

**United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Fort Hill Usonian House

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 117 Sheridan Circle

City or town: Charleston State: WV County: Kanawha

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 A B X C D

Deputy SHPO <hr/> Signature of certifying official/Title: Date <u>West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<hr/> Signature of commenting official: Date <hr/> Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Domestic/ Single Dwelling

Current Functions: Domestic/Single Dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

Modern Movement

Other: Usonian

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: Walls: brick and wood; Foundation: concrete;
Roof: rubber

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Fort Hill Usonian House is located in the historic Fort Hill section of Charleston in Kanawha County. It is a 1556 square feet mid-century era Usonian home built in 1956 on an irregular lot of wooded steep terrain. It was designed by noted architect Howard Johe and built by master carpenter Walter "Jake" Dudley. It is a textbook example of Usonian residential architecture meeting all its defining design criteria. The Fort Hill Usonian was built into the hillside, integrating into the natural terrain, via a three-tiered, split-level design on a floating slab foundation. The home offers panoramic views of the city to the east and woodlands to the west. Inside the windows and landscaping give the visual illusion of living within the tree canopy. The house exterior is dominated by bold horizontal lines and vertical brick columns. The interior is composed of natural textures including exposed red brick, stone, tongue and groove birch panels and custom carpentry and framing. The most distinguishing design element is a bold 50" birch feature wall above the front entryway stairwell. This feature wall ends at a large glass window. The birch wall is separated via glass from identical sized exterior siding comprised of combed cedar that wraps around the 2nd floor of the home. This is an excellent example of the Usonian design principle of blurring the lines between the interior and exterior of a home, making it appear seamless. The house's original design ethos and aesthetic is mostly intact, with alterations including bathroom and kitchen remodels done over the years.

Narrative Description

SETTING:

The Fort Hill Usonian is located at 117 Sheridan Circle in Charleston, WV. Fort Hill is a residential district located on a hill which derives its name from Fort Scammon, a Civil War-era earthen fort, located at the top of the hill. Fort Scammon was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. The Fort Hill neighborhood experienced exceptional growth in the post-

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World War II period.

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The house is situated among rolling hills with views to the south of the city and Kanawha River valley below. From the southeast side of the house Yeager Airport is visible four miles to the east nestled atop the hills on the other side of the river.

The home is located on irregular wedge shaped, one-acre, steep hillside lot with rocky, dense clay soil. The atypical lot runs from west southwest to east northeast about 400' in width and ranging between 90 to 140' deep south to north. The lot slopes to the south sharply with Mountain View Drive to the rear and Sheridan Circle to the south.

The elevation from the top of the property to the bottom varies from 70 to 40'. The house is positioned WSW to ESE. A circa 1935 house built on an adjoining lot to the east faces Mt. View Drive. Architect Howard Johe positioned the Fort Hill Usonian to enjoy the full exposure of the rising and setting sun, completely uninhibited by other structures. The house is positioned so the most northeast corner faces the neighboring property at a 45-degree angle ensuring the neighboring house is almost entirely unseen from any window.

To the east is a grass lot, which is the backyard of the neighboring house, to the west and north is wooded terrain with many tall oak trees which is part of the property's acreage.

From the east to the property along Sheridan Circle is a driveway that rises about seven feet and runs approximately 45 feet to the house.

The architect carefully positioned the house to make maximum use of sunlight and wind. Trees were planted around the house to give the effect of the home being nestled within the hillside tree canopy. The second-floor windows look directly into the leaf canopy of a 30' oak tree directly in front of the house. The tree canopy spans the entire width of the second floor. To the east is 30' tall pignut hickory tree that helps provide shade for the floor to ceiling windows in the dining room in summer. Behind the hickory tree, and 8' from the house, is a non-contributing object. It is a 5' welded Cor-ten steel sculpture by artist Robert Blood (1918-2016). The sculpture is the Japanese kanji symbol for "life." It was made in 1972 and installed on the property in 2019 by the current owners.

There is a 3' tall stone retaining wall to the north, directly behind the house. Original to the house's construction, this is a contributing structure. Between the retaining wall and house is a red brick pathway running the length of the house. It creates an 8x8' patio on the east wing and narrows to a 4' wide foot path until terminating at the deck on the west side. Beyond the retaining wall is a large magnolia tree along with many oak, birch and walnut trees.

Fort Hill Usonian

Built in 1956, the Fort Hill Usonian is a 1 ½ story split level residence with dynamic horizontal lines, a flat roof that overhangs the structure, and abundant large windows. It is comprised of a brick rectangle on a slab foundation bisected through the center by another rectangle made of combed cedar planks. The second story extends out to the south and is supported by an 8' red

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brick column to the right and three steel poles to the left. This second story overhang creates a carport underneath the second story. On the west side of the house is a large deck comprised of 36" high combed oak pony walls which match the combed cedar siding of the second story. The house is 1,565 square ft and is set deep into the hill. It is an outstanding example of Usonian architecture, precisely following Frank Lloyd Wright's original Usonian home concepts. Architect Howard Johe carefully followed all the criteria defined by Wright as comprising a Usonian house, including integration into the natural terrain, use of native materials for both the exterior and interior, open floor plans, car port, modest size, modules, concrete slab foundation and zoned plans.

EXTERIOR

The property is anchored by a long rectangular slab foundation running west to east. The foundation is bisected in the center by the south facing second floor level, which also creates a carport underneath. The carport overhang is supported by an 8' long brick column wall to the right, and three steel poles to the left. The house is positioned on the easternmost side with views to the city below. The house is set back into the sloped hillside terrain. The northern back wall is filled about 30" whereas the southern side of the structure gives way to the hill's natural slope.

The exterior appears built stepped into the hillside with the second story appearing cantilevered.

As one approaches from the east there is a driveway of about 60 feet with a retaining wall to the right about 30" high of quarried stone. This retaining wall runs up to the house and terminates at the entrance and carport. To the left is an 8' x 16" brick column on the southern side of the carport and is one of two support structures, the other being a series of three 4.5" steel poles at the end of the carport. This provides a carport area approximately 12' wide and 32' deep and above the second story. The ceiling of the carport is black painted plywood. Two entrance doors are located under the carport. The second story butts on the northern side to first level and windows run non-stop on the eastern, southern and western façade. The roof of this section slopes down to the South starting at about 7' above the carport and rises to a height of about 10'. The flat roof is EPDM .

This cedar paneled outcrop, or protrusion, along the second level creates a unique buttress that steps out at a 7.5-degree angle and is made of combed cedar with striated horizontal lines. This protrusion also creates internal storage areas for the second floor. The overhang above the windows is roughly 4" further positioned outwards allowing water to drain off.

Within the entrance of the carport there is the primary entrance with two windows and a main door, and 20' further down is a door entrance granting access to the laundry/mechanical room. The northern wall running west to east under the carport is brick. As the carport ends on the west a small cement patio extends from the carport pad and there is a stairway to the deck. The most easterly protrusion of the main living area is visible, which consists of the southern wall and eastern wall with city views. It is roughly 30" above the ground level on the southern wall with brick and a black concrete ledge that supports the eastern protrusion. The southern wall is almost entirely glass with three large floor-to-ceiling windows approximately 4' wide and 7'

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tall with an additional casement window above said units running about another 16". The wood is painted and is a mixture of white oak and cedar. There is no cladding. Above this is a soffit of painted black wood extending about 28". The eastern wall a soffit protrusion is similar, but the northern end has a brick section of about 54" where it intersects the northern wall that runs the length of the back of the house which is also brick, with a higher ground elevation due to the slope and the wall are compacted backfilled about 30". The main living area is a flat roof with an elevation of about 9' exterior.

The back northern wall there is a single window behind the east wing on the north wall. A contributing small 3' wide brick laid path runs the back length of the property about 54' in length. The path has a small stone retaining wall running along it to keep the woodland growth separated from the house.

The western side of the house is a wall almost identical to the eastern wall. It is about 13' in length and the soffit runs 7' as an overhang over the wood deck.

During renovations an original, unused, poured foundation wall, was uncovered that indicated the original floorplan called for an additional eight feet to the living room and a deck. It was discovered that a 1956 boundary line dispute abbreviated the intended size of the house. Eight years later this adjacent lot was purchased and added to the property. The 1994 deck was torn down and replaced in 2025 with a complimentary wood deck that followed the original foundation lines and the Usonian aesthetic of the house.

The wood of the walls here is white oak. The patio runs west to east 14' and south to north 22'. It is elevated about 42" from the ground and the flooring is made from Ipe wood. The border of the northern deck is a solid white oak wood wall with a 30" wide counter. The western and southern wall of the patio are also white oak. The border of the patio is a protruding buttress design identical to the slanted 7.5-degree angled feature of the second story and is about 36" in height. The southern wall of the western wing of the house has one 4' wide assembled window with a door facing south that exists to the patio. Steps run down about 60" down to the 12x12 concrete patio that exists at the western side of the carport. The most southernly and westwardly portion of the patio is supported by three 4.5" steel poles. A concrete support exists at the north/western and opposing southeastern section of the patio. The steps are made from Ipe wood, except for the first three steps, which are concrete and part of the Eastern/Southern concrete support.

Visible from the patio is the western façade of the house which is brick and a full two stories in height with small 20" x 36" windows on the upper floor and an identical set of two windows on the lower level looking into the mechanical/laundry room.

Approximately 80' from the western wall of the house is a non-contributing, 500 sq. ft., two-story building that serves as a guest house and storage space. The structure was built in 1995 as part of major renovations done to the house that year.

Directly below the guest house are two stone retaining walls built to help support the building and hillside. The stone retaining walls are terraced, the lowest wall is 45' long and above it is a

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25' long wall. A narrow set of stone and cement stairs cuts through the middle of the walls. A third stone retaining wall at the top is partially collapsed. These retaining walls are a non-contributing structure.

INTERIOR

The house is orientated so that the front of the house runs east to west, with minimal depth running south to north. Its orientation along with window placement allows the house to take full advantage of the sun's movement throughout the day, bathing the entire home in natural light from sunrise to sunset.

The frontage has three entrance doors, two on the ground level and one of the first floor. The ground level doors are the primary front door and another door that accesses the laundry/mechanical room. Both entrances are located under the shelter of the carport.

Entering the front door, to the immediate right, are two windows mirroring the dimensions of the door. The windows allow natural light into the small foyer area. The flooring is natural stone. To the left is a small corridor that leads to a full bathroom, coat rack, coat closet which terminates at a laundry/utility room. This room contains a hot water tank, HVAC systems, sink, washer and dryer and many cabinets for storage. The floor is cement. Between the washer and dryer is the second entrance door under the carport. Along the room's western wall is a long yellow countertop with two windows above it that allow natural light into the room.

The front door opens onto a set of nine wide cork steps. The steps are 52" wide with a rise of 7" and a tread of 12". The steps lead directly into the main living area of the house on the first floor. Above the stairwell is a 13' tall ceiling slanting upwards composed of redwood beams and tectum panels. Three period glass pendant lights from Sweden hang above the stairwell. The left wall of the stairwell is a 10' tall red brick wall with the final 36" to the ceiling composed of tongue and groove birch panels cut on a slant to conform to the ceiling. The right side of the stairwell is composed of tongue and groove birch. The brick wall has a beam handrail that matches the wood beams used on the ceiling.

Above the stairwell is a unique architectural feature of the house, a wraparound horizontal shelf wall composed of horizontal tongue and groove heartwood birch. This intersects with the vertical birch panels that comprise the wall behind it. This birch feature wall is 9' wide x 5' tall and is inclined starting at the base of 3" and leans to about 12" at the top. This interior feature wall terminates at a large window where the feature is continued on the exterior of the home in the form of the combed cedar siding. It creates the effect of interior lines continuing to the exterior.

A 32" birch panel pony wall cordons off the stairwell from the dining room and intersects the bottom of the feature wall.

At the top of the stairwell, one enters the main living area of the home, known as the public zone in Usonian architecture. This zone on the first level encompasses the dining room, the kitchen

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and the living room with no internal walls separating the areas. Today it is commonly referred to as a "open plan living space."

Directly above the final step are two 36x18" horizontal clerestory windows and birch paneling that meet to the highest point of the 13' slated ceiling. This provides natural light to the stairwell. The first floor living space ceiling is 9' high. The ceiling is composed of fiery red wood beams with taupe tectum panels in between, creating a bold linear pattern.

The beams are comprised of two sistered 9 ¼ x 1 ¾ Douglas fir wood beams on center every 48" and are the structural support for the 3" thick acoustic tectum decking panels. Tectum was a new product in the 1950s made of aspen wood fibers and binders which give the panels a distinct fibrous texture. The tectum panels used by Johe were 3" thick which provided enough structural support for people to sit or use the above roof as a patio space if so desired. The tectum panels also provide great acoustics and absorb the sounds in a room, particularly desirable in a smaller house with an open space living plan.

Due to interior degradation, being painted white and several roof leaks in the past new 5/8" complimentary tectum panels were installed on top of the original 3" tectum panels.

Directly across from the stairwell is 60" x 40" window framed in birch. The top pane is a 12"x40" and the bottom 44x40". The window is on the red brick northern wall that runs the length of the dining area and terminates at the beginning of the kitchen area.

To the immediate right of the stairwell is the 20'x15'x8' dining area. The south and east facing portions, meeting at the southeast corner, are composed of six floor-to-ceiling windows, three on the east and three on the south. These provide a view of the city in the distance and of a pignut hickory tree fifteen feet from the windows. Each window is 44"x86" comprised of two panes, the top windows are 44"x16" transom windows and below are 44x70" double paned picture windows. The windows begin 6" above the floor level. Between the windows and the floor is a 4" wide and 6" tall platform made of birch, with vents line cut out, for the HVAC system. Four complimentary lighting sconces are positioned on the birch panels where the transom windows begin. This provides soft ambient lighting to the room. The last window on the left of the eastern wall meets a red brick masonry 45" wide column that corners to meet the northern brick wall.

The floors throughout the entire main level are cork panels.

To the left of the stairwell is the kitchen zone of the home. There is a 44" corridor to enter the space. To the right of the corridor entrance is a white tile countertop framed in teak containing a sink. Below are teak cabinets on both sides. The southern wall of the kitchen the is 9' high tongue and groove birch panel wall that runs 8' to the entrance of a stair well to the second floor.

The northern wall of the kitchen is composed of custom-built teak cabinets, two stoves, pantry and refrigerator. The kitchen was remodeled in 2024. The kitchen in the Fort Hill Usonian had been remodeled no less than four times over the past six decades. The previous kitchen had created new internal walls and other issues that interfered with the design principles of a Usonian

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home. Therefore, it was entirely gutted and replaced with a kitchen as complimentary as a modern kitchen could be. The current kitchen is based upon the original footprint of the 1956 kitchen.

In the center of the kitchen is an island, with natural white ceramic tile top framed in teak. Below are drawers and cabinets. Half of the front left side of the island is recessed to allow for stools. Where the kitchen island and northern wall of cabinets end the living room area begins.

Past the 2nd floor stairway entryway, the 9' tall tongue and groove birch paneled southern wall continues for another 106". Built into this section of the wall are two 52"x25" cabinet spaces that provide ample storage for the adjoining kitchen and living room spaces.

The birch paneling terminates at a red brick wall. This 9' tall, 52" wide red brick column begins the living room zone. As the brick wall ends it meets a birch framed custom door that gives access to the deck area. To the right of the door are 84" is a Douglas fir and birch framed windows, comprised of two panes. The bottom pane is 40x68" and the top is 40x12". This window terminates the southern wall of the first floor.

The western wall of the first floor is comprised entirely of three 84" high windows framed in birch. Each window is comprised of a 40"x68" bottom pane and a 40"x12" top pane. The top middle pane is a transom window. These windows mirror the look and size of the windows on the eastern side of the house in the dining area.

The northwest corner is a petite 9" wide floor to ceiling brick column. The northern wall of the living room is covered in a natural canvas-like wall covering complimentary to the original burlap wallpaper scraps that were found when renovating the home.

The stairwell in the kitchen and living area leads to the second-story bedroom zone.

The stairway is 42" wide and has seven wood steps. This stairwell mirrors the design of entryway stairs in many respects. The bottom of the stairwell is where the ceiling height reaches its maximum of 13' height and contains two northern facing clearstory windows to provide natural light. The ceiling slopes downward as the stairs ascend. The ceiling height is 9' at the top of the steps. The entire stairwell is tongue and groove birch panels.

The entire second floor ceiling has Douglas fir wood beams spaced 44" apart with wood paneling in between the beams. The original tectum panels are beneath the wood paneling.

The stairs lead to 9'x4' corridor with wood floors. To the immediate right of the steps is a bedroom door and directly in front of the stairwell is a door to access the master bedroom. To the left of the stairs is a 5' corridor which terminates at a linen closet. On the left side of the corridor is the bathroom which was remodeled in 1994 and not complimentary.

The home originally had three bedrooms, but the two southern facing bedrooms were combined into one large master bedroom. All the windows on this floor were replaced with new vinyl

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windows and the framing painted white in 1995. It appears the original Douglas fir and birch framing is still intact with the new smaller windows just inserted into the original framing. There are plans to restore the original framing and window dimensions in the future.

The bedroom to the left of the stairwell is 12'x10'. It has slanted ceilings that are 11' high at the northern wall sloping to height of 9' at the southern wall. There are two 24"x40" clearstory transom windows on the northern wall. All the walls in this bedroom are made of plaster except for the western wall which is part of the second internal and external brick column in the house. This brick wall contains two narrow 14"x42" windows separated by a narrow 8" brick column. The windows look out onto the deck and back door entrance with the trees, guest house and woodland lot in the distance.

The master bedroom is large 28'x13' space with a total of eighteen windows, sixteen are 24"x42" casement windows and two are 45"x42" fixed windows. The ceiling of the bedroom begins at a height of 86" at the northern wall and inclines to a height of 103" at the southern wall. The northern bedroom wall is plaster and has closet on each end.

The southern wall of the bedroom is anchored by the 12" thick and 8' wide brick column that terminates in southeast corner. The lower portion of the brick column acts as a support for the car port underneath the second floor. The rest of the southern wall is composed of ten 24"x42" casement windows. Below the windows are built in storage cabinets with sliding doors. This recessed storage space is created by the protruding combed cedar feature wall on the exterior of the house.

The eastern wall of the bedroom is composed of one large 42"x45" fixed window with three 24"x42" casement, two to the right and one to the left of the fixed window. Below these windows are built in storage spaces and shelving. The western wall of the bedroom mirrors the widows on the east, with one large 42"x45" fixed window and three 24"x42" casement windows with built-in, recessed storage space below.

Integrity

The Fort Hill Usonian has integrity sufficient to convey its historical and architectural significance. It retains integrity of setting and location, having never been moved. The house underwent a significant and careful restoration in 2024 to undue remodeling work done to the home in 1994.

In 1994, the brick and wood of the home's interior was painted white, a large wall was added for a kitchen expansion, and dry wall panels had been placed over the tectum. All the white paint was painstakingly removed from the brick and birch panels on the ground floor, restoring them to their natural state. The tectum panels on the ceiling were restored. The additional wall between the dining room and kitchen was removed, restoring the original open plan living zones to the home. The kitchen was remodeled to match the original footprint and complimentary custom teak cabinets were added. Wood floors were removed, and cork floors installed to match the original floor used in 1956.

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The only major alteration to the exterior has been the construction of a new deck in 2025. However, the deck's location, size, form, and massing do not detract from the Usonian style design of the house.

Original materials such as Douglas fir, heartwood birch, cedar, red brick and stone are intact and in excellent condition throughout the house. The unique feature wall that combines interior and exterior, along with all the heartwood birch tongue and groove paneling, is in excellent condition. With the integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, association, materials, and workmanship intact, the Fort Hill Usonian retains the integrity of a true Usonian house and is an iconic example of Howard Johe's residential Usonian-style and mid-century modern architectural designs.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance:

Architecture

Period of Significance:

1956-1957

Architect/Builder:

Howard Johe, architect

Walter "Jake" Dudley, builder

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Summary Paragraph

The Fort Hill Usonian House is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an outstanding example of a Usonian style residence, the work of Howard Johe, FAIA and master carpenter Walter Dudley. The home was designed at the beginning of Johe's prolific career, taking up Frank Lloyd Wright's challenge to young architects to embrace a new concept for American residential architecture he called Usonian. The home is a true Usonian house meeting all its major design criteria and incorporating Johe's own interpretations of the concept. It exhibits the skills of a master carpenter and builder required to execute a design customized for steep West Virginia hillside terrain. Its dynamic horizontal lines, flat roof, abundant windows and use of native materials on the interior and exterior perfectly capture Wright's Usonian aesthetic. It is nominated for listing under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance. The Period of Significance is 1956-197, the years it was built.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Background

The Fort Hill Usonian House is located in the Fort Hill district of Charleston, WV. At the top of the hill is the site of Fort Scammon, from which the district derives its name. The hilltop site was chosen for a fort during the Civil War due to its panoramic views of the city east to west along the Kanawha River below. The current day archaeological site preserves the elliptical pattern earthen battlements that were set up in 1863. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. The Fort Hill Usonian is located approximately 400 ft down the hill from the site.

In the 1920s, the district started being developed for residential use, with more than a dozen stately homes constructed for the area called "Fort Hill Manor." In the post-World War II era the hill experienced a rapid increase in development. The majority of homes in the neighborhood were built between 1948 and 1970. The rapid growth was due to the need for housing the large influx of engineers, chemists, scientists, executives and tradesmen brought to Charleston by the growing chemical industry. Union Carbide, Monsanto, DuPont and FMC all built and ran major production facilities and plants in the Kanawha Valley during the 1950s.

Architect Howard Johe was commissioned to build two homes for clients on Fort Hill Manor in 1956. Johe was a young architect employed at the Silling Architectural Firm but moonlighted by privately accepting residential commissions. One of the houses is located at 207 McKinnley Avenue, one street down from Sheridan Circle and within the sightline of the empty lots at 117 Sheridan.

In 1955, local real estate developer Calvert Estill, Jr. owned two steep atypical lots located at 117 Sheridan Circle. The grade and terrain made the property unideal and challenging to build a house upon. Estill saw a new house being built on the 400 block of Sheridan Circle that was designed by Johe. Johe was next designing a house on McKinley Avenue, just two hundred feet

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from Estill's lot on Sheridan Circle. Estil approached Johe to design a spec house for the lots at 117 Sheridan Circle. As a result, the Fort Hill Usonian was built at the same time as the house commissioned for 207 McKinnley Ave.

A spec house is a unique opportunity for an architect since it allows complete freedom in the home's design, unlike a house commissioned by a client where their input and preferences are central to the design. A spec house can allow the architect full control of over the home's concept, design, construction and execution.

Mr. Estill was a certified appraiser, pilot, real estate developer, travel writer and poet. He was approximately the same age as Johe. Estill must have trusted Johe's vision of designing a new, unconventional American home in conventional American city. This vision took the form of a Usonian home, a bold and modern design for the era. Usonians proved an ideal solution for building an affordable house on the steep terrain of atypical lots, as Frank Lloyd Wright originally intended when he developed the Usonian concept.

The "Small House Problem" and Usonian Architecture

The term "Usonian" was adopted by famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright. It is an acronym for "United States of North America." Wright favored the term as opposed to "American." He deemed Usonian as the first purely American style of residential architecture. He envisioned Usonian houses as a way for the average American family to own a well-designed, quality home in harmony with its natural environment. The concept for Usonian architecture began with Wright trying to solve what was called "the small house problem" in 1930s America. This was the challenge of how to build sensible, gracious houses that were not just "another little imitation of a mansion," as Wright said.¹

In the wake of the Great Depression and World War II, the United States faced a severe shortage of good, moderately priced housing stock. Wright was determined to design a house that reflected contemporary needs instead of imitating grand houses on a smaller scale. He applied his principals of organic architecture to the "small house problem." The Usonian house was a continuation of Wright's quest to rid homes of box like rooms, wed houses to their terrain, to simplify layouts and to employ materials and technology in innovative and honest ways.

In January 1938, the Time Inc. publication *Architectural Forum* dedicated its entire issue to Wright's work. In this issue Wright introduced what is now considered his first Usonian house, the Jacobs House in Madison, Wisconsin. The Jacobs House was the first Wright home built on a budget for a non-wealthy client. Herbert Jacobs was a young newspaper reporter who had read about Wright's designs and admired his work. He wrote a letter to Wright asking if he could design a house for him that would cost under \$5,000. The average cost of a new home in 1938 was \$3,900.² Wright presented the Jacobs House as his solution to the small home problem. It is

¹ Frank Lloyd Wright, "To the Young Man in Architecture" *Architectural Forum*, January 1938, reprinted as two-page broadsheet, Appendix C page 355.

² Faith Williams, "Living Costs in 1938," *Monthly Labor Review* Vol. 48. No. 3, March 1939, pp. 531-537.

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considered the birth of Wright's Usonian residential architecture, though the term Usonian wouldn't be used for several more years.

Wright also published an important open letter in that same issue of *Architectural Forum* entitled, "To the Young Man in Architecture – A Challenge." In the letter Wright gives his thoughts on organic architecture and the challenge of the small house problem. He closes with this:

My purpose and hope in presenting this material in the ARCHITECTURAL FORUM is to promote discussion and rekindle enthusiasm for an honest American architecture. After months of work on this January issue I am more convinced than ever that this work should prove of value, particularly to the younger architects, who are America's last line of defense. Here is a challenge; may I see it answered in three dimensions across the country.³

For purposes of clarity in this nomination a "Usonian House" is defined as the concept Wright conceived of in the late 1930s to solve the small house problem. Wright believed architects could design a modern home for \$5,000. In 1938, the cost to build a new house was \$3,900, so \$5,000 was higher than the average price but still well within the means of middle-class American family. The challenge of building a modern, well designed, home within the means of a middle-class family was the foundation underpinning the concept of Usonian architecture.

In taking up the challenge of designing a house that could be built on an average budget, Wright had to transform and prioritize his many architectural concepts into a core set of principles that could be adopted by others and built anywhere in the United States. He intended for Usonian houses to be modest and organic in their design, complementing rather than contrasting with nature. Their form and shape should be influenced by the surrounding environment, with a heavy emphasis on natural materials (wood, brick, glass, and concrete), horizontal lines, open floor plans, and natural lighting. Elaborate ornamentation is limited. Usonians are typically smaller, with no basement, a carport rather than a garage, a maximum of two or three bedrooms, and usually single story. They have flat roofs, overhangs, radiant floor heating, and plenty of windows.⁴

In the decade following Wright's introduction of the Jacobs House, he and other architects were approached by wealthy clientele to build Usonian homes. These clients had financial means well beyond that of the typical American family the Usonian concept was targeted towards. These clients admired the Usonian concept but had larger budgets for more elaborate and large homes. As a result "Usonian Architecture" grew beyond the scale and scope of the original concept. In designing a small house that wasn't "another little imitation of a mansion," Wright had reversed the issue. Now people who could afford to build mansions wanted to embrace clean modern

³ Frank Lloyd Wright, "To the Young Man in Architecture," *Architectural Forum*, January 1938, reprinted as two-page broadsheet. Appendix C page 355.

⁴ Rachel Davies, "Usonian Houses: Everything You Need to Know About Frank Lloyd Wright's Affordable Homes," *Architectural Digest*, November 29, 2024, accessed March 3, 2026, <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/usonian-houses-everything-you-need-to-know-about-frank-lloyd-wrights-affordable-homes>.

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simplicity and the honest architecture at the heart of the Usonian house concept.

Wright's design ethos for Usonian homes could be scaled up or down. Usonian principles work on a large or small scale. Wright originally envisioned Usonian homes as a new type of modern home that the average family could afford to build. Since Wright was a world-famous architect he was usually commissioned by commercial entities and private clients with large budgets. As a result, all of the homes Wright built after 1938 are considered Usonian-style⁵ (also referred to as Organic Architecture or Wrightian) but most far exceed the original Usonian house concept's budget and size criteria. These Wright-designed, Usonian-style houses range from 2,000 to 5,000 sq. ft. in size, added architectural features, and cost three-to-six times more than the average new home of the era.

For this reason, the term "Usonian-style" will be used to refer to these larger, more expensive homes. Usonian and Usonian-style homes share a similar design aesthetic, but Usonian-style homes are much larger, more expensive, have costly architectural features, such as long cantilevered roof lines or extensive stonework, and contain more rooms than the original Usonian home concept as first conceived by Wright. The difference between "Usonian" and "Usonian-style" is important because the Fort Hill Usonian is a true Usonian as originally defined by Wright and far rarer than the many Usonian-style or Usonian-influenced homes built by Wright, and other architects, from 1940 to 1970. The Fort Hill Usonian carefully followed all the criteria, scale, aesthetic style, cost and ethos of the original Usonian concept as proposed by Wright.

Wright designed several true Usonian houses for three separate planned Usonian communities or cooperatives he was involved in developing. The Usonia Historic District in Mount Pleasant, NY has three true Usonian homes designed by Wright. It also has 47 Usonian and Usonian-style houses designed by his apprentices and other architects. There have been fierce debates over the past forty years in the Usonia District as to what defines a Usonian home. Starting in the 1990s, new owners began purchasing houses in the Usonia district with the intention of altering and enlarging them. All exterior changes must be approved by the Usonia cooperative. It has turned architectural issues into public debates and helped further define a true Usonian house, as opposed to Usonian style or Usonian design.⁶

Usonian houses proved neither as easy nor as inexpensive to build as initially hoped. After World War II, mass-produced suburban housing, like Levittown on Long Island, became the dominate force in American new home construction. Wright feared a suburban sprawl of mass-produced, prefabricated houses and mobile homes would dominate the American landscape in the future. Wright's fear and loathing of mass-produced homes is a major reason he championed the concept of Usonian homes. It was difficult for the avant garde, custom designed Usonian house to compete with the lower cost, speed and ease of mass-produced "turn-key" houses in the American real estate market.

⁵ Carla Lind, "Frank Lloyd Wright Usonian Houses," *Archetype Press*, 1994.

⁶ Elaine Louie, "Updating Wright's Ideal" *New York Times*, May 5, 1994, Home Section C1 Pg 57, 62.

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Usonians required a trained architect to design and their construction required skilled masons and carpenters, both of which became increasingly costly after World War II. Wright experimented with different ways to cut costs and time for building Usonian houses to make them more accessible to the average American family. He invented the “Usonian Automatic” in the early 1950s which made use of inexpensive concrete blocks and modular designs that could be assembled in a variety of ways. He hoped that home buyers could save money by building Usonian Automatics themselves. However, assembling Usonian automatics proved difficult for the home buyer who still ended up requiring professionals to build them. Only four were ever built.

As a result of these issues, relatively few true Usonians were built during Wright’s lifetime or after, but the concepts and ideas underpinning Usonian architecture had an enormous effect and influence on American residential architecture in the second half of the 20th century. Architect and historian Peter Blake stated that the “modest dignity” of Usonian homes laid the foundation for much of America’s modern domestic architecture. Usonian houses could be deemed a “predecessor to the brick, ranch-style homes, which were widespread from the 1940’s to 1970’s and to most of the mid-century modern houses that followed.”⁷ Blake believed Wright’s concept of “space in motion,” where space flows seamlessly from room to room, from indoors to outdoors, represented the true art form of modern architecture. This concept, called “open space living” can now be broadly found in almost all new homes built for the past twenty-five years but were at the center of the Usonian design Wright pioneered eighty years ago.

Howard Johe, Architect AIA (1924-2005)

Howard Johe was born in 1924 in Pittsburgh, PA. His uncle Herbert W. Johe (1914-2005) was an architect, professor and eventually the assistant dean of the College of Architecture and Design at the University of Michigan. Howard’s uncle was very influential in his life and why he pursued a career in architecture.

Johe attended his uncle’s alma mater, the Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie-Mellon University), in Pittsburgh to study architecture. The architecture program was under the College of Fine Arts which offered a five-year Bachelor of Architecture degree. Johe attended at the same time a young Andy Warhol was pursuing his BFA degree there.

Johe’s daughter, Sara Johe Busse⁸, confirmed that her father met Frank Lloyd Wright several times in the 1940s while attending Carnegie. As part of Wright’s ongoing commissions for the Kaufmann family, he traveled regularly to Pittsburgh where he would visit Carnegie’s Architecture department and socialize with its dean, John Knox Shear. Shear became the editor-and-chief of the influential *Architectural Record* magazine in 1955. Shear’s records, held in the archive collections at Carnegie-Melon, contain correspondence between himself and Wright.⁹

⁷ Peter Blake, “Frank Lloyd Wright, architecture and space,” Pelican Book, 1965

⁸ Sarah Johe Busse, interview by Maria Armada, Charleston, WV, November 11, 2025.

⁹ Shear Correspondence with Wright, 1954, *Architectural Record*, Shear Collection, Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives.

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As a senior architecture student, Johe attended a dinner held for Wright at Shear's residence during one of Wright's visits to the school. He told his daughter, Sara Johe-Busse, stories about this dinner and meeting the famous architect. Wright, with his architectural work and theories, had enormous influence on Johe. According to his daughter, Johe considered his uncle Herbert Johe, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Cy Silling the architects who most influenced his work.

Johe graduated with a bachelor's degree of Architecture from Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1950. He had already begun his career as a draftsman at Marlier & Johnstone, working there from 1947 to 1949. After graduation Johe and Tasso Katselas became partners in a small firm in Pittsburgh. Katselas went on to found TKA Architects Inc. He became a noted Pittsburgh architect contributing to many major projects in the city, including the Pittsburgh Airport. Katselas and Johe worked together for approximately one year but remained close friends for the rest of their lives.

In 1950, Johe joined the firm of C.E. Silling and Associates in Charleston, WV.

While at Silling the majority of Johe's career was focused on large buildings for the public and private sector. Some of the major projects he was a lead architect on included the West Virginia Culture Center, the WVU Mountaineer Colosseum and WVU's Medical School. Johe's work on public commission projects from 1955-1980 are modern in design but make abundant and practical use of natural materials, particularly wood and stone. His natural yet modern design aesthetic is prominent in all of his large public buildings.

A prime example of his design ethos and prolific use of honest, natural materials is at the West Virginia Culture Center within the state capitol complex. This building allowed him to display his unique talent and appreciation of acoustic properties in his designs. At the Culture Center he met the varying acoustic needs of its Great Hall, auditorium, museum space, offices, quiet libraries and research areas all within one 24,000 sq ft building using natural materials. Live performances are still broadcast and recorded regularly at the Culture Center stage due to its excellent acoustics.

Johe spent his entire professional career at Silling and Associates, eventually becoming a partner in the 1960s and retiring in 1993.

Johe's residential work and designs were private commissions and not part of his job for Silling and Associates. His daughter believes he designed approximately fifty private residences in West Virginia over the course of his career. Approximately a dozen of these homes were built between 1954-1964 in a modern style.

Discussions with Sara Johe-Busse, and research conducted using the addresses she provided, indicate at least seven of the private houses Johe designed as a young architect in Charleston are done in a Usonian-style of residential architecture. They are Usonian-style houses, but not true Usonian homes.

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Johe-Busse believes the first house her father built in 1954, for his family at 2315 Woodland Ave., was originally built as a true Usonian home. Master carpenter Jake Dudley was the builder for Johe's home. The original foot print was small and compact. However, with a growing family and needing ample home-office space, Johe expanded the house in 1958. He doubled the house's square footage to 2,800 sq. ft. adding bedrooms, enlarging some areas, and incorporating office space. Johe lived at this residence until the 1970s, after which Johe sold it and moved into a new home he designed. In 2018, his granddaughter was able to purchase his former home on Woodland Avenue for her own family and currently lives there. The house has remained mostly unaltered and intact from the final 1958 blueprints.

The house Johe designed at 207 McKinnley was built concurrently with the Fort Hill Usonian. Both houses incorporated many aspects of Usonian residential architecture. However, 207 McKinnley was a client commissioned home and therefore has many elements tailored to the client's preferences and needs outside the scope of a true Usonian house. It is a Usonian-style home as opposed to a Usonian house.

207 McKinnley is a very large, two-story house that is over 5,000 sq ft. Unfortunately, extensive renovations and additions in 2000, such as the addition of a new western wing, dramatically altered the house. Interior changes such as replacing tectum ceiling tiles with dry wall panels, entirely new interior walls, a total kitchen redesign, wall to wall carpeting and the creation of new facades for the native building materials erased and altered most of Johe's "honest materials" style and original floorplan. The exterior still retains some of Johe's original aesthetic.

Howard Johe's career was spent in Charleston designing iconic buildings across the state. Johe was a great lover of the arts, especially music, and performed in local musical groups with fellow architects. Johe was 33rd degree Mason and very active in the Masonic Lodge. He was married to Louise "Floss" Johe and had three children, David, Laura and Sara. He died in 2005.

Walter Curtis Dudley, Builder

Not much biographical information is available on the builder Walter "Jake" Dudley. He was born October 8, 1895, and died in April 1975 in Charleston.¹⁰ He was raised on his family farm outside of Charleston, which now is a large shopping plaza called "Dudley Farms." Jake wanted to be a builder, not a farmer.¹¹ Dudley acquired an exceptional reputation as a master carpenter and home builder among tradesmen in the region. Dudley built homes in Charleston from the 1930s until his death in 1975.

Speaking to various people who built homes in Charleston from the 1960s through the 1980s they recalled clients had to get on a years-long wait list for Dudley to build their home. Ed Hillenbrand, a cabinet maker and owner of Hillenbrand Furniture in South Charleston, stated Dudley was considered the best builder in the city. Ed's own parents had to wait two years

¹⁰ Social Security Death Index Database.

¹¹ Walter Curtis Dudley, Jr. Obituary, *Charleston Gazette*, September 3, 2015.

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before Dudley was available to build their Cape Cod style home in 1958.¹² Dudley's precision style and carpentry techniques are unique enough that local carpenters recognize his work upon stepping into any house he built.

Dudley was particularly adept at post and beam style of building and framing houses. He also employed unique, signature techniques to frame his windows. The technical difficulty of his carpentry work made it instantly recognizable to other builders and craftsmen. Research into the Fort Hill Usonian began when Chuck Mabe, a veteran carpenter, visited the Fort Hill Usonian in 2017. His first comment upon entering the house was, "This is a house Jake Dudley built, no doubt about it." This was later proved to be accurate when Sara Johe Busse confirmed Dudley was the builder of the Fort Hill Usonian and was one of her father's preferred builders. Many of homes he built in Charleston, when listed for sale, will still specify "built by Jake Dudley" in the listing text.

Howard Johe and Jake Dudley collaborated on several Usonian style houses, including Johe's personal residence built in 1953.¹³

The Fort Hill Usonian House

Howard Johe designed several Usonian-style homes in Charleston. These houses used some of the concepts and aesthetics of Usonian design in their construction, but the Fort Hill Usonian is the only true Usonian house he designed that remains relatively unaltered and intact.

The Fort Hill Usonian meets all the major criteria that define a true Usonian home, not just the style or aesthetic. The major design tenants of a Usonian house are as follows:¹⁴

- Dominant horizontal lines
- Flat roofs with overhangs
- Natural materials
- Unit system wall
- Integrated windows
- Organic sitting
- Carports
- Modules (Floor plan based on grid)
- Zoned plans (three primary living spaces)
- Open living areas
- Adjacent cook-dining areas
- Concrete slab floors

Dominant horizontal lines and flat roof with overhangs

The Fort Hill Usonian is dominated by horizontal lines on both the interior and exterior. The

¹² Interview with Ed and Connie Hillenbrand, August 3, 2022.

¹³ Email with Sara Johe-Busse, November 11, 2025.

¹⁴ Carla Lind, "Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses," *Archetype Press*, 1994.

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exterior features two tiers of a flat roof with overhangs and a concrete slab foundation. The interior features extensive horizontal lines throughout via dynamic use of Douglas fir ceiling beams.

Natural Materials

The interior and exterior are constructed entirely of natural materials. The primary building materials are brick, stone, wood and abundant glass windows. Many interior walls are tongue and groove birch panels.

Unit Wall Systems

Unit Wall Systems are Wright's term for walls that are the same on the interior as they are on the exterior. Red brick is used extensively throughout the house, with an airgap between the interior and exterior brick walls and columns.

Integrated Windows

The large floor to ceiling windows on the first floor integrates the natural trees and landscape into the home's interior. Clearstory windows are built over stairs to provide natural lighting for stairwells. The second floor has wraparound casement windows on every exterior wall except the northern. Every area of the house is bathed in natural light during the daytime.

Organic Sitting

The split-level house is built in a tiered fashion into the hillside terrain. It has sweeping views of the city and river below to the south, to the north and west the house is nestled within woodland terrain. The placement of the house, and landscaping around it, make it feel like a treehouse or when inside. Most windows provide view of either the tree leaf canopy or middle of the large tree trunks. Only northern windows provide a view of solid ground.

Carports

The home incorporates a carport into the home's entrance. The carport is created by the second floor overhanging the first, providing not only a space for cars but a large open, sheltered area on the front of the house. The front door, and a second entry door, are under the cover of the carport.

Modules

Wright used the term modules to describe repeating geometric units that served as the basis for the dimensions of a building. The house is built in 4x4' units on a grid, with 4' between the ceiling beams. Johe also used contrasting woods and textures to highlight the grid and patterns central to his design making them a important visual design element throughout the house.

Zoned Plans

The house follows the free-flowing space concepts outlined by Wright. The dining, kitchen and living room are all separate zones on the first floor but there are no internal walls separating the spaces, they freely flow into each other. The first floor would be deemed the "living zone" and the second floor acts as the "bedroom" zone with all the bedrooms and a bathroom located on the second floor. The ground floor is the service zone where laundry, utility equipment, HVAC and a

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bathroom are located.

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Adjacent cooking-dining areas

The kitchen is directly next to the dining area with only a countertop space dividing the two areas.

Service Cores

The ground floor contains the “service core” of the house at the western end. The service core is the laundry room which has cement floors and contains all the necessary primary equipment to run the electric, water and HVAC systems.

Concrete Slab Floor

The home is built on a floating concrete slab foundation.

Integral Gravity Heating

During restoration work, pipes for radiate heating were discovered under the floors but it is not known if they were ever utilized. The house uses gas heating and floor vents.

The Fort Hill Usonian was purchased in 1957 by R.C. Tincher for \$13,750. Nationally the median price of a new home in 1957 was \$12,220, making the Fort Hill Usonian an affordable home for a middle-class family.¹⁵

Conclusion

The Fort Hill Usonian is nearly seventy years old but is still accurately described as a modern home in 2025. It is a testament to Frank Lloyd Wright’s vision that almost all Usonian and Usonian-style homes are still described as modern.

The Fort Hill Usonian is a rare and exceptional example of Usonian residential architecture in West Virginia. Less than 100 true Usonian homes, as opposed to Usonian-style, are documented nationwide. Usonian homes were an important development in American 20th century architecture pioneered by Wright. It demonstrated that traditional carpentry techniques and natural materials could be combined with new, modern design concepts to create an entirely new type of American residential architecture.

Completed near the beginning of architect Howard Johe’s prolific career, the Fort Hill Usonian showcases Johe’s fundamental understanding of Wright’s principles of Usonian architecture. It is not just a Usonian style home, but a true Usonian house as defined by Wright in scope, design, size and concept.

¹⁵ Deed Book 1216, page 243, Kanawha County Courthouse Assessor Office.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

1. Latitude: 38.351436 Longitude: -81.652507

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: 17N Easting: 442855 Northing: 4244994

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries are depicted in Figure 2. Being all of Lots Nos. 214 and 215 and part of Lot 216 in Fort Hill Manor, Charleston, Kanawha County, West Virginia. Kanawha County Photostatic Map Book 9, Page 62 also describes the boundaries as follows:

Beginning at an iron pipe in the northerly right of way line of Sheridan Circle at the southerly common corner of Lots Nos. 213 and 214; thence running with the common division line between Lots Nos 213 and 214, N 51 58'W., 68.02 feet to a point in the southerly right of way line of Mountview Drive; thence running with the southerly right of way line of Mountview Drive on the following course and distances: N42, 16E, 35 feet to a point; thence along a curve to the right, the chord of which bears N49, 15E, 71.01 feet to a point; thence along a curve to the right, the chord of which bears N.53, 05'E, 4 feet; and along a curve to the left, the chord of which bears N.50 24'E, 23.40 feet to an iron pipe; thence leaving Mountview Drive and running through Lot 216, S.52' 29'E, 135.60 feet to an iron pipe in the northerly right of way line of Sheridan Circle; thence running with the northerly right of way line of Sheridan Circle on the following courses and distances; along a curve to the right, the chord of which bears S40 50'W, 30.50 feet to a point; along a curve to the right, the chord of which bears N88, 8'W, 30.71 feet to a point; thence along a curve to the left, the course of which bears S53, 56'W, 110.23 feet to the place of the beginning, all as shown upon a map entitled, "Mortgage Verification for Elbert G. Warren III Showing Lots 214, 215, Part of 216 Forth Hill Manor Located at 117 Sheridan Circle, Charleston, WV, South Annex District, Kanawha County, West Virginia" dated March 28, 1997 made by Kevin Schafer, PS, a copy of which is recorded in the aforesaid Clerk's Office in Deed Book 1852, page 135.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the entire house and its accompanying land.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Maria Armada
organization: History Never Repeats, LLC
street & number: 117 Sheridan Circle
city or town: Charleston state: WV zip code: 25314
e-mail Tinyarmada@gmail.com
telephone: (304) 767-4250
date: Nov. 14, 2025

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Additional Documentation

Photographs

Name of Property: Fort Hill Usonian House

City or Vicinity: Charleston

County: Kanawha

State: West Virginia

Photographer: Maria Armada and Aaron Saxton

Date Photographed: Nov. 2024, July 2025, Nov. 2025

Photo Log

1 of 17. FHU – Exterior Frontage Nov 2025

Photo of front of home taken from street November 2025. Camera facing north.

2 of 17. FHU-Exterior Southeast from Driveway

Photo of the house from the driveway with carport, second floor and glass windows of living room visible. Camera facing northwest.

3 of 17. FHU-Eastern Exterior.

Depicts architectural lines of house and how it is recessed into the hillside terrain. Eastern windows of lounge and 2nd floor master bedroom are visible. Camera facing west.

4 of 17. FHU-Exterior Deck from Northwest

Depicts structure of the deck, living room windows, western brick column and 2nd floor bedroom windows. Camera facing east.

5 of 17. FHU-Exterior -Deck and ground entry and wall

Depicts the ground level stair entry to the deck and details the complimentary deck wall built to match the original cedar siding on 2nd level exterior. Camera facing northwest.

6 of 17. FHU-Exterior Deck and Living Room Windows

Depicts the deck flooring, sheltered overhang of western wing/living room windows, steel pole supports, western brick column with exterior windows and first floor entry door. Camera facing north.

7 of 17. FHU-Interior & Exterior Ceiling Lines

Depicts the flowing lines and grid geometry of the exterior deck overhang and the interior living room ceiling, separated by the large living room windows. Camera facing east.

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8 of 17. FHU-Interior Front Entry, Stairs and Feature Wall

Looking from top of first floor stairs down to the front door entrance. Depicts the feature wall over the front door and the birch paneling and eastern brick column that creates the stair well. Camera facing south.

9 of 17. FHU-Feature Walls Meeting

Depicts how the interior birch feature wall meets with the exterior cedar siding at the dining room windows. Showcases the way the interior and exterior lines are blurred. Camera facing southwest.

10 of 17. FHU- Interior Stairwell Clearstory

Depicts the tall, slanted ceiling above entry way, with clearstory windows and architectural ceiling beams. Details the red brick, birch, Douglas fir and tectum textures are used throughout the house all intersecting. Camera facing northwest.

11 of 17. FHU-Interior-SW Windows

Depicts the dining room zone with the southeastern floor-to-ceiling windows. Camera facing southeast.

12 of 17. FHU-Interior -Kitchen Zone

View from the dining zone into the view the kitchen and living room. Camera facing west.

13 of 17. FHU-Interior-2nd Fl Stairwell to 1st Fl

View from the top of the 2nd floor stairs down into the kitchen zone on the first floor. Camera facing north.

14 of 17. FHU-Interior-View from Living room to East

View of the first floor interior taken from end of living room on west side of house. Details of tongue and groove birch wall panels and western brick column. Shows open floor living space flow as living room goes from kitchen into dining room. Camera facing east.

15 of 17. FHU-Interior-living room western pov

Depicts a view of the living room from the easter perspective, with views of the south-western windows and first floor custom entry door. Camera facing west.

16 of 17. FHU-Exterior SW House Summer 2025

Depicts a view of southern-west exterior house from the down the hill during summer deck construction. Shows the amount of tree growth and greenery around house and incline of terrain. Depicts non-contributory guest house structure and terracing to west. Camera facing northeast.

17 of 17. FHU-Exterior Back of House

Photo depicts the back of the house, taken from a northern perspective from the street above (Mountview Drive). The house is only visible from this road in winter when the leaves are gone. Showcases the steep terrain and how the house is built into the hillside. Camera facing southeast.

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Figure Log

Figure 1. USGS Map

Figure 2. Satellite Image of Boundary

Figure 3. 2021 Boundary Line Adjustment Plat

Figure 4. FHU Floorplan

Figure 5. Floorplan with photos keyed

Figure 6. Satellite Image Map

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Fort Hill Usonian House
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Photo 1 Front of home taken from street November 2025. Camera facing north.



Photo 2 Photo of the house from the driveway with carport, second floor and glass windows of living room visible. Camera facing northwest.

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Photo 3 Depicts architectural lines of house and how it is recessed into the hillside terrain. Eastern windows of lounge and 2nd floor master bedroom are visible. Camera facing west.



Photo 4 Depicts structure of the deck, living room windows, western brick column and 2nd floor bedroom windows. Camera facing east.

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Photo 5 Depicts the ground level stair entry to the deck and details the complimentary deck wall built to match the original cedar siding on 2nd level exterior. Camera facing northwest.

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Photo 6 Depicts the deck flooring, sheltered overhang of western wing/living room windows, steel pole supports, western brick column with exterior windows and first floor entry door. Camera facing north.

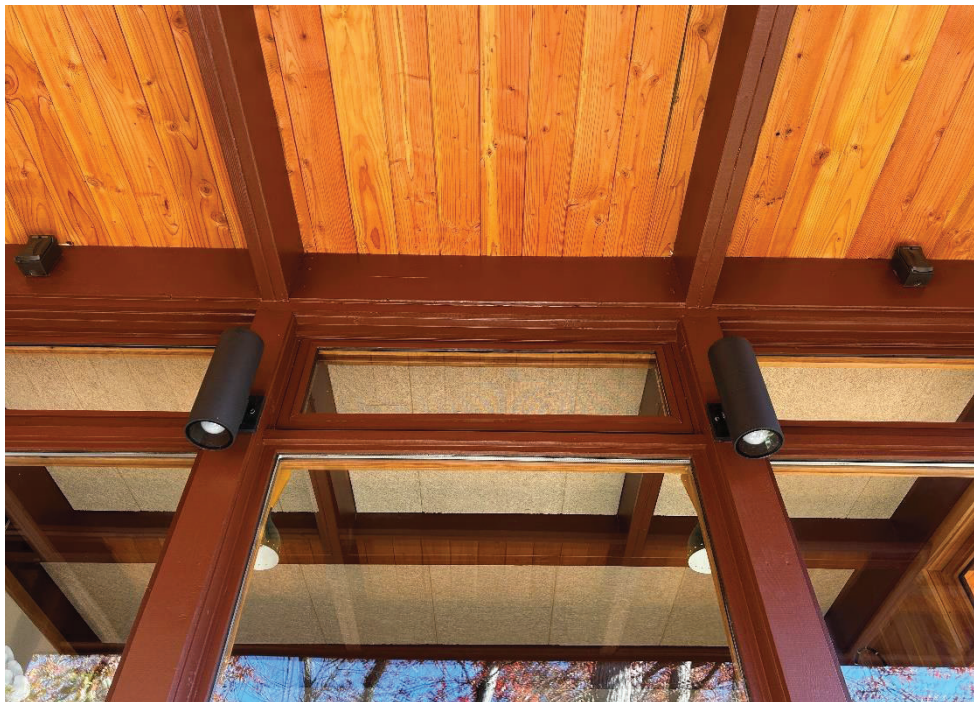


Photo 7 Depicts the flowing lines and grid geometry of the exterior deck overhang and the interior living room ceiling, separated by the large living room windows. Camera facing east.

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Photo 8 Looking from top of first floor stairs down to the front door entrance. Depicts the feature wall over the front door and the birch paneling and eastern brick column that creates the stair well. Camera facing south.

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Photo 9 Depicts how the interior birch feature wall meets with the exterior cedar siding at the dining room windows. Showcases the way the interior and exterior lines are blurred. Camera facing southwest.

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Photo 10 Depicts the tall, slanted ceiling above entry way, with clearstory windows and architectural ceiling beams. Details the red brick, birch, Douglas fir and tectum textures are used throughout the house all intersecting. Camera facing northwest.

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Photo 11 Depicts the dining room zone with the south eastern floor-to-ceiling windows. Camera facing southeast.

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Photo 12 View from the dining zone into the view the kitchen and living room. Camera facing west.

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Photo 13 View from the top of the 2nd floor stairs down into the kitchen zone on the first floor. Camera facing north.

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Photo 14 View of the first floor interior taken from end of living room on west side of house. Details of tongue and groove birch wall panels and western brick column. Shows open floor living space flow as living room goes from kitchen into dining room. Camera facing east.

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Photo 15 Depicts a view of the living room from the eastern perspective, with views of the south-western windows and first floor custom entry door. Camera facing west.

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Photo 16 Depicts a view of southern-west exterior house from the down the hill during summer deck construction. Shows the amount of tree growth and greenery around house and incline of terrain. Depicts non-contributory guest house structure and terracing to west. Camera facing northeast.



Photo 17 Photo depicts the back of the house, taken from a northern perspective from the street above (Mountview Drive). Camera facing southeast.

117 Sheridan Circle, Char

Map navigation controls: +, -, Home, Location, Share, Alert, Print, Measure, 2D/3D

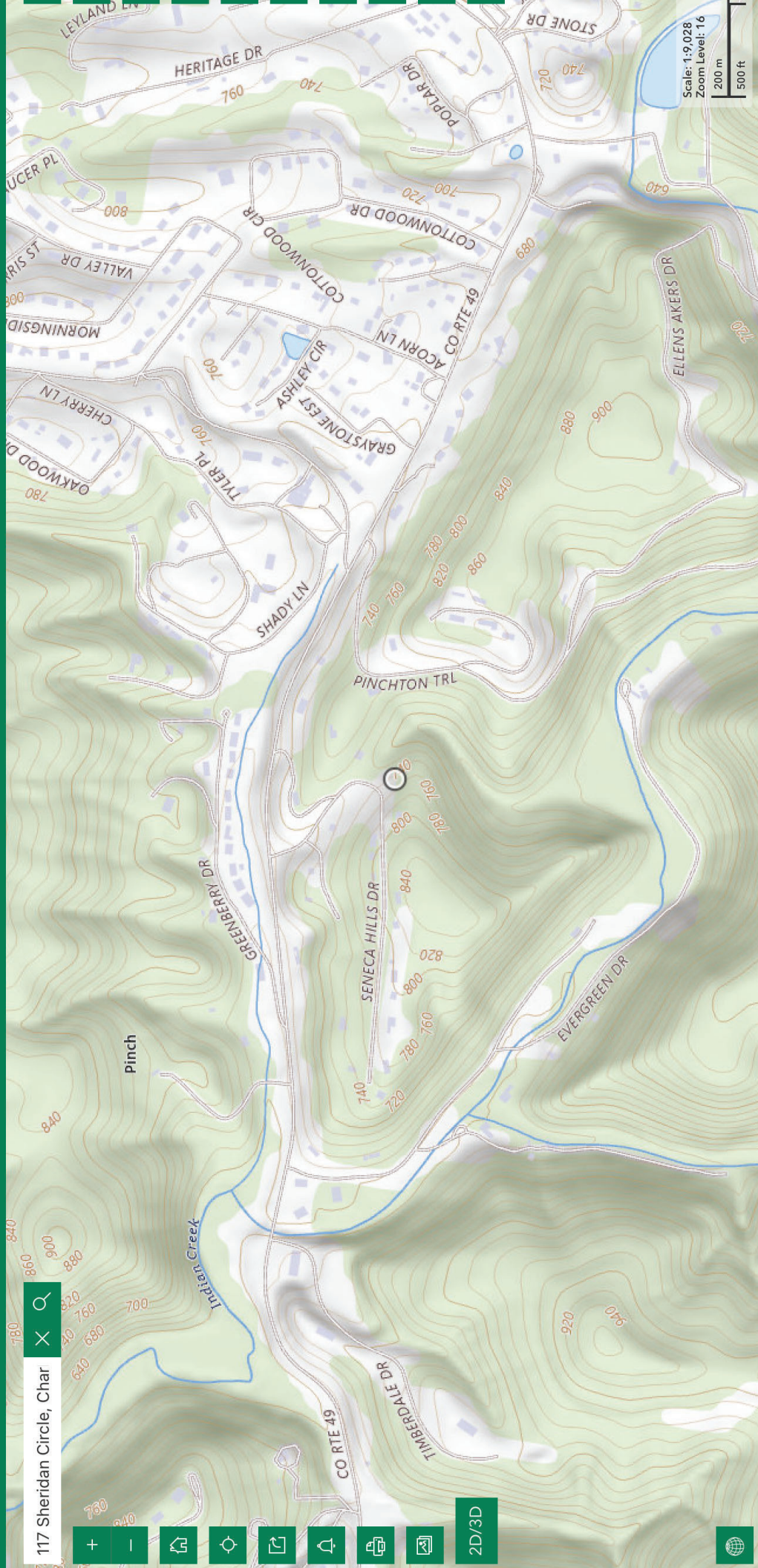


Figure 1

North

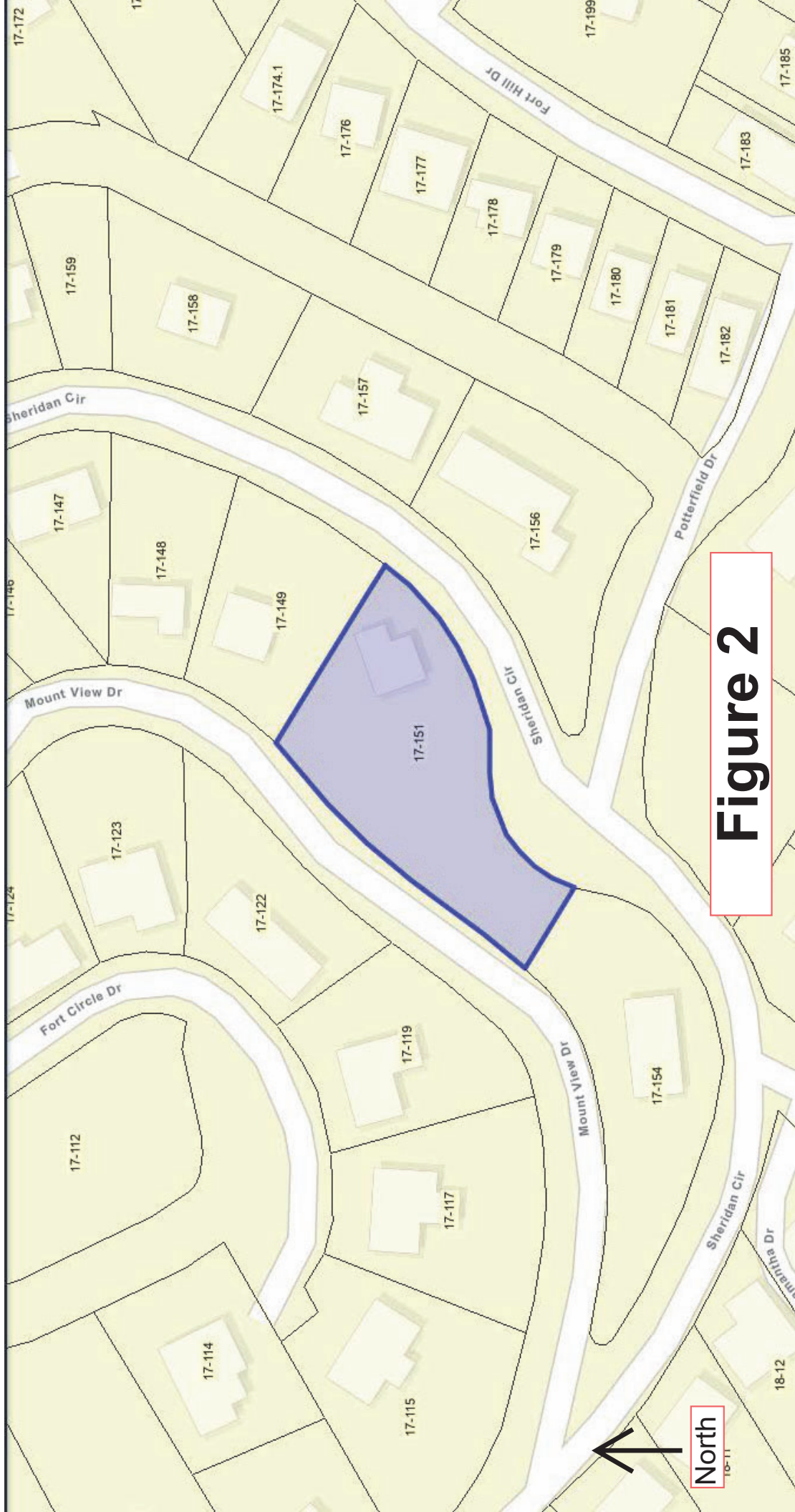


Figure 2

North

SURVEY NOTES:

THIS SURVEY DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A TITLE SEARCH BY THE SURVEYOR. NO ABSTRACT OR TITLE WAS FURNISHED TO THE SURVEYOR. THIS SURVEYOR HAS MADE NO INVESTIGATION NOR INDEPENDENT SEARCH FOR EASEMENTS OF RECORD, ENCUMBRANCES, RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS, NOR ANY OTHER FACTS THAT AN ACCURATE AND CURRENT TITLE SEARCH MAY DISCLOSE.

EXCEPT AS SPECIFICALLY STATED OR SHOWN HEREON, THIS SURVEY DOES NOT PURPORT TO REFLECT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WHICH MAY BE APPLICABLE TO THE SUBJECT REAL ESTATE: EASEMENTS AND RIGHTS OF WAY OTHER THAN THOSE VISIBLE AT THE TIME OF THE SURVEY, THOSE KNOWN AND OF RECORD, OR AS PROVIDED BY THE CLIENT. RESTRICTIONS, ZONING OR OTHER LAND-USE REGULATIONS, AND ANY OTHER FACTS WHICH AN ACCURATE AND CURRENT TITLE SEARCH MAY DISCLOSE.

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FIELD LOCATE AND VERIFY THE LOCATION OF ALL UNDERGROUND UTILITIES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF ANY CONSTRUCTION. CALL MISS UTILITY OF W.V. PHONE 1-800-245-4848

LEGEND

- △ MONUMENT (FOUND) (AS NOTED)
- 5/8" REBAR (SET)
- CALCULATED POINT

CURVE TABLE					
CURVE	LT./RT.	RADIUS	ARC LENGTH	CHORD BEARING	CHORD LENGTH
C-1	LEFT	155.49'	35.07'	N 42°16' E	35.00'
C-2	RIGHT	560.00'	91.87'	N 40°34' E	93.10'
C-3	RIGHT	560.00'	69.56'	N 48°54' E	69.51'
C-4	LEFT	471.16'	4.00'	N 52°13' E	4.00'
C-5	LEFT	471.16'	23.40'	N 50°33' E	23.40'
C-6	RIGHT	126.41'	30.57'	S 41°00' W	30.50'
C-7	RIGHT	126.41'	80.07'	S 66°04' W	78.74'
C-8	RIGHT	126.41'	30.79'	N 88°48' W	30.71'
C-9	LEFT	79.00'	122.00'	S 53°56' W	110.23'



DUNBAR, WV MARCH 29, 2021
PHONE: 304-768-5678

BOUNDARY LINE ADJUSTMENT PLAT FOR
MARIA F. ARMADA
BEING PARCEL "A"
PART OF LOT 216 TO BE
COMBINED WITH TAX PARCEL 151

ALSO BEING PARCEL "B"
PART OF LOT 216 TO BE
COMBINED WITH TAX PARCEL 149
FORT HILL MANOR

SOUTH ANNEX DISTRICT
KANAWHA COUNTY, WV

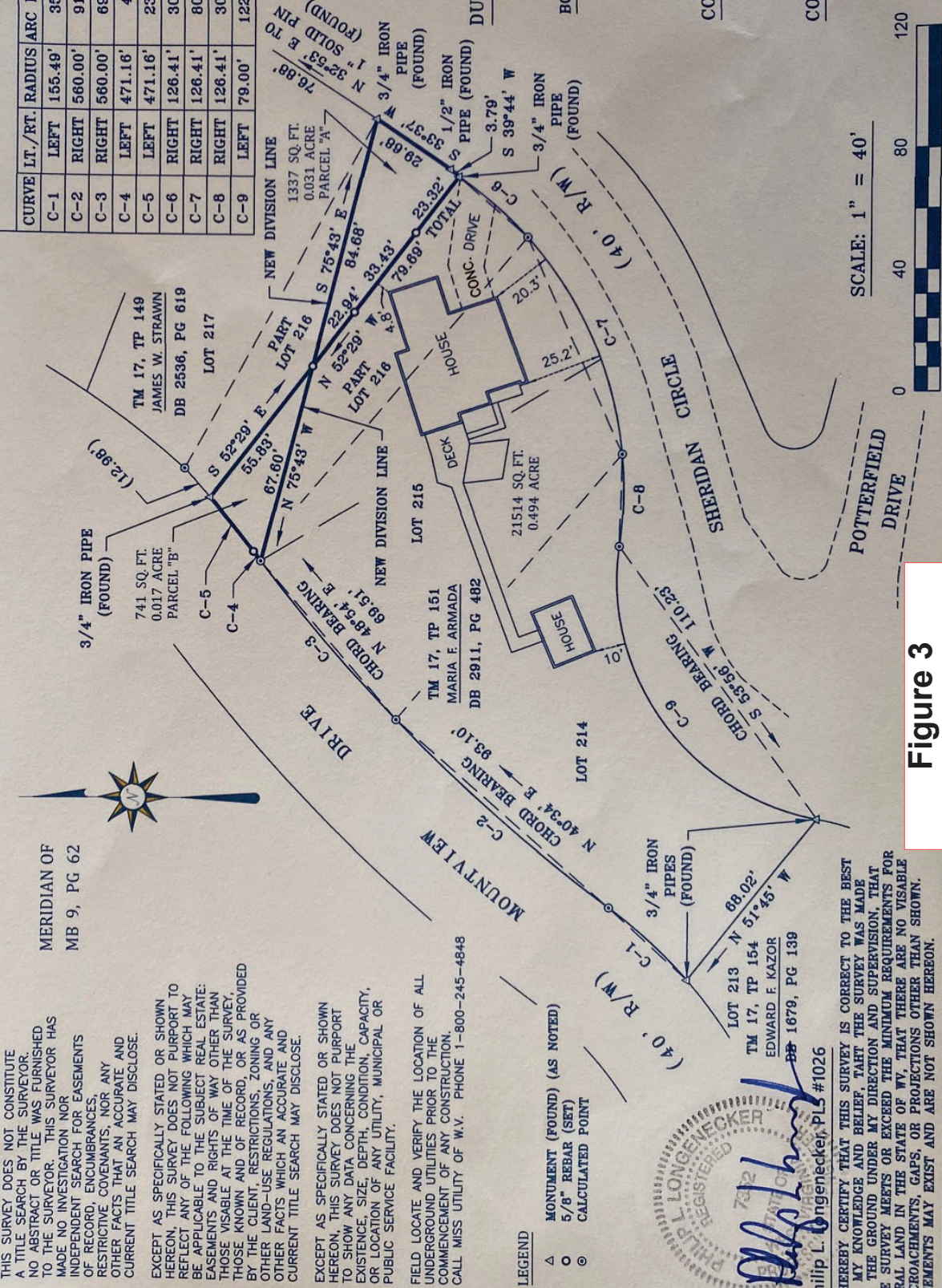
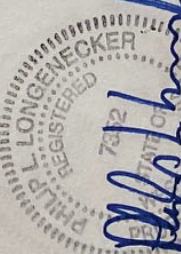


Figure 3

Philip L. Longenecker, PLS #1026
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS SURVEY IS CORRECT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, THAT THE SURVEY WAS MADE ON THE GROUND UNDER MY DIRECTION AND SUPERVISION, THAT THE SURVEY MEETS OR EXCEEDS THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR RURAL LAND IN THE STATE OF WV, THAT THERE ARE NO VISIBLE ENCROACHMENTS, GAPS, OR PROJECTIONS OTHER THAN SHOWN. EASEMENTS MAY EXIST AND ARE NOT SHOWN HEREON.



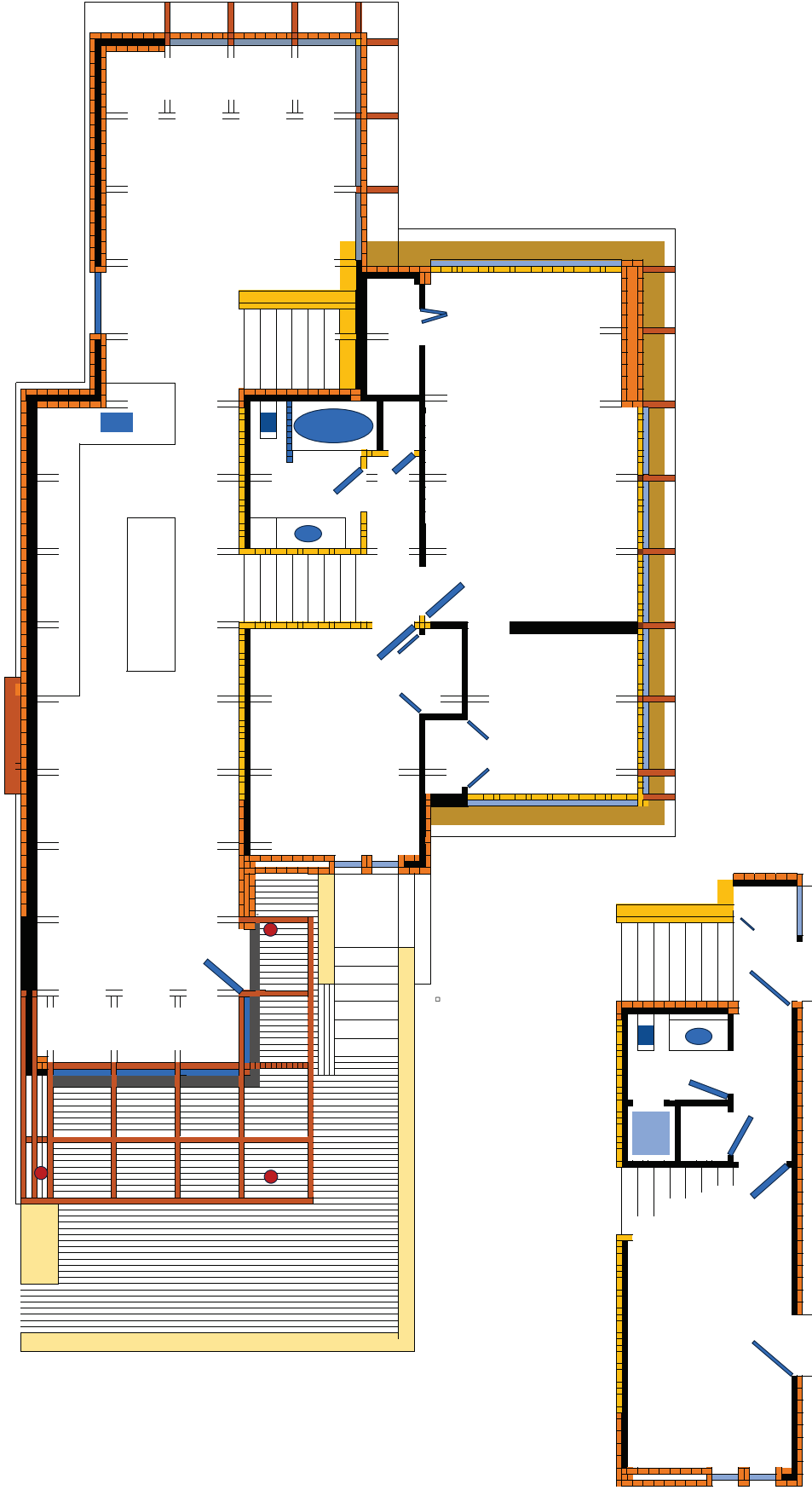


Figure 4

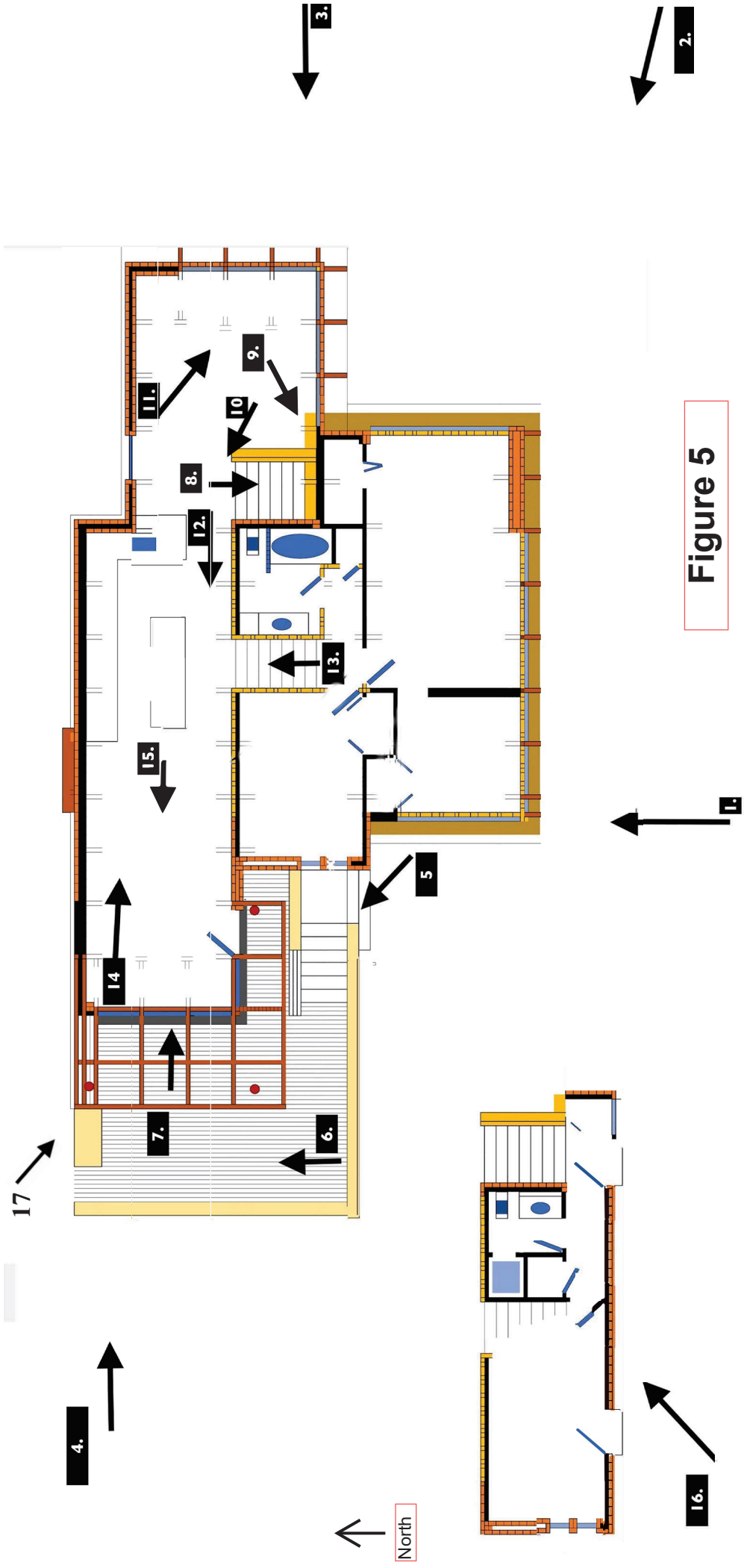


Figure 5

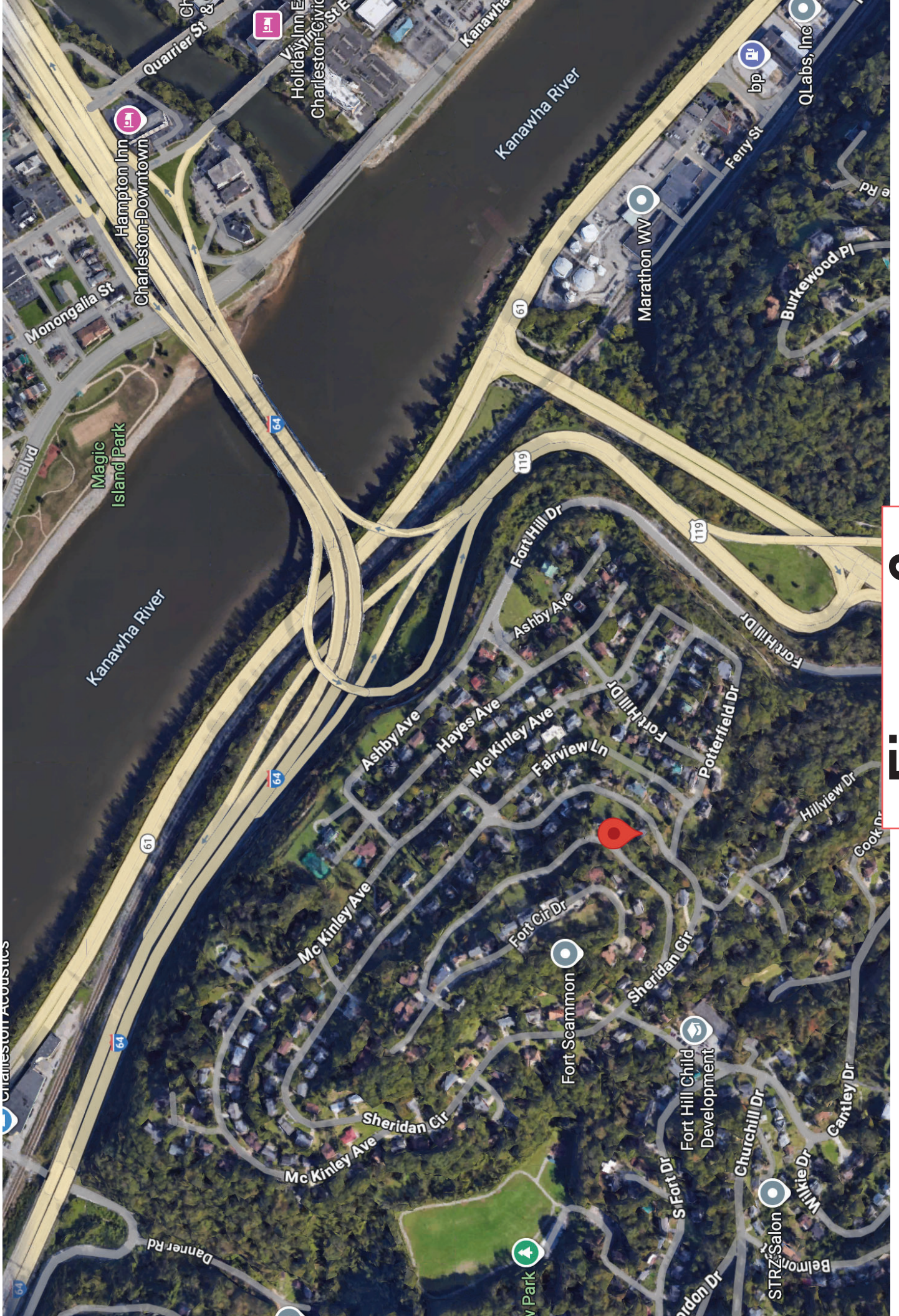


Figure 6