

Site and Lot Design

In 1949, Sternberg's site and construction plans were submitted to the Revere Quality House Program. Upon their acceptance into the program, William C. Atkin, a San Antonio based technical advisor to the Southwest Research Institute, visited Denver to lay the groundwork for the construction and display of nine initial homes.

On October 13, 1949, after a battle with the Englewood fire department over the radical street design, the full subdivision plan was approved and filed with Arapahoe County and the Englewood Planning and Zoning Commission. In November of 1949, Hawkins borrowed \$85,000 from Central Bank to finance the initial construction phase, mortgaging nine of the lots.

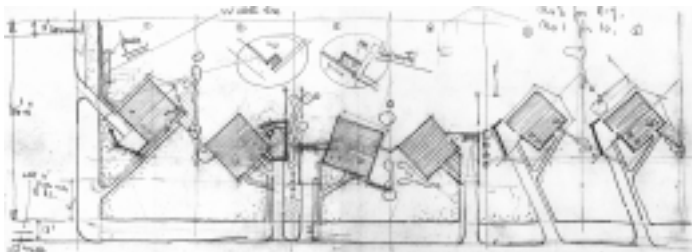
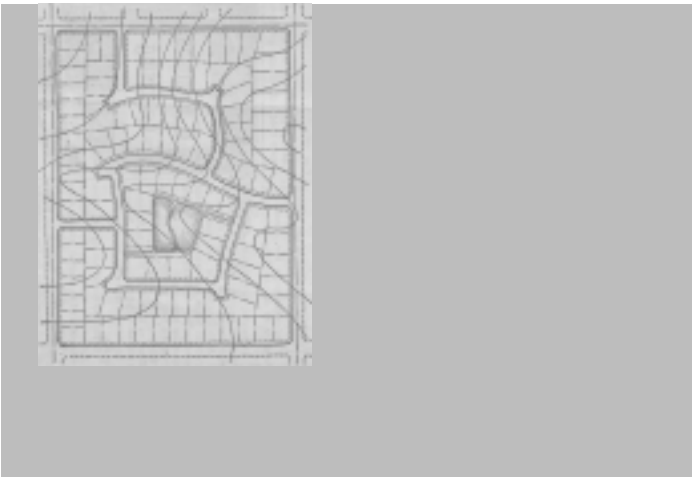
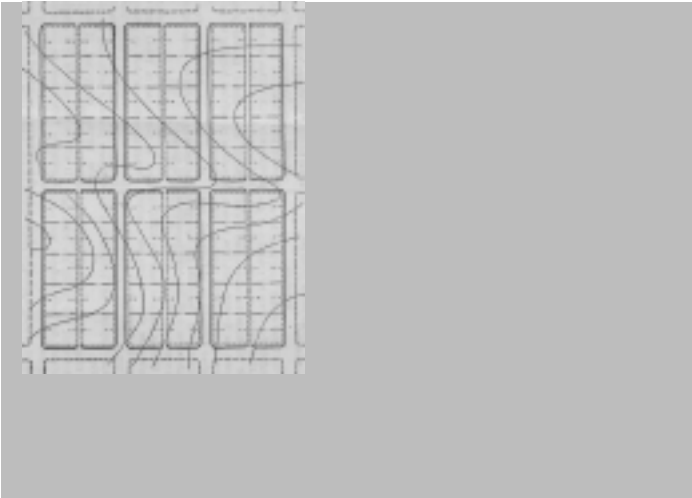
Sternberg's site planning was founded on his training with the firm of Sir Patrick Abercrombie, a key architect of London's 1944 Green Belt plan.

It was unconventional, standing in stark contrast to the surrounding neighborhoods. Instead of regrading and leveling the lots, common residential development practice, the natural grade was retained. Some houses were sited on flat lots atop high points or low expanses below. Some stepped up or down to the front, rear or side of their sites. Houses were oriented on their lots for privacy, and to take best advantage of south and west exposures for solar heating and mountain views.

Within Arapahoe Acres, Sternberg partially abandoned the surrounding street grid. This reduced traffic speed and discouraged through traffic, resulting in a safer, quieter neighborhood. Unlike the neighborhoods to the north, south and west, there were no alleys within Arapahoe Acres. Garages and carports faced the street. Deliveries and garbage pickup took place on the street, increasing backyard privacy and security.

Sternberg's original concept included a private neighborhood park to be situated between Cornell Place (originally named Arapahoe Place) and Cornell Circle, but it was eliminated in the interests of economy by Hawkins.

Most residential developments narrowly defined lot size, floor space and home price. As a result, most were composed of a very homogeneous socio-economic group. For Arapahoe Acres, a more diverse community was envisioned for families of varying size and financial resources. Homes were grouped in price ranges from \$10,000 to over \$20,000. Lot sizes varied from 66 x 100 feet up to 80 x 150 feet.



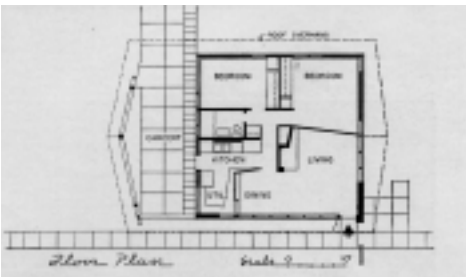
House Design

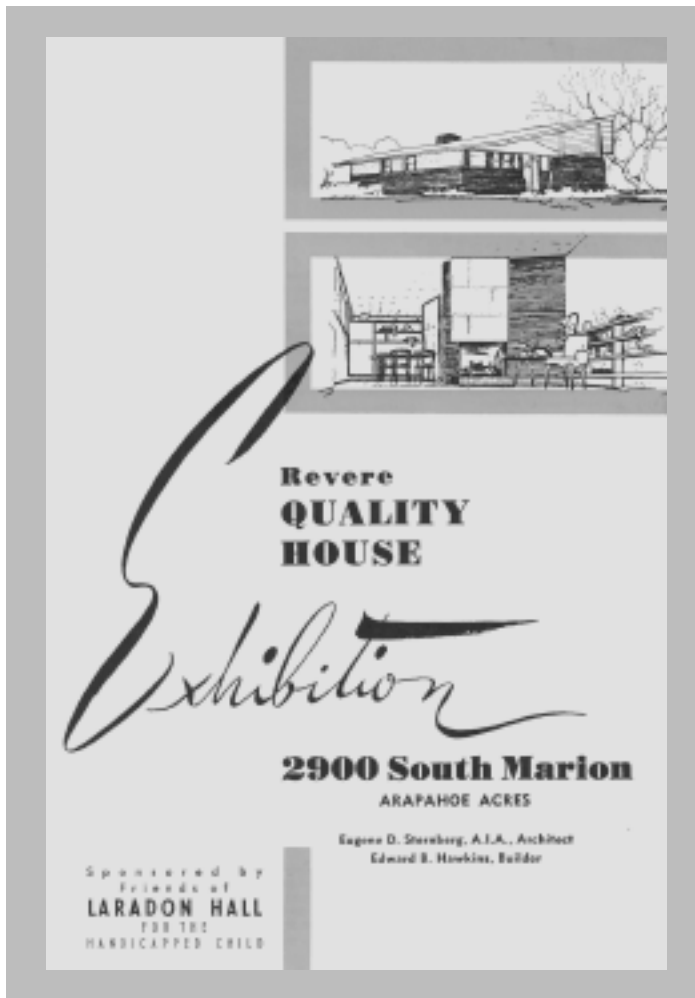
The initial nine homes designed by Sternberg were a single basic plan varied by individual location on the lot and by the position and character of the carport and main entrance. Each home had a paved terrace to the rear. The primary exterior materials were red or yellow brick, plywood panels and glass.

The homes were designed on a four-foot module with flowing living and work areas set off from the bedrooms for privacy. Sliding interior wall panels were based on the Japanese Shoji screen. A variety of options were offered on the roof types, the fireplaces, and the color and finish of exterior and interior walls. Interior walls were often paneled in natural hardwood plywood. State-of-the-art kitchens offered new appliances and efficient workspaces. Floors were asphalt tile. Due to the sponsorship of Revere Copper and Brass, the model home featured copper in the mechanical construction and interior finishes.

The homes were characterized by many construction innovations which Sternberg had brought with him from his work in London. They included insulated cavity brick walls and the area's first warm-air heating system combining radiant floor heat with forced air heat distributed under concrete slabs to floor registers along walls. Acoustical ceilings provided noise control.

Stylistically, Sternberg's work was related to the International Style as seen in the work of Marcel Breuer. Breuer was a first generation student who later taught at the Bauhaus in Germany, the pioneering school of modern design. He emigrated to the United States in 1937 where he taught and practiced architecture with Walter Gropius, the Bauhaus founder who had been appointed Director of the Architecture Department at Harvard.





Initial Showhome Grand Opening

By the time the Denver press announced the opening of the model home on Sunday, March 12, 1950, the first group of nine homes had already been sold. Despite an untimely snow storm, over 4,000 attended the opening at 2900 South Marion Street, drawn by headlines promising a modern model home with comforts normally reserved for more expensive houses. Model home admissions were donated to Laradon Hall, a Denver school for the education of disabled children.

Visitors were asked to contribute to “scientific housing research” by filling out a four page survey on house design, siting, options and pricing.

Model home furnishings by Herman Miller, Knoll Associates and Artek were selected by Sternberg and lent by the Cabaniss Furniture Store to promote the acceptance of modern furniture in moderately-priced homes. Cabaniss was the first furniture store in Denver to sell modern furniture.

Through the Revere Quality Home Program’s massive publicity campaign, Arapahoe Acres appeared nationally in the architectural and construction press. In 1950, *Life* magazine featured Arapahoe Acres in “Best Houses under \$15,000; Eight fine, mass-produced examples show buyers what they can get in low-priced homes.”

A commendation from the Southwest Research Institute’s division of housing and construction technology was noted in *Architectural Record*, and Arapahoe Acres was singled out for “quality and character.” In a 1950 *Progressive Architecture* article that questioned architects nationally about their designs for speculative builder homes, Arapahoe Acres was a featured project. The neighborhood was also mentioned as a noteworthy development in a 1951 *Progressive Architecture* “Case Study,” and featured in the book *Quality Budget Houses* by Katherine Ford and Thomas Creighton.

The July 1951 *Practical Builder* ran the feature article “A Sell-Out in Contemporary Architecture” and Revere Copper and Brass ran full page ads featuring Arapahoe Acres in national trade publications. *Better Homes and Gardens* offered a complete set of Arapahoe Acres house plans for \$25.00, for which Sternberg received a commission.

Will find photo of empty lot, too...

Construction of Arapahoe Acres

Construction in Arapahoe Acres was begun in 1949 and completed in 1957. In 1950, nineteen homes were completed, primarily along Marion and at the west end of Lafayette. The next year building slowed, with only eleven homes completed in the lower west end of Lafayette and a few on adjacent lots along Bates.

Construction increased in 1952 with seventeen new homes along the north side of Cornell Avenue and the west side of Cornell Circle.

A majority of development occurred between 1953 and 1955. Sixty-four homes, over half the houses in the neighborhood, were built. Development first focused on Cornell Circle and Place, then moved to Dartmouth for the addition of five homes. The end of 1955 found the Cornell area basically complete as well as nine homes along Franklin. Infill of single lots and the completion of three homes along Franklin brought the development near completion in 1956. In 1957, Hawkins and Mannon completed their three final homes together in Arapahoe Acres.

