

Sugar Creek Ranch

Kirkwood, Missouri

Application for Designation of Local Historic District by the Kirkwood Landmarks Commission

History of Neighborhood

Established in 1954, the neighborhood of Sugar Creek Ranch in Kirkwood, Missouri includes 60 Mid-Century Modern homes designed by Ralph and Mary Jane Fournier, and constructed by developer Burton Duenke. The Fourniers and Duenke heavily influenced the post World War II era housing landscape of the St. Louis area suburbs, and together designed and constructed hundreds of houses in the St. Louis Metropolitan area. The Fourniers' works have been celebrated locally, including being featured in the 2014 exhibition *Suburban Modernism: The Architecture and Interior Design of Ralph and Mary Jane Fournier* (Maryville University), and the 2020 Nine Network Documentary *Mid-Century Modern in St. Louis*. The Sugar Creek Ranch neighborhood is a well-preserved example of the Fournier/Duenke neighborhoods and remains almost entirely intact — to this date the neighborhood has experienced only one tear down.

Stylistically, the houses exemplify several hallmark architectural characteristics of the Fourniers' signature California Modernist style, including:

- Low-slung roof lines that provide vaulted spaces on the interior and hug the topography of the site.
- Large expanses of glass that provide ample natural light and views of the landscape from the interior of the homes.
- Post and beam construction with modular panel infill.
- Open interior floor plans for the living/dining/kitchen areas (public realm of the homes).
- Double-sided fireplaces.
- Natural materials, including California redwood siding, mahogany paneling, and natural stone fireplaces and planters.
- Terraced lots to create privacy between houses.


Additionally, the houses are of historical significance due to the fact that they were constructed of prefabricated, modular panels from the (now shuttered) Kirkwood-based company, Modular Homes. This unique, modular system allowed for flexible configurations, economical construction, and open, free-flowing floor plans that could be repeated on nearly any site (*see page 2*).














Aerial photograph of Sugar Creek Ranch, circa 1956.

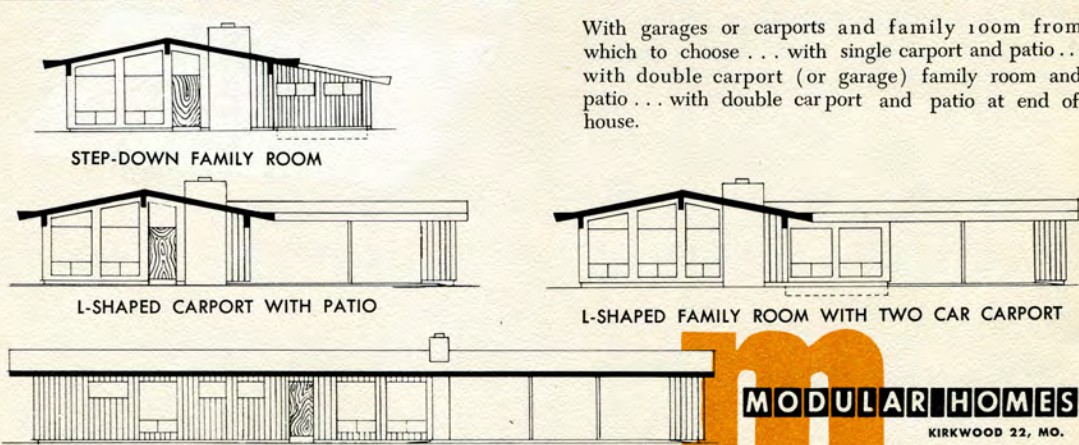
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HOW THE PANEL SYSTEM WORKS . . .



If you have a view to capture, use one of these panels  . . . or you may wish to use panels on either side of a door like this  . . . You may have an extra door off the master bedroom to an enclosed patio like this  or this  or at the end of your home, like this . . .  The clerestory glass in the gable lets you enjoy the sky by day and the moon and stars at night. You have a broad choice of windows like these . . .  . . . or even this  Modular's interchangeable panels help orient your home for sunshine . . .  for breeze . . .  to block out an undesirable view . . .  or for protection against winter's cold. 

FLEXIBILITY TO MEET EVERY SITE AND CUSTOMER NEED



STEP-DOWN FAMILY ROOM

L-SHAPED CARPORT WITH PATIO

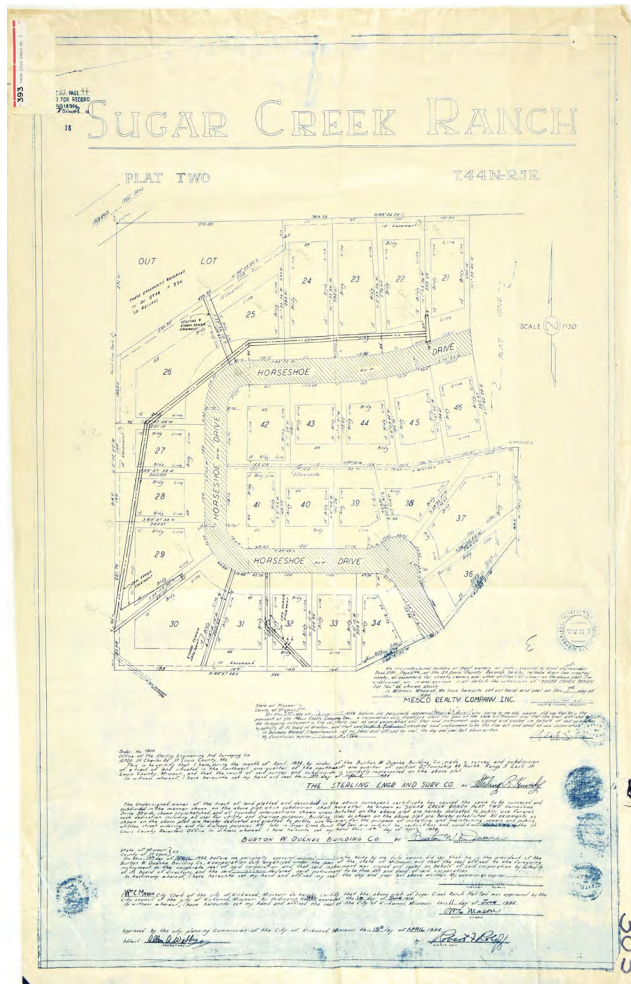
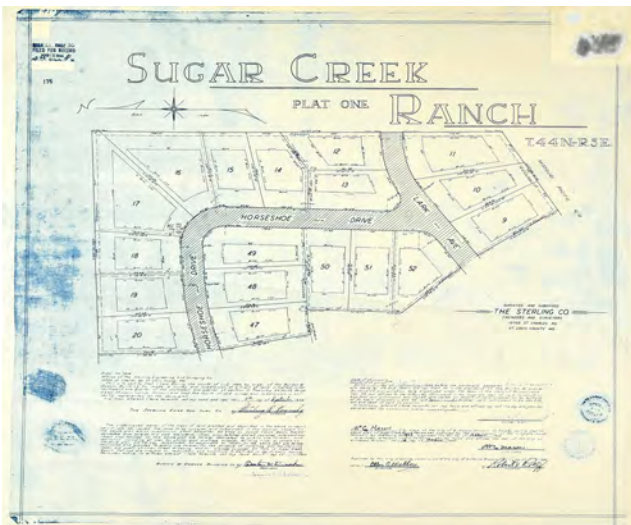
L-SHAPED FAMILY ROOM WITH TWO CAR CARPORT

TWO CAR CARPORT WITH PATIO

With garages or carports and family room from which to choose . . . with single carport and patio . . . with double carport (or garage) family room and patio . . . with double carport and patio at end of house.

MODULAR HOMES
KIRKWOOD 22, MO.

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Sugar Creek Ranch Plat Plans,
Approved by the City of Kirkwood on August 16, 1954

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Design Guidelines

Homeowners are strongly encouraged to preserve the existing homes and modify and expand upon them appropriately. Tearing down and demolishing existing structures is strongly discouraged. Renovations and additions are allowed as long as they comply with the below design guidelines. The intention of these guidelines is to preserve the architectural integrity of the ranch style houses and encourage the preservation of a relatively low-density suburban residential neighborhood of modest houses sited on large lots. These design guidelines are not intended to treat the existing houses of Sugar Creek Ranch as fixed historical monuments or museums that must be preserved in every single detail.

Renovations, additions, accessory structures, and if absolutely necessary, new construction, shall conform to the following design guidelines:

General Proportions:

- One-level houses: Designed for lots that have been terraced as generally flat lots. One-level houses could be slab-on-grade type ranches or single-story homes with basements.
- Two-level houses: Designed for lots with significant topographic change. The houses have grade access at both levels (walk-out basements). Two-level houses with appearance of two levels from the street will generally be discouraged. Rear additions with discrete, two-level configurations or lofted spaces will be allowed as long as the architecture and roof lines are in accordance with the design guidelines presented here.
- Siting of new construction should be similar to that of neighboring structures with respect to building orientation. Similar to the manner in which the original neighborhood houses were oriented, houses should be sited so large openings of one house do not look onto the large openings of their neighbors. The configuration of attached garages are encouraged to act as buffers in this respect.
- References to the immediately adjacent homes should apply to the setbacks, size, height, and massing of new homes and additions.

Spatial Designation & Floor Plan:

- Asymmetrical "L-shaped", "Z-shaped", and rectangular floor plans that are generally consistent with the California ranch prototype of the neighborhood (*see pages 8 & 9*).
- Simple, open floor plans at the public areas of the house (kitchen, living, dining, etc.) that maximize views to the (often) rear yard.
- Exposed structural members, and large areas of glazing are encouraged to be used in "public areas" (*see page 10*).
- Vaulted ceilings are encouraged at all primary rooms of the house including the public areas, bedrooms, and bathrooms when appropriate.
- The interiors are encouraged to be "open floor plans", designed purposefully in connection with the adjoining exterior spaces.
- Public areas designed with a fireplace and hearth as a focal point.

Architectural Detailing:

- New construction should have details consistent with adjacent historic houses. Construction details should be based on overall neighborhood precedents rather than trying to make two adjacent houses look similar to one another. Variety within general overall parameters is encouraged (*see original sketches on page 7 for examples of consistent, but varied materials from house to house*).
- Detailing should be simple with an absence of traditional ornament.
- Main entry should be modest, low-key, and informal. Entry should be located close to an inside corner where two volumes intersect or there is a setback in the wall to welcome visitors. Main entry should be protected from the elements by the primary roof overhang (*see page 8*). The roof will provide a protected, shaded walk or porch. Columns may be used to support a larger roof overhang and to draw visual contrast to the overall horizontal form of the house (*see pages 8 & 9*).

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Design Guidelines, *continued*

- Utility equipment should be hidden or architecturally integrated.
- Durable construction materials for a long life-cycle are preferred.

Discouraged:

- Entries articulated through changing scales or projections with overly ornate doors.
- Traditional ornament such as Ogee trims.

Doors & Windows:

- Large expanses of glass (single panel windows) are encouraged to be used in the “public” areas of the house (*see page 10*).
- Operable casement, slider, or awning windows preferred. It is encouraged that each major room include two operable windows or doors. Mullied groupings of fixed and operable windows are encouraged.
- Consistent window and door type, style, material, and color on all facades. Main entry door and adjacent glazing should be designed to be consistent with the other windows and doors. Rectangular, simple profiles should be used. The top of window heads may extend upward where vaulted ceiling are used. Arched-top and other decorative window shapes are discouraged.
- Window mullions and divided lites are discouraged. Double-hung windows are discouraged. Decorative shutters are discouraged. Fixed metal or fabric awnings are discouraged.
- Storm windows, doors, screens, etc., should have framing that corresponds to the window/door/fascia color. Profiles and shapes should complement the openings. Ideally, screens should be designed to be “invisible” with regard to the overall elevation composition when viewed from a distance.
- Doors should be simple slabs of a single color. Full-lite exterior doors are allowed. A flush smooth finish is preferred. Exterior doors may have a unique accent color or natural finish if wood.

Discouraged:

- Use of mullions or divided panes.
- Double-hung windows.
- Inoperable or decorative shutters.
- Paneled doors.
- Arched, circular, or eyebrow windows.

Exterior Materials:

- Wood siding is encouraged with brick or limestone masonry bands.
- Siding: Vertical board and batten, horizontal lap, or tongue and groove. Wood with a natural finish is encouraged. Painted, smooth-finish cementitious or polyash boards are acceptable as long as the exposure and detailing are consistent with historic precedent. Unfinished wood or rustic cedar shingles should not be used.
- Windows and Doors: Wood or aluminum clad construction preferred.

Discouraged:

- Use of a single material on the front elevation with the single use of a different material on the remaining elevations. (i.e., brick front elevation with siding on remaining elevations).
- Vinyl siding or use of thin veneer brick or stone.
- Single pieces of stone masonry mixed with brick masonry, and/or elaborate brick patterns.
- Traditional porch column surrounds or masonry column bases.
- Lap and tongue & groove siding with greater than 6” exposure is discouraged.

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Design Guidelines, *continued*

Roof:

- Low-slope roof lines and/or flat roofs shall be used. Roof sloped 3:12 and below are strongly encouraged. Sloped roofs shall provide for interior vaulted spaces in the public areas” of the house (i.e., living room, family room, dining room, kitchens, communal spaces, entry hall). Other spaces may feature vaulted ceilings where appropriate.
- Large overhanging eaves preferred.
- Soffits shall run parallel with the roof slope. Flat soffits that return to the exterior face of the wall are discouraged.
- Simply detailed fascia boards consistent with the neighborhood.

Discouraged:

- Closed soffits that return perpendicular to the exterior wall.
- Roofs that feature dormers or other decorative projections.

Color:

- Natural material colors.
- Natural or neutral paint/stain colors.
- Accent colors at doors and trim are allowed.

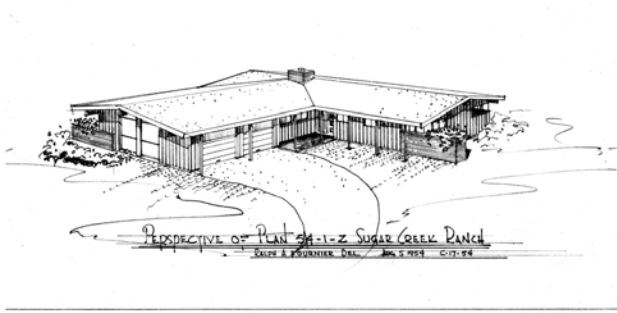
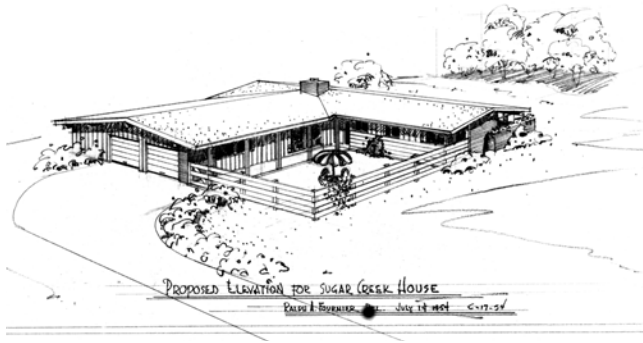


*House at 1415 Lark Avenue
photo credit Matt Marcinkowski*

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Architect Ralph Fournier's perspective drawings showing various configurations of cladding, column treatment, garage orientation and window placement. Detailing is consistent but allows for material and planning variation.

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Examples of 'rectangular' floor plan houses at SCR. All plans feature low sloped roofs and extended overhangs, but have different garage configurations, different column treatment, and different masonry accents.

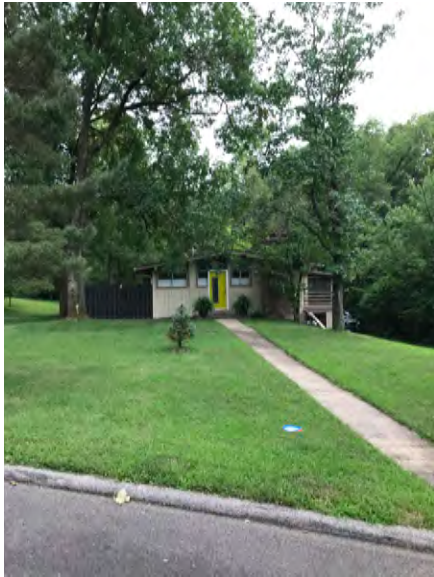


Examples of 'L-shaped' floor plan houses at SCR. This model especially features protected entries at the inside corners of the houses.

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Examples of 'Z-shaped' floor plan houses at SCR. Similar to 'L-shaped' plans but with an extended garage mass. These types also have protected openings at the inside corners of the houses.



Example a walk-out floor plan house at SCR. These plans retain the single-story massing and appearance of the slab-on-grade ranch houses but use the sloped topography to incorporate walk-out basements.

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Public spaces in the houses have large expanses of glass that often follow the pitch of the low-sloped roofs. Also note the expressed beams on the exterior.



Most lots were terraced to accommodate one story ranches. This also helps promote privacy between neighboring houses.