



Historic Preservation Services

Community Development & Neighborhood Services
281 North College Avenue
P.O. Box 580
Fort Collins, CO 80522.0580

970.416.4250
preservation@fcgov.com
fcgov.com/historicpreservation

Fort Collins Landmark Designation

LOCATION INFORMATION

Address: 1801 Sheely Dr.

Legal Description: Lot 22, Peck Minor Sub, Fort Collins

Property Name (historic and/or common): Leslie P. and Ruth A. Ware Property

OWNER INFORMATION

Name: Ralph G. and Chery L. Olson

Phone: 970-690-8517; 970-231-7140

Email: raffle20@yahoo.com

Mailing Address: 1801 Sheely Dr., Fort Collins, CO 80526

CLASSIFICATION

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	Existing Designation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Nat'l Register
<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> State Register
<input type="checkbox"/> Site			<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	
<input type="checkbox"/> Object			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Residential	
<input type="checkbox"/> District			<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	
			<input type="checkbox"/> Government	
			<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

FORM PREPARED BY

Name and Title: Yani Jones, Historic Preservation Planner¹

Address: 281 N. College Ave., Fort Collins, CO

Phone: 970-224-6045

Email: yjones@fcgov.com

DATE: October 20, 2022

¹ The contents of this nomination are largely based on the intensive-level cultural resources survey completed by Mary Therese Anstey (Historitecture, LLC) on November 19, 2010, but additional information has been added from a Landmark nomination form provided by Ralph and Cheryl Olson and by research and writing from Historic Preservation Services staff; all sources referenced in this nomination are listed in the References section of this form, including the sources from the 2010 Anstey report, the 2022 Olson nomination, and additional sources found by staff. Photos were taken by Yani Jones 2022 and copies can be found with City of Fort Collins Historic Preservation Services.

TYPE OF DESIGNATION and BOUNDARIES

Individual Landmark Property Landmark District

Explanation of Boundaries:

The boundaries of the property being designated as a Fort Collins Landmark correspond to the legal description of the property (hereinafter the "Property"), above.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE and INTEGRITY

Properties are eligible for designation if they possess **both** significance and integrity.

Significance is the importance of a site, structure, object or district to the history, architecture, archeology, engineering or culture of our community, State or Nation. For designation as Fort Collins Landmarks or Fort Collins Landmark Districts properties must meet one (1) or more of the following standards set forth in Fort Collins Municipal Code Section 14-22(a):

Standard 1: *Events*

This property is associated with events that have made a recognizable contribution to the broad patterns of the history of the community, State or Nation. It is associated with either (or both) of these two (2) types of events:

- a) A specific event marking an important moment in Fort Collins prehistory or history; and/or
- b) A pattern of events or a historic trend that made a recognizable contribution to the development of the community, State or Nation.

Standard 2: *Persons/Groups*

This property is associated with the lives of persons or groups of persons recognizable in the history of the community, State or Nation whose specific contributions to that history can be identified and documented.

Standard 3: *Design/Construction*

This property embodies the identifiable characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; represents the work of a craftsman or architect whose work is distinguishable from others by its characteristic style and quality; possesses high artistic values or design concepts; or is part of a recognizable and distinguishable group of properties.

The Leslie P. and Ruth A. Ware Property is significant under Standard 3 (Design/Construction) because it is a representative example of the Usonian style of architecture and because of the public interest it drew at the time of its construction. This 1961 house followed the design of Colorado Springs architect Robert Bullock and used materials from the Valley Block Company. The design was called "The Silhouette of the Sixties," and it served as a show home for builder Ben Olds and Valley Block Company's Ormond Sherwood. Olds and Sherwood intended "to show future homeowners, architects, and builders, and the bankers who finance home building, that concrete block houses were not always minimum housing" (Joanne Ditmer, 1961). During

construction, the promoters had to erect wooden sawhorse barricades to keep the interested public from interfering with the building work, and curiosity about the house continued even after the Wares moved in later in 1961. Character-defining features include the streamlined appearance, achieved by the white-painted concrete, clerestory windows, “floating” roof with wide overhangs and plexiglass globe details, attached carport with decorative screen, the horizontality of the structure, the general absence of street-facing windows with significant glazing on the rear elevation, and the integration of the home within the landscape and through landscape features like the original circular pavers in the front yard and leading to the breezeway in the backyard.

Standard 4: *Information Potential*

This property has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Period of Significance is the discrete chronological period (or periods) during which a historic property gained its significance. Additions or alterations to a property that have significance in their own right can warrant the extension of a Period of Significance.

Period(s) of Significance:

1961 – The year of the house’s construction

Integrity is the ability of a site, structure, object or district to be able to convey its significance. The integrity of a resource is based on the degree to which it retains all or some of seven (7) aspects or qualities set forth in Fort Collins Municipal Code Section 14-22(b): location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. All seven qualities do not need to be present for a site, structure, object or district to be eligible as long as the overall sense of past time and place is evident.

Standard 1: *Location is the place where the resource was constructed or the place where the historic or prehistoric event occurred.*

The location of the house has not changed.

Standard 2: *Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan space, structure and style of a resource.*

The design of this house clearly represents the Usonian style of architecture. It features architectural elements and design choices characteristic of that style, such as the dominant horizontal lines, emphasized by the clerestory windows with plexiglass orbs, the flat roof with large overhangs, the large windows at the rear elevation meant to bring the outside in, the integration of the house in the landscape, and the carport. The lower-level garage and workshop was added in the late 1960s, a historic change; this garage is integrated into the landscape much like the rest of the house. Although the breezeway was enclosed from the carport to the main house, this change is not visible from the façade.

Standard 3: *Setting is the physical environment of a resource. Setting refers to the character of the place; it involves how, not just where, the resource is situated and its relationship to the surrounding features and open space.*

The setting of this property has not changed significantly over time. The house continues to integrate in with its surrounding yard space and landscaping, including landscape features like the large circular steps or the plexiglass orb topped light posts. The

neighborhood this property is situated in also includes many other homes constructed around 1961, including those in the Sheely Drive Landmark District.

☒ **Standard 4: *Materials are the physical elements that form a resource.***

This house has sufficient integrity of materials. It was constructed primarily of concrete, which is significant to the design and history of this particular house; there has been little, if any, loss of this material. The plexiglass orbs have also been retained. Ruth Ware reported that she replaced the first level windows and garage door in the 1980s; because there are not early photos of the rear elevation of this property, it cannot be known for sure, but it is likely that these were in-kind or compatible replacements given the type of windows and doors elsewhere on the property.

☒ **Standard 5: *Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure or site.***

Workmanship is evident on this house in the techniques and choices made to achieve the appearance of the floating roof by employing the clerestory windows and using the plexiglass orbs to camouflage structural posts. The builder's ability to create a streamlined, "high-end" look using concrete block as intended also demonstrates his workmanship. Details, such as the diamond-shaped screens in the carport, or the patterned balcony wall, also show workmanship.

☒ **Standard 6: *Feeling is a resource's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the resource's historic or prehistoric character.***

Because of this home's clear embodiment of the Usonian style of architecture, and because of the integrity of materials, setting, and workmanship, the Leslie and Ruth Ware Property continues to feel like a 1960s residence.

☒ **Standard 7: *Association is the direct link between an important event or person and a historic or prehistoric resource. A resource retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Like feeling, association requires the presence of physical features that convey a property's historic character.***

The concrete block material and the workmanship displayed on the house demonstrate the home's association with Ormond Sherwood of the Valley Block Company and Ben Olds, the builder.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

By the 1950s, many American families began to outgrow their starter homes. New housing construction frequently featured large family rooms, two-car garages, and multiple bathrooms. Additionally, postwar prosperity contributed to the emergence of an upper-middle class in Fort Collins. Roomy ranch type homes sprouted up across the city, especially in new subdivisions like the Carolyn Mantz subdivision and Sheely subdivision, both developed at least in part by builder Ben Olds. Although the Mantz subdivision features a variety of housing styles, types, and sizes from the postwar era, the Sheely Subdivision, and nearby area where 1801 Sheely Dr. would be constructed, included homes with a more consistently contemporary style and was targeted at more affluent homeowners.

The original owners of 1801 Sheely Dr. were Leslie P. and Ruth A. Ware. The Wares moved from St. Louis to Fort Collins when Leslie, owner of Ware Broadcasting, purchased local radio station KZIX. In 1958, when in town searching for a new home, the couple met with homebuilder Ben Olds and Valley Block Company partner Ormond Sherwood at the Charco Broiler restaurant to study house plans Colorado Springs architect Robert Bullock had prepared. The Wares were keen to move into a home of similar quality as their Missouri, architect-designed residence. Olds was interested in drawing more homeowners to the new Sheely Drive housing area and Sherwood wanted to demonstrate how concrete construction materials from his company could be used in upscale homes. In 1959, the Wares agreed to purchase the Bullock-designed house, and construction got underway.

The house was labeled the “Silhouette of the Sixties.” Olds and Sherwood used it temporarily as a show home. During the construction these promoters had to erect wooden sawhorse barricades to keep the interested public from interfering with the building work. Joanne Ditmer, in a *Denver Post* article about the home, noted that the Valley Block Company “wanted to show future home owners, architects, and builders, and the bankers who finance home building, that concrete block houses were not always minimum housing.” Sherwood even hosted a site visit to 1801 Sheely Dr. for the Colorado Concrete Masonry Association and the president of the National Concrete Masonry Association.

The house’s design includes a number of notable features remarked on by 1961 newspaper articles. The house was set parallel to the route of the winter sun, and it was wired with an intercom system in the house and to the front door. It also employed new materials like Polyestro resin covered masonry blocks in the bathrooms, also used at the Rollerland skating rink, to help prevent stains. Ruth Ware described some of the other striking feature of the home, such as the floor to ceiling windows in the rear of the house that afforded stunning views to the west, the sound and fireproof qualities of the construction materials, the pieces from the Bowling Furniture Company, and the basement bomb shelter. The public continued to show a great deal of interest in the home, even after July 1961 when the Wares moved in, and the property ceased to be an open attraction.²

Leslie Ware, in addition to owning Ware Broadcasting and KZIX Radio Station, was also the president of Horsetooth Broadcasting Company from 1964 – 1966. He opened The Top

² Although the house had been sold to the Wares, who would move into the house in the summer of 1961, newspaper articles discuss Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood moving into the house during the first half of that year.

Restaurant c. 1968 as well, and then sold it at the end of 1970. In 1976, he opened Cars, Ltd. This industrious individual retired around 1982, according to City Directory records, just three years before his death. Ruth Ware was a well-known local artist and silversmith. She had silver and beaded jewelry featured in local and national exhibits. Ruth was active in the local art community and worked to bring art exhibits to the city; she served on the Visual Arts Committee, including as president for a period. She married Victor Koelzer in 1987. Victor passed away in 1994.

In 1995 the house transferred from Ruth Ware to the Ruth Koelzer Ware Trust and ten years later, in 2005, the current owners, Ralph G. and Cheryl L. Olson, took possession of the home. Both of the Olsons attended Colorado State University and the couple has lived in a total of six historic homes in Fort Collins. Colorado Preservation, Inc., awarded the couple a state preservation award in 1992. Cheryl has been active with the Poudre Landmarks home tour since 1986, opening her home for gala parties as part of past tours. The house at 1801 Sheely Drive was on the 2010 tour.

Usonian Architecture

Frank Lloyd Wright envisioned the Usonian design philosophy around 1900, but it evolved over the next three decades. The term “Usonian” comes from Wright’s idea that this architecture would serve “the residents of a culturally reformed United States of North America,” and even extended further into community planning by emphasizing serving human needs through the decentralization of use in an area. During and following the Great Depression, Wright attempted to address the need for more affordable housing with simple, human-scale, integrated design, a departure from his sprawling Prairie style work. But like the Prairie style, Usonian houses were still incorporated into the landscape, and Wright continued to attempt to bring the outside in through his designs, as in the incorporation of large windows or walls extending beyond the interior. Character-defining features of Usonian buildings include dominant horizontal lines, flat roofs with large overhangs, integrated windows, organic siting (a private side and an open side, usually facing south), carports, zoned plans (living space, small bedrooms, kitchen/dining at the intersection), open living areas, concrete slab floors with integral gravity heating, built-in components, inside-outside walls, and central hearths.

Architect of 1801 Sheely Dr., Robert F. Bullock, according to Ruth Ware, borrowed or adapted many of the design elements on this house from a home built by Wright in 1950s that was featured in *House Beautiful* and *House and Gardens* magazines. Elements characteristic to the Usonian style are evident in the design, such as the horizontality of the home, the large overhangs of the roof, the carport, the large windows or glass doors, and the integration of the house into the landscape.

Construction History

Construction of 1801 Sheely Dr. was completed at the very end of 1960 or beginning of 1961. Historic images illustrate how little this home has changed over time. Ruth Ware’s 1987 correspondence with the City of Fort Collins provides a concise list of changes made to the home during her tenure. These alterations included the lower-level garage addition in the late 1960s; converting the downstairs from three bedrooms to one bedroom plus a den/ office in 1968; replacement of all first level windows and a new garage door in 1986 (likely on the rear of the property); a new hot water heater, new backyard fence, and exterior painting in 1988; interior

painting and humidifiers in 1989; two new furnaces in 1993; and a new sewer line in 1997. The Olsons have applied for three building permits for installation of a new in-ground swimming pool (December 2006), breezeway enclosure (December 2006), and construction of a poolside cabana (August 2007); they also installed the outdoor cooking area and the circular pavers on the north side of the back yard around the same time. Building permit research also found record of reroofing in 1972, 1980, and 2005.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Construction Date: 1961

Architect/Builder: Robert Bullock (architect); Ben Olds (Builder)

Building Materials: Concrete/Concrete Block

Architectural Style & Type: Modern Movements

Description:

This house is located on an irregularly shaped and extremely large corner lot at the intersection of Sheely Drive and Wallenberg Drive. An alley off of Wallenberg Drive goes behind this property, giving access for the rear, lower-level garage. The front yard features a grass with large, circular steppingstones, original to the design of the property, in gravel. There are also rock beds with ornamental grasses and other low plants. A large circular planter of concrete blocks painted white to match the house appears near the façade, between the carport and the front door. The back yard contains several mature trees, juniper bushes, and a mixture of grass, mulch, rock, and concrete patio sections. Descending into the back yard from the enclosed breezeway are original circular concrete steps; there are similar concrete steps on the opposite side of the yard that were added in the 2000s. There is also a pool in this back yard with an open cabana structure with an angled roof covering supported by an hourglass shaped decorative post and featuring a hanging light fixture.

Oriented to the northeast, this 1961 Modern Movements home rests on a concrete foundation. The house is constructed of concrete blocks painted white. Unless otherwise specified, the windows on this house are aluminum. The roof appears to float above the house as if supported by a series of plexiglass globes that appear within the space of the clerestory windows. The overhanging eaves and wide cornice enhance this sense of a floating roof.

The primary entry is centered on the façade. The lightly stained wooden door features a distinctive center doorknob and there is a sidelight window to the left of the door. On the other side of the door, mounted on the façade, there is a stylized mailbox of highly polished metal. A solid half-height wall extends from the northern corner of the façade, giving the house an even more expansive appearance. Along this wall and leading to the rear of the property there is an iron gate which features a series of circles; the pattern in this ironwork mimics the plexiglass spheres along the façade and the large round steppingstones in the front yard. There is a less expansive wall extending from the south end of the façade as well. This wall attaches to a two-car carport. Inside the carport there is a decorative screen with two large diamonds featuring a breezeblock center and wide, stylized, painted outlines. More plexiglass globes appear to support the roof of the carport. Between the front door and the carport, on the façade, there are three small metal planters.

The northwest elevation is relatively unadorned, including some HVAC or ventilation equipment, what may be an access panel toward the center of the wall face, and two aluminum basement windows.

The southeast elevation is also relatively unadorned and includes both part of the main house to on the east side and the lower-level garage on the west side. The lower-level garage portion includes some utility equipment. The main house portion is obscured by an enclosure of concrete block walls and wood fencing.

The southwest (rear) elevation consists of 3 main portions, the lower-level garage and upper-level carport furthest south, the enclosed breezeway, and the main house furthest north. The garage projects southwest from beneath the rear part of the carport into the yard. On the southwest elevation, it has a single-car garage door and a wood human door to its left with a large central light. On the garage's northwest elevation, there are two aluminum windows near the southwest end of the structure. The land slopes up along the side of the garage. Large, round, concrete steps also ascend to a deck in front of the breezeway. The right side of this area has a simple, black-painted metal gate through which the carport's decorative diamond screen can be seen, as can some of the plexiglass orbs. The rest of the breezeway has been enclosed, and is dominated by a large, sliding glass door. There is a light fixture to the left of this door. The main house on this elevation includes, on the lower level, from south to north, a set of paired aluminum sliding glass doors flanked by orb light fixtures, another aluminum sliding glass door with another orb light fixture to its left, and one final aluminum sliding glass door. Extending over these doors is a balcony extending the length of the main house; its concrete wall is perforated with a repeating pattern. The balcony wall is higher on the north end of the building than the south end. Behind the north end of the balcony, toward the edge of the building, is an aluminum sliding glass door with a light fixture to its left; above these doors and extending to the right are the house's characteristic aluminum clerestory windows. Behind the shorter portion of the balcony is a wall of windows, including the clerestory windows and two large pictured windows centered below them with three square windows stacked vertically on each side. There is another light fixture to the right of this collection of windows. Extended off the northmost edge of this elevation is a concrete wall with outdoor cooking features, added in the 2000s.

REFERENCE LIST or SOURCES of INFORMATION

- Ditmer, Joanne. "Concrete House Cheaper than It Looks." *Denver Post*. January 23, 1961.
- "Drive Begun to Purchase Paintings for Fort Collins." *Fort Collins Coloradoan*. November 20, 1966.
- Fort Collins City Directory Collection. Local History Archive at the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery. Fort Collins, CO.
- Google Search: Cheryl Olson.
- Harris, Cindy and Adam Thomas. "'Fort Collins E-X-P-A-N-D-S': The City's Postwar Development 1945-1969." Historitecture, LLC. Prepared for Advance Planning Department, City of Fort Collins. June 2011. <https://www.fcgov.com/historicpreservation/pdf/postwar-context.pdf>
- History Colorado. "Usonian." <https://www.historycolorado.org/usonian>.
- Koelzer, Ruth Ware. "1873-1998: Memories of Fort Collins - Simpler Time Greeted Newcomers." *Fort Collins Coloradoan*. April 19, 1998.
- Larimer County Tax Assessor Property Search.
<https://www.larimer.gov/assessor/search#/property/>
- "New Masonry Block Home Has Distinctive Features." *Fort Collins Coloradoan*. January 8, 1961.
- Poudre Landmarks Foundation. Retro Revival Homes Tour brochure. 2010. "1801 Sheely Owner File." 1801 Sheely Dr. Digital Property File. City of Fort Collins Historic Preservation Services. Fort Collins, CO.
- "Ruth A. Ware." Obituary. *Fort Collins Coloradoan*. November 9, 2013.
- "State Concrete Association to Meet." *Fort Collins Coloradoan*. January 5, 1961.
- Valley Block Company Cover Page. "1801 Sheely Owner File." 1801 Sheely Dr. Digital Property File. City of Fort Collins Historic Preservation Services. Fort Collins, CO.
- Ware, Ruth A. Correspondence with City of Fort Collins Historic Preservation Program. 9 January 1987.
- "Ware Sells Top Restaurant; Name Changed to 'Skyroom.'" *Fort Collins Coloradoan*. November 19, 1970.

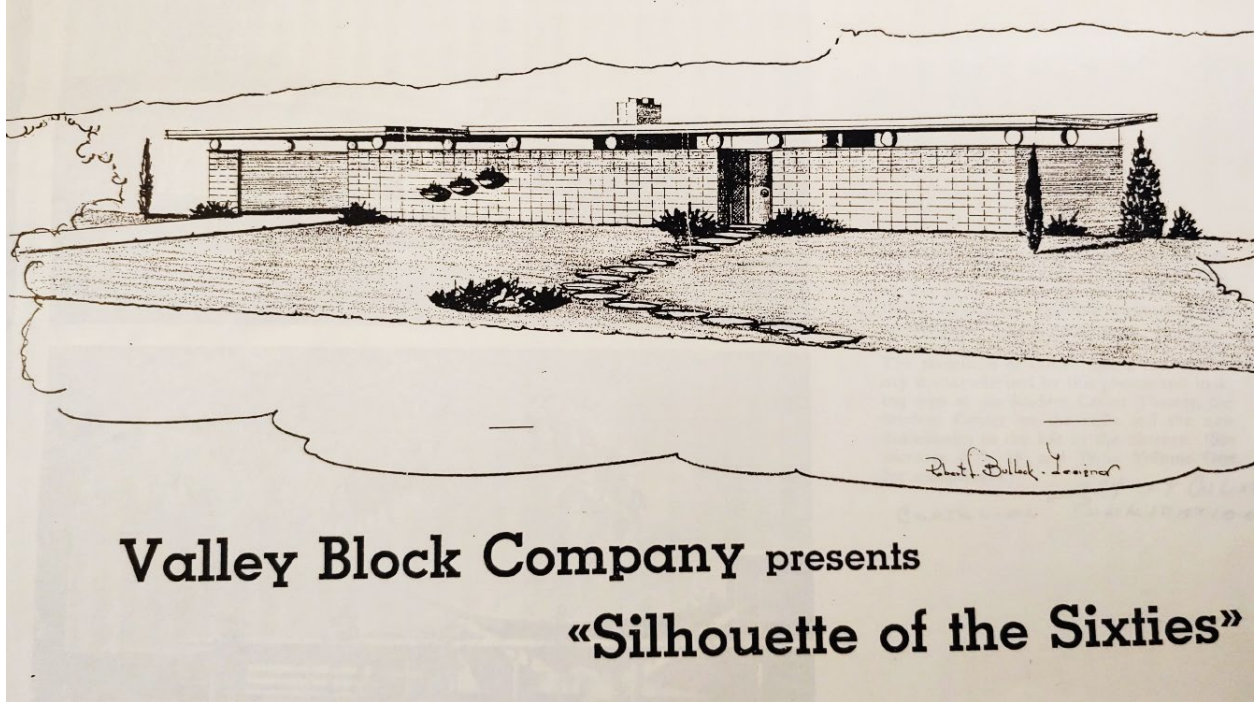
MAPS and PHOTOGRAPHS



Map 1 Location Map

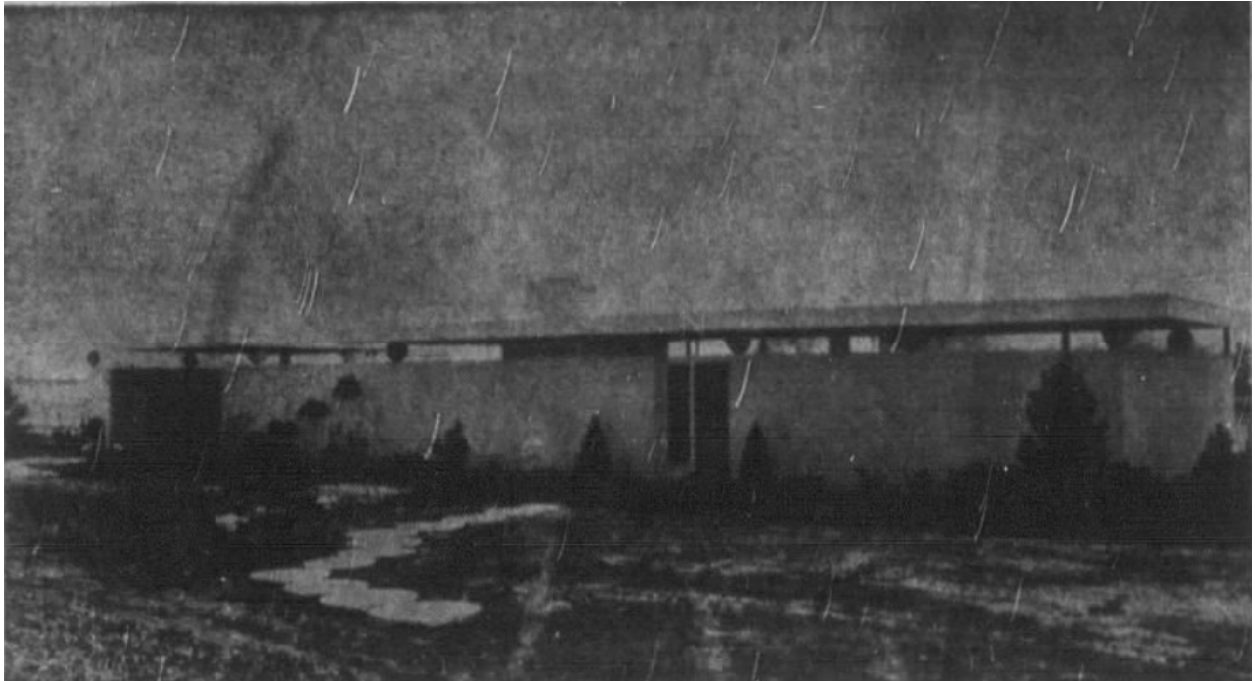


Map 2 Aerial View



Valley Block Company presents
«Silhouette of the Sixties»

Figure 1 Bullock drawing of 1801 Sheely Dr.



Historic Photo 1 Coloradoan photo 1961



Historic Photo 2 Tax Assessor Photo 1962



Historic Photo 3 Tax Assessor Photo 1968



Historic Photo 4 Tax Assessor Photo 1977



Photo 1 Setting



Photo 2 Façade



Photo 3 Façade - North wall and gate



Photo 4 Facade - Front door



Photo 5 Carport diamond screen and plexiglass orb



Photo 6 North wall leading to alley off Wallenberg Dr.



Photo 7 Northwest Elevation and orb light post



Photo 8 Northwest Elevation – Windows



Photo 9 Southwest Elevation



Photo 10 Southwest Elevation - Northmost sliding glass door and outdoor kitchen area



Photo 11 Southwest Elevation - Middle sliding glass door



Photo 12 Southwest Elevation - Southmost paired sliding glass doors



Photo 13 Southwest Elevation – Upper-level balcony, sliding glass door, and clerestory windows



Photo 14 Southwest Elevation - Upper-level shorter balcony and windows



Photo 15 Southwest Elevation - Enclosed breezeway and gate to carport



Photo 16 Garage northwest elevation



Photo 17 Garage northwest elevation windows



Photo 18 Garage southwest elevation



Photo 19 Garage southwest elevation - person door



Photo 20 Southeast Elevation, wall, and fence



Photo 21 Backyard concrete steps to breezeway deck (original, according to owner)



Photo 22 Backyard



Photo 23 Backyard - showing north wall and non-original cement steps



Photo 24 Pool and cabana

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Property:

The undersigned owner, or owners, of the Property hereby submit the Property for designation as a Fort Collins landmark pursuant to the Fort Collins Landmark Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 14 of the Code of the City of Fort Collins. The undersigned owner, or owners, certify that all signatures necessary to consent to the designation of the Property are affixed below.

I understand that upon designation, I or my successors will be required to receive approval from the City of Fort Collins Historic Preservation staff prior to the occurrence of any of the following:

- Preparation of plans for reconstruction or alteration of the exterior of the improvements on the Property or interior spaces readily visible from any public street, alley, park, or other public place; and/or
- Preparation of plans for construction of, addition to, or demolition of improvements on the Property.

DATED this 11th day of OCTOBER, 2022

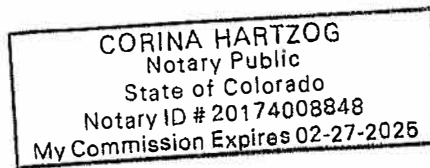
RALPH G OLSON
Owner Name (please print)

Ralph Olson
Owner Signature

State of COLO

County of WYOMING

)ss.



Subscribed and sworn before me this 11th day of October, 2022

by Ralph Olson

Witness my hand and official seal. My commission expires 2-27-25

Corina Hartzog
Notary