TUCSON
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
FOUNDATION

March 28, 2026

Chris Poirier, Deputy Director
Pima County Development Services Department
(520) 724-9000

Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission Plans Review Subcommittee
% City of Tucson Clerk

Re: Historic Landmark Zone for 4239 North Pontatoc Road, Tucson, Arizona 85718 Charles Cox House, (Architect: Charles E. Cox), Tax ID: 109-16-027D; Legal description: Pontatoc Uplands N246.32' E249.23' of Lot 26

On behalf of owner James Reed, I am pleased to submit the fifth Pima County Historic Landmark Zone application for the Chalres E. Cox designed Charles Cox House House.

This historic property and home meet the Pima County Historic Landmark Zone (Ch. 18.63) Application Criteria. The historic house is a historic resource within a human-made landscapes or spaces, which has been individually determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance and meets eight application criteria: 1. It is authenticated as dating from a particular significant period in Pima County's history (1962). 2. Is associated with the lives of outstanding historical personages Chalres Cox. 3. Is associated with significant events or occurrences: The architectural work of Charles Cox and Architecture of the Modern Movement in Tucson. 4. is a significant example of the architectural period in which it was built and has distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, method of construction: is a surviving example of Chalres Cox single-family residential building. 5. Is the notable work of architect Chalres Cox. 6. Contributes information of historical, cultural, and social importance relating to the heritage of the community. 6 Is in its original setting which contributes to an understanding of the heritage of the community and provides the area with a

sense of uniqueness. 7. Is readily distinguishable from other areas of the community. 8. Possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, thus constituting a recognizable entity.

In addition to meeting the application criteria the submission packet include the following seven requirements:

A. Legal description of the property: Pontatoc Uplands N246.32' E249.23' of Lot 26

B. *A list by name and title, of all ownership interests in the* property: James Frederick Reed

C. *Letter of authorization for an agent*: See Attached.

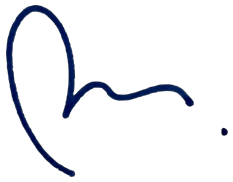
D. *Site plan*: See Attached.

E. *A completed* State of Arizona Historic Property Inventory Form / Determination: Determination of National Register of Historic Places Eligibility Attached

F. *Other supporting evidence*: Determination of Eligibility from the State Historic Preservation Officer.

G. *Most recent (available) aerial, USGS Map, and elevation and interior photos*: See Attached.

We look forward to working with Pima County, the T-PCHC committee and your office on the successful designation of this important property as the next Pima County Historic Landmark.



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CC: Jan Lesher, Pima County Administrator
Ian Milliken, Pima County Office for Preservation of Cultural, Archaeological, and Heritage Resources
James Reed, Charles Cox House Owner

PROPERTY LOCATION INFORMATION

Project Name:	Charles Cox House
Property Address:	4239 North Pontatoc Road
Architect/Designer:	Charles Cox, Architect
Builder:	unknown
Plat Name:	Pontatoc Uplands N246.32' E249.23' of Lot 26
Built:	Designed 1962, completed 1963
Pima County Parcel Number/s:	109-16-027D Parcel Use: Residential

APPLICANT INFORMATION

APPLICANT NAME:	Tucson Historic Preservation Foundation
ADDRESS:	PO Box 40008, Tucson, Arizona, 85717
PHONE:	520-247-8969
EMAIL:	info@preservetucson.org
PROPERTY OWNER NAME:	James Reed
PROPERTY OWNER EMAIL:	jimreed53@gmail.com
PHONE:	(520) 401-9782

Property Description

Setting

The Charles Cox House is located in Pima County's Pontatoc Uplands Subdivision (platted 1952). The residence was designed in 1962 and completed in 1963 by noted Tucson based architect Charles E. Cox as his own home and is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Charles Cox House, South Elevation, Photo by GMVargas 2023

Constructed from Querobabi fired red burnt adobe, concrete block, redwood, and glass window walls the property is a significant example of a mid-twentieth-century regional subtype of Usonian modern architecture using Sonoran building materials and responding to the desert climate

The Charles Cox House is located on a small plateau within a single lot in the center of the subdivision, west of Pontatoc Road, north of Saranac Drive and east of Osage Drive. The house is surrounded by desert vegetation consistent with the prevailing setback and landscape character within the subdivision. Nestled in the rugged desert landscape of the Catalina Foothills, the property is characterized by a gently sloping terrain dotted with native flora, including saguaros, palo verde, and mesquite trees. The house is positioned to take full

advantage of panoramic views of the Santa Catalina Mountains to the north and sweeping desert vistas to the south. With minimal site disturbance and a low profile, the residence is seamlessly integrated into its natural environment, a hallmark of desert modernist design.

The approach to the house is via a driveway northwest to a retaining wall and stairs that lead to a modest entry courtyard that introduces the geometric rigor of the home's architectural form. The immediate surroundings maintain their original desert landscape, with pathways and garden spaces delineated by the retaining wall and low masonry walls that blend with the native topography. The property's orientation and spatial organization underscore the architect's sensitivity to climate, ensuring optimal shade and cross-ventilation while fostering a strong indoor-outdoor connection.

Fig. 2. Site Map, Cox House centered with dark yellow shows the boundary of the original lot.

The site plan demonstrates a deliberate interplay between built and natural environments. The residence is sited with precision, allowing the angular forms of the structure to harmonize with the rolling desert contours. The hardscape elements, such as the concrete pathways and masonry terraces, follow the home's angular geometry, reinforcing a sense of order within the organic landscape. The controlled yet informal planting strategy enhances the visual contrast between structured architectural elements and the surrounding Sonoran desert terrain.

At sunrise and sunset, the interplay of light and shadow across the angular facades creates a dynamic effect, emphasizing the structure's geometric complexity. The use of burnt adobe brick and natural wood materials allows the home to blend into its surroundings while maintaining a sculptural presence. The carefully curated landscape and precise architectural placement define the house's relationship with its environment.

The combination of the foothills location, unique architecture and the work of a locally recognized architectural master create an important post-WWII era example of Mid-Century Modern residential architecture in Tucson. At the time of construction the house showcased an example of progressive architecture within a rural suburban context.

Charles Cox House, South Elevation, Photo by Reed, 2023

South Elevation (Primary Front Facade)

The primary facade of the Charles Cox House is defined by its distinctive low-slung, angular roofline that projects dramatically beyond the exterior walls, a striking characteristic of mid-century desert architecture. The roof's deep overhangs provide critical shade to the expansive glass window wall system, which are framed in slender wood and divided into a series of horizontal panels, creating a rhythmic interplay between solid and void. The warm red burnt adobe masonry, laid in a running bond pattern, establishes a material continuity with the

desert environment, while the recessed entryway is subtly integrated within the angular geometry of the design.

The house's entrance is marked by a modest red-painted door, an understated yet intentional architectural gesture that contrasts against the earthy adobe brick tones. To the left of the entry, a prominent corner window wraps around, dissolving the boundary between the interior and the surrounding desert landscape. The primary elevation is further distinguished by its sculptural integration with the terrain, with stepped masonry planters and a gently sloping concrete pathway leading toward the front entry.

Charles Cox House, South Elevation entry, Photo by Reed, 2023

The defining characteristic of the south elevation is its expressive roof structure, which follows the angular logic of the plan, extending outward in a bold, geometric gesture. This pronounced overhang not only serves as a passive shading device but also enhances the horizontality of the design, anchoring the house firmly within the landscape. The fenestration strategy ensures an optimal balance of natural light and thermal control, with deep-set windows reducing solar gain while maximizing outward views.

A secondary masonry element at the south elevation subtly delineates the threshold between public and private realms, reinforcing the house's layered spatial experience. The precision of detailing—visible in the finely articulated wood soffits and crisp masonry transitions -

underscores the architect's meticulous approach to materiality and form. The interplay between geometric rigor and material warmth gives the facade a timeless yet distinctly modernist character.

North Elevation (Rear Yard with Pool)
The north elevation of the house opens onto a private rear yard that features a swimming pool, a quintessential element of Tucson's mid-century residential architecture. The home's geometric plan unfolds into a series of angular projections, creating intimate outdoor spaces that frame views of the Santa Catalina Mountains. The rear facade is punctuated by full-height glass walls and sliding doors, reinforcing the home's seamless connection between indoor and outdoor living.

Charles Cox House, North Elevation, Photo by Reed, 2023

A shallow covered patio extends from the main living area and is created by the angular roofline which continues its dynamic thrust outward, providing a retreat adjacent to the pool. The pool area, enclosed by low masonry walls and native plantings, is designed as an extension of the living space, integrating water, light, and air to enhance the desert modernist aesthetic.

The north elevation is also defined by a rhythm of horizontal and vertical elements, with the glazing system acting as a transparent counterpoint to the solidity of the masonry volumes. The juxtaposition of open and enclosed spaces reinforces the house's spatial dynamism, while the

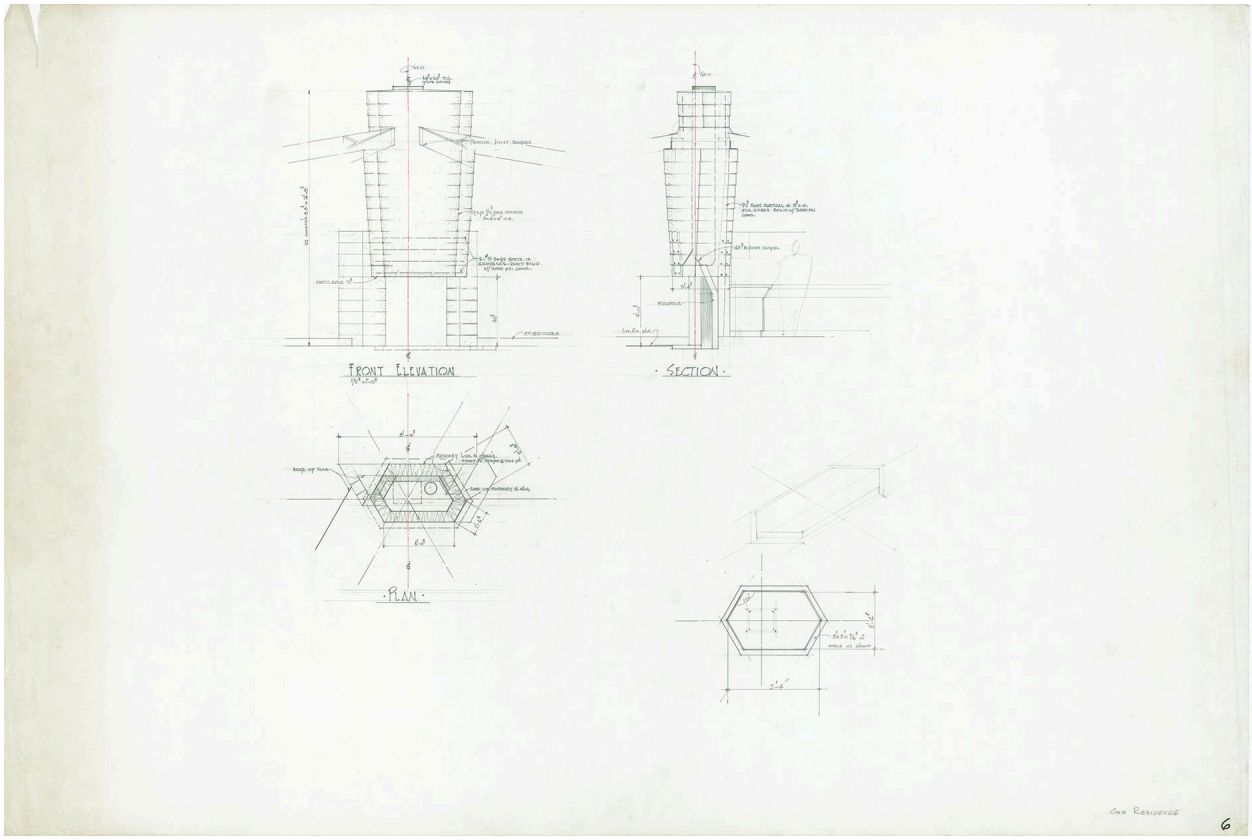
restrained material palette maintains cohesion across the architectural composition. The controlled transparency of this facade allows for an ever-changing play of light and shadow.

A strong axial alignment between the primary living spaces and the outdoor terraces enhances the home's spatial flow.

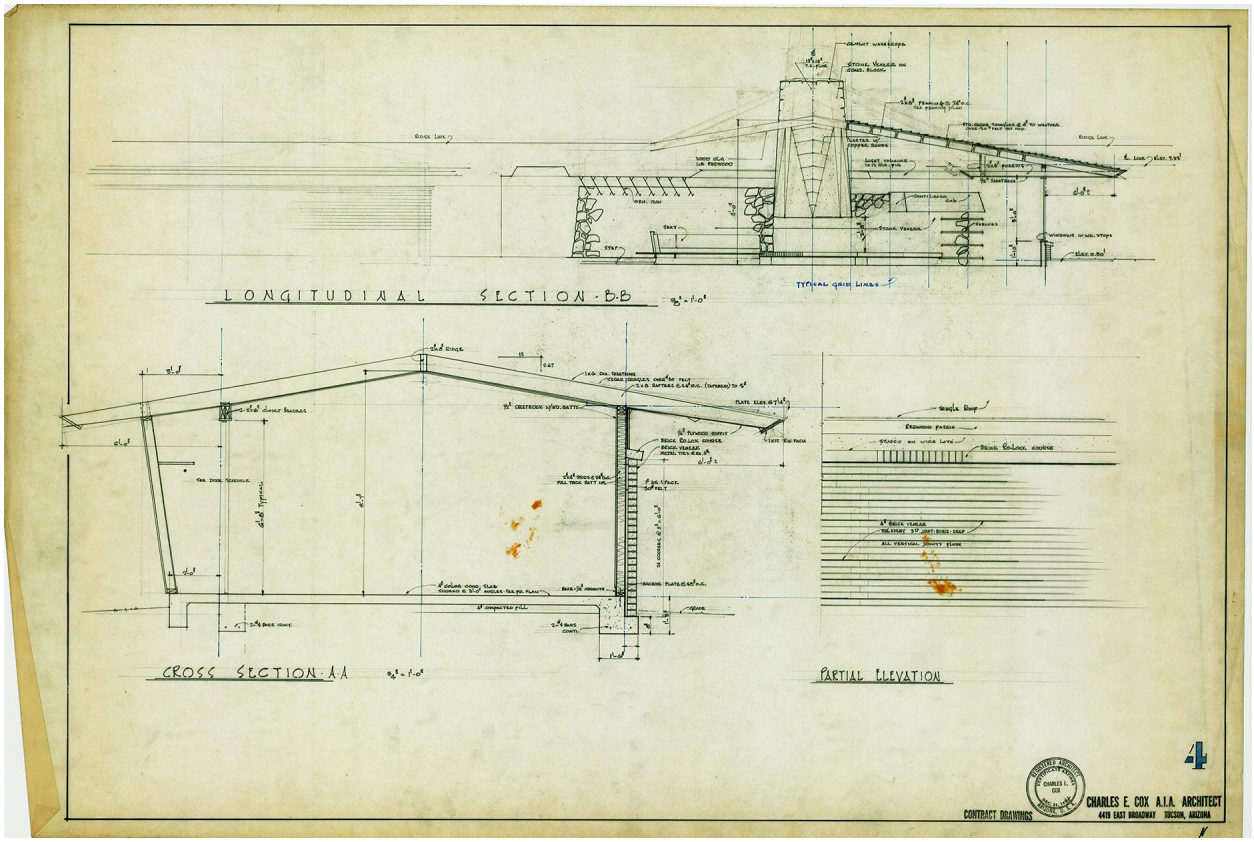
East and West Elevations (Secondary Elevations)
The east and west elevations of the Charles Cox House continue the theme of angular geometries and deep overhangs, reinforcing the structure's integration with the surrounding desert landscape. The east elevation, partially shielded by mature desert vegetation is set beneath the sharp roofline. The elevation's material palette is consistent with the rest of the house, with a combination of exposed red brick and vertical wood paneling that accentuates the horizontal emphasis of the architecture.

A distinctive design feature of the east elevation is the angled buttress-like walls that project outward from the main volume of the house. These elements provide both structural reinforcement and a sculptural quality, casting dynamic shadows across the façade as the sun moves across the sky. The angular masonry fins serve as passive shading devices, a hallmark of climate-responsive mid-century modern design.

In both elevations, the interplay of solid and void—articulated through careful glazing placement—reinforces the house's geometric rigor. The rhythm of the structural elements creates a visual dialogue with the shifting light, making the façade an active participant in the ever-changing desert environment. The architectural detailing, from the finely crafted wooden soffits to the seamless junctions between brick and glass, speaks to the precision and intentionality of Cox's design philosophy.



Charles Cox House, Interior fireplace place drawing, 1963.



Charles Cox House, Interior section drawing, 1963.

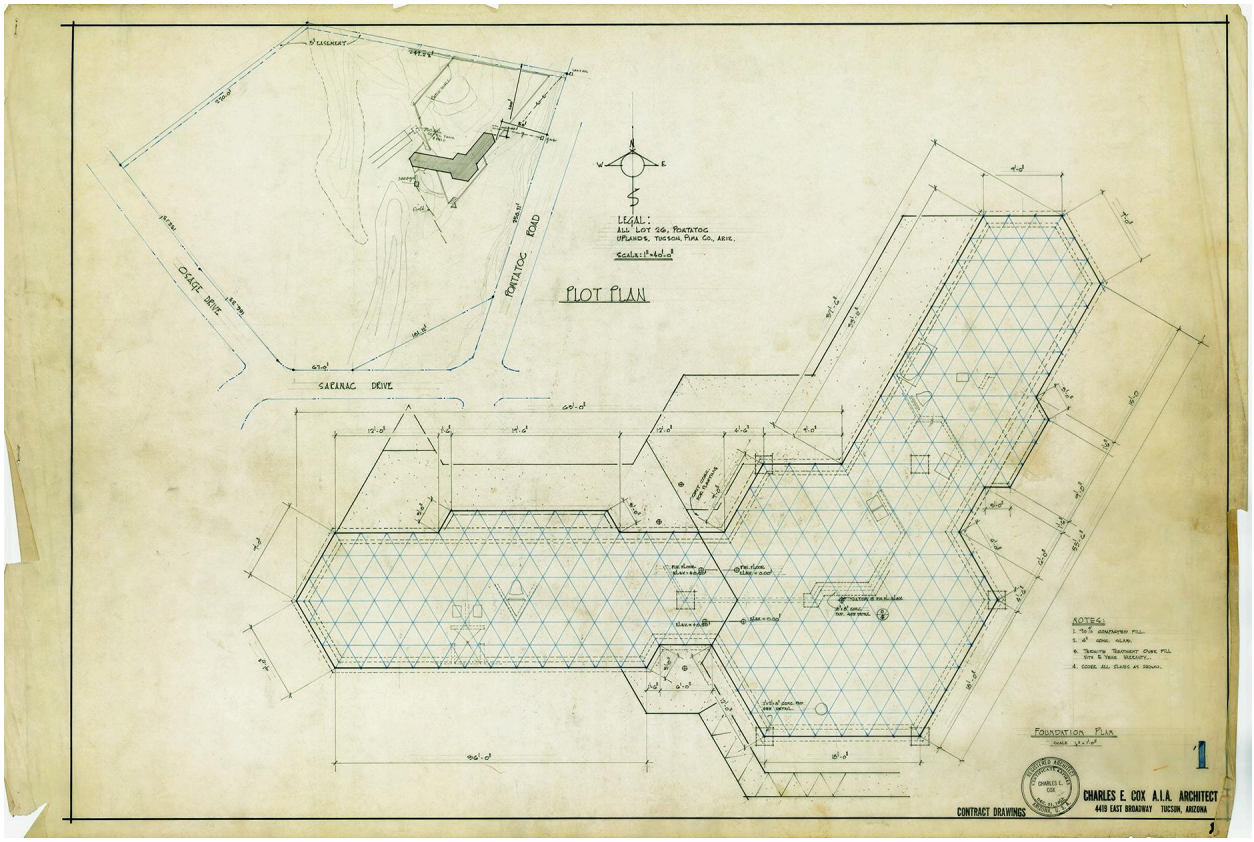
Plan and Geometry

The Charles Cox House exhibits a uniquely geometric plan, heavily informed by the architect's experimental use of triangular and hexagonal forms. The overall footprint of the house departs from traditional rectilinear arrangements, instead embracing a dynamic interlocking of angular modules. This unconventional configuration generates a series of interconnected spaces that maintain both functional clarity and visual complexity.

At the core of the plan is a central axis that organizes the primary living areas, extending outward into a sequence of angular wings. The triangular and hexagonal modules define both spatial boundaries and circulation paths, encouraging a fluid movement between rooms while maintaining a sense of enclosure. This geometric articulation is reinforced through the ceiling planes, where exposed beams and paneling echo the angular logic of the plan.

The use of the triangle as a generative form manifests in multiple aspects of the house's design, from the articulation of roof planes to the layout of fenestration. The triangulated grid structure provides an inherent structural efficiency, allowing for expansive cantilevers and open interiors without the need for intrusive support columns. This approach not only enhances the spatial openness but also imbues the house with a distinctive sculptural quality.

The geometry of the plan extends into the landscape, with site walls and pathways following the same angular logic. This continuity between built form and natural context reinforces the architect's vision of an integrated architectural and environmental experience. By utilizing a rigorously geometric framework, the house achieves a sense of order and dynamism that is emblematic of mid-century modern experimentation in form-making.



Charles Cox House, Plan Drawing

Interior Features

The interior of the Charles Cox House exemplifies the principles of mid-century modernism, with an open-plan layout, desinged around a sculptural fireplace, integrated built-ins, and a seamless connection to the surrounding landscape. The central living space is defined by angular ceilings that echo the home's overall geometric organization. Materiality plays a crucial role in shaping the interior atmosphere. The predominant use of white plaster walls, wood detailing, and polished concrete floors creates a tactile, grounded aesthetic. The living area features a built-in fireplace set within a sculptural masonry wall, its angular form mirroring the faceted roof planes above. This hearth serves as both a focal point and a spatial divider, subtly delineating the open-plan layout without the need for conventional partitions.

The kitchen is an extension of the home's geometry, with custom cabinetry and countertops arranged in accordance with the triangulated plan. The workspace is defined by clean lines, flat-panel millwork, and integrated storage solutions, ensuring both functional efficiency and

aesthetic cohesion. Large corner windows at strategic locations flood the kitchen with natural light, reducing the reliance on artificial illumination while offering framed views of the desert landscape.

Charles Cox House, Interior Fireplace, Photo by GMVargas, 2023

Throughout the house, built-in furniture elements—ranging from cantilevered shelving to recessed seating — reinforce the sense of spatial integration. The bedrooms maintain the same material palette, with windows that establish a direct visual and physical connection to private courtyard spaces. The bathrooms, designed with streamlined mid-century fixtures, feature clerestory lighting, enhancing their sense of openness while maintaining privacy. Every element of the interior reflects the architect's commitment to material honesty, structural clarity, and a harmonious relationship between form and function.

Charles Cox House, Interior Kitchen and Casework, Photo by GMVargas, 2023

Garden and Site Walls

The garden and site walls of the Charles Cox House play a role in framing outdoor spaces and extending the architectural language into the landscape. Constructed from the same red adobe brick as the main structure and concrete, these walls create a cohesive material continuity between the built environment and the surrounding desert terrain. Their angular design follows the geometric logic of the house, with faceted forms and stepped profiles that respond to the site's natural contours.

A low perimeter wall encloses the primary outdoor living spaces, providing both privacy and a sense of defined enclosure without disrupting sightlines to the broader landscape. These walls are punctuated with integrated planters, which soften the masonry with native desert vegetation. The strategic placement of openings within the walls allows for controlled views.

The garden itself is designed with an emphasis on xeriscaping, utilizing drought-tolerant species that require minimal maintenance while enhancing the property's ecological resilience. Agaves, prickly pear cacti, and desert grasses are arranged in an informal yet intentional manner, reinforcing the naturalistic character of the site. The interplay between structured masonry and organic planting creates a dynamic contrast, further accentuating the home's relationship with its desert context.

Alterations
The house retains an exceptionally high degree of integrity. The only exterior alterations are the addition of the solar panels, support and storage buildings on the property.

Out Buildings and Garage
The garage at the Charles Cox House is a utilitarian structure; it is a carefully considered component that maintains the design integrity of the residence. Set slightly apart from the main living volume, it is integrated into the site through the use of matching masonry walls and a low-profile roofline that mirrors the angularity of the house. This separation allows for a clear distinction between the functional and domestic spaces while preserving the visual cohesiveness of the overall composition.

The garage's facade is defined by a broad, horizontal opening, featuring a door that aligns with the material and textural palette of the house and an apartment above. The roof extends outward in a protective overhang, creating a shaded transition zone that enhances the approach experience.

Statement of Significance

Catalina Foothills
The Catalina Foothills, north of Tucson city limits, was primarily federal trust land and utilized for cattle grazing before John Murphey and his wife Helen developed a vision for the area. They aimed to attract affluent Easterners seeking a winter residence in the desert by planning and building an exclusive romantic community of southwestern revival homes. Starting in the 1920s, Murphey purchased land located north of River Road in the Santa Catalina Mountains foothills. His expansive long-range vision included ten subdivisions with large lots, each spanning over three acres and carefully designed to ensure maximum privacy while preserving the local desert vegetation, wildlife, and scenic views of the mountains and valleys. In 1928, Murphey secured a 7000-acre tract north of River Road between Oracle Road and Sabino Canyon at a federal land auction. On February 17, 1935, the first model home, the "Mexican Farm House," designed by architect Josias Thomas Joesler, was advertised for sale in the Arizona Daily Star.[1]

Following WWII, by the early-1950s as Tucson boomed, high-end development in and around the Catalina Foothills Estates continued. Tracks of land owned by other speculators and

[1] Arizona Daily Star, Mexican Farm House advertisement, February 17, 1935, 3.

investors were subdivided and new developments were launched. Pontatoc Uplands was one of these early 1950s examples.

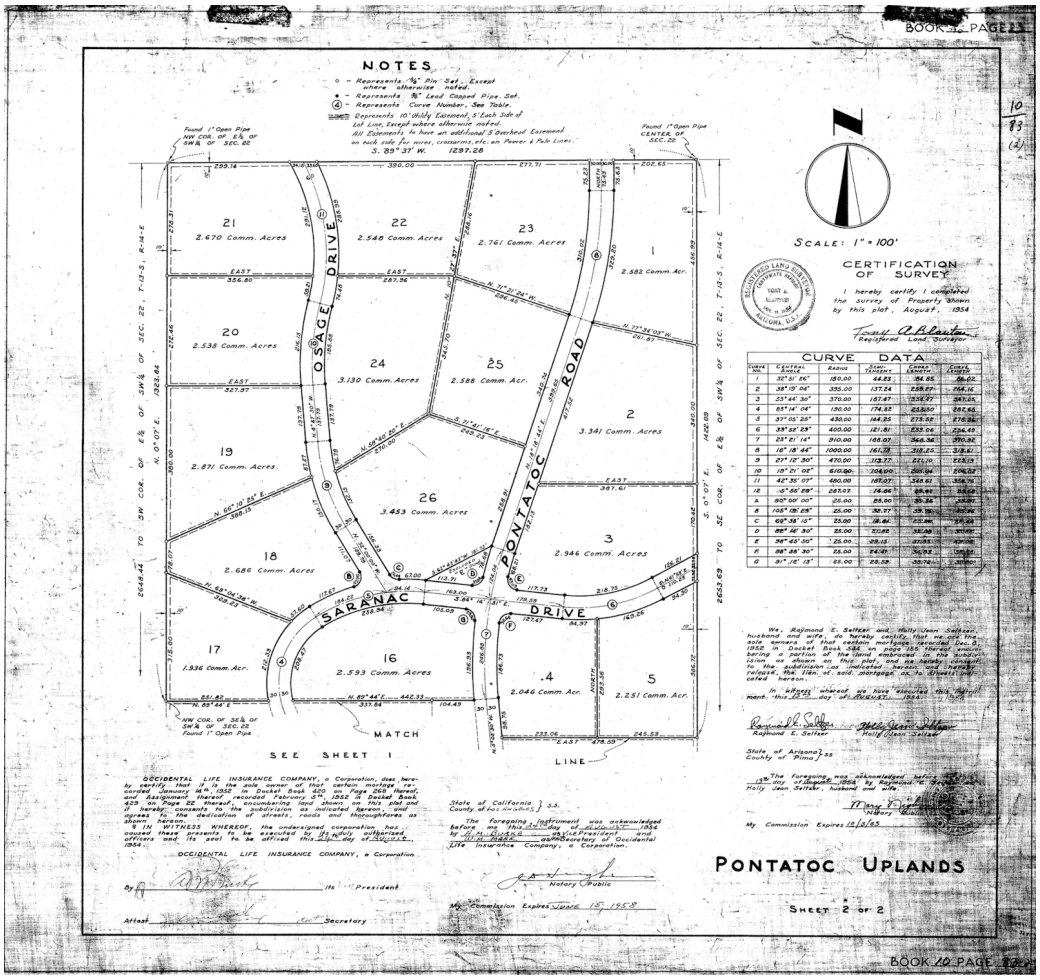
Pontatoc Uplands

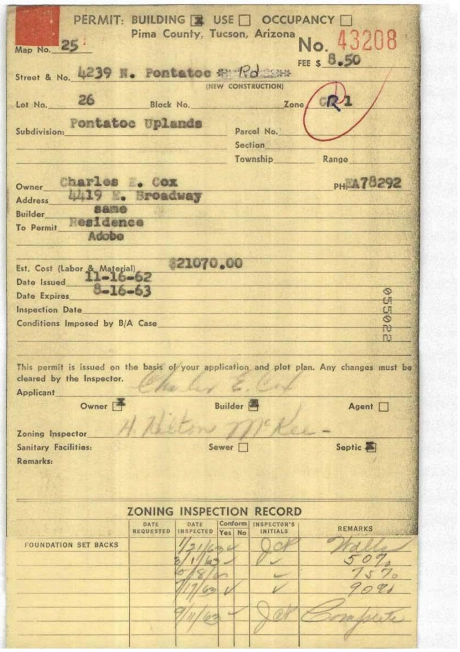
Subdivided by Raymond E. Seltzer and Holly Jean Seltzer the subdivision plat was surveyed and designed by engineer Tony Blanton (of Blanton and Cole) and recorded on August 13, 1954. (Fig. 2) The plat featured curvilinear streets that meandered through the rolling foothills. The “scenic homesites" were served by Pontatoc Water Co. which were advertised as managed under “state supervision.”[2] The subdivision catered to custom speculative high-end luxury home builders and buyers looking for a buildable lot.

Finished houses were advertised in the local Tucson paper and editorial features spotlighted the subdivision. The Tucson Citizen on January 8, 1955, noted, “Homes already built in Pontatoc Uplands reveal many of the gracious elements which are present in our southwestern architecture. [...] an intimate entrance patio that leads one to the front door of the house which is protected by an overhang from sun and wind.”[3]

Home sites continue to be advertised over the next decade and homes constructed within the subdivision continue to be featured in the local papers. 4220 N. Pontatoc Road designed by Don Beninati and built by H.A. Tidmore was featured in the Arizona Daily Star, Homes, and Features cover on October 23, 1955.[4] Other noted projects include the 1961 Tom Gist-designed Custom Contemporary ranch house at 4424 North Pontatoc Road.

[2] Arizona Daily Star, Pontatoc Uplands, advertisement, January 23, 1955, 13.
[3] Tucson Citizen, Casual Comfort in Pontotoc Homes, January 8, 1955, 33.
[4] Arizona Daily Star, Dramatic Home In Pontatoc Uplands Off River Road, October 23, 1955, 25.





Pontatoc Uplands Subdivision 1954.

Charles Cox House Construction Permit.

Architect of the Modern Movement in Tucson 1945 - 1975

The Charles Cox House was constructed in 1963 squarely within the Modern Movement. Sarah Allaback's 2003 Essays on Modern Architecture produced for the National Park Service provides a context for evaluating architectural significance. Allaback introductory essay is excerpted:

> American architects began to experiment with styles beyond the traditional neoclassical in the early nineteenth century. Styles were chosen for their historical associations and the buildings were considered architecturally pure versions of the past. By the end of the century, architects felt free to combine styles in an "eclectic" manner, without such concern for stylistic origins. New technologies and building materials encouraged this emerging experimentation. If this was all modern, however, it was certainly not "modernism." When European modernism arrived in the United States in the 1920s no one could mistake it for anything that went before. Historians quickly labeled this early phase of modern architecture the International Style. It was short-lived. The white,

geometric forms were too bleak for Americans, especially since they came without the social meaning of their European counterparts.

The International Style was imported to the United States, but its early development was not without American influence. As European architects began experimenting in wild new forms of architecture, materials and forms, they studied the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright, whose work had been published in portfolios by 1910. Nothing Wright designed remotely resembled the sleek European buildings, but none could deny that his work was both modern and impossible to ignore. [...] different forms of modern architecture with very different sensibilities were able to develop side by side in America. Frank Lloyd Wright and his Prairie School influenced all American architects, even immigrants like Richard Neutra and Walter Gropius.

By the 1950s, modern architecture had been popularized to the point where it lost its shocking newness. The developers of Levitttowns and other postwar subdivisions introduced popular versions of “the modern home.” While middle-class Americans enjoyed the luxury of picture windows, carports and split-levels, the architectural profession moved beyond what most people would consider domestic space. Philip Johnson’s famous Glass House was the architectural equivalent of the artist framing a blank canvas. Once everything had been removed but glass, leaving the essence of a building, there was no place left to go. Postmodernism developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s as a rejection of the blankness of modernism. It was all about adding layers of meaning, however artificial. Although refreshing at the time, this self-conscious style could not sustain itself. Architects of the twenty-first century are designing modern architecture that is colored by its own modernistic past. And, according to architectural histories, that past has already stood the test of time. [...] roughly from the late 1920s to the early 1960s. Whether or not we appreciate these buildings, they represent a key moment in our history, a time when all historical reference was thrown aside in favor of something new and unexplored. From our perspective, the explosion of modern architecture is dulled by familiarity. But in the 1920s a line was crossed that we can barely comprehend. Buildings went from being cultural books--their stories revealed in symbols and inscriptions rich in historical meaning--to being mute wonders of technology suggesting infinite possibility. The architectural historian and critic John Jacobus, Jr., reminds us that “nearly every present day architect, whatever his station or real sentiment, at least professes allegiance to the outward materialistic manifestations of the creative revolution that took place with the International Style.” Modern buildings exemplify the search for the limits of building and design, the exploration of new interpretations of what is comfortable, and the effort to maximize human potential through building.

In the Pre-WWII era, the built environment of Tucson and Southern Arizona was defined by a host of revival architectural styles that promoted the region’s romantic southwestern roots. In the late nineteenth and early twenty century, Architect Henry Trost moved to Tucson from

Chicago, having worked in the office of Louis Sullivan. His architectural expression blended the Chicago school with Regionalism, and shaped the growing cities of Arizona, including Tucson, Bisbee, and Douglas, before moving to El Paso Texas. His architecture was an early manifestation of American modernism pioneered by Sullivan. Not until the interwar years would Tucson-based architects Richard Morse and Arthur T. Brown begin experimenting with European ideas of Modern architecture. Morse's Forest Lodge (1935) designed for Margaret Howard, Countess of Suffolk, and Berkshire was directly inspired by his time in Europe looking at Modern architectural design pioneered by the Bauhaus.

Like many cities after WWII, Tucson was growing rapidly. In 1940, the population was 35,000. By 1960, it had soared to 212,000. This population boom translated to significant housing development and outward expansion from the urban core. A new cohort of young architects and architectural designers began to shape the city.

Numerous subtypes of architectural expression emerged within Tucson's Modern Movement. The Charles Cox House is a strong nod to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, in particular Wright's Usonian homes of the 1950s that used the triangle as the geometric base of the design form.

As Wright noted in Architectural Form in 1938, discussing affordable housing designs he described this work:

> We call the style Usonian meaning 'of these United States'. If the house seems a little open for your Northwest, that openness has been taken care of by building the house upon a paved concrete mat itself heated by steam pipes laid under it in the gravel filling beneath. This insures comfort no matter how cold outside and there are no radiators in sight. What looks like them in the drawings are really the folding screens between the several paces opening into the central or general space -- a kind of enclosed patio.
>
> Space is characteristic of this free pattern from a freer life than you could possibly live in the conventional house - separated into boxes; itself a big box.

Of the residential work from this period, three of Wright's projects were the clear inspiration for the Charles Cox House which used a triangular grid to drive the design.

> Palmer House, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1950
> Kraus House, Kirkwood, Missouri, 1951
> Ablin House, Bakersfield, California, 1958

The house embraces the tenets of Usonian philosophy and delivers a regional expression that is both inspired by Wright and unique.

Charles E. Cox (1922 - 1996)
Born in 1922 in the town of Springfield Missouri, Cox worked for his architect and engineer father from 1936 to 1940 when he joined the Coast Guard PT boat squadron and headed into the South Pacific. His first son Luther Dean Cox/Lewis (1941 - 1972) was born in 1941. In 1945, Cox entered the Coast Guard Academy at New London Connecticut, and studied engineering, seamanship, and military law. Discharged in 1946, his second son Larry Lee Cox Sr. (1946 - 1967) was born. Cox used his GI bill to attend Tulane University, graduating in 18 months.

Following college Cox spent 18 months designing hospitals, railroads, and air terminals in Honduras for the Standard Fruit Co. In the early 1950s, Cox worked for several architects in New Orleans and Nevada before moving to Las Vegas in 1954. The Reno Gazette-Journal reported on April 9, 1954, that Cox had passed the state architectural board and would receive an architect certificate. Cox designed numerous buildings in Las Vegas including the Bonanza Club Casino and the Golden Hotel Mardi Gras and a shopping center in North Las Vegas.

Las Vagas, Bonanza Club Casino, c. 1950

Cox's parents had arrived in Tucson shortly after the war and by 1948 his father was partners with custom home builder John Joynt in Joynt Construction[5] and by 1958 was partners in

[5] Tucson City Directory, 1948, p 111.

Prichett Construction Co.[6] Cox arrived in Tucson by 1955, serving that year as the president of the Tucson chapter of the AIA. He established his offices at 1419 East 8th. He was noted in the local paper “as a disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright” but it is not confirmed that he was a student of Wright at Taliesin West despite the clear influence.

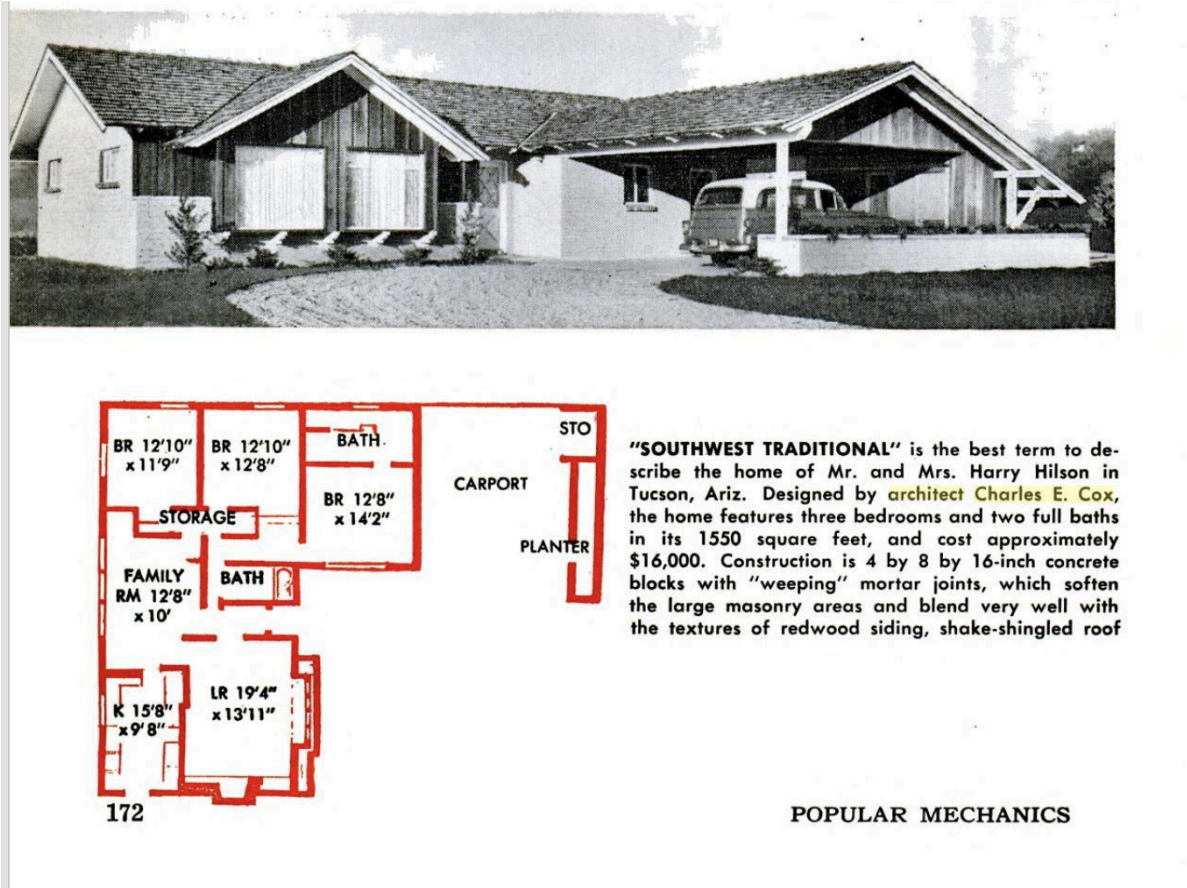
Catalina Baptist Church, under construction c. 1959.

By 1958 Cox was advertising architectural services in the Tucson Citizen. Cox’s first major work in Tucson was the ambitious 1958 proposal for a new sanctuary for the Catalina Baptist Church at 1900 N Country Club Rd, Tucson, AZ 85716. The design was a hyperbolic thin cast concrete paraboloid. The Tucson Citizen reported that it “may become first of its kind in the world church architecture” and that “It is a functional design adapted from architecture in Italy for industrial buildings giving unlimited floor space, free of pillars and beams.” Cox noted “So far as I have been able to learn” [...] “this will be the first church using a hyperbolic paraboloid design anywhere.” [7] The progressive engineered design was approved in August of 1958 by the church.[8]

Cox’s work was definitely of the modern movement. His exuberant forms and structural systems were architecturally graphic and visually provocative. The innovative sanctuary design pushed the aesthetic of Tucson’s built environment. The church project was extensively reported on and published throughout the region. Large commissions followed and his buildings embraced popular trends of the era. In 1959 Cox worked with Jim Christy in designing a

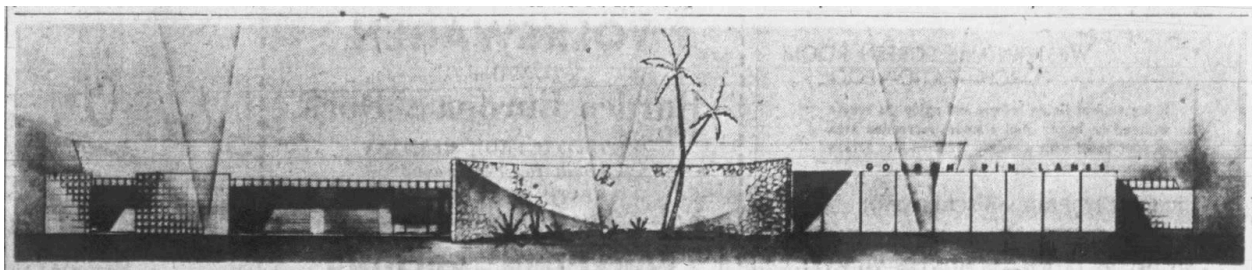
[6] Tucson City Directory, 1958, p 551.
[7] Tucson Citizen, Church Style First of Kind, June 7, 1958, 6.
[8] Tucson Citizen, Tucson pastor Finds Many American Churches Abroad, August 23, 1958, 6.

proposed new satellite tracking station[9] and one of his residential designs was featured in Popular Mechanics magazine.



Popular Mechanics, Parade of Homes, Outstanding Homes from Across the County, October 1959, 172.

In 1960 Cox was hired by F.J. Perlloto to design the Golden Pin Lanes bowling alley on Tucson's Miracle Mile. The building used massive precast concrete beams that were fabricated in Phoenix and shipped to tucson. The structural beam system was believed at the time to be the largest of the type in the country.

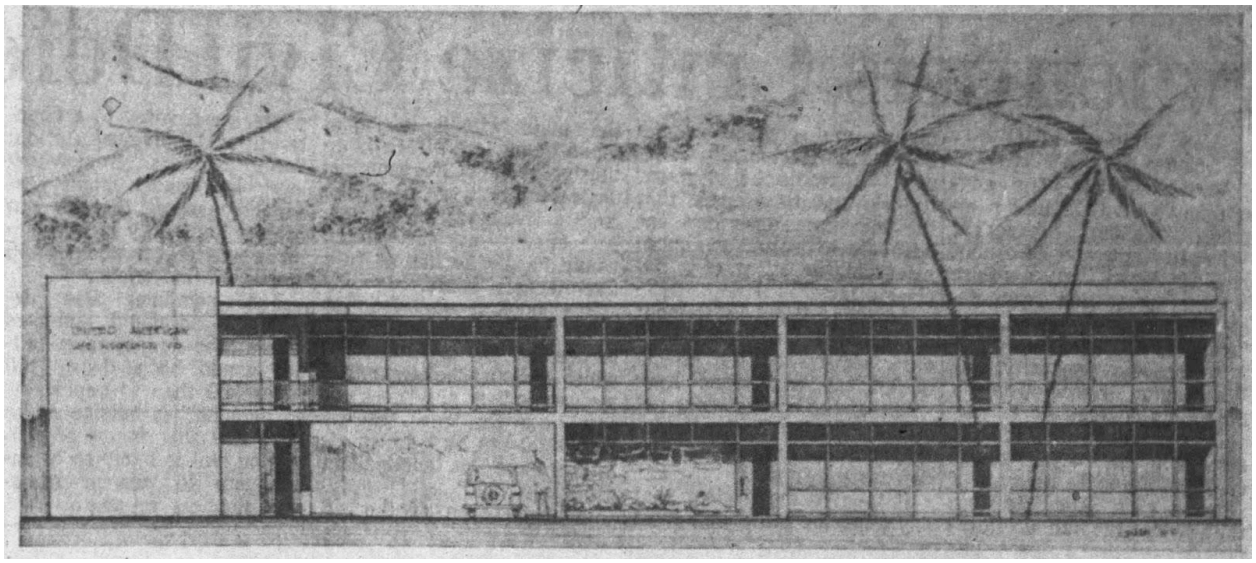


Cox Rendering, Golden Pin Lanes, 1960

[9] Arizona Daily Star, Satellite Trackers Honored, January 27, 1959, 15.

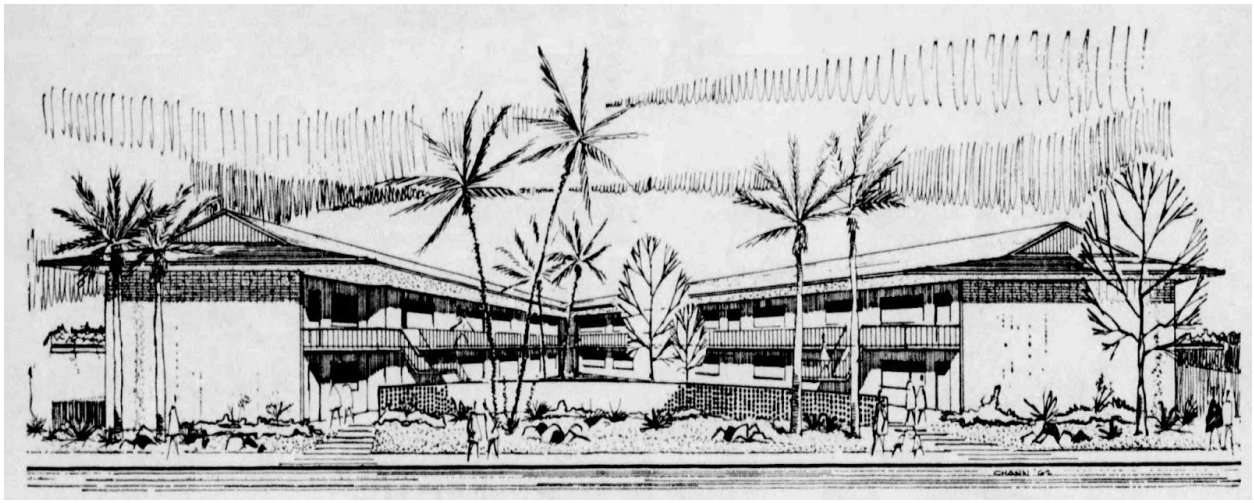
While Cox was having success in commercial design his residential work was also recognized and on September 3, 1960, Tucson Citizen “Around Your Home” featured Cox’s John F. Newcomer Jr. House on the cover.[10]

In 1962 Cox was again commissioned by F.J. Perillo, this time to design a new office building, envisioned it to be the first of a new financial center near the intersection of Broadway Boulevard and Craycroft Road.[11][12] The building included a large mural by Lawrence Guetthoff.[13] Chinese-American Architect Earl Kai Chan worked for Cox during this period and began producing illustrations for the firm and collaborating on design work.



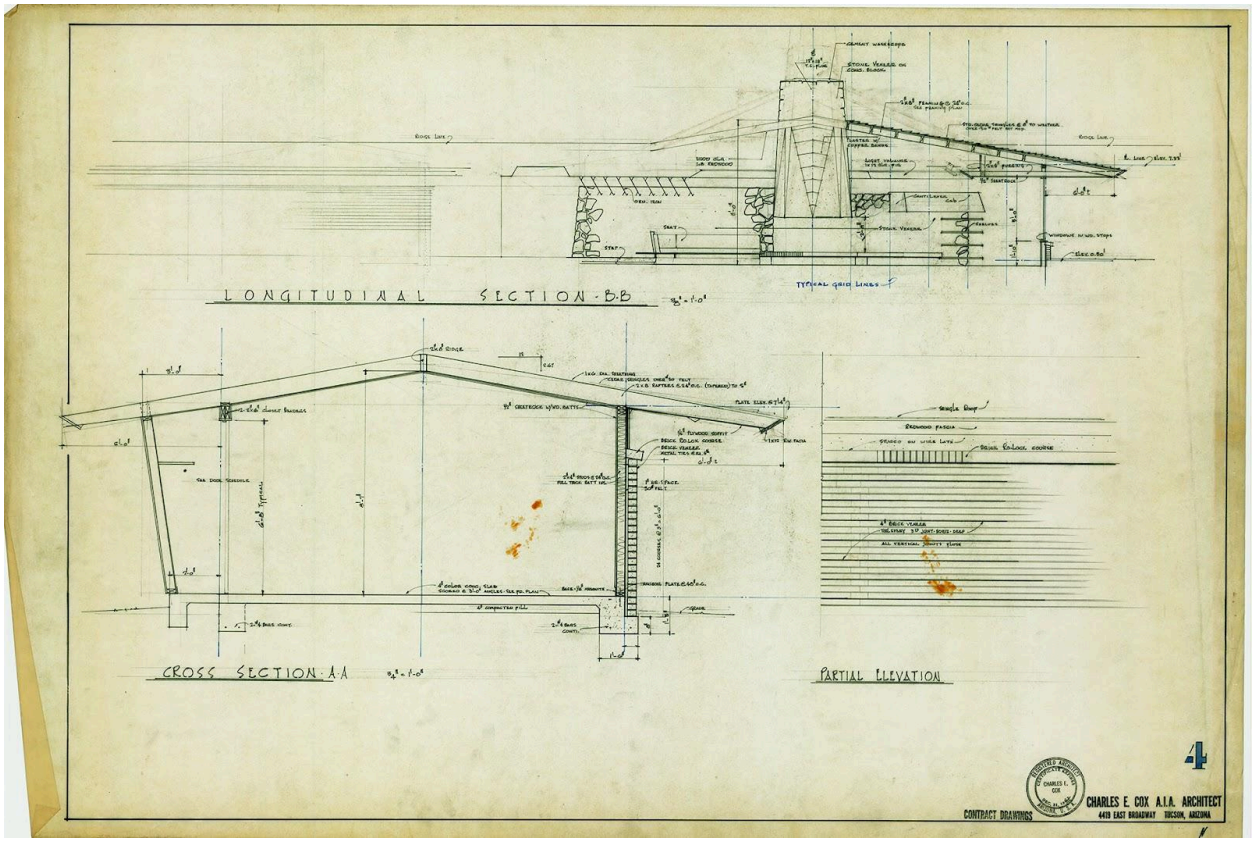
4419 East Broadway, F. J. Perillo Building, United American Life Insurance Building, Highland Plaza, 1962

[10] Kirts, Shirley, Tucson Citizen, Newcomer Home Offers Utmost Comfort, September 3, 1960 36
[11] Tucson Citizen, $235,000 Building Planned on East Broadway, January 27, 1962, 39
[12] Tucson Citizen, $235,000 Building Planned on East Broadway, January 27, 1962, 39
[13] Arizona Daily Star, Salute to Howard Strauss and Assoc. Of Tucson Advertisement, September 20, 1962, 37.



Elizabeth Arms Apartments, 1962

In 1962 the firm was hired to design the large Elizabeth Arms Apartments at 5770 East 10th Street[14] in a Polynesian-inspired style. The same year Cox undertook the design of his own home the Charles Cox House.



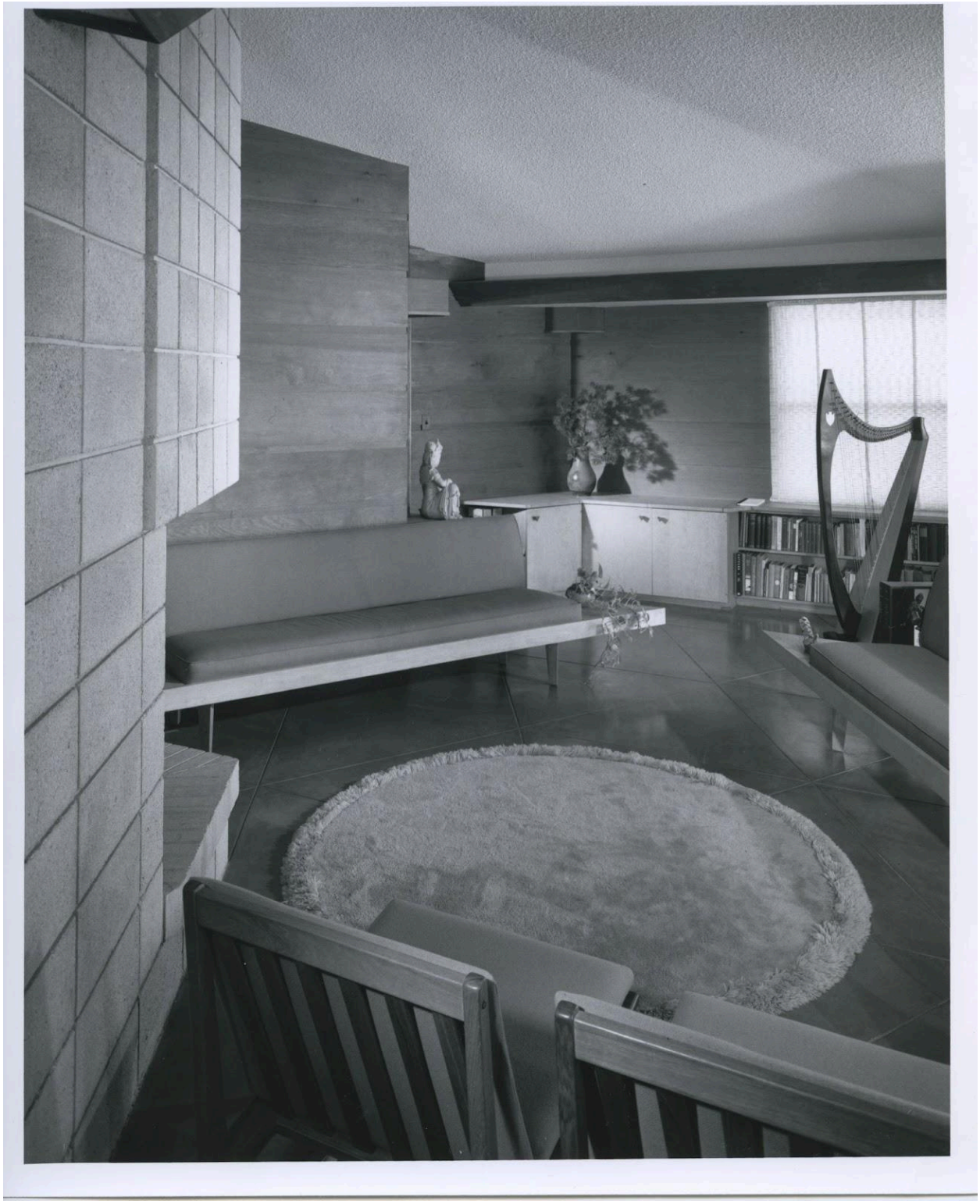
Charles Cox House, section and fireplace details, 1962

[14] Arizona Daily Star, Elizabeth Arms Apartments Advertisement, September 30, 1962, 34.

1963 Hosoji house, 8951 Calle Playa.

Cox, inspired by the Usonian work of Frank Lloyd Wright, used a triangular grid to formulate the plan. The design was so successful that he developed a streamlined simplified smaller concrete block variation of the house for the 1963 Tucson Home Builders Association Parade of Homes.

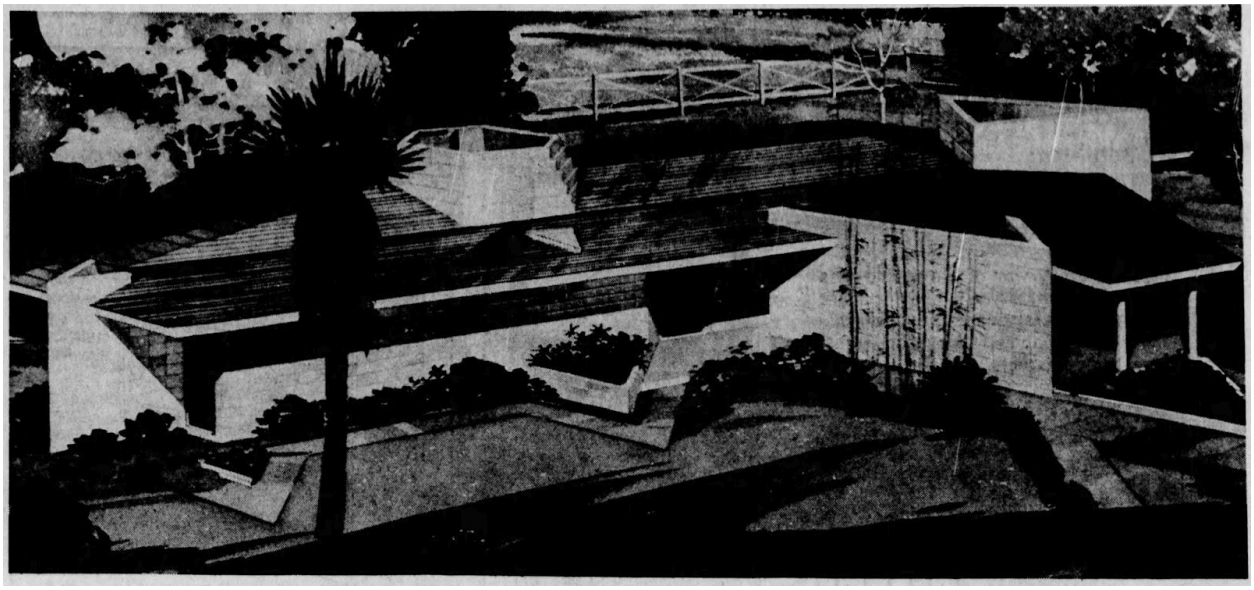
This smaller prototype was called the Hosoji House, was built by Lock McCorkle, and was a sensation. The house was selected by Portland Cement to be entered in the National Horizon



1963 Hosoji house, 8951 Calle Playa.

Homes,[15] Concrete Industries Horizon Homes program competition.[16] Although it did not win the Horizon award it was featured in a multi-page spread of the Tucson Daily Citizen on December 5, 1964.[17] [18]

Cox, reflecting on the design in the Arizona Daily Star provides insight into his approach for both design projects, “Designed as it is on the basic equilateral triangle grid, the house offers more freedom in the expression of the building materials used in construction, and offers a never-ending variety of moods for its occupants. The housewife no longer desires to change furniture arrangements in order to re-balance room areas in a house like this. It’s in a continual state of change by its interplay of light and shadow, color and texture, form and concept. The house was that rare opportunity to prove that construction and design can, at last, proceed beyond the “Plan Factory” box.”[19]



Hosoji house rendering, 8951 Calle Playa, 1963

In January of 1963, Cox was hired by developer Orland Fiandaca to design his most ambitious project, a large convention center on Drachman Street one block west of Stone.[20] The large 5.5 Million Convention Center Complex included a civic auditorium, supporting facilities, retail and business, and a hotel.[21] Earl Kai Chann led the project. Although never realized, the project provided an opportunity for the firm to demonstrate its scope and design prowess.

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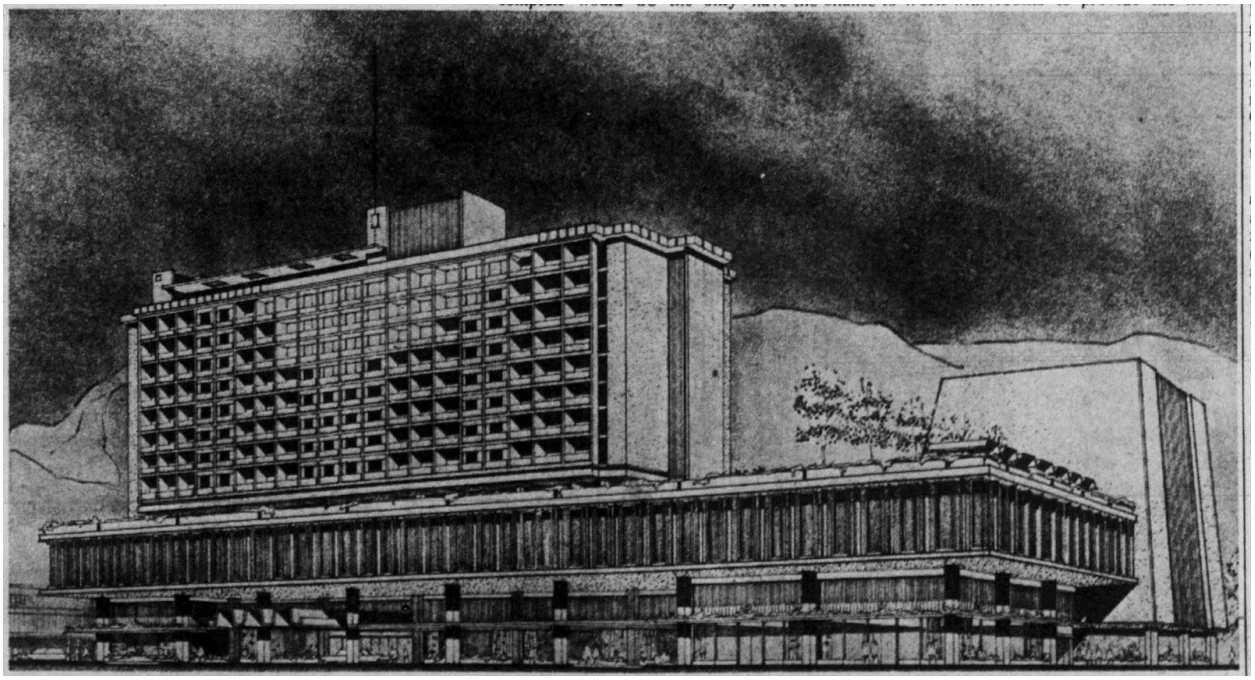
[15] Tucson Citizen, Weekend Crowd of 10,000 Opens Parade of Homes, April 29, 1963, 16.
[16] Arizona Daily Star, Tucsonans Participate in Home Competition, April 21, 1963, 51.
[17] Brown, Mary, Tucson Daily Citizen, Hosoji Is Its Name, December 5, 1964, 58.
[18] Arizona Daily Star, 1963 Parade of Homes, Contractor Calls Plans Organic, April 7, 1963, 39.
[19] Brown, Mary, Tucson Daily Citizen, Hosoji Is Its Name, December 5, 1964, 58.
[20] Arizona Daily Star, P-Z to Get Convention Center Plan, January 15, 1963, 26
[21] Tucson Citizen, Giant Convention Complex Proposed, November 8, 1962.

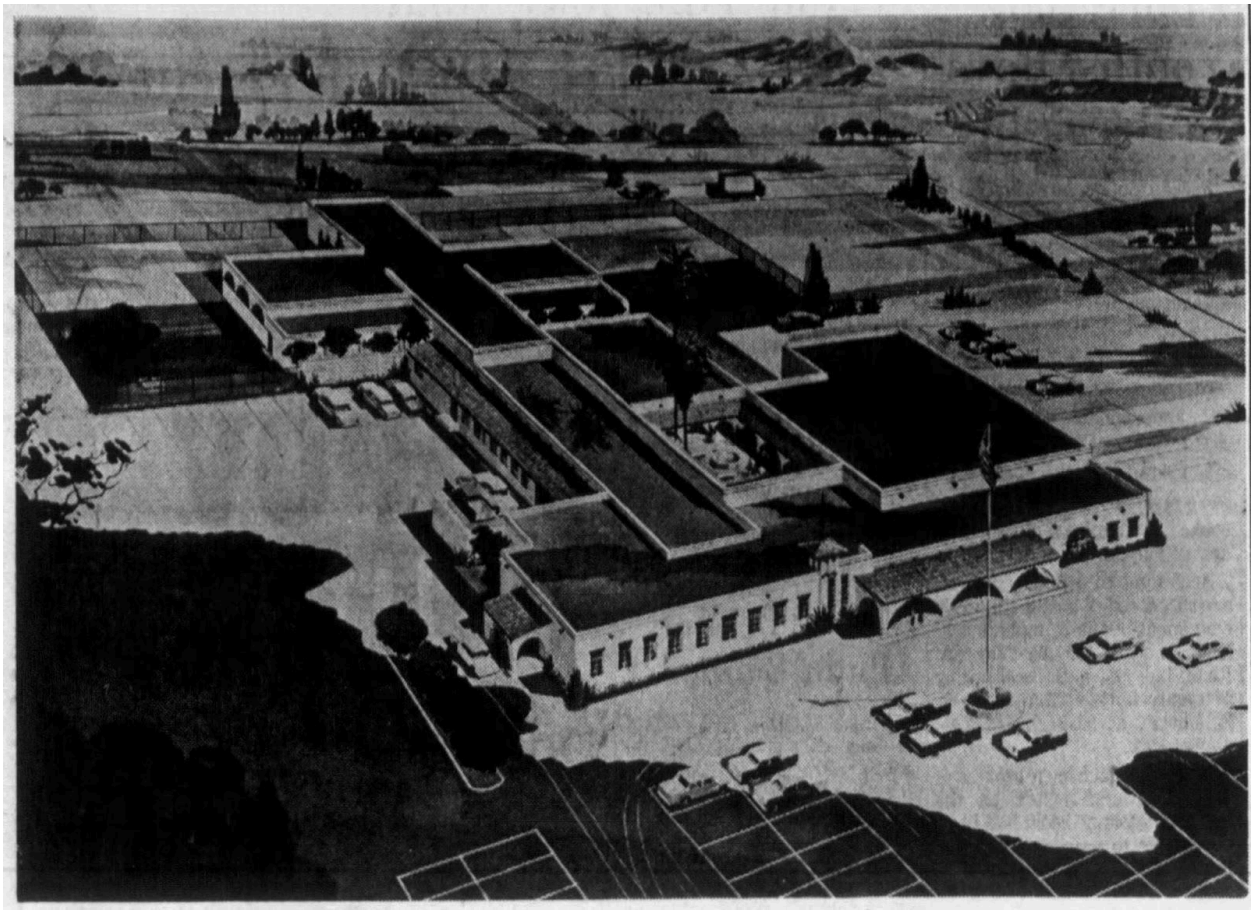


Convention Complex proposed rendering, November 8, 1962.

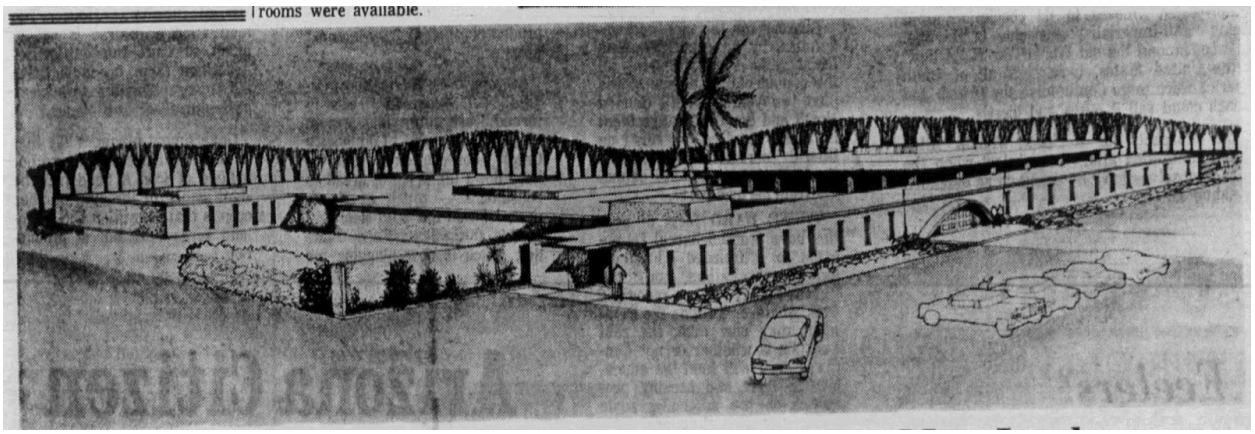
By 1966 the firm's offices were located at 4419 East Broadway. Cox was elected a member of the College of Fellows of the American Society of Registered Architects in 1966/67. On the occasion, Cox observed: “The average businessman and average homeowner is satisfied, seemingly to accept a lot less than the best. That’s why you find a minimum of really high-class residential areas in Tucson. The question comes to mind: Whose fault is that? The Architects? The citizens? I think it’s the architects’. The city building department can’t police design. You need more than a building code. You need a certain amount of integrity by the architect, builder, and owner.”

Durrin 1966 Cox was hired to design the Tucson Juvenile Courts Facility and by 1968 Cox was associated with architect Lou Coon. In September of 68 the team was working on the design of the Cochise County Juvenile Center.[22]

[22] Arizona Republic, Cochise supervisor board rejects bids to build new juvenile center, September 26, 1968, 49.



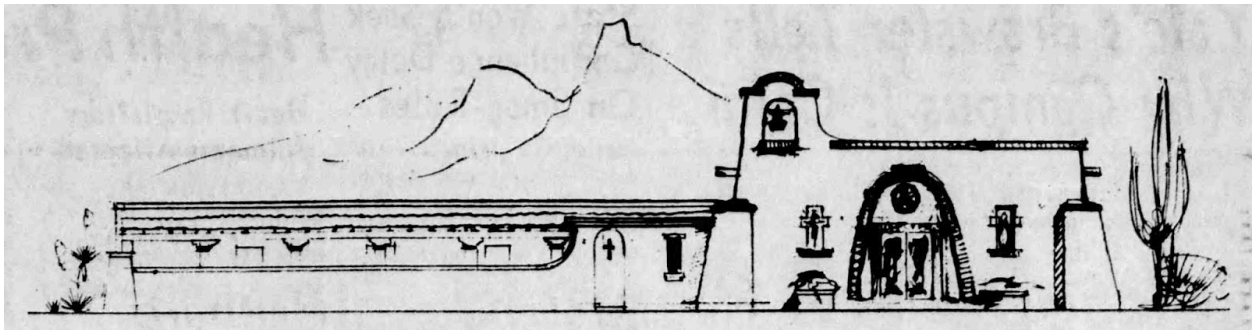
Tucson Juvenile Courts Facility, 1966



Tucson Juvenile Courts Facility, 1966

By 1972 Cox was working for the University of Arizona as assistant director of Physical resources.[23] and in 1973 Cox was listed in the registry of architects as maintaining a home-based practice at 2325 East Waverly, Tucson, Arizona 85719.

[23] Tucson Daily Citizen, Planner aver UA cannot do much with library sum, May 19, 1972, 36.



St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 1973

In April 1973 Cox partnered with Federico Sam to design the University of Arizona's War Memorial Plaques[24] and that same year Cox completed the design of St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Tucson.

In 1985 Cox's wife Lucy Ruth Howell died and by 1996 he had retired to Brandon, Rankin, Mississippi. Cox died on April 13. 1966.

Major Project List

Date	Name	Address
1958	Catalina American Baptist Church (constructed 1961)*	1900 N. Country Club
1960	Golden Pin, bowling alley* (Demolished 2020)	1010 W. Miracle mile
1960	John F. Newcomer Jr. House	
1961	Church of the Master	615 South Pantano
1961	Oxford House Apartments	7th Avenue and University Avenue
1961	Church of Christ (Demolished 2019)	2848 North Mountain
1961	Diamond Pin Lanes, bowling alley	22nd Street and Kolb Road
1961	Laguna Elementary School	5001 North Shannon Road
1962	United American Life Insurance Building	5315 East Broadway Boulevard
1962	Elizabeth Arms Apartments	5770 East 10th Street
1963	Charles Cox House	4239 North Pontatoc Road
1963	National Car Rentals	6610 South Tucson Blvd.
1963	Baptist Church	8800 North 11th Street
1964	Swan Funeral Home	1335 South Swan Road

[24] Donovan, Judy, Arizona Daily Star, The UA Will Build A New War Memorial, April 15, 1973, 55.

1964	West Ridge Estates Spec House	West Ridge Estates
1963	Hosoji House, Lock McCorkle Home The Horizon National Homes	8951 E Calle Playa - Desert Palm Park
1965	Park Adams Apartments (mural Charles Clement)	1425 North Park Avenue
1965	Camelback Church of Christ	Phoenix, Arizona
1966	North Side Fire Station #8	250 W King Rd, Tucson, AZ 85705
1966	Naughton Plumbing Sales	Broadway and Alvernon
1967	Juvenile Court Center	Ajo Way and S. Campbell Ave.
1969	Church of Brethren Hall, classrooms and offices	2200 North Dodge
1970	Tiffany West Creative Hair	7030 East Broadway
1973	St. Alban Chapel (Sabino Canyon and River Road)	3738 Old Sabino Canyon Road
1975	Spaghetti Company remodel	1818 S. Alvernon Way

* listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Criterion C

The Charles Cox House is eligible under Criterion C.
As noted in The National Register Bulletin:

> To be eligible under this portion of the Criterion, a property must clearly illustrate, through "distinctive characteristics," the following: The pattern of features common to a particular class of resources, The individuality or variation of features that occurs within the class, The evolution of that class, or The transition between classes of resources.
>
> Distinctive Characteristics: "Distinctive characteristics" are the physical features or traits that commonly recur in individual types, periods, or methods of construction. To be eligible, a property must clearly contain enough of those characteristics to be considered a true representative of a particular type, period, or method of construction. Characteristics can be expressed in terms such as form, proportion, structure, plan, style, or materials. They can be general, referring to ideas of design and construction such as basic plan or form, or they can be specific, referring to precise ways of combining particular kinds of materials.
>
> Type, Period, and Method of Construction: "Type, period, or method of construction" refers to the way certain properties are related to one another by cultural tradition or function, by dates of construction or style, or by choice or availability of materials and technology. A structure is eligible as a specimen of its type or period of construction if it is an important example (within its context) of building practices of a particular time in

history. For properties that represent the variation, evolution, or transition of construction types, it must be demonstrated that the variation, etc., was an important phase of the architectural development of the area or community in that it had an impact as evidenced by later buildings. A property is not eligible, however, simply because it has been identified as the only such property ever fabricated; it must be demonstrated to be significant as well.

Tucson Citizen, June 7, 1958. Charles Cox, Merrill Robart, and Rev. Rodger Harrison, pastor

Regionalizing Usonian Ideals: The Charles Cox House and the Legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright in Tucson's Mid-Century Modernism

The Cox House represents an important regional adaptation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian principles and a unique contribution to mid-century modern architecture in Tucson. Designed and constructed in 1963, the house integrates key Wrightian design tenets, particularly in its geometric organization and emphasis on organic architecture, while also responding to the specific environmental and cultural context of the Sonoran Desert. In considering the eligibility of the Cox House for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, the case for its significance is within the Usonian tradition and its distinguished architectural merit in relation to Wright's philosophy, particularly through the lens of regional adaptation and innovation.

The Charles Cox House exhibits distinctive elements that align with Wright's Usonian ideals, most notably the use of a triangular grid as a generative organizational principle. This geometric

approach, which Wright explored in designs such as the Palmer House (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1950), the Kraus House (Kirkwood, Missouri, 1951), and the Ablin House (Bakersfield, California, 1958), fosters an integrated spatial composition that dissolves traditional rectilinear boundaries, creating a fluid and dynamic living environment. Cox's application of this design methodology demonstrates a direct engagement with Wright's principles while also pushing them toward new regional expressions suited to Tucson's arid climate and landscape. While Wright's Usonian houses aimed to provide affordable and functional homes for the American middle class, Cox's interpretation in the Charles Cox House adapts these principles to a high-end, custom-built home, reflecting the evolving economic and social landscape of mid-century Tucson.

While Usonian architecture was not originally conceived as regionally specific, it provided a flexible design framework that allowed architects to tailor it to different environmental conditions. In the case of the Cox House, its adaptation is expressed through site orientation, passive solar strategies, and integration with the desert landscape. Unlike Wright's original Usonian homes, which frequently utilized wood siding and expansive clerestory windows suited for temperate climates, Cox incorporated locally available burnt adobe, a material deeply embedded in Tucson's architectural vernacular, to create a sense of continuity with regional building traditions. This decision not only grounds the home in its Sonoran context but also enhances thermal performance, reducing heat gain in the intense desert sun.

Cox's use of deep overhangs and strategic siting minimizes solar exposure and promotes natural ventilation, principles that align with Wright's passive environmental strategies but are particularly crucial in the hot, arid conditions of Southern Arizona. The use of redwood as a questionable adaptation to the desert climate, it is important to contextualize this choice within mid-century architectural trends, where natural materials were often employed for their aesthetic warmth and organic integration rather than strictly climatic appropriateness. However, the Cox House's extensive masonry elements, low horizontal profile, and interplay between indoor and outdoor spaces reinforce its responsiveness to the desert landscape in a manner distinct from Wright's original Usonian prototypes.

The geometric purity of the Cox House further reflects its engagement with Usonian ideals while introducing a distinctly Tucson-specific iteration. The triangular grid structure, a hallmark of Wright's later Usonian experiments, is not merely an aesthetic gesture but a deliberate design choice that fosters a continuous spatial flow between interior and exterior spaces. This approach is particularly effective in the Cox House, where the integration of indoor and outdoor living is essential to its functionality in the desert climate. The use of angular forms allows for unique opportunities in shading and cross-ventilation, enhancing comfort while reinforcing the house's architectural integrity.

While Cox may not have attained the national stature of Wright or his direct disciples, his body of work within Tucson's modernist movement and his clear engagement with Wrightian principles position him as a significant regional practitioner. His experimentation with structural

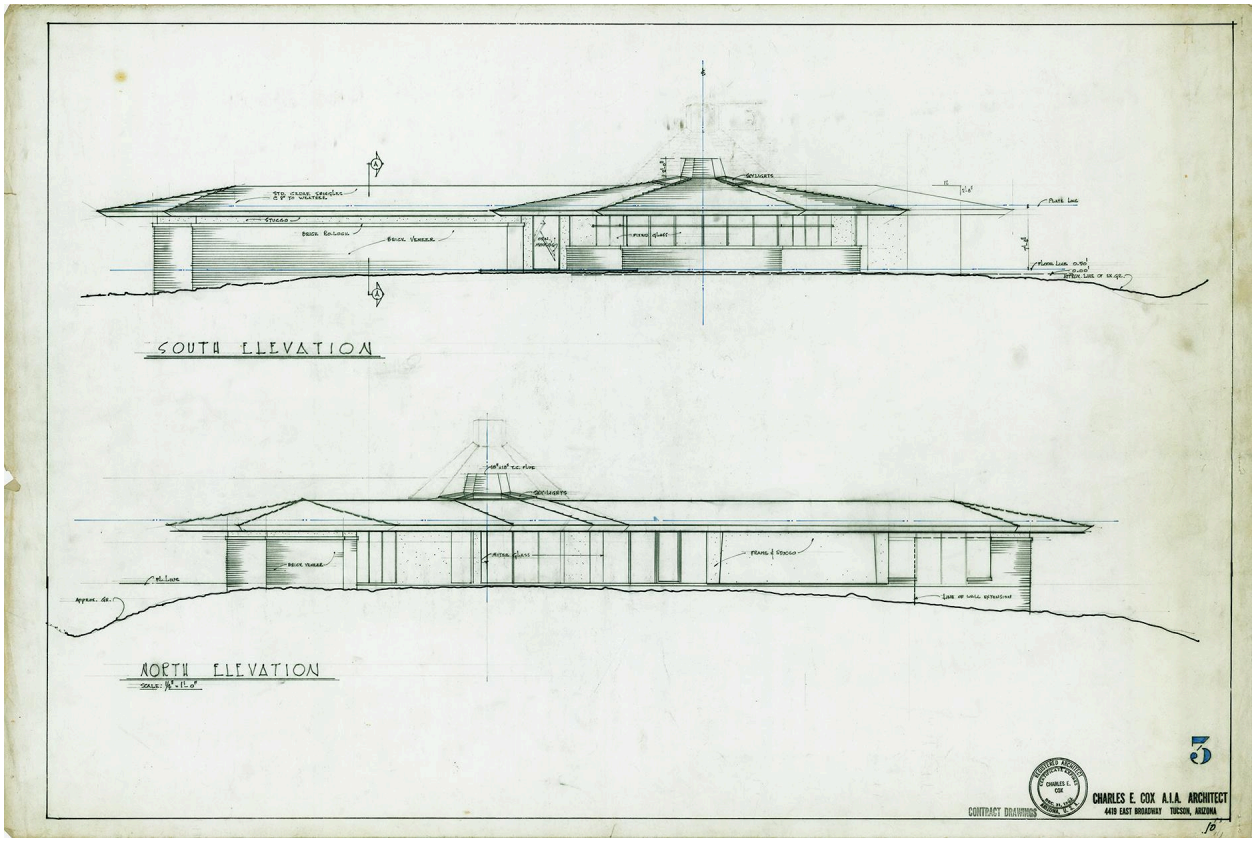
forms, as evidenced in projects like the Catalina Baptist Church and the Golden Pin Lanes, showcases an innovative approach to modernist design that extends beyond mere imitation. The Cox House, as a personal residence, serves as a built manifesto of his architectural philosophy, reflecting both a reverence for Wright's legacy and a desire to advance its principles within a new geographic and cultural context.

Cox's practice in Tucson demonstrates a broader trend in mid-century architecture, where regional architects synthesized international and national influences to create locally responsive designs. His engagement with Wright's Usonian concepts is not a simple replication but a reinterpretation, adapted to the unique material culture and environmental conditions of the Sonoran Desert. This distinction is crucial in framing the significance of the Cox House: while it is unmistakably inspired by Wright's work, it stands as an autonomous architectural statement, indicative of the broader evolution of modernist principles in the American Southwest.

The legacy of the Cox House extends beyond its formal and material characteristics. As a part of Tucson's mid-century modern landscape, it exemplifies a moment in architectural history where ideas of organicism, efficiency, and regional adaptation converged. In this sense, Cox's work contributes to the broader discourse on how Wright's principles were interpreted and localized by mid-century architects. It is within this intellectual and stylistic lineage that the Cox House finds its true architectural significance.

In conclusion, the Charles Cox House is an architecturally significant example of mid-century modern design that demonstrates a sophisticated synthesis of Wrightian ideals and regional adaptation. While it is not an exact replica of Wright's Usonian houses, it embodies the core tenets of that tradition—geometric abstraction, organic integration, and an emphasis on spatial fluidity—while responding to the unique demands of Tucson's desert environment. Its reliance on locally resonant materials, its site-sensitive design, and its engagement with Wright's triangular grid system all contribute to its architectural distinctiveness. Given these considerations, the house merits recognition under Criterion C as an important representation of Wright-influenced modernism in Arizona. Further scholarly examination of Cox's work in relation to Wrightian precedents provide additional depth to the understanding of mid-century architectural evolution in the Southwest and reaffirm the significance of this exemplary Tucson residence.

Designation of the house as a Pima County Landmark is an important step in understanding the protecting our regions architectural heritage.



Charles Cox House, elevations, 1963

Integrity

As defined in the National Register Bulletin, “How to apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation”, integrity is defined as: “the ability of a property to convey its significance. To be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, a property must not only be shown to be significant under the National Register criteria, but it also must have integrity. The evaluation of integrity is sometimes a subjective judgment, but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance.”

The Charles Cox House retains all seven aspects of integrity as defined by the National Register as such, it has sufficient integrity to convey its significance.

Location *is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.* The house is in the same location it was constructed within the Pontotoc Upland Subdivision and retains the natural site desert vegetation.

Design *is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.* The artistic design of the house is unaltered and intact.

Setting *is the physical environment of a historic property.* The setting remains the same as from the period of proposed significance 1963. Although the original lot was subdivided into three lots and a house built to the south and west which have not impacted the viewsheds

Materials *are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.* The burnt adobe and wood siding and window systems are extant.

Charles Cox House, South elevation, living room window.

Workmanship *is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.* The unique workmanship used to build the house is intact.

Feeling *is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.* The house's feeling is retained and continues to emulate the design trends popular during the period of significance.

Association *is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.* The building retains its association with architect Charles Cox as he designed it as his own home.

The house is eligible under Criterion Criterion C: Modern Movement In Tucson as the work of a master and possessing high artistic values.

The building retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance.

Contemporary Photographs

001 South Elevation, looking northeast

002 South Elevation, looking southwest

003 South Elevation, looking north

004 South Elevation, looking northeast

005 South Elevation, looking west

006 South Elevation, entry door, looking east

007 West Elevation, looking east

008 North Elevation, looking southwest

009 North Elevation, looking south

010 North Elevation, looking southwest

011 South and West Elevation with entry patio, looking northeast

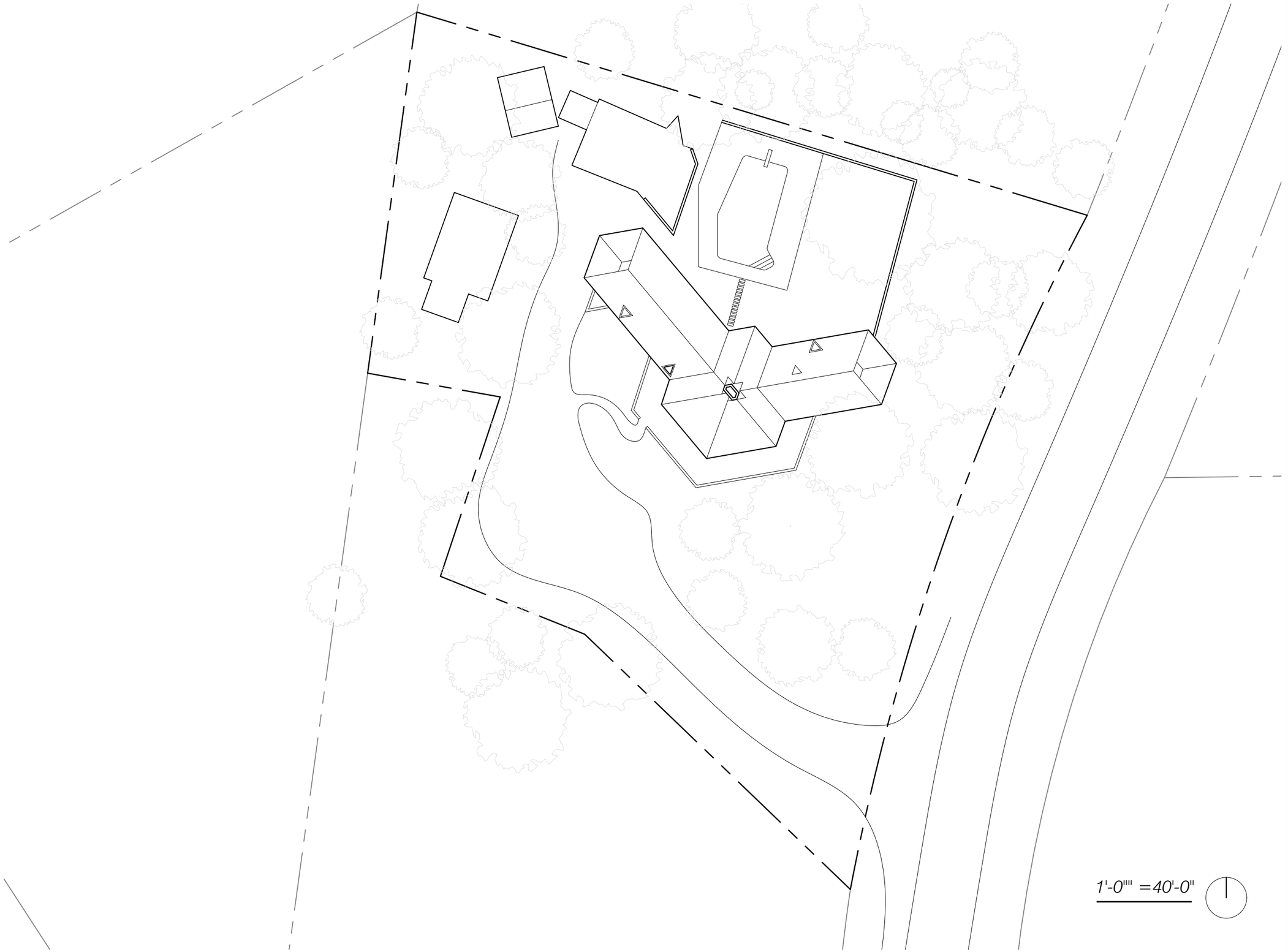
012 Interior, living room looking south

013 South Elevation, kitchen bay window, looking east

014 Pool looking northwest

015 Interior, sitting room

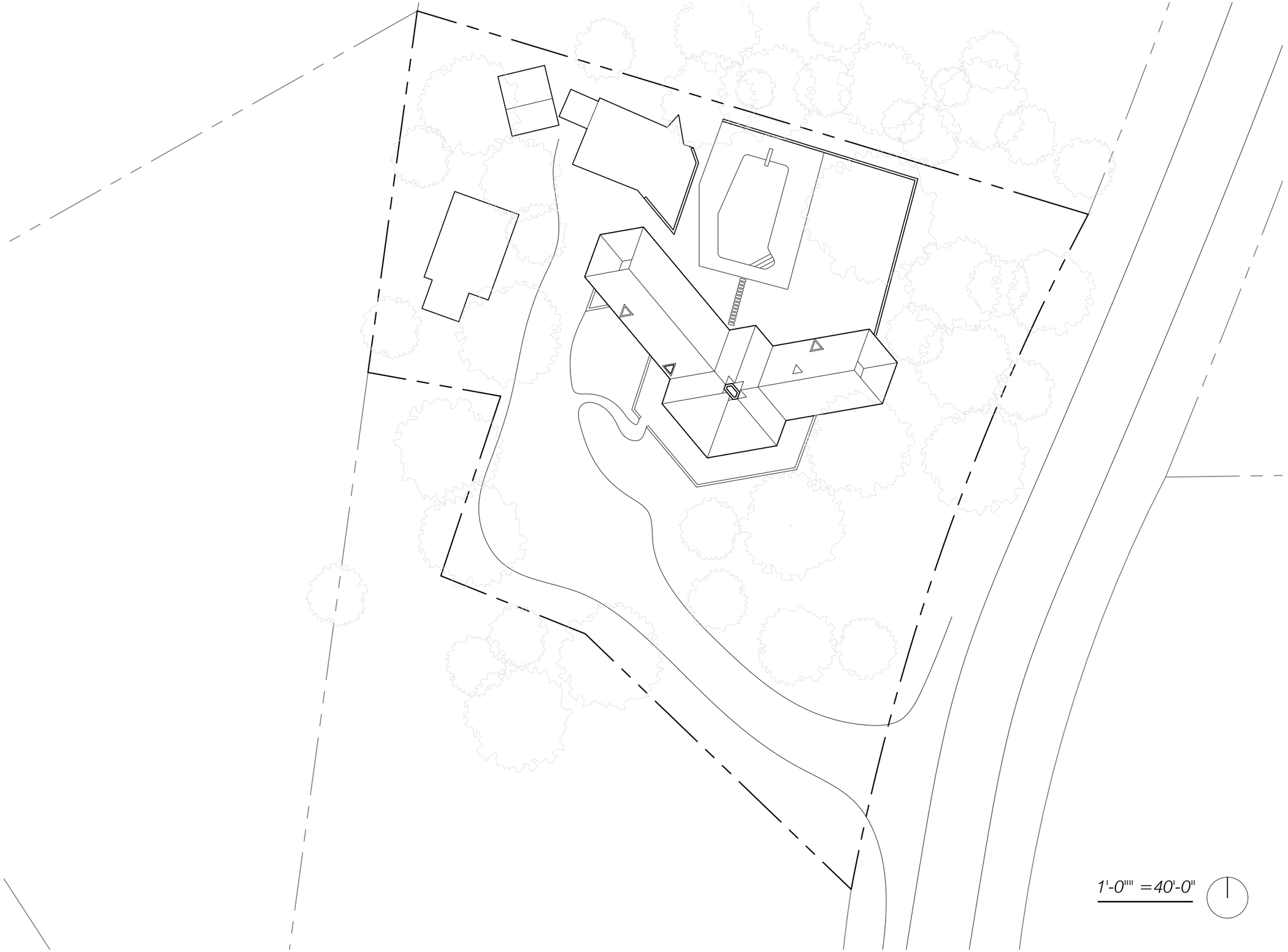
016 Interior, bedroom hallway

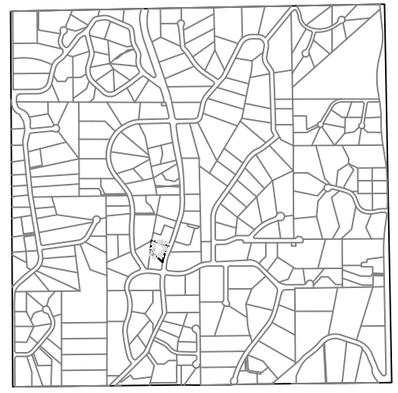


CHARLES COX
HOUSE

4239 N PONTATOC RD
TUCSON, AZ 85718

SITE PLAN





PARCEL ID: 10916027D

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:
PONTATOC UPLANDS PTN
N246.32' E249.23' OF LOT 26

TOWNSHIP 13S
RANGE 14E
SECTION 22

1'-0"" =40'-0"

CHARLES COX
HOUSE

4239 N PONTATOC RD
TUCSON, AZ 85718

SITE PLAN

1'-0"" =40'-0"

CHARLES COX
HOUSE

4239 N PONTATOC RD
TUCSON, AZ 85718

DIMENSION PLAN

017 Interior, bedroom hallway, looking south

018 Interior, fireplace, looking north

Photo 001

Photo 002

Photo 003

Photo 004

Photo 005

Photo 006

Photo 007

Photo 008

Photo 009

Photo 010

Photo 011

Photo 12

Photo 13

Photo 14

Photo 15

Photo 16

Photo 017

Photo 18