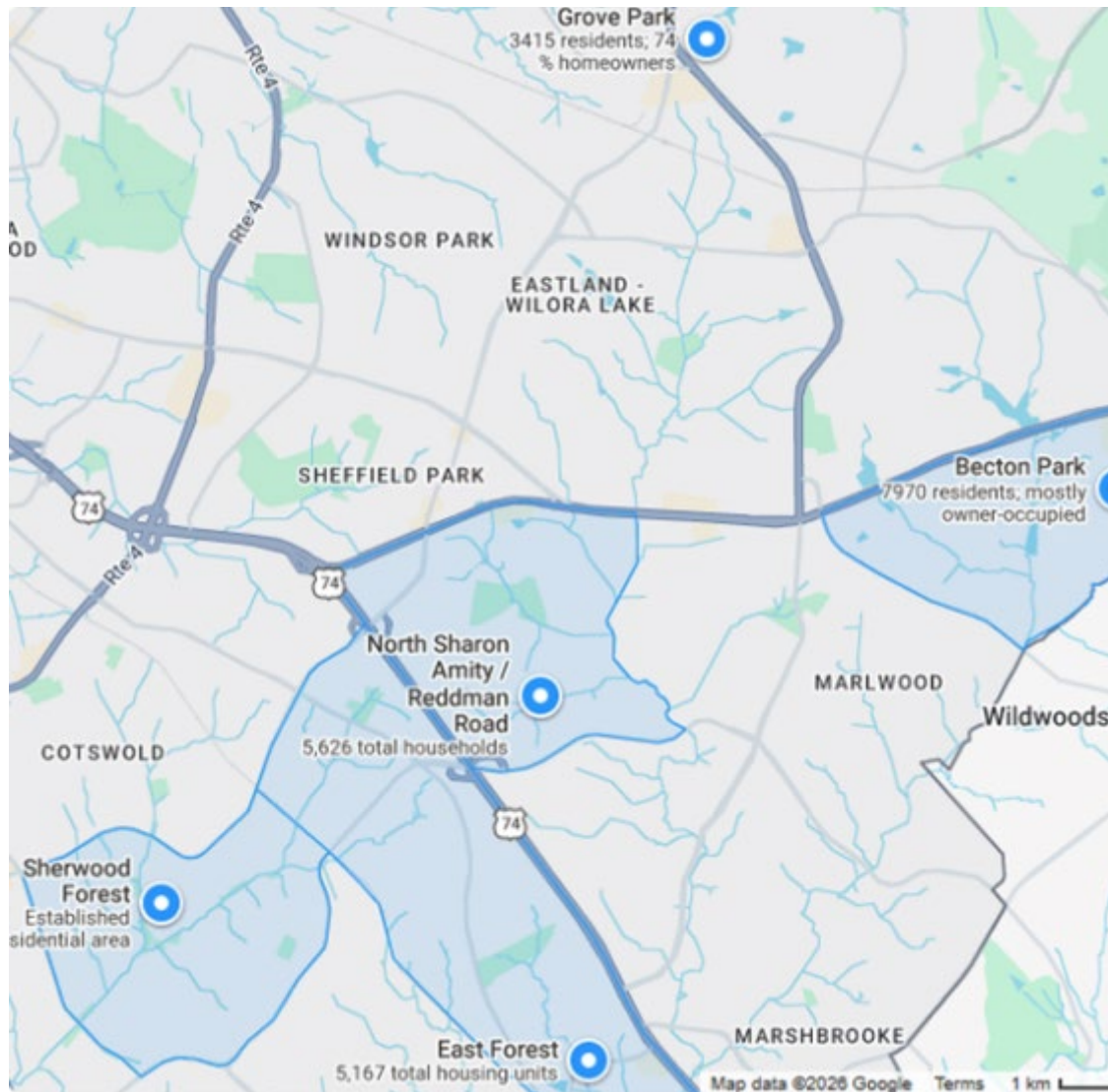
1808 Marlwood Circle was built in 1959 in the Becton Park/Marlwood Acres neighborhood. The house features a notable deep-gabled side porch.



8600 Dogwood Drive

8600 Dogwood Drive was built in 1966 in the Cedarbrook Acres neighborhood.

The Foard House, and the eight other East Charlotte Contemporary Modern houses listed here are individually significant for their architecture. These nine houses, built between 1959 and 1969, are also significant in that they clearly represent the era in which their neighborhoods were built and help document with their distinctive style the history of the neighborhoods and the phenomenal geographic growth of Charlotte after World War II.



**Map showing subject East Charlotte neighborhoods.**

The combined approximate total population of the Grove Park, Burtonwood/East Forest, North Sharon Amity, Becton Park/Marlwood Acres and Sherwood Forest neighborhoods is currently 41.3 thousand residents. With single-family homes being dominant in all of these neighborhoods, the rarity of the nine Contemporary Modern houses discussed here is clearly apparent.<sup>5</sup>

## Cecil Jerome “Zeke” Foard and Nancy Foard



Cecil Foard and  
Nancy Foard,  
wedding photograph.

Credit: Cora A. Harris

Cecil Jerome “Zeke” Foard was born in 1932.<sup>6</sup> He attended Harding High School, where he met Nancy Grady. The two married in 1952. Following his service in the United States Army from 1953 to 1955, Foard returned to Charlotte and began working for his father-in-law, Ernest Grady. Ernest Grady was a prominent regional figure, having founded the Grady Sign Company, one of the earliest neon sign advertising firms in the southeastern United States.<sup>7</sup> Originating in the 1910s, the company began with hand-painted barn signs produced while Grady traveled by horse and buggy. Over time, these efforts expanded into multiple ventures, including a lighting company, a neon sign company, and a plastic display company, each operating independently from the original Grady Sign Company.<sup>8</sup>

Zeke Foard assumed responsibility for the business operations of the company after demonstrating a strong aptitude for management. In 1966, Ernest Grady sold the company to Zeke and Nancy Foard, who assumed the roles of president and vice president, respectively. The company was renamed Sign Art Incorporated.<sup>9</sup>



Sign Art Inc. logo. *The Charlotte News*, Jan 8, 1971, p. 13A.

This transition coincided with a period of rapid economic expansion in Charlotte during the late 1960s, when the city’s growing banking sector provided the financial foundation for suburban development and commercial growth. Institutions such as First Union National Bank and American Trust Company, later North Carolina National Bank (NCNB), were central to this transformation, and both emerged as major national financial institutions.<sup>10</sup>

In 1968, Zeke Foard successfully secured a contract with First Union National Bank to produce signage for its merger with Commercial State Bank of Laurinburg.<sup>10</sup> This marked the beginning of Sign Art Incorporated's long-standing role as the primary sign company for First Union, overseeing signage for large-scale mergers and branch conversions. One of the largest projects occurred in 1982, when the merger of North Carolina Bank and North Carolina National Bank required signage for nearly 70 branches across the state. Sign Arts produced custom architectural signage, which is typically a major component of the commercial built environment as it is often a prominent, if not the most prominent, architectural feature of a commercial property. Sign Arts, under the leadership of Zeke and Nancy Foard, was directly involved in shaping Charlotte's, and many other North Carolina cities' visual identity, producing the signage that crowned major banking headquarters and other commercial buildings across the state.



Sign Art Inc. employee installing NCNB Sign, *The Charlotte Observer*, Credit: Phil Drake



Staff Photo By JOE EDENS

**Name Dropping:** Eric Price (top) and Ricky Hiott of Signart Inc. put together a sign Saturday for First Federal Savings and Loan's new location at South Tryon and 3rd streets.

Cecil Foard Left and signs by SignArt Inc., *The Charlotte News*, 1984, p. 8A

Sign Arts employees First Federal Savings  
*The Charlotte News*, January 8, 1971



PHOTO COURTESY OF SIGNART  
This Reid's sign is one way businesses look to preserve the city's history - by keeping and rehabilitating old signage.

Reid's Sign rehabilitated by Sign Art Inc.  
*The Charlotte Observer*, July 8, 2017



SignArt's Punch Belvin Readies NCNB Signs For Installation

*The Charlotte Observer*, Dec 2, 1978, p.17

Beyond her work with Sign Arts, Nancy Foard was actively involved in civic and political life as a local leader of the Democratic Party<sup>11</sup>, a healthy food advocate, and in the restoration of Charlotte's historic North Carolina Medical College building.<sup>12</sup> Zeke Foard was also involved with historic preservation. He led restoration efforts for the historic gold-leaf eagle that once adorned the 1837 Charlotte Branch of the US Mint, now the Mint Museum of Art<sup>13</sup>, and through Sign Arts, worked to restore several historic neon signs in Charlotte.<sup>14</sup>

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> See [“Industry, Transportation and Education The New South Development of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County”](#) and [“Survey of Potential Historic Landmarks and Preservation Areas in East Charlotte”](#) for more information on the growth of Charlotte and the built environment from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1960.

<sup>2</sup> See [“MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA”](#) and [“Motorized Landscape: The Development or Modernism In Charlotte, 1945-1885”](#) for more information on the architectural significance of East Charlotte from 1945 to 1969.

<sup>3</sup> Jack Dagenhart is identified as the builder of the Foard House in “Charlotte Modernist Houses and Architecture,” from NCModernist, available at <https://www.ncmodernist.org/charlotte.htm>

<sup>4</sup> “Made In the Shade: Sign-Making Company Works Around Problem- Literally.” *The Charlotte Observer*, 18 Jun 1987, p.13

<sup>5</sup> See the [United States Census Bureau](#) data portal, “Charlotte Housing Data,” as well as neighborhood demographic summaries from Oprea Realty Group and Point2Homes. Available at [https://data.census.gov/profile/North\\_Carolina?q=040XX00US37](https://data.census.gov/profile/North_Carolina?q=040XX00US37), <https://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/NC/Charlotte/East-Charlotte-Demographics.html#households>, <https://oprearealtygroup.com/neighborhoods/east-charlotte>

<sup>6</sup> “News of North Carolina.” *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 Oct. 1962, p. 14.; Hankins and Whittington Funeral Services. and “Cecil Jerome 'Zeke' Foard April 30, 1931-March 23, 2024” *The Charlotte Observer*, 7 Apr. 2024, p. B13 for more information on Cecil Foard.

<sup>7</sup> Wister, Emery. “Ernest Grady’s Leaving- But He’ll Be Back.” *The Charlotte News*, 2 May 1976.

<sup>8</sup> “Grady Sign Co. Moves.” *The Charlotte Observer*, 27 May 1966 p. 38.

<sup>9</sup> Katie Dagenhart and Bob Dennis. “signArt Company traces roots to signs painted on barns.” *The Charlotte News*, 21 Mar. 1984, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> See Paul Kurzeja’s “The History of Banking in Charlotte.” Charlotte Museum of History, available at <https://charlottemuseum.org/learn/articles/the-history-of-banking-in-charlotte/>

<sup>11</sup> "Obituaries-Nancy Grady Foard." *The Charlotte Observer*, 16 Jan. 2003, p. 6B

<sup>12</sup> "The North Carolina Medical Building." The Charlotte Mecklenburg Landmarks Commission, 6 Feb. 1979.

<sup>13</sup> "Legal Notices; Public Notice" *The Charlotte Observer*, 3 Feb. 1997, p. 27

<sup>14</sup> "Under the Eagle's Eye," *The Charlotte Observer*, 4 Jul. 1976, p. 23H

## Architectural Description



According to Virginia McAlester, an American Architectural historian, Contemporary Modern houses constructed from 1945 to the present are identified by a low-pitched gabled roof, sometimes flat, with widely overhanging eaves and commonly exposed roof beams. Within *A Field Guide to American Homes*, McAlester notes: “These small and affordable houses were constructed from natural materials, built low to the ground, included open floor plans with a free flow of interior spaces (only bedrooms and bathrooms had walls) and had broad sheltering roof overhangs. They also featured a significant spatial and visual interplay between indoor and outdoor spaces” (McAlester, p. 646). Contemporary Modern houses are described for their adaptability to hillsides and varied topography. Large windows frequently open toward outdoor spaces and scenic views, reinforcing a strong connection between the interior and the landscape. The use of panelized wall systems and carefully balanced window arrangements reflects a clear influence of Japanese architectural principles. The Foard House meets the description of Contemporary Modern to such an extent that it can be considered as a “high style” example of the style.





Figure 1: Modern Lighting Fixtures

The Foard House, constructed in 1968 for Cecil Jerome “Zeke” Foard and Nancy Foard, is a Modern Contemporary style, single-family residence located on a sloped parcel within the Grove Park neighborhood of Charlotte, North Carolina. The house was built by Jack Dagenhart of Eastern Construction Company. The house occupies a hillside with significant change in elevation from front to rear. As a result, the front elevation presents a one-story scale (Figure 2), while the rear elevation reveals two full stories (Figure 3). The rear of the house opens onto a two-level patio that overlooks the landscaped grounds and the lake beyond. The Foard House is defined by low-pitched, elongated rooflines with deep overhangs that emphasize horizontality, characteristic of the Modern Contemporary style. The rooflines visually anchor the structure within its terraced landscape and reinforce its alignment with the natural contours of the site. Surrounding the house are planting beds arranged along the perimeter of the structure, consistent with residential practices that became increasingly prevalent during the 1960s.

The property is situated on a terraced site that descends toward Linda Lake, a small body of water that defines the northeastern boundary of the parcel. A pathway extends from the rear porch of the house down to the lake providing a connection between the upper living spaces and the waterfront. It originally featured landscape lighting fixtures (*Figure 1*), now in disrepair.



Figure 2: Front Facade Elevation



Figure 3: Back Facade Elevation

The primary exterior siding material is T1-11 panels, an exterior plywood siding that was introduced in the 1960s and was widely used in 20<sup>th</sup>-century modern architecture, as it was starkly different from traditional horizontal siding. Exterior trim and exposed structural members are black-painted wood. The window frames are metal and hold large, fixed glass panels. Structural beams extend from the interior through the exterior, reinforcing visual continuity and signaling a high-style application of mid-century modern design principles.



Figure 4: Front & North Elevations



Figure 5: South Elevation

The upper-level functions as the primary living area, characterized by an open plan with minimal interior partitions. Upon entry, a central living room serves as the primary shared space. A secondary living area is located to the right and is partially screened by a descending staircase rather than by full-height walls. Black-painted wooden posts delineate spatial zones while maintaining visual continuity. To the north of the central living space, a wing contains a bedroom and bathroom. To the south, the plan is divided by a white gypsum wall and a centrally placed brick mantel. Beyond this partition is the kitchen, which no longer retains its original fixtures or finishes. The kitchen provides access to a small porch and steps along the southern elevation (*Figure 5*). An additional access point to the balcony is located on the eastern facade.

The lower level is more enclosed, with full-height walls defining individual rooms. Two exterior doors with direct-glazed glass transoms connect this level to the rear patio: one located in an office or bar space and the other in the far northeastern bedroom. Of the rooms on the lower level, two contain egress windows and therefore meet the requirements to be classified as bedrooms. The spatial contrast between the open upper level and the compartmentalized lower level reinforces functional distinctions between shared and private spaces.

A cream-colored brick is used extensively throughout the house, appearing in three masonry fireplaces as well as on multiple interior and exterior walls on the lower level (*Figure 6*). The brickwork contributes to a more enclosed and defined spatial character on the lower floor, in contrast to the openness of the upper level. Large

expanses of glazing on the upper floor admit natural light and framed views of the surrounding landscape. In areas requiring privacy, including bathrooms, bedrooms, and portions of the front-facing living spaces, frosted glass is employed to allow light while limiting visibility. Many original Contemporary Modern features remain intact, including window systems and lighting fixtures that date to the original period of construction.



Figure 6: Cream Brick in Lower-Level Office Space

The Foard House retains a high degree of integrity in terms of material, design, location, and associative history. Although some interior elements, such as kitchen fixtures, have been altered, the overall form, plan, materials, and spatial organization of the house remain consistent with its original 1968 design. The property continues to convey its significance as a well-preserved example of Modern Contemporary style in Charlotte, North Carolina, and as a reflection of the social and cultural values of its original occupants.

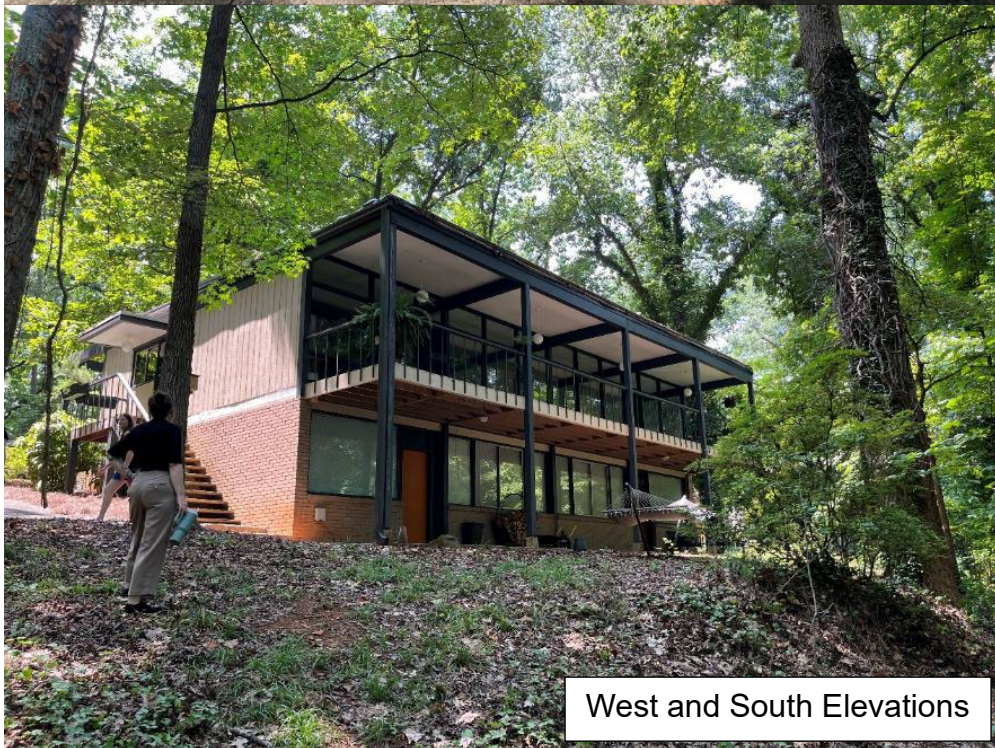
## Additional Photographs of the Property

### Exterior Images:





South Elevation



West and South Elevations



Upper-Level Patio



West Elevation

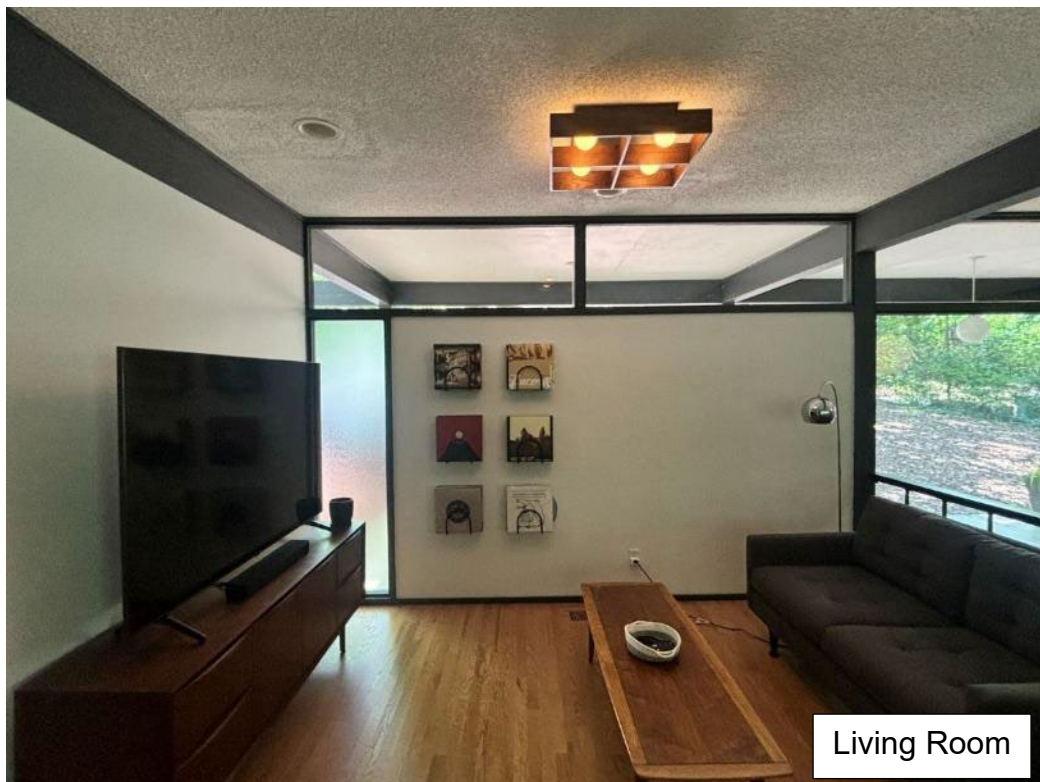


North and Front Elevations



Northeast View

Interior Images:

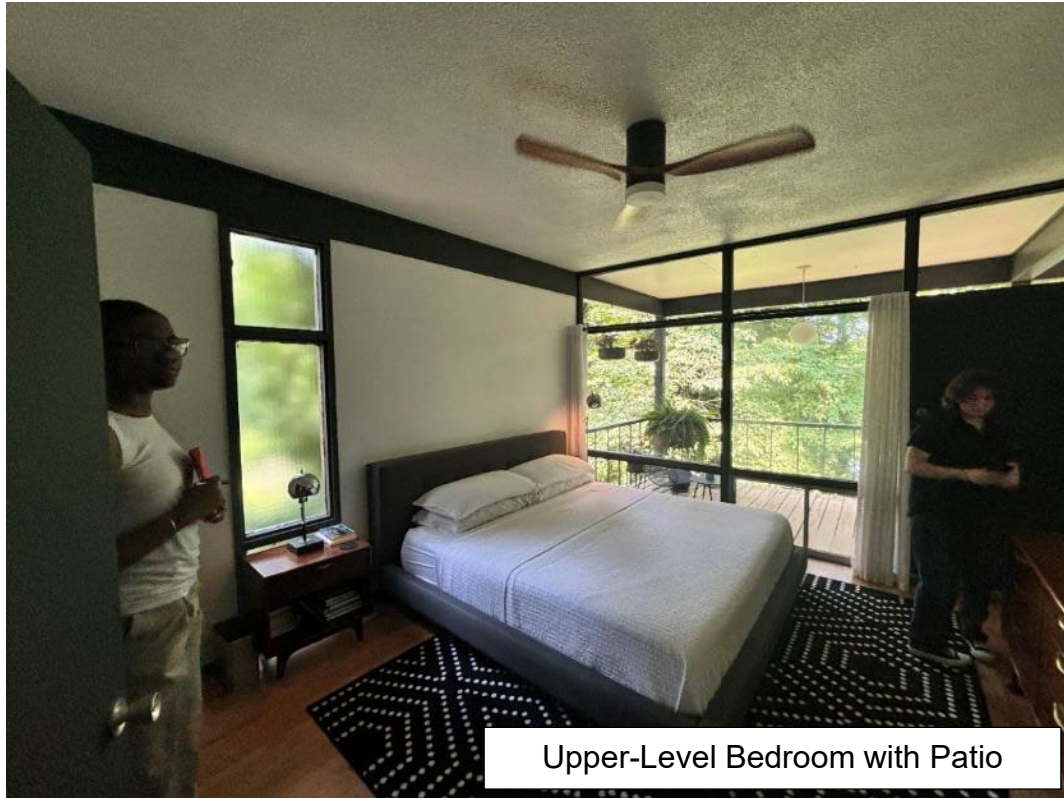




Center Mantle



Renovated Kitchen



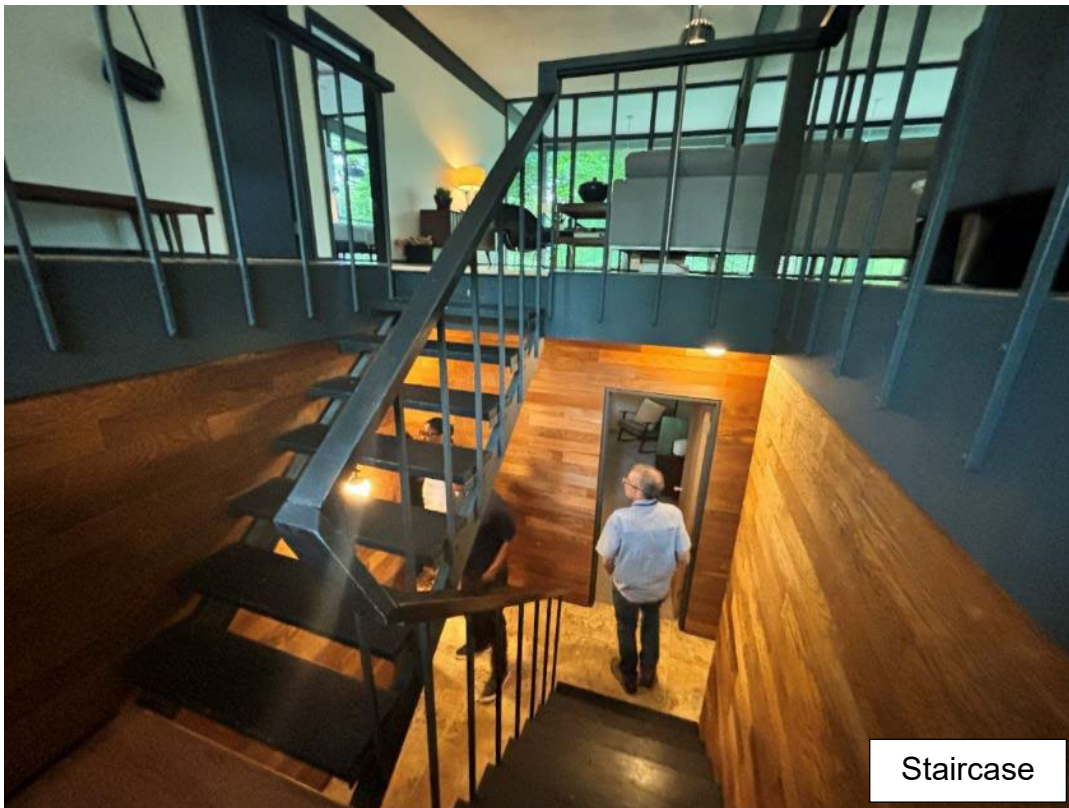
Upper-Level Bedroom with Patio



Upper-Level Patio



Staircase Beside Front

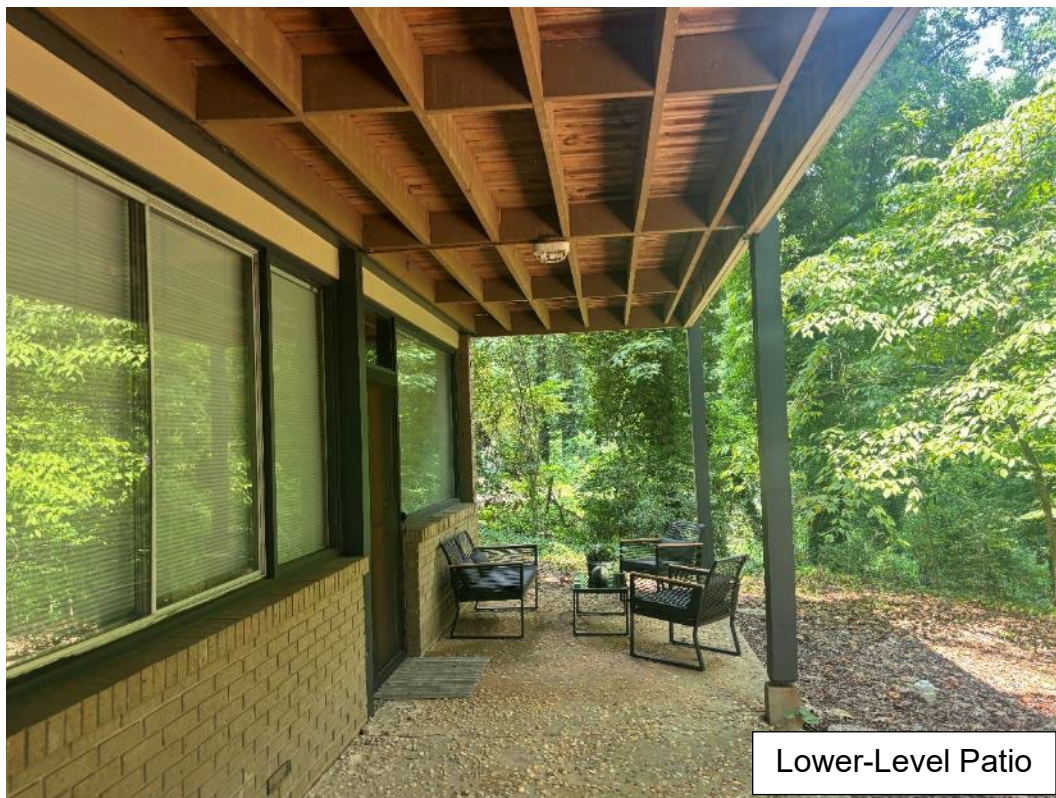


Staircase





Lower Bedroom with Patio



Lower-Level Patio