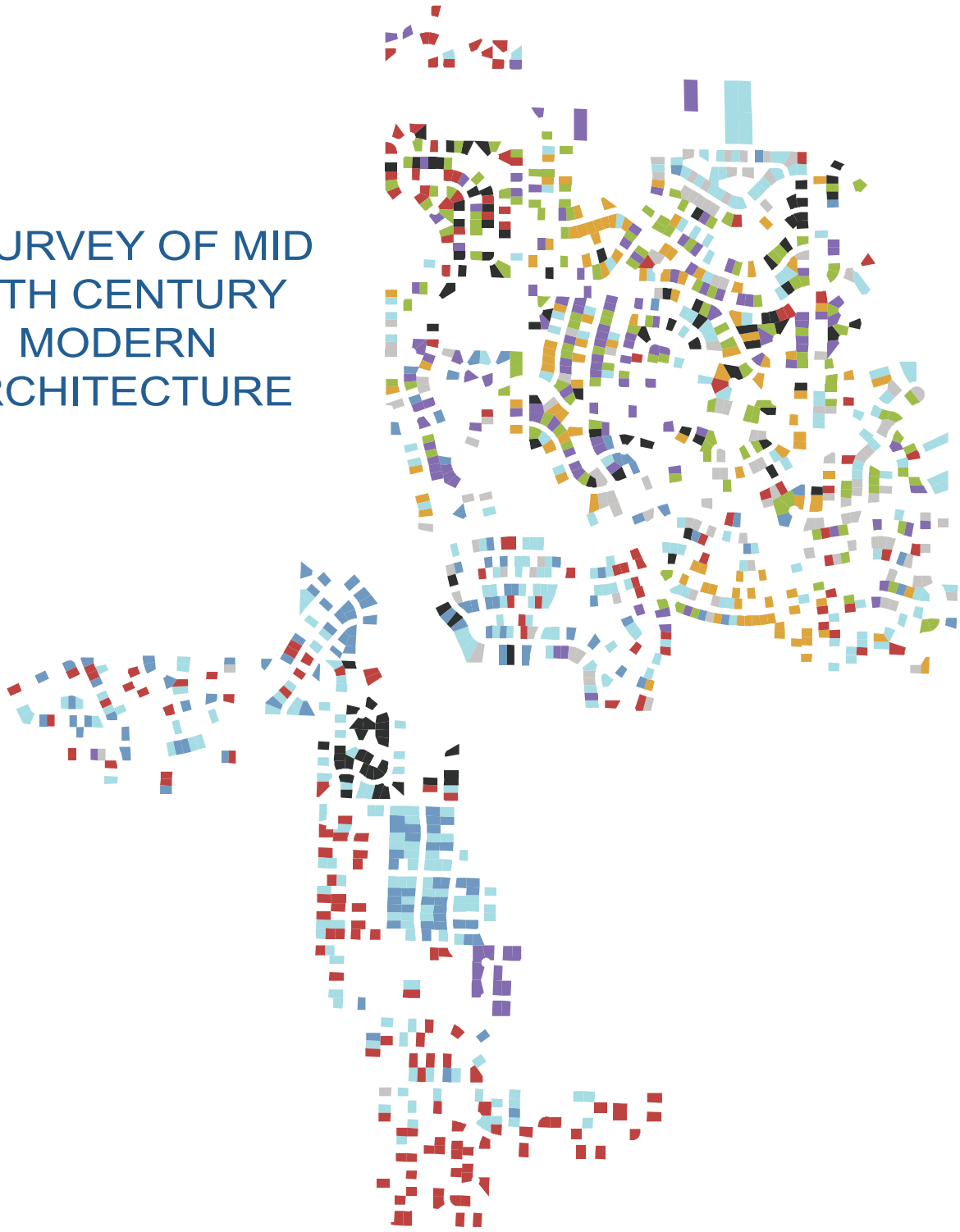
NOT JUST OLD, BUT SIGNIFICANT

LAKE HILLS, BELLEVUE, WA

A SURVEY OF MID 20TH CENTURY MODERN ARCHITECTURE



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

We are a diverse group of four undergraduate students at the University of Washington, Department of Urban Design and Planning, majoring in Community, Environment, and Planning. Our academic interests include planning, design, and historic preservation. We are all coming from different backgrounds: Dan grew up in Western Washington, Elena - in Russia, Tori - in China, and Bogdan has roots in Ukraine. While we each bring a distinct perspective to this project, together we worked to achieve a common goal of bettering the livelihood of the Lake Hills community by surveying and promoting appreciation of architecture in the place they call home.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

University of Washington Faculty

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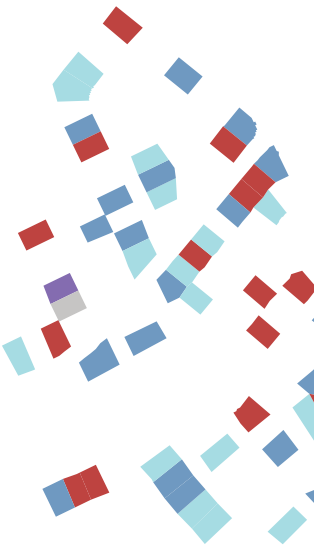


INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the findings of the Lake Hills development mid 20th century modern architecture survey undertaken by a team of the UW students in the Fall Quarter of 2013. Michael Houser, State Architectural Historian, Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) provided the project request and guidelines. The report describes the historical context of the Lake Hills urban development, provides a detailed visual communication of the current architectural composition of the neighborhood, and suggests recommendations to DAHP regarding the eligibility of the neighborhood to the National Register of Historic Places as one of the largest planned communities in the Pacific Northwest and the state's first historic district comprised of mid 20th century architecture.

The work represented in this document is preliminary and proposed to provide a framework for moving forward with further research into the designation of the area. Given the limited window of time to conduct this survey, it is necessary for this work to be continued in order to provide any final conclusive recommendations. This report illustrates the current conditions of the neighborhood and provides an initial understanding of the architectural situation for moving forward. The architectural character of Lake Hills is an asset that has the potential for fostering a sense of community among its residents and deserves further attention from preservationists and planners.

PROCESS SUMMARY

Our process for data collection was basic in nature; distinguish possible architecture representatives and identify them in the neighborhood. In addition to recognition, we attempted to ascertain if any individual homes would constitute architectural integrity with their original design, workmanship, materials, and the feeling the property expresses. All information gathered throughout the process was entered into a GIS database created be the team. The database was then used to create maps, numbers, and guidance for developing our recommendation for moving forward.

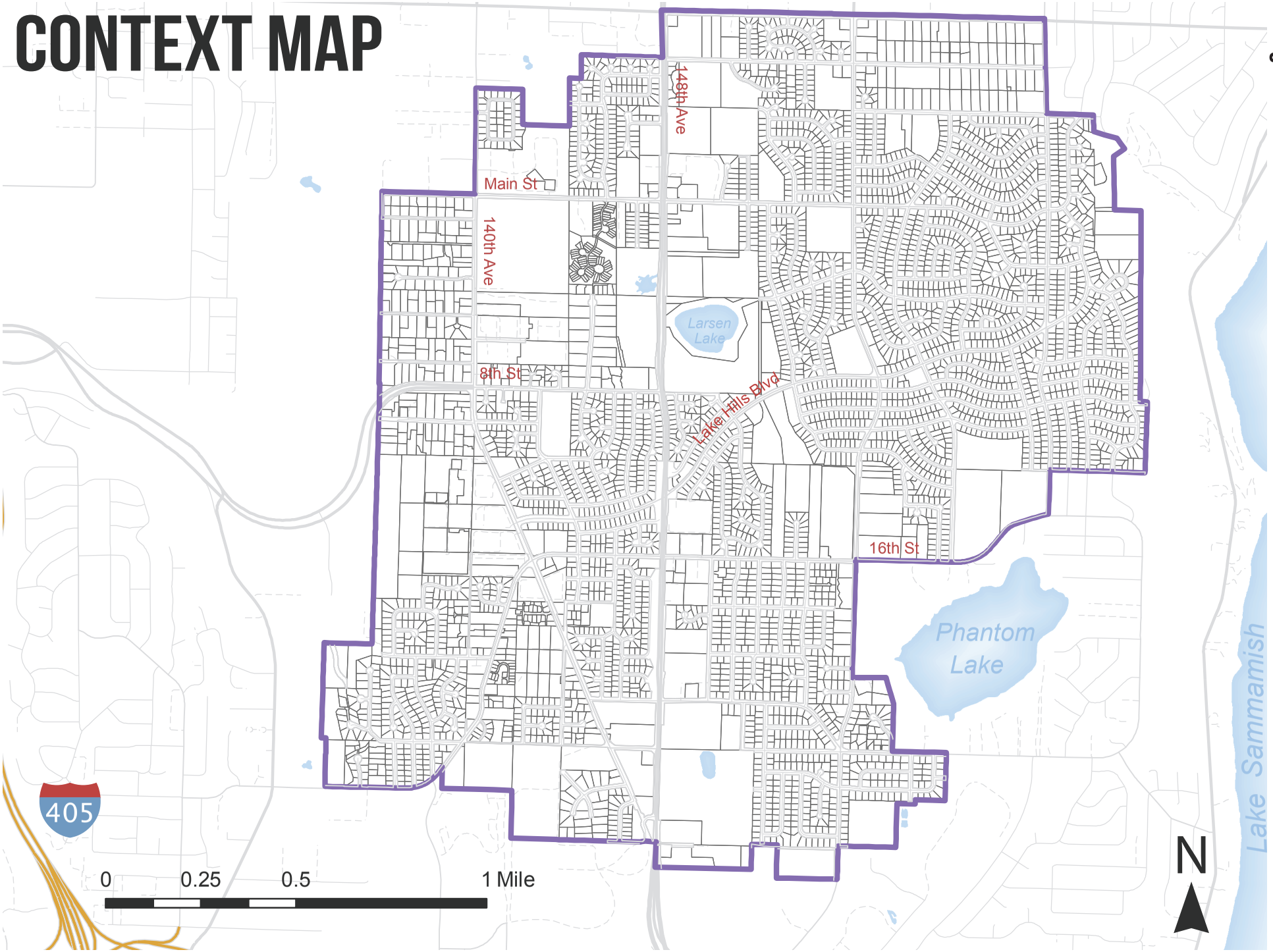
The general tasks were:

- Determine client requirements and organize the workload in order to most efficiently utilize the limited timeframe
- Identify stakeholders throughout the community/city in order to maximize our available resources
- Research the neighborhood historically and architecturally
- Conduct Field Work
- Process and analyze findings
- Final Report and Recommendation

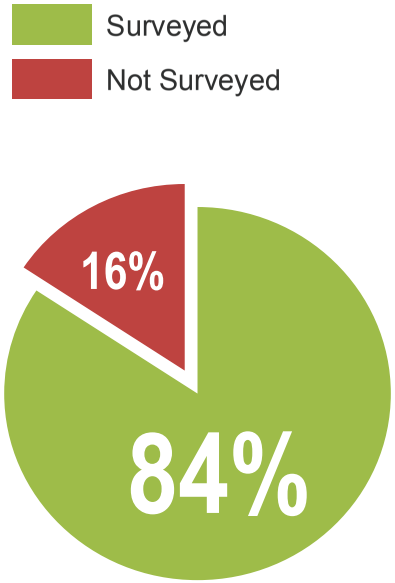
LOCATION MAP

LAKE HILLS, BELLEVUE, WA

CONTEXT MAP


148th Ave
Main St
140th Ave
Larsen Lake
8th St
Lake Hills Blvd
16th St
Phantom Lake
Lake Sammamish
405
0
0.25
0.5
1 Mile
N

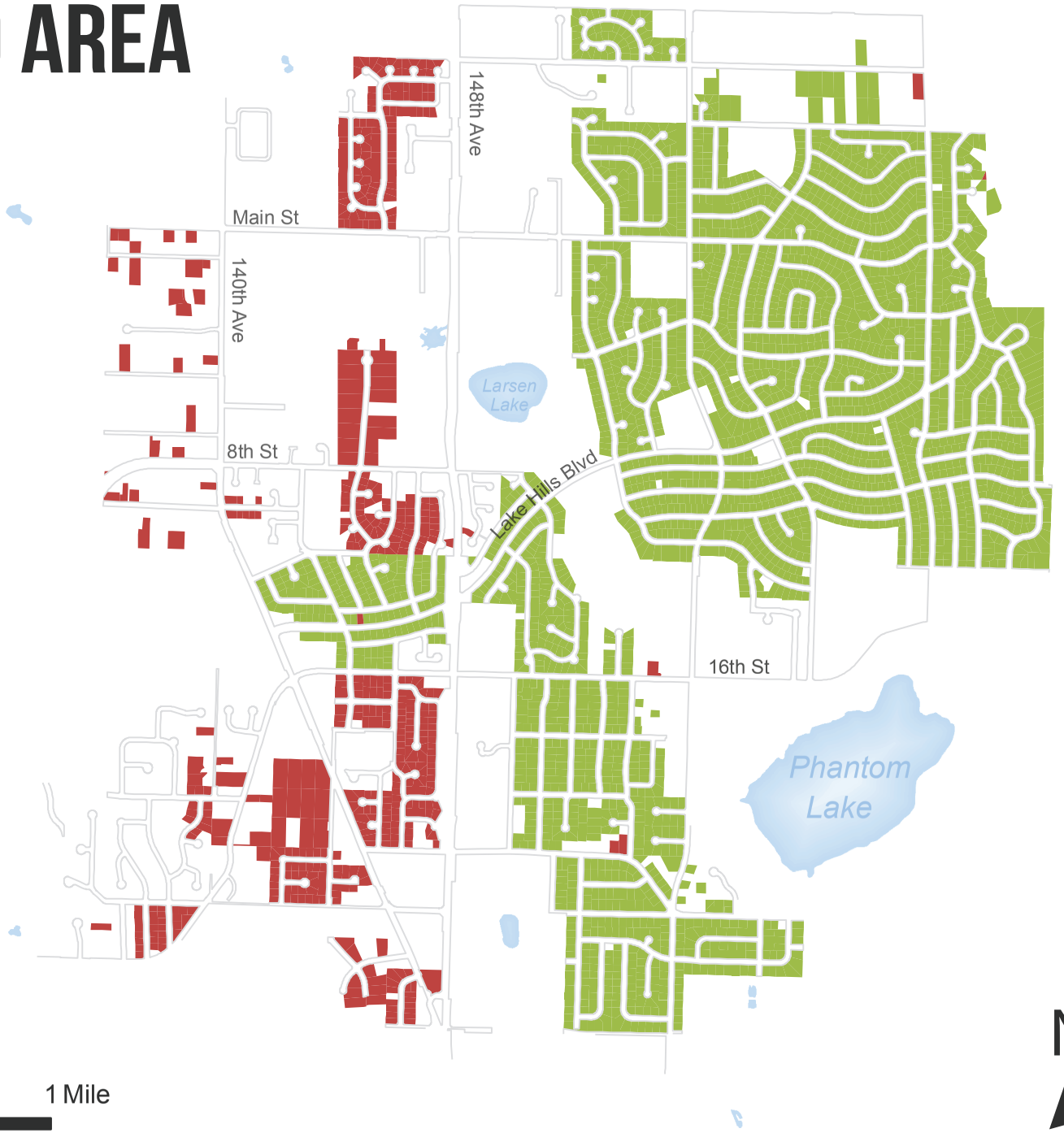
RESEARCHED AREA



Surveyed
Not Surveyed

RESEARCHED AREA

Total	3297
Surveyed	2780
Not Surveyed	517



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HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

- Pre 1900s: Yakima Indians had a winter encampment near Larsen Lake, originally developed parts of the district
- Early 1900s: Japanese immigrants farmed the land between Larson and Phantom lakes
- Post-WWII period: The beginning of a rapid urban development, at a time when suburbanization phenomenon struck America
- 1944: The Servicemen's Readjustment Act (G.I. Bill) was issued to prove a resource of benefits for WWII veterans. Benefits included guaranteed low-interest mortgage loans which allowed for home purchases for millions of middle class citizens.
- 1954: A real-estate salesman R.H. Conner purchased 1200 acres of farmland east of Bellevue's boundaries with the purpose of creating an instant planned community based on the model of Levittown in New York
- 1955, August – The first model homes were showcased
- 1955, August 21 – Govenor Langlie formally opens development
- 1955, September 27 – King County Planning Commission approved the preliminary master plan of the Lake Hills Community
- 1955 – 1965: The initial development was built, producing a high concentration of mid-century modern architecture
- 1956, April 10 – Lake Hills Community Club was established; weekly meetings began in the Bell & Valdez suburban Sales Office
- 1969: The city of Bellevue annexed Lake Hills. The East Bellevue Community Council establishment was empowered by state law with approval/disapproval authority over certain land-use actions in Lake Hills

URBAN DEVELOPMENT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

An early history of Lake Hills indicates a Native American and Japanese Immigrants presence in the area. Yakima Indians, who had a winter encampment near Larsen Lake, had originally developed parts of the district. In the early 1900s Japanese farmers cultivated the land between Larson and Phantom lakes (bellevuewa.gov).

A more recent chapter in history for Lake Hills started with the urban development of the post-WWII era, when the suburbanization phenomenon struck America. More than a quarter of the American people were left behind city apartments and row houses to buy new homes of their own thanks to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 known as G.I. Bill (Bowell).

In1954 real-estate investor R.H. Conner, in conjunction with the builders George Bell and Ted Valdez, acquired land, which sprawled over 1200 acres of wetlands, fertile slopes and timbered hills for a planned community. They bought the land from Modern Homebuilders and got rezoning approval for city lots centering on winding Lake Hills Boulevard. Envisioning a livable future neighborhood, the men prepared to create an instant community with streets, infrastructure, shopping and public areas, and 4000 homes (Hinshaw).

In 1955, Lake Hills was proposed as the largest planned community in the Pacific Northwest. As Seattle Times described it, a “self-contained city in a country atmosphere” (Boswell), integrating education, recreation, shopping, and worship with a carefully designed community of single-family homes. Homes in Lake Hills were about 1000 square feet and faced one another across streets with no curbs, lights, or sidewalks. The development project was inexpensively built on inexpensive land, and met an acute postwar need for middle income housing.

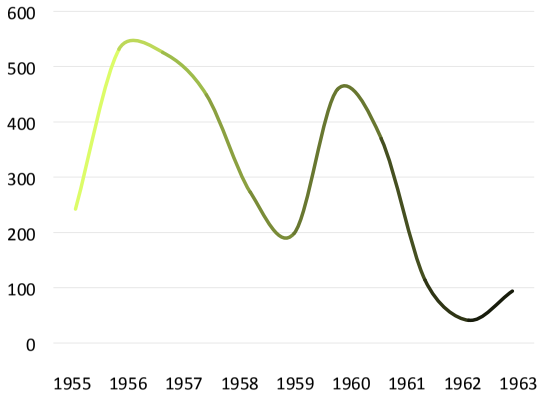
After years of near independence, in 1969 the people of Lake Hills determined that their interests would be best served by joining Bellevue and voted for annexation. Today, the East Bellevue Community Council (EBCC), an elected five-member body, has the legal authority to veto land use and zoning decisions by the Bellevue City Council. Having its voice represented by the EBCC, Lake Hills is essentially a town within a town (Hinshaw).

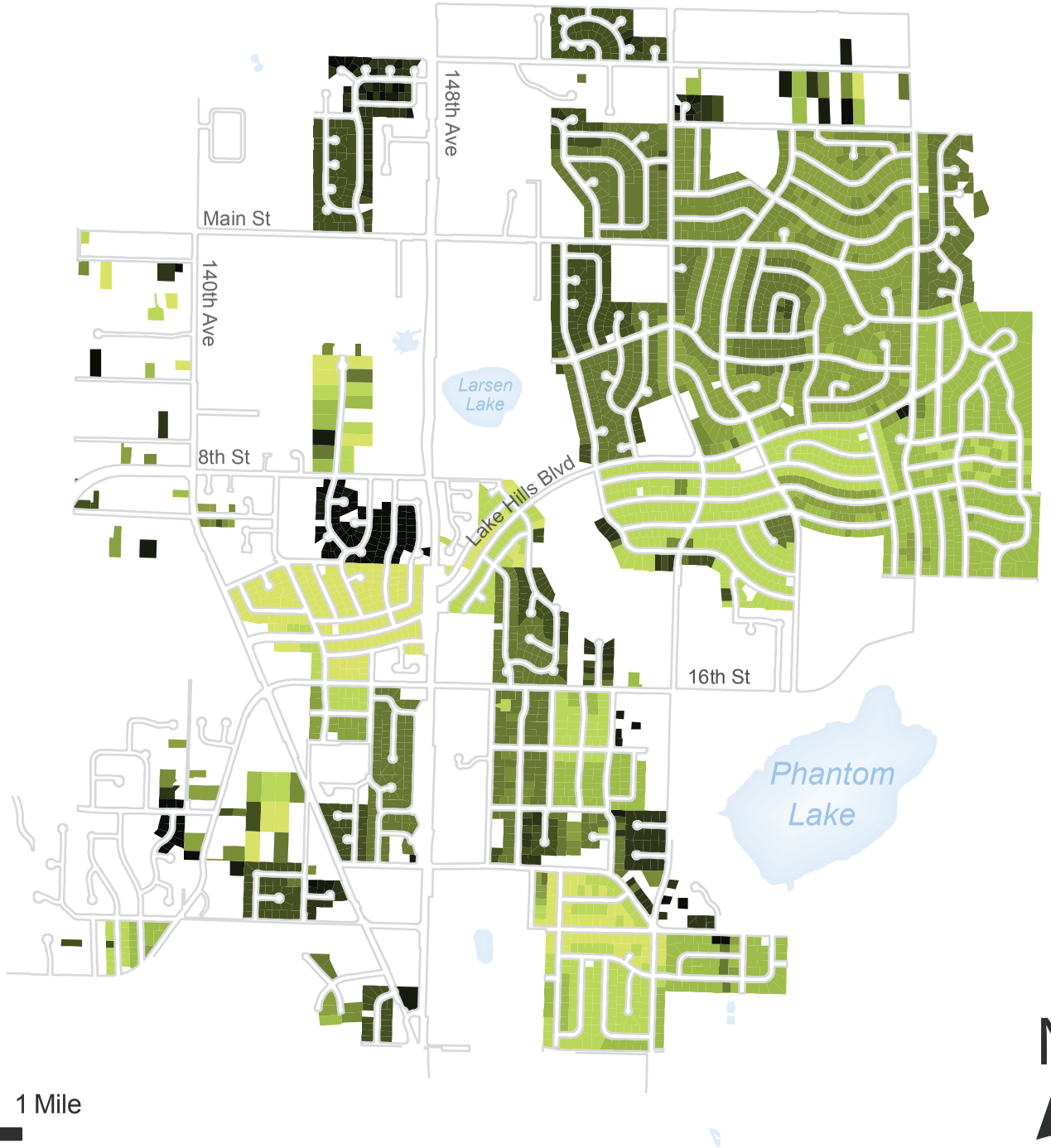
Over the years the neighborhood has experienced population growth and infrastructure development. Today, the Lake Hills community is known as one of the most diverse in the Pacific Northwest and has upwards of 20,000 residents; mostly representing the middle-income class. The area contains much of Bellevue’s relatively affordable single-family housing. The richness of the neighborhood lies in its social infrastructure, extensive system of open space and recreation facilities, and natural topography (bellevuewa.gov).

YEAR BUILT

- 1955
- 1956
- 1957
- 1958
- 1959
- 1960
- 1961
- 1962
- 1963
- 1964
- 1965

YEAR TOTALS





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ARCHITECTS, BUILDERS, & DEVELOPERS

The Lake Hills community was envisioned, designed, and constructed by the following major contributors:

R.H. Conner- Lake Hills land developer, real-estate investor, and a Seattle manufacturer of women's clothing. He purchased 1200 acres of Lake Hills land from Modern Builders and created the planned residential neighborhood in cooperation with George Bell and Ted Valdez.

George Bell- Born March 26, 1917, in Boise, Idaho, graduating in 1935 from West Seattle High School. During World War II, he was a civilian contractor for the Navy in Honolulu, repairing aircraft. Mr. Bell's legacy is the development of ramblers and split-level homes on the Eastside where thousands of young couples have raised their families over the past half-century. Over three decades, beginning in the late 1940s, Mr. Bell, first individually and then with partners, built 15,000 mostly single-family houses on the Eastside and some in South King County. Along with Ted Valdez, he was a founder of Bell and Valdez building company (incorporated 1948). By the mid-1960s, Mr. Bell saw a change in housing trends, so he and his partners concentrated on developments around golf courses, including Fairwood, Tam O'Shanter, Brae Burn and Twin Lakes.

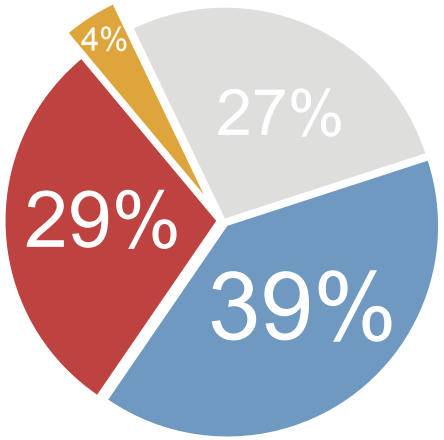
John Andersen- An architect and structural engineer for Bell & Valdez. He was a Northwest pioneer of pre-fabricated subassemblies for flooring and framing. He maximized the economy of multiple productions by engineering his design so that much of the on-site work was assembly of framing elements rather than construction from scratch. Andersen placed a great deal of emphasis on planning so that a limited number of models gave the greatest effect of variety. The architect was proud of the heavy California influence in his designs, mentioning that he frequently visited there to see other trends.

Kinney Leonard- Builder and founder of Leonard Homes, Inc and also built numerous homes in the Lake Hills development. He was a second-generation builder who had planned many PNW construction projects and custom-built many leading Seattle residencies in exclusive Gregory Heights, Normandy Park and Seahurst.

Harstad and Associates - Designed a complete storm and sanitary sewage system in Lake Hills with a private treatment plant.

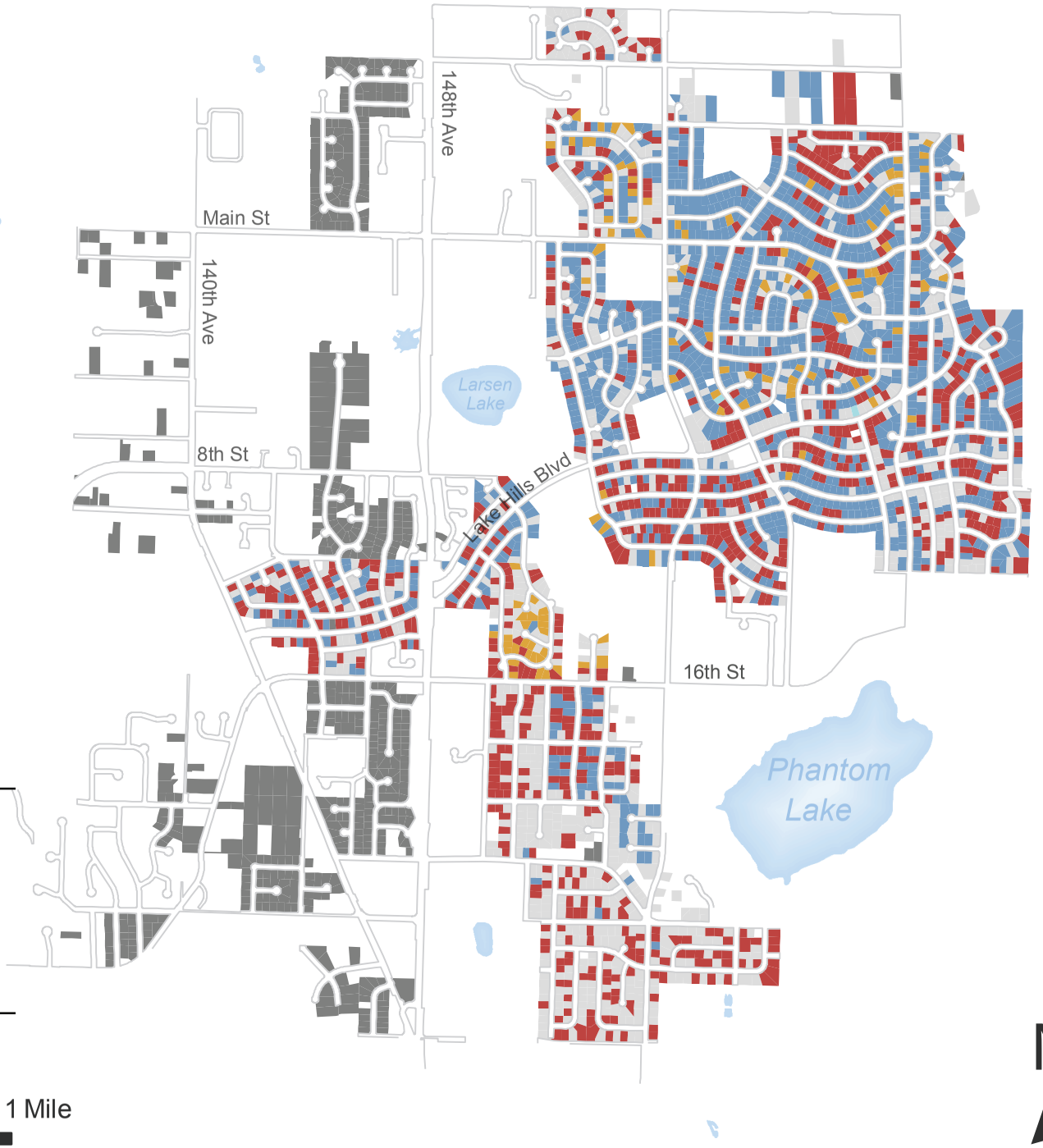
BUILDERS

- Bell & Valdez
- Howard Schroeder
- Leonard
- Morrison & Associates
- Needs Further Research
- Not Surveyed



IDENTIFIED BUILDERS

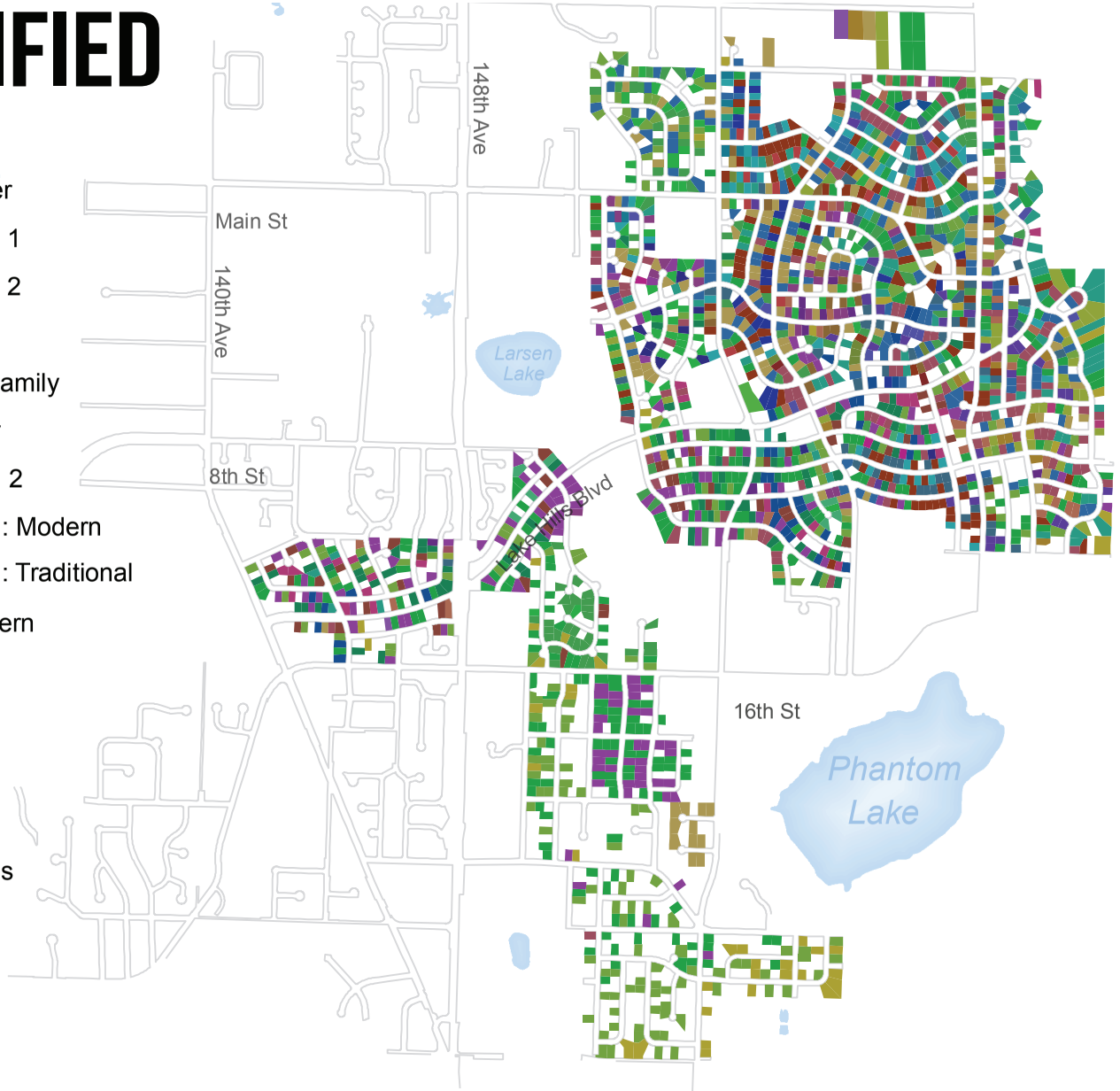
Total by Bell & Valdez:	1099
Total by Leonard:	816
Total by Morrison & Associates:	110
Howard Schroeder	2
Needs Further Research	753
TOTAL	2780



0 0.25 0.5 1 Mile

MODELS IDENTIFIED

- Alpine
- Apartments
- Bellaire
- Cape Cod
- Capri
- Catalina
- Cedar-Vue
- Chalet
- Citation
- Colonial
- Continental
- Country Squire
- Evergreen
- Forester
- Gable Greenbrier
- Greenbrier
- Hillcrest
- Model 1
- Model 3
- Northwood
- Olympian
- Sunset
- Trendsetter
- Tri-Lander 1
- Tri-Lander 2
- Tri-Vue
- Western Family
- Westerner
- Westwood 2
- Westwood: Modern
- Westwood: Traditional
- Young Modern
- Rivera
- San Juan
- Skylark
- Suburban
- Suburbanitis



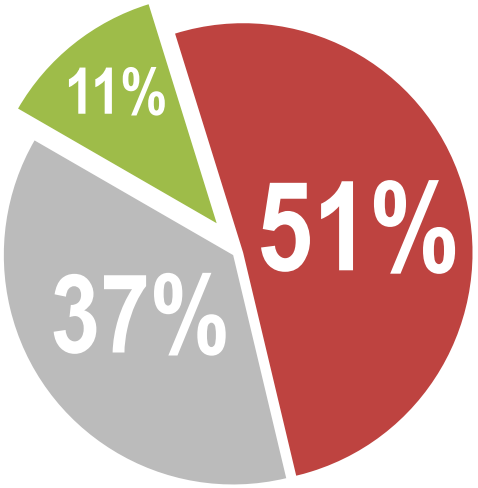
0 0.25 0.5 1 Mile

These models were identified through a combination of research and field observations. Some of the models were known prior to the survey work while many more were not discovered until after that work began. When a new model was discovered during the survey work, more research through historical archives was conducted in order to identify the unknown models.

N

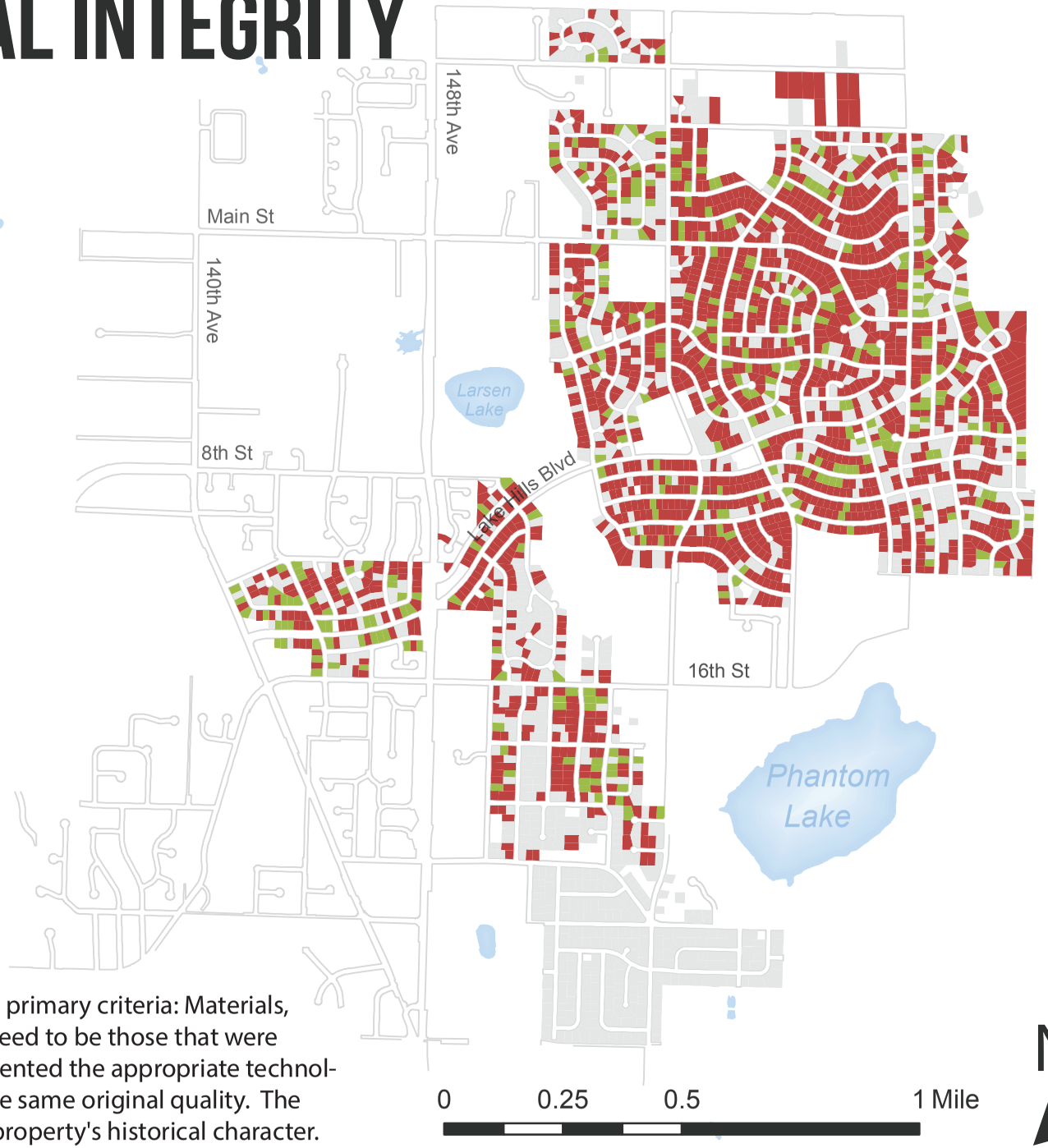
ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY

Yes
No
Needs Further Research



ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY

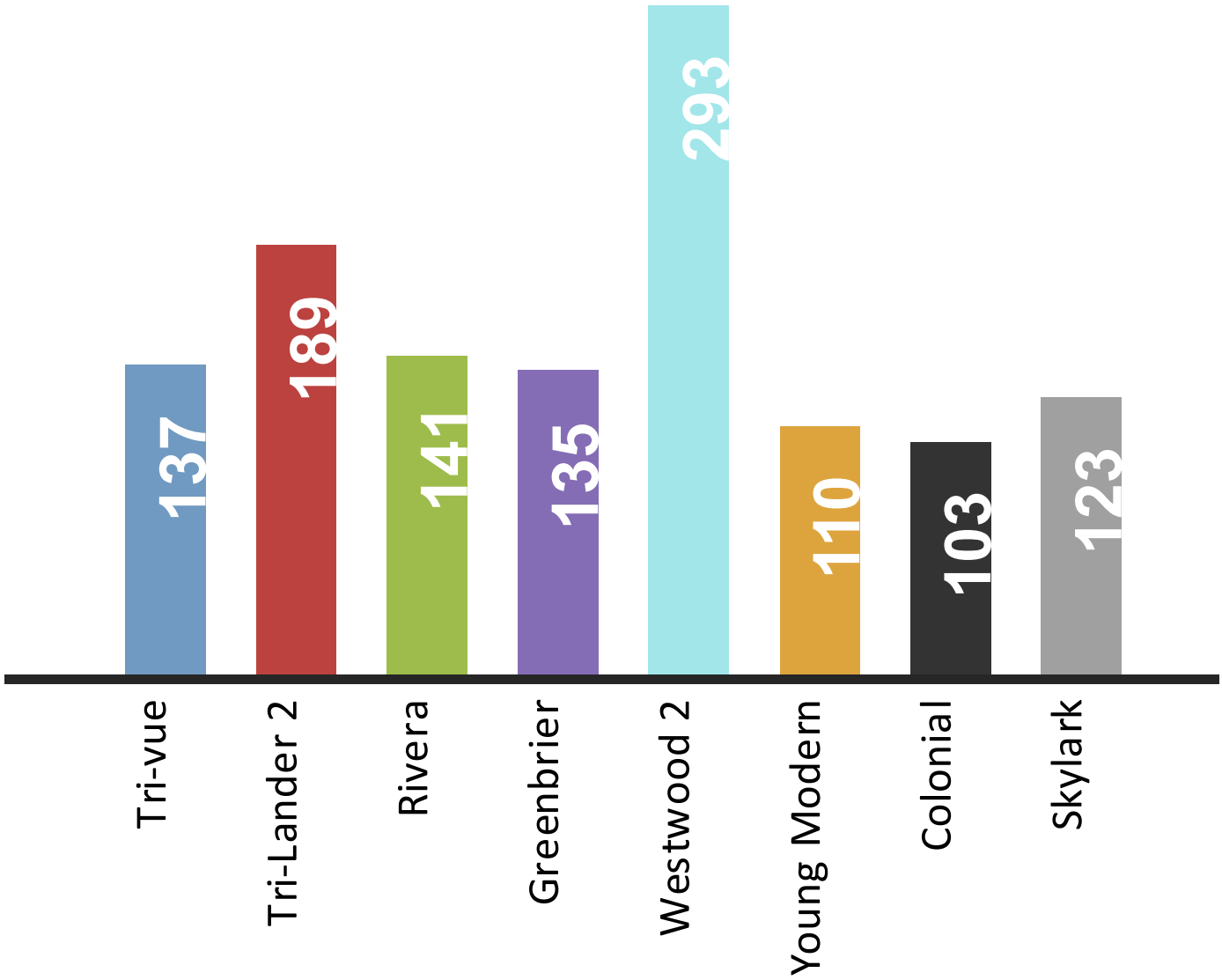
Yes	330
No	1420
Needs Further Research	1030
TOTAL	2780



Architectural integrity was determined by 3 primary criteria: Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling. The materials need to be those that were available during the time period and represented the appropriate technologies. The workmanship needed to be of the same original quality. The feeling of the home needed to convey the property's historical character.

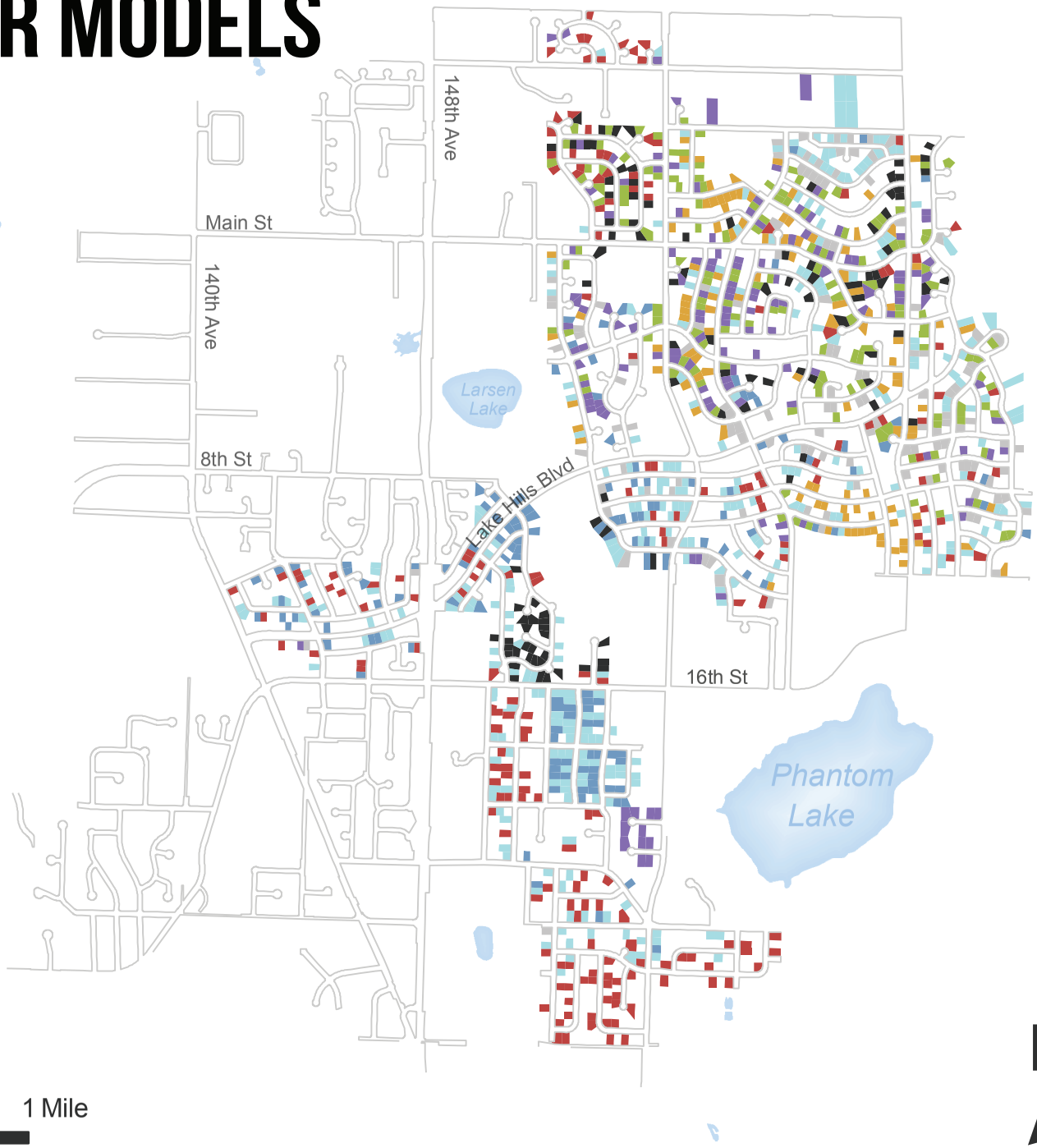
MOST POPULAR MODELS

During our fieldwork eight models stood out to us as predominant in the neighborhood. The following account for 21% of the recognized models and 44% of the total homes surveyed. The following maps and images provided further understanding of the architecture and their relationships with the rest of architectural community.



MOST POPULAR MODELS

- Tri-Vue
- Tri-Lander 2
- Rivera
- Greenbrier
- Westwood 2
- Young Modern
- Colonial
- Skylark

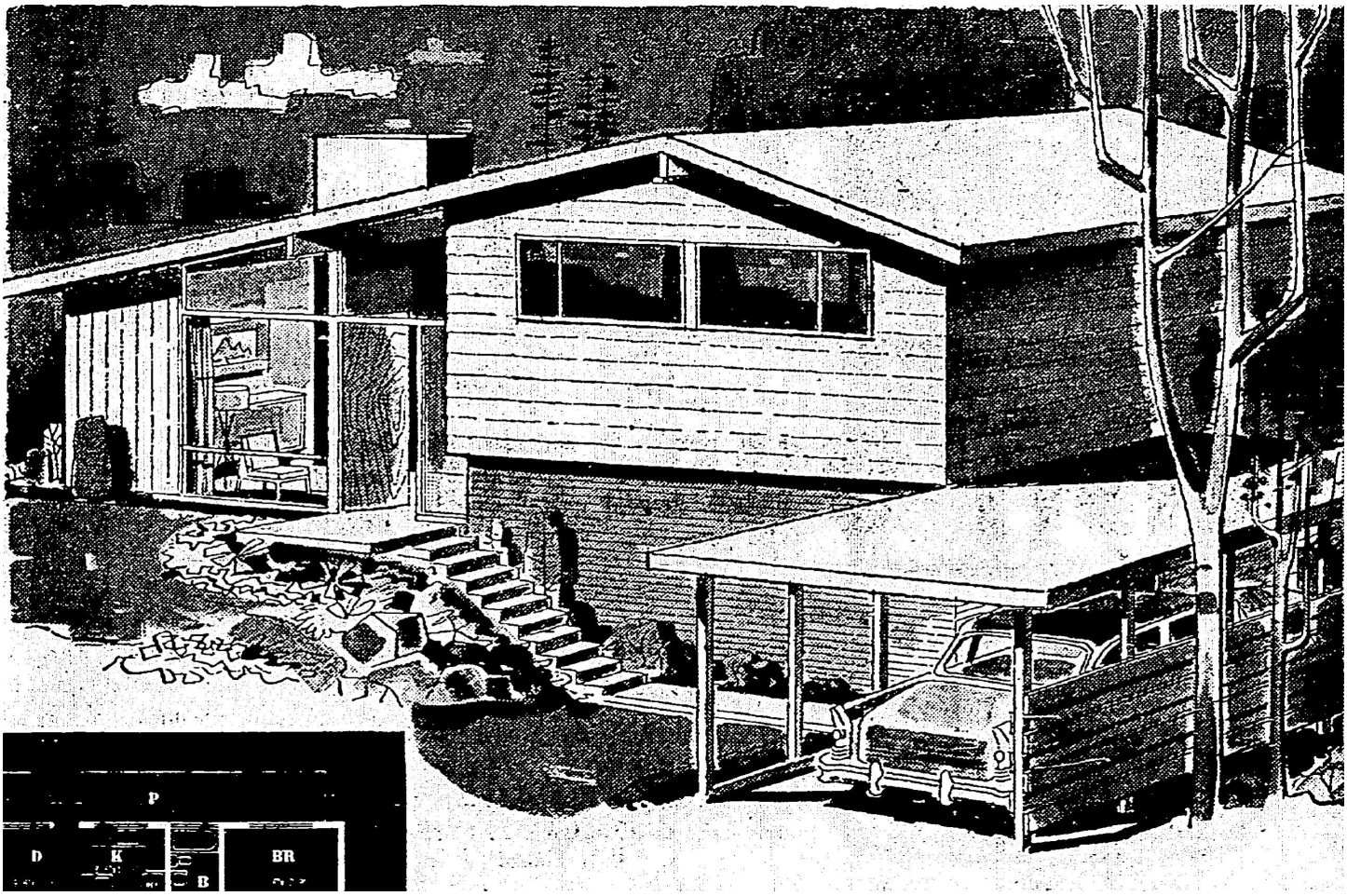


TRI-VUE, 137 MODELS LOCATED

ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEER: John Anderson

DESIGNER: Unknown

BUILDER: Bell & Valdez

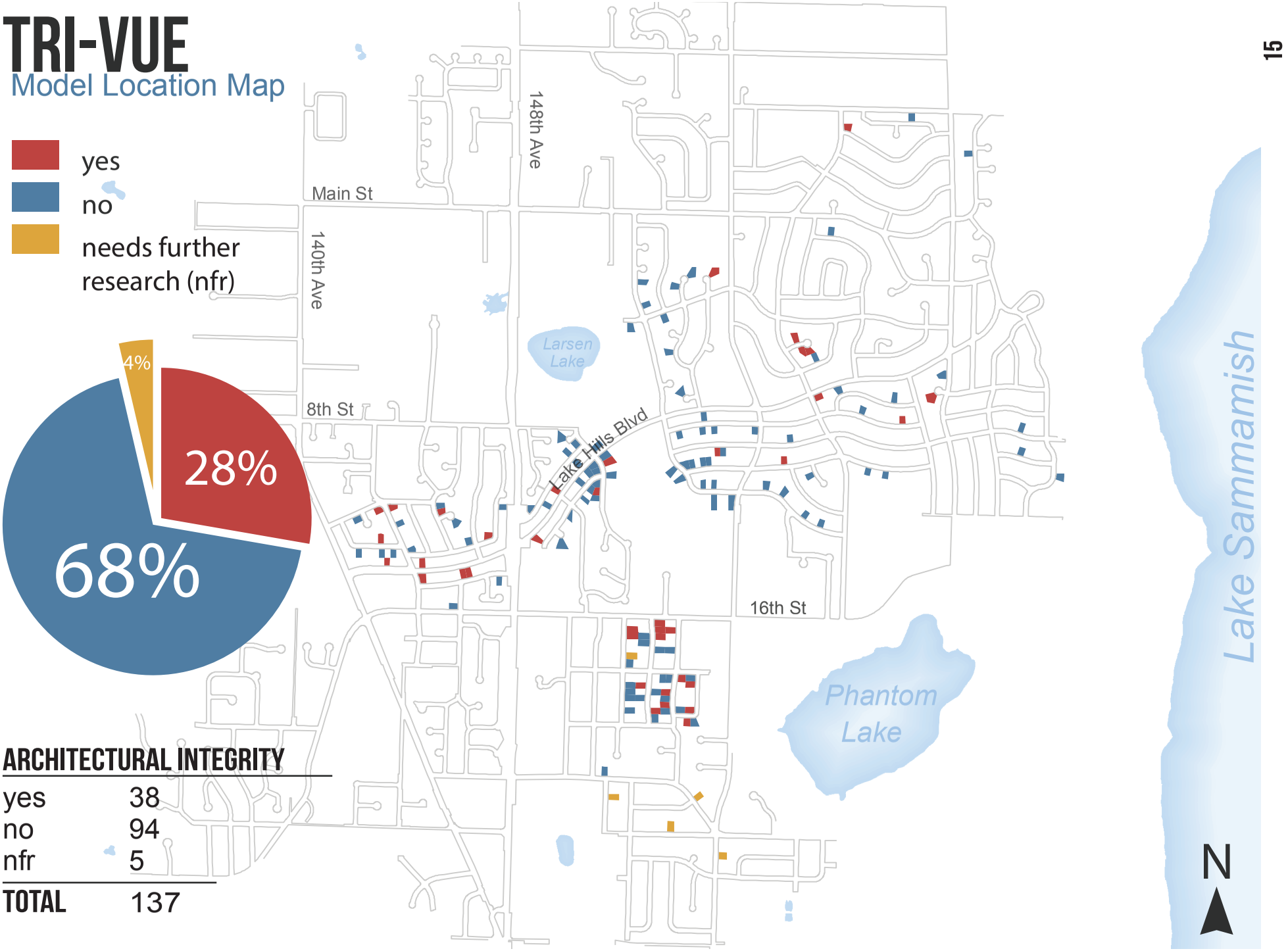


PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Tri-Vue is a split-level family house with approximately 1,475 square feet, with a carport attached to the house on one side. The mid-level entrance connects the lower to the upper level with a staircase. On one side of the entrance is a large clear window, rising from the floor to the ceiling, and on the other side is a more private exterior design, with two windows on the upper level. The roof of the living space is in gable style, with unbalanced shoulders. The longer shoulder of the roof covers the interior section with a big window, while the shorter shoulder covers the more private side, which has a two-story structure. Attached to the two-story side of the house, the carport extends beyond the edge of the house, with a flat roof and a driveway leading to the street.

TRI-VUE

Model Location Map



ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY

yes	38
no	94
nfr	5
TOTAL	137

TRI-LANDER 2, 189 MODELS LOCATED

ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEER: Unknown

DESIGNER: Ronald R. Campbell

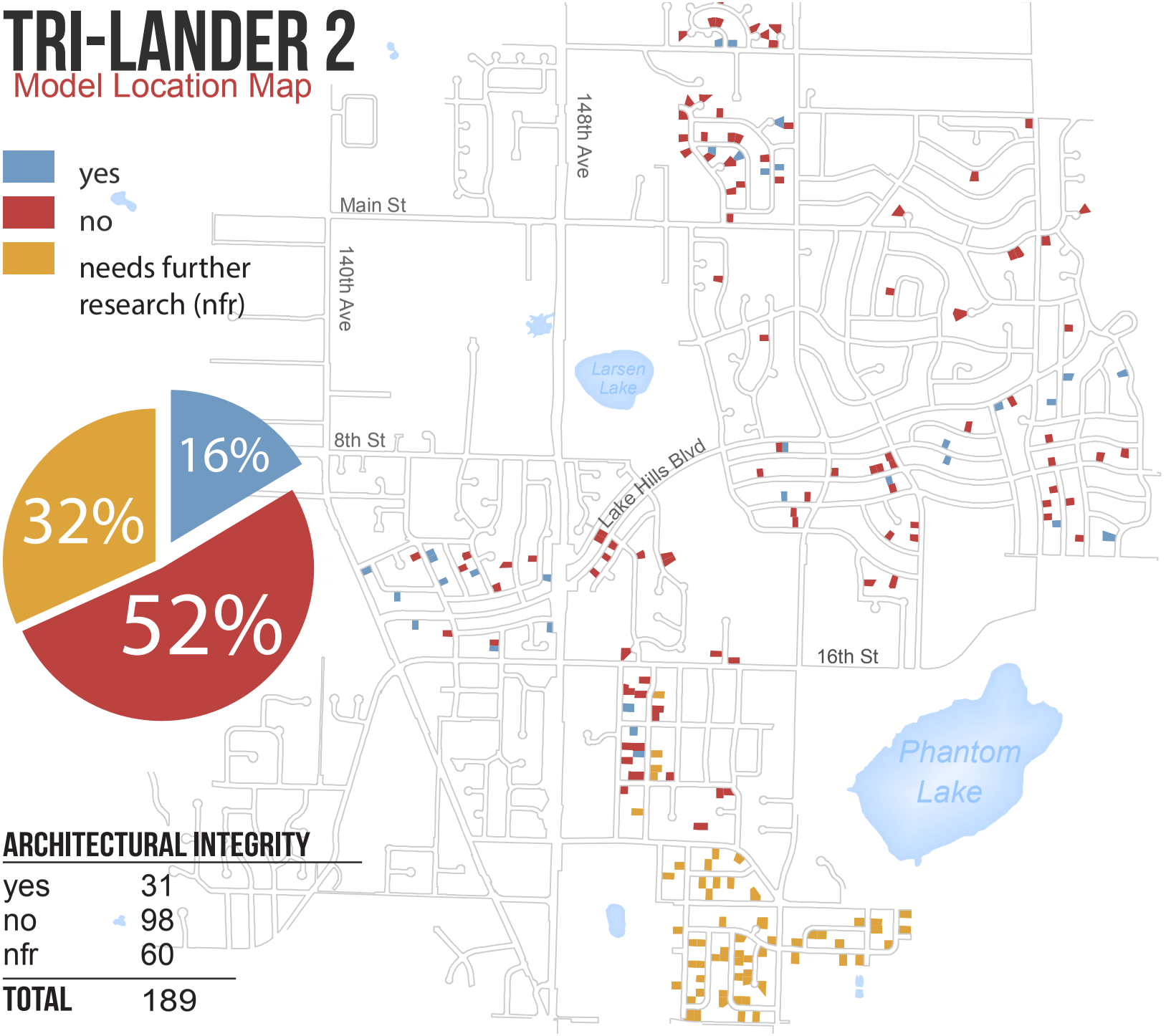
BUILDER: Leonard

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Tri-lander 2 expresses a simple and clear design of a one-story house containing three front windows, an entrance and a carport, with gable style roof. The carport or garage is attached to the house and extends forward from the front of the house with a gable roof in a perpendicular direction. Except the carport, the roof of the living area is a continuous roofline, and may have a chimney built for the fireplace inside the house. On one side of the entrance there is a bigger window and on the other side there are two smaller ones.

TRI-LANDER 2

Model Location Map



ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY

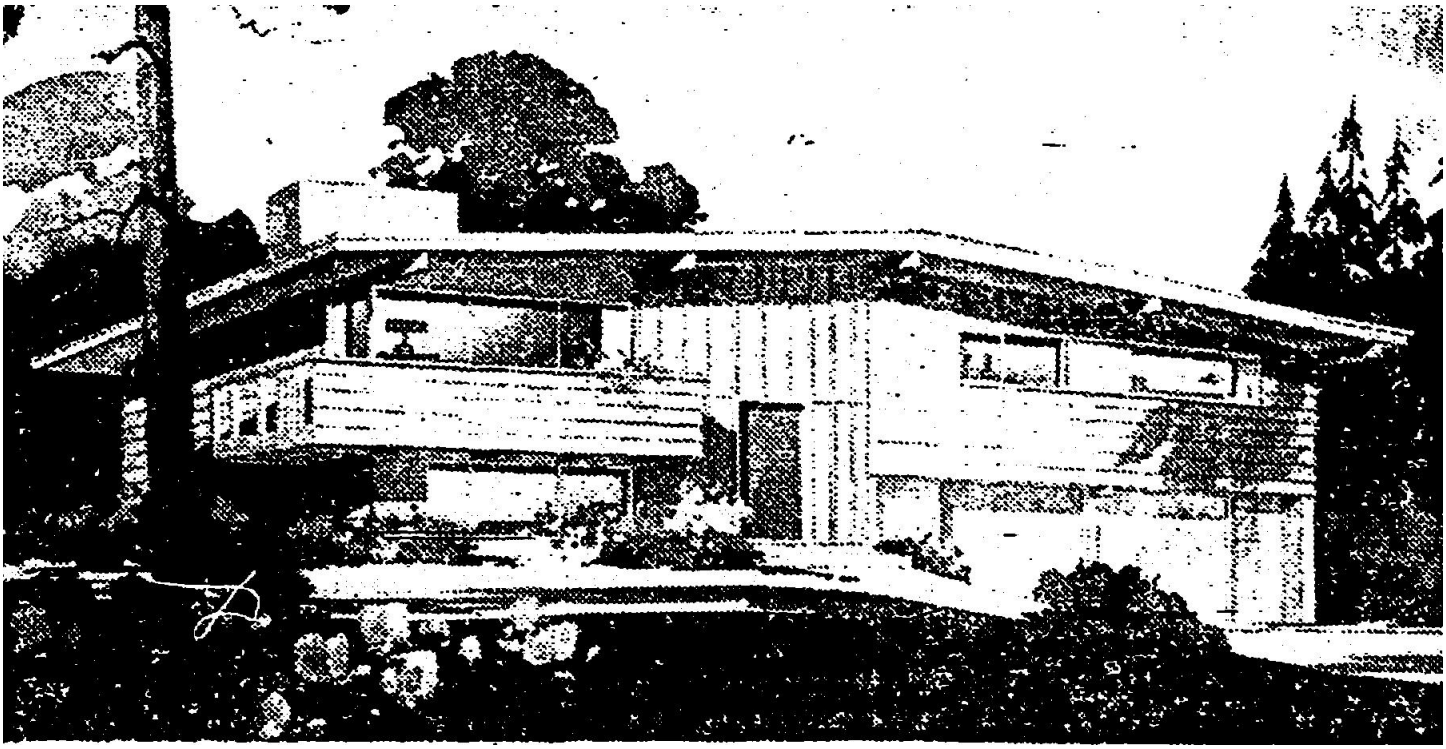
yes	31
no	98
nfr	60
TOTAL	189

RIVERA, 141 MODELS LOCATED

ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEER: John Anderson

DESIGNER: Robert Hobble

BUILDER: Bell & Valdez

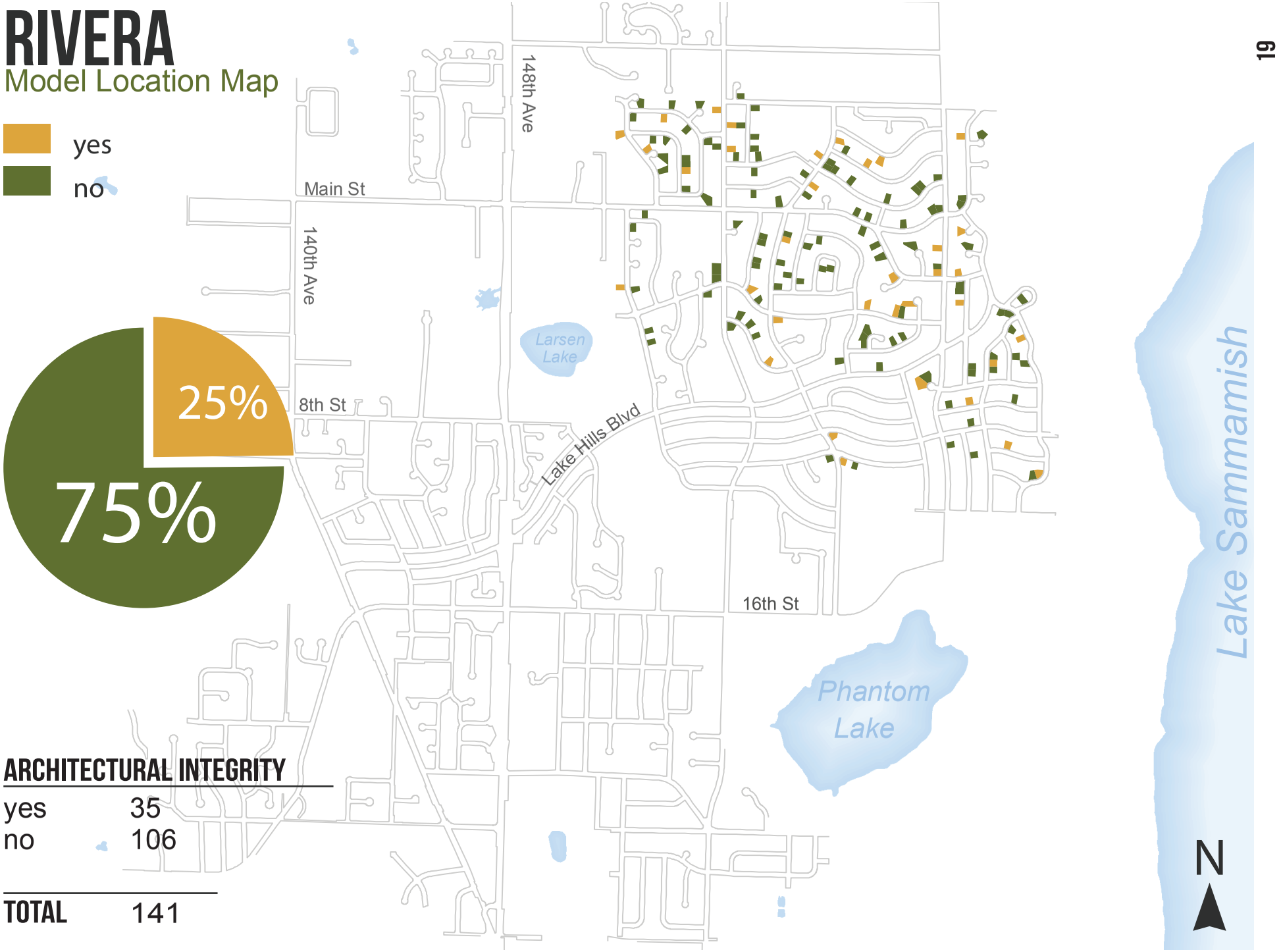


PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Rivera model is approximately 1,150 square feet, with a split-level entry, double garage, a beamed ceiling and a gable roof. The split-level design allows for dealing with the slopes of the property. A mid-level entry means there are stairs to both the upper floor and the lower floor at the entry. Surrounding the entry are plastic panels rising from the floor to the ceiling of the upper level. The two-car garage is located on the ground level. A patio is attached to the upper level, with a large glass sliding door as the entrance and the window to the interior space. The other windows of the model are relatively smaller and located on the upper level above the garage space and on the lower level below the patio.

RIVERA

Model Location Map



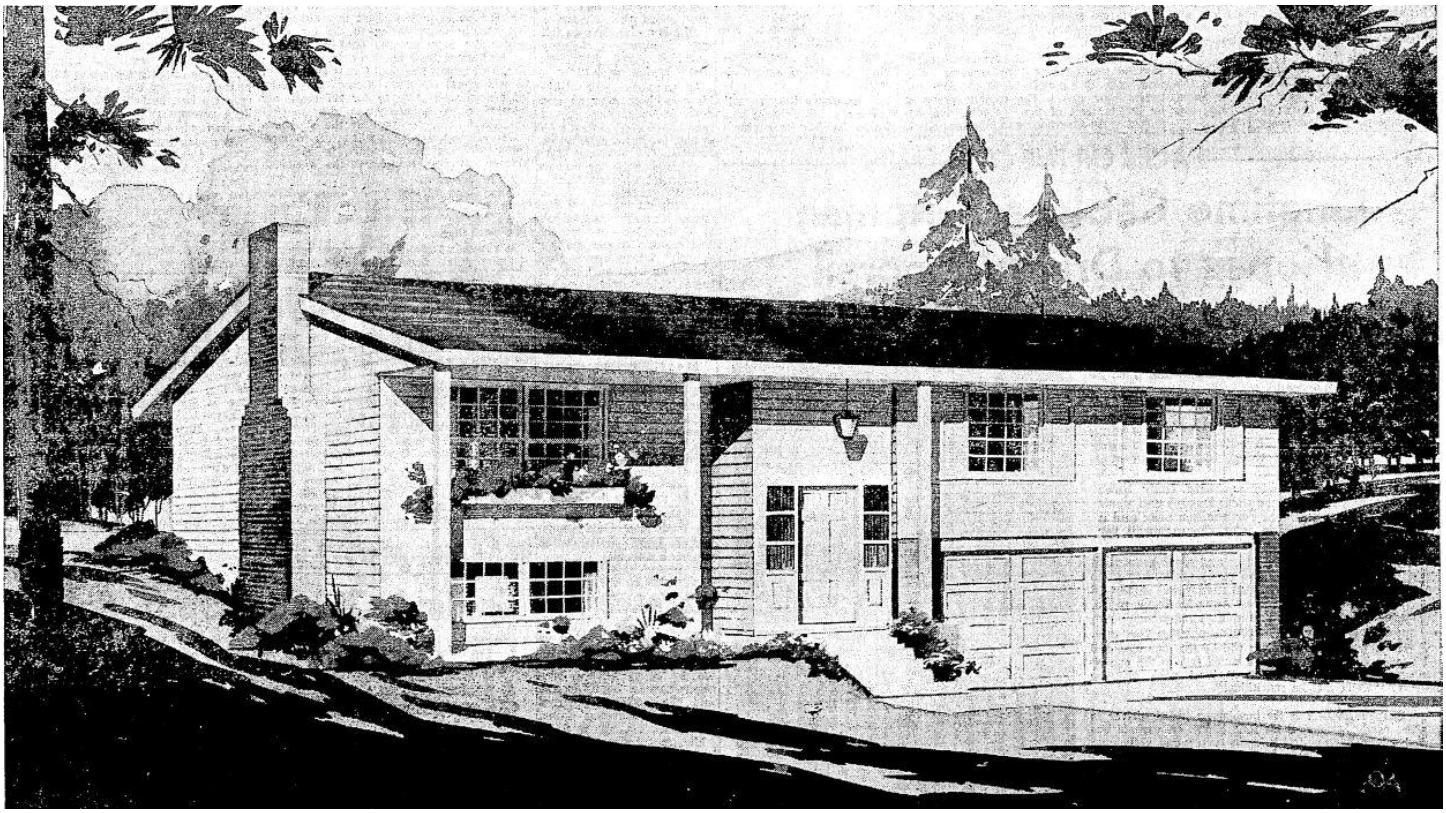
ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY	
yes	35
no	106
TOTAL	141

GREENBRIER, 135 MODELS LOCATED

ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEER: John Anderson

DESIGNER: Unknown

BUILDER: Bell & Valdez

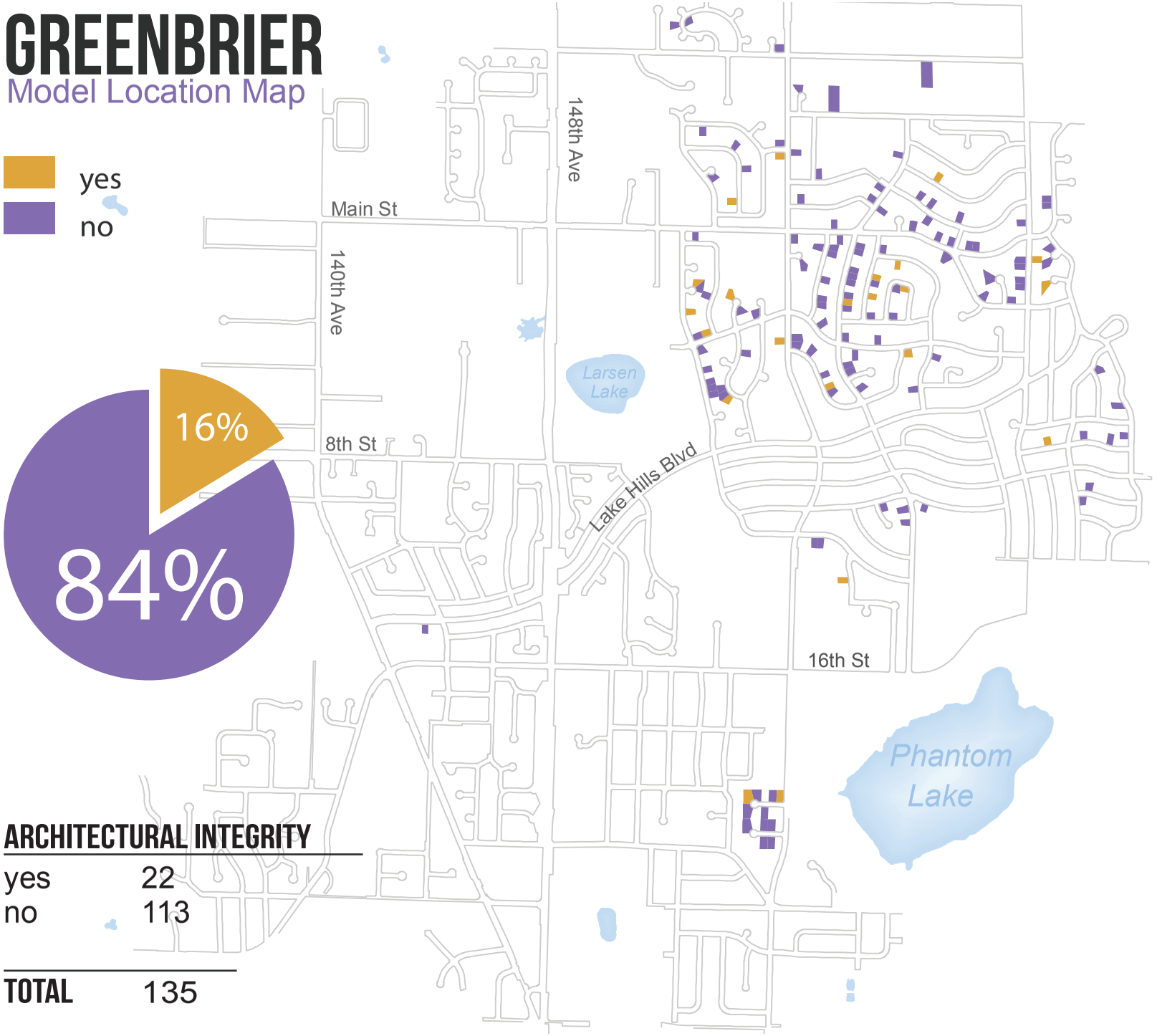


PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Greenbrier is a two-story house with approximately 1,513 square feet. It has an attached double garage and a gable roof. The upper level contains six rooms. There are windows on each side of the entrance, but not above the entrance. On one side there are windows on both levels, and on the other side windows are only on the upper level above the garage. The roof extends beyond the living space, supported by pillars standing in front of the house. There may also be a chimney attached on one end of the house.

GREENBRIER

Model Location Map



ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY

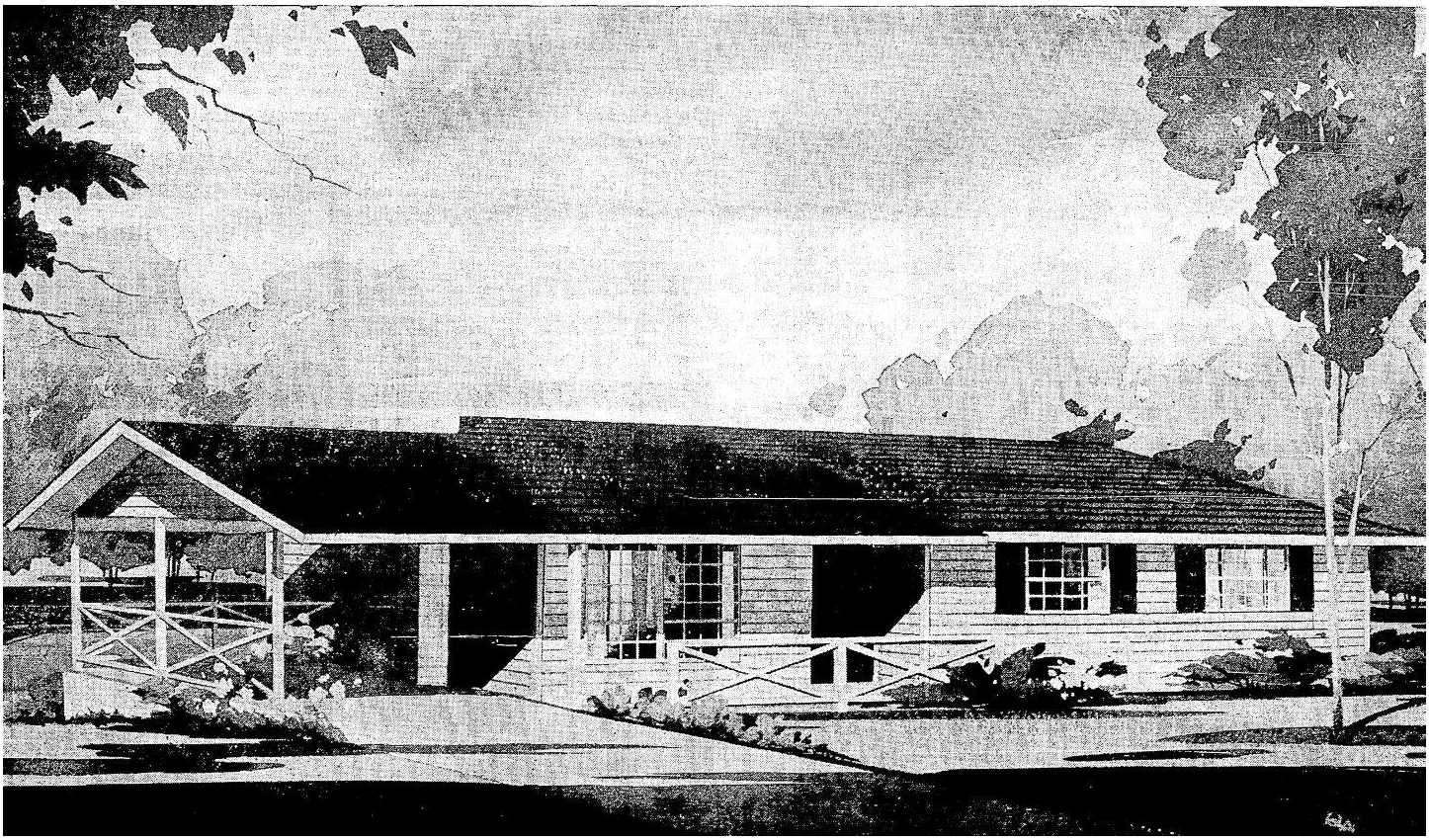
yes	22
no	113
TOTAL	135

WESTWOOD 2, 293 MODELS LOCATED

ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEER: John Anderson

DESIGNER: Unknown

BUILDER: Bell & Valdez

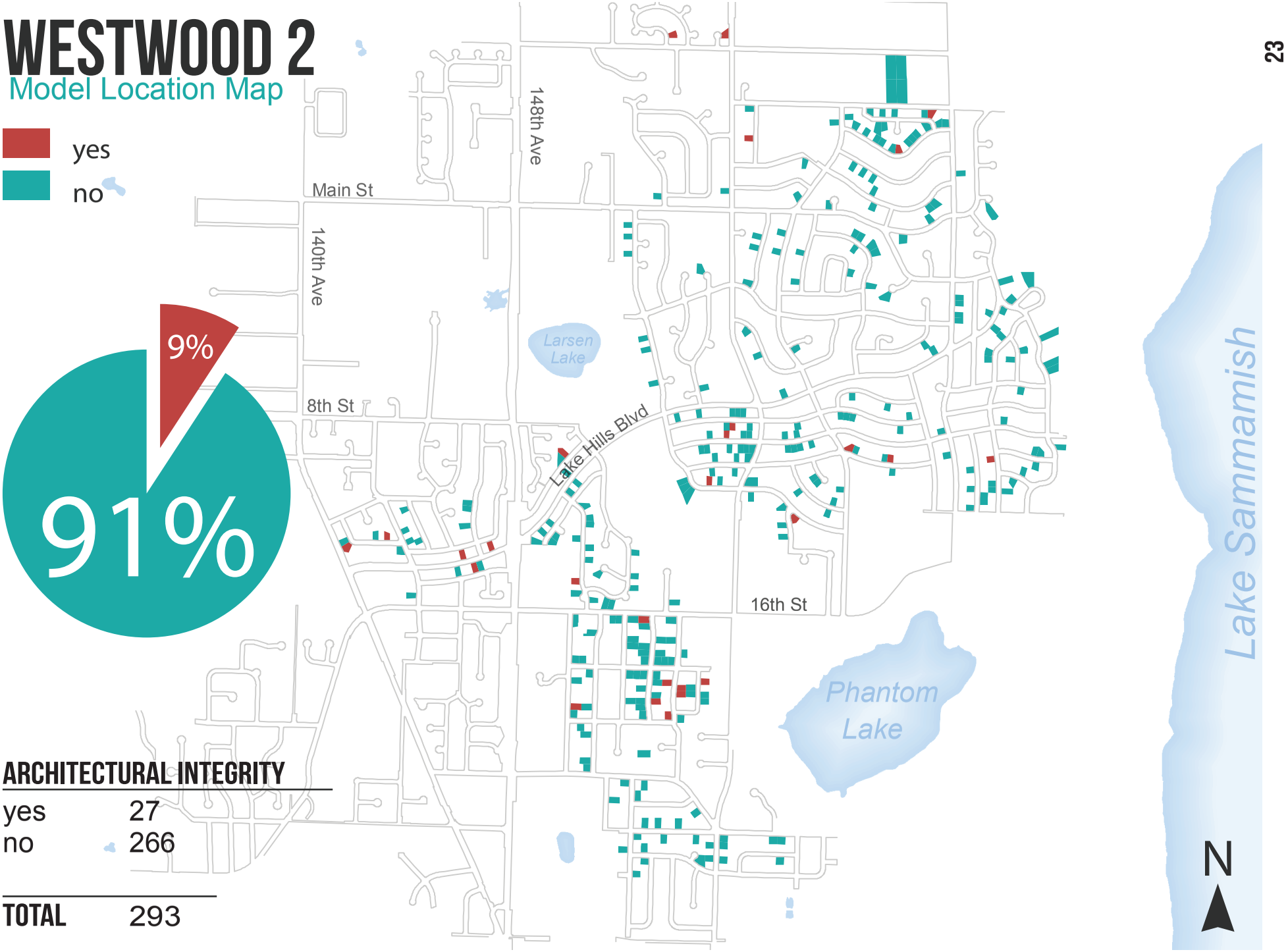


PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Westwood design is a one story single-family house with a basement and 1,988 square feet living space. The overall design is simple and clear, with a gable roof, a carport, and the main entrance in the front. The roofline is continuous and extends from one end of the house to the other and covering the carport space, which is connected with the street by a driveway. On one side of the entrance there is a big window, and on the other side are two smaller windows. The main level has three bedrooms and there may also be a family outdoor space in the back of the home.

WESTWOOD 2

Model Location Map



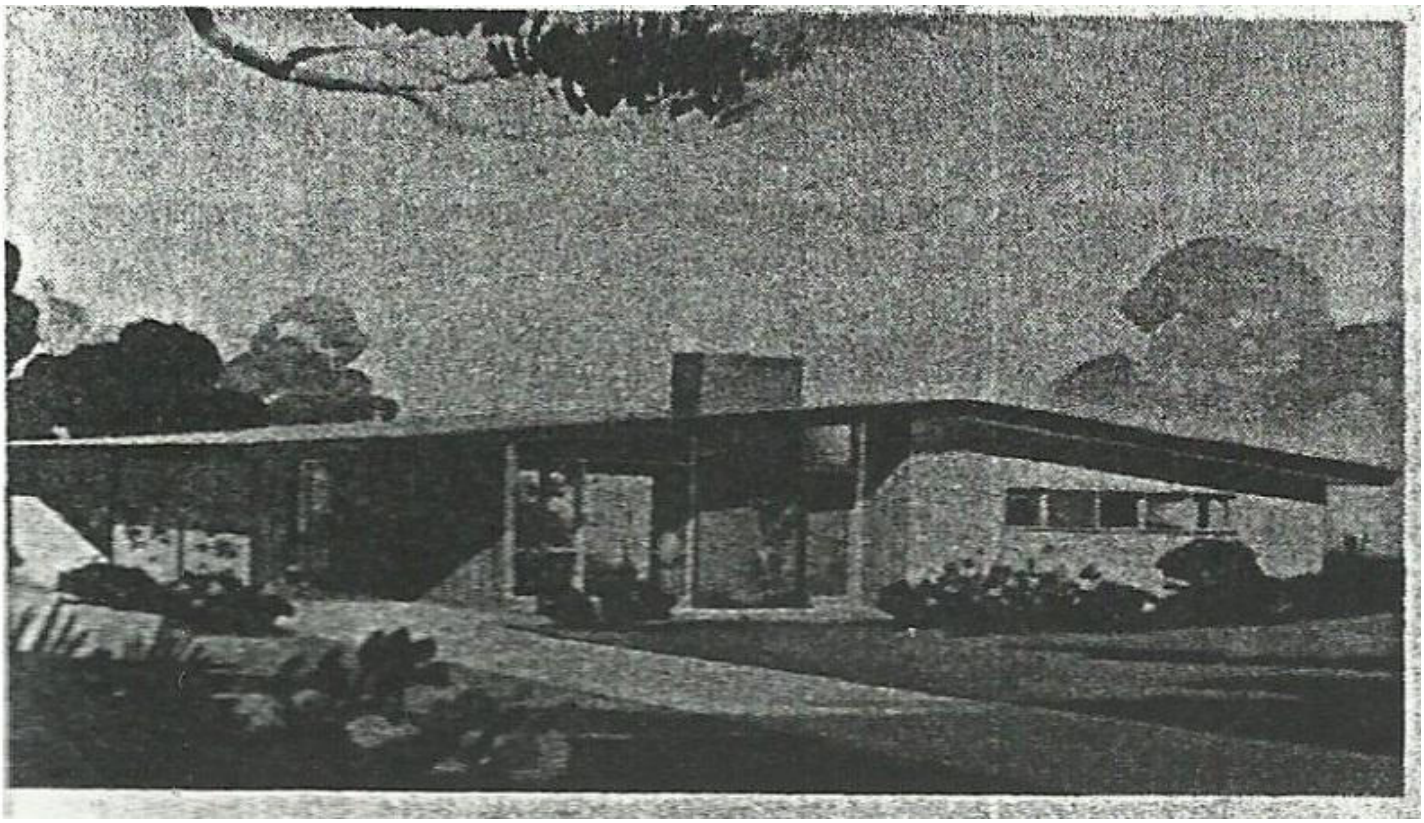
ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY	
yes	27
no	266
TOTAL	293

YOUNG MODERN, 110 MODELS LOCATED

ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEER: John Anderson

DESIGNER: Unknown

BUILDER: Bell & Valdez

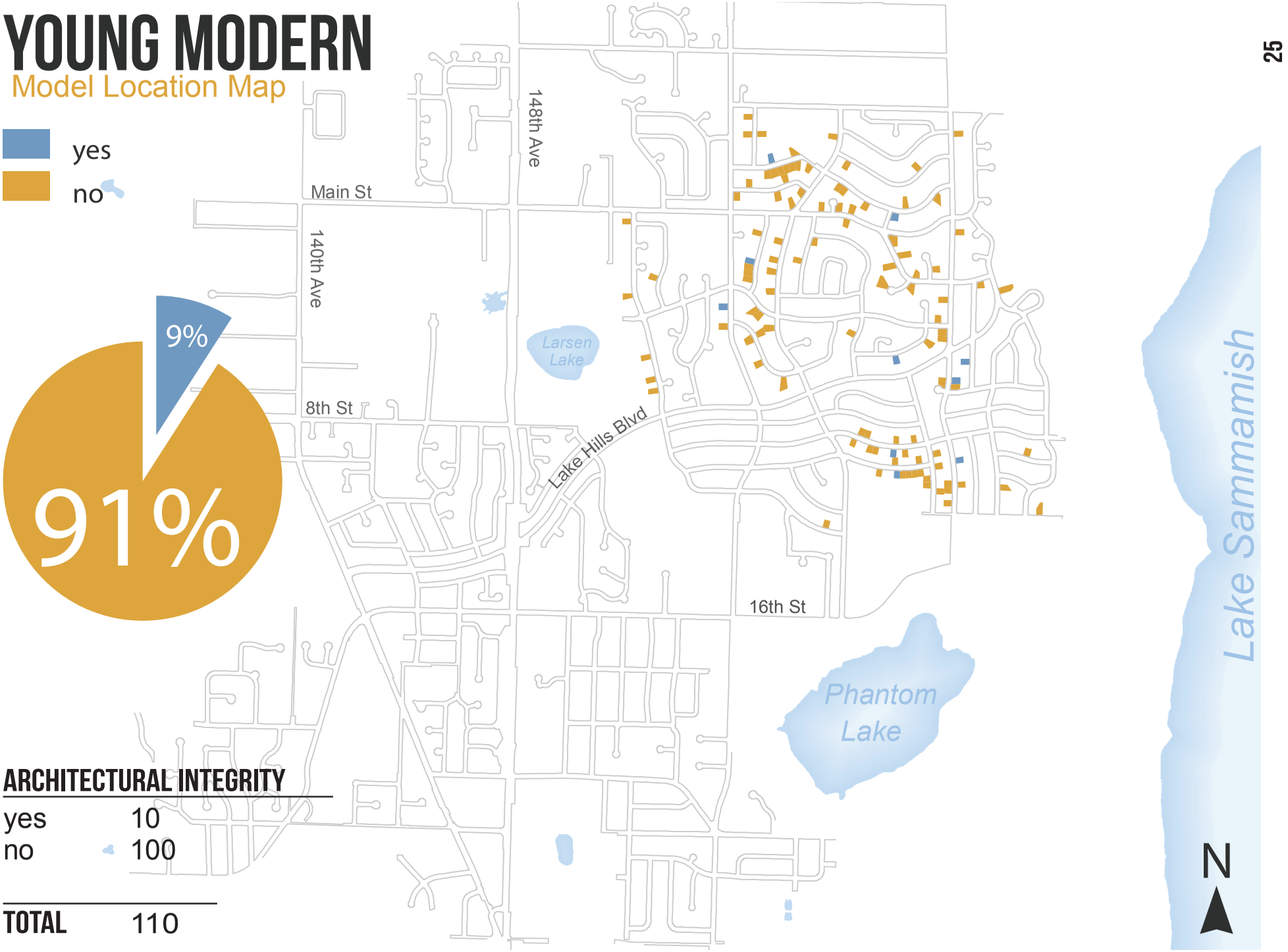


PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Young Modern is a one story single family house with approximately 1,944 square feet. It has a double or single carport built at one end. The gable style roofline is continuous from the carport end to the other end of the house. Young modern has an asymmetrical plan. The entrance stands between the chimney and a big window, which is next to the carport. The chimney is partially exposed and becomes a part of the front exterior. On the other side of the chimney is a more private exterior, with two smaller windows.

YOUNG MODERN

Model Location Map



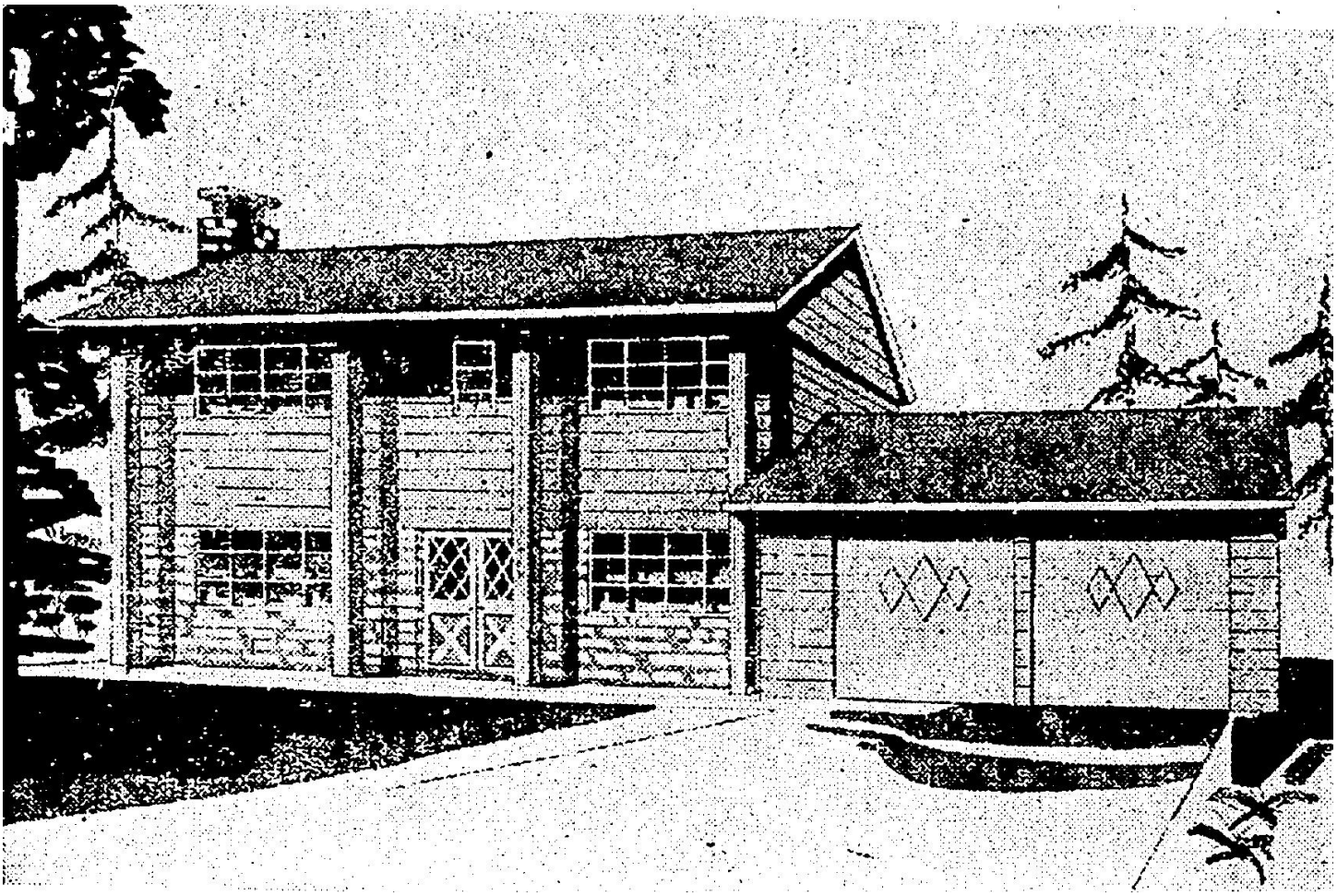
ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY	
yes	10
no	100
TOTAL	110

COLONIAL, 103 MODELS LOCATED

ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEER: Unknown

DESIGNER: Lawrence & Hazenm

BUILDER: J.W. Morrison & Associates

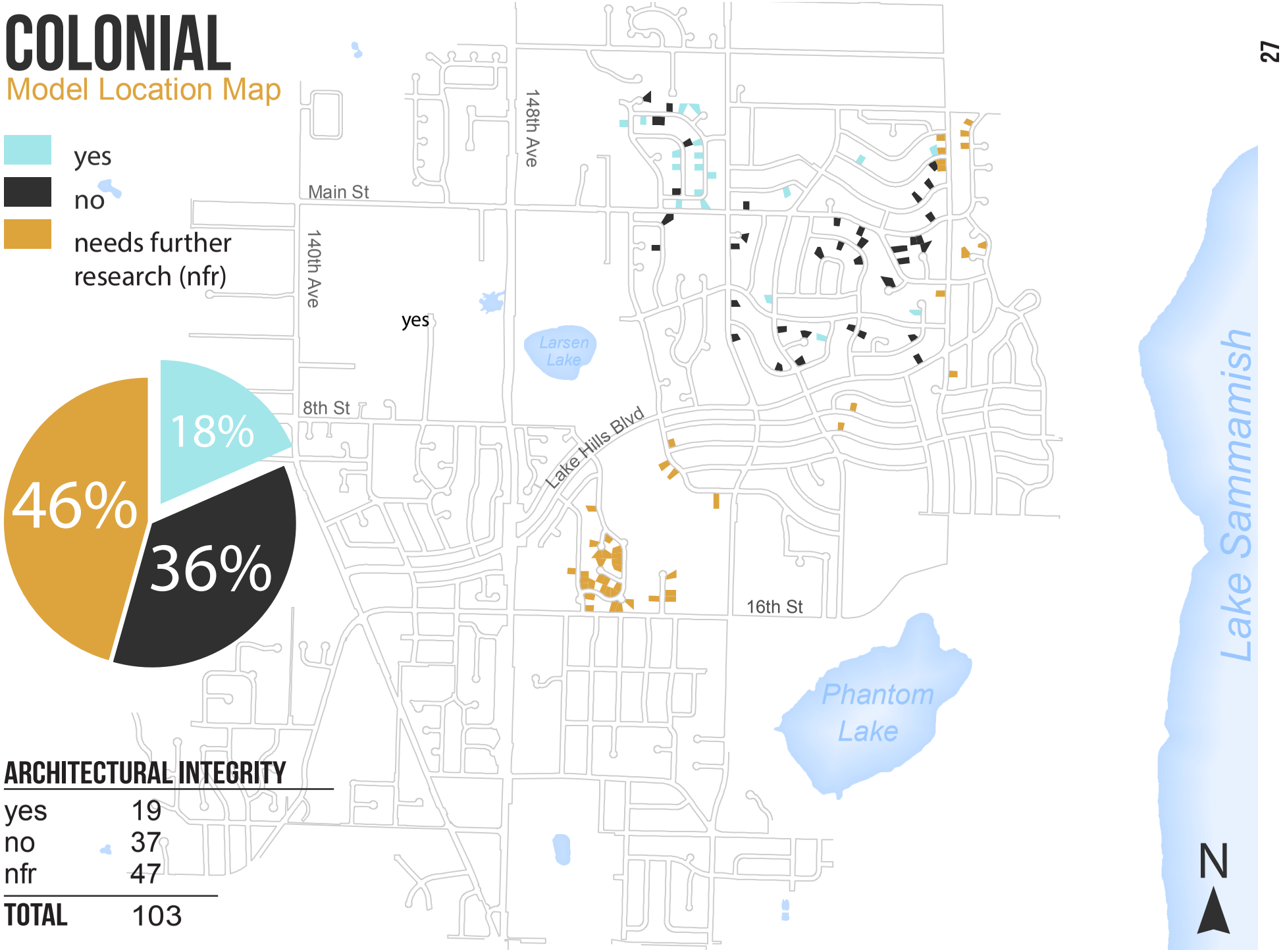


PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Colonial is a two story family house, with the entry on the lower level and a box gable roof for both the living space and is garage. It is approximately 1,944 square feet plus the double garage. The exterior is finished with brick and cedar siding. The roof is supported by four pillars in front of the house rising from the ground up to the upper floor ceiling. Windows are installed on both levels, with a smaller one in the middle of the upper floor above the entrance. The second floor is designed with a patio. The garage space is attached to the house on the side.

COLONIAL

Model Location Map



ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY

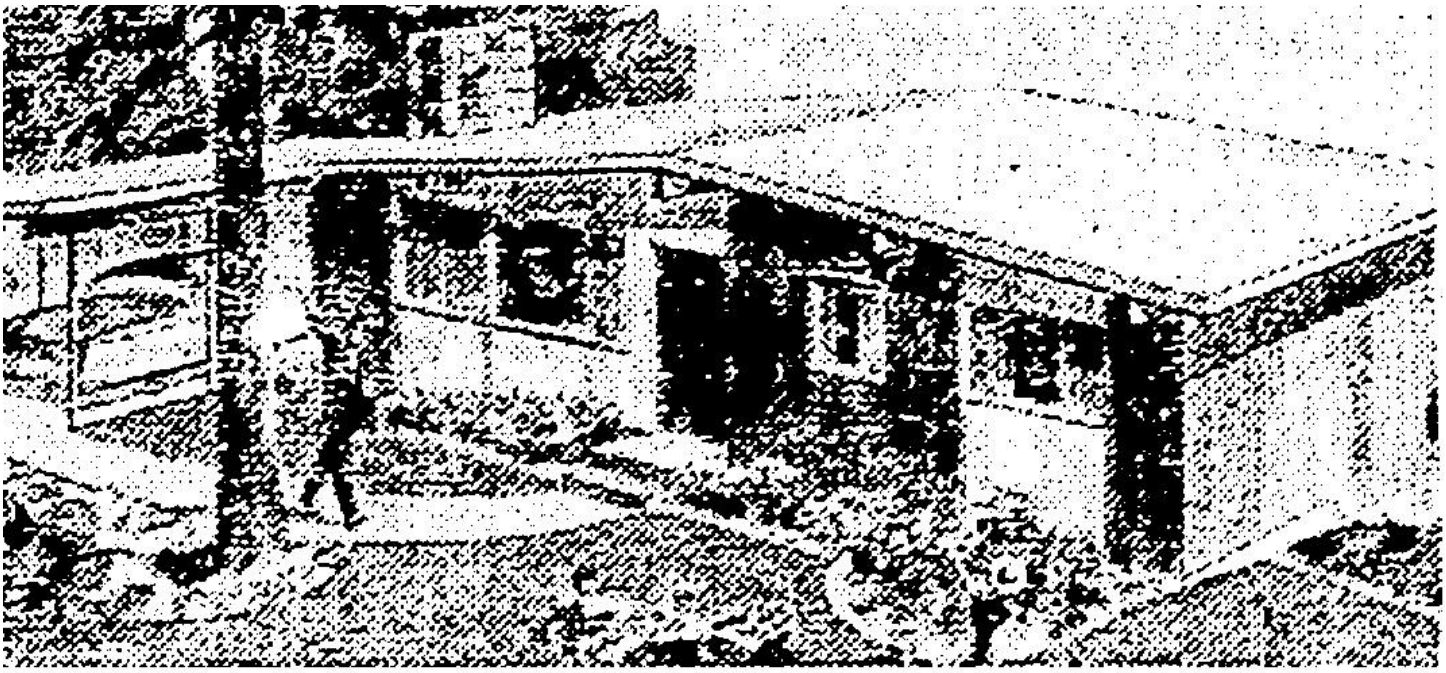
yes	19
no	37
nfr	47
TOTAL	103

SKYLARK, 123 MODELS LOCATED

ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEER: John Anderson

DESIGNER: Unknown

BUILDER: Bell & Valdez



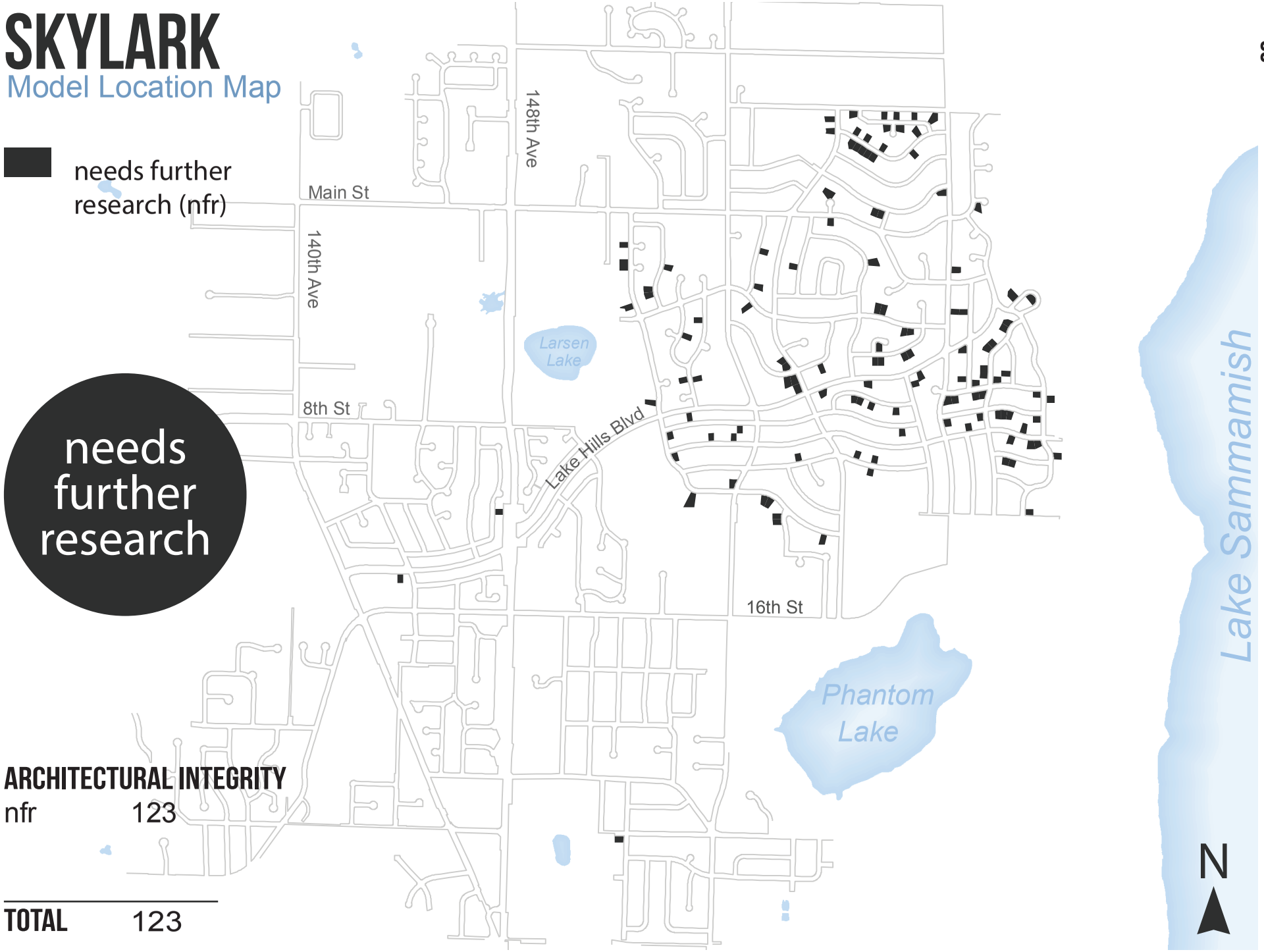
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Skylark is a one story single-family house with a lower level daylight basement and a carport attached on the ground level. The entrance hall leads directly to the kitchen, living room or bedroom section. The entrance is in the middle of a bigger window and two smaller ones on the other side. The house is built with a gable style roof, and the attached carport is built with a shed roof. The carport is attached to the front of one end of the house.

SKYLARK

Model Location Map

needs further research (nfr)



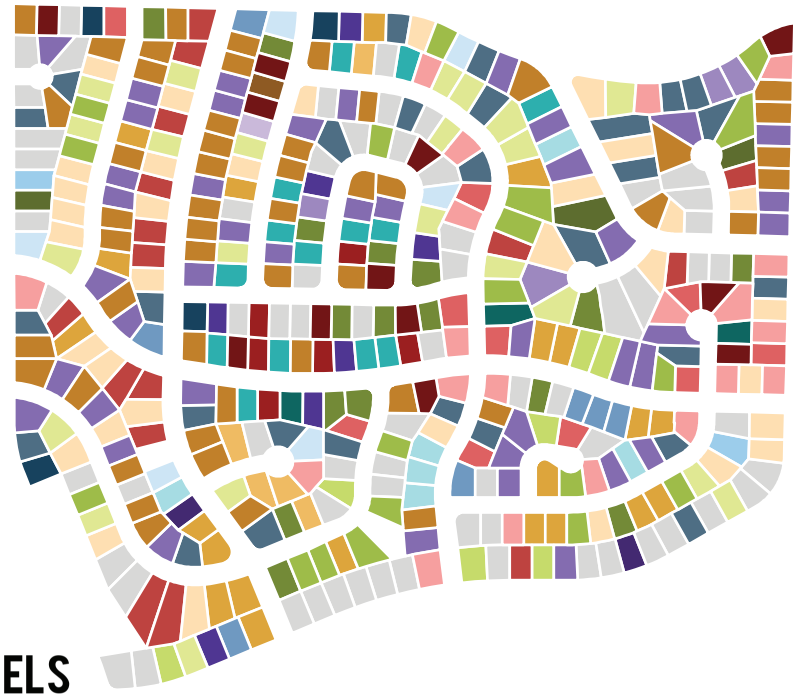
needs further research

ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY

nfr	123
TOTAL	123

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATION

Both architectural integrity and model diversity exist on a level that is supportive of further research into identifying an historical district. These conditions best occur in a dense cluster of blocks in this Northeast region of the community. This section of the neighborhood displays 29 of the 37 recognized models. It has the highest potential for possible success in both district identification and the recognition of individual homes. It is the team's suggestion that further research into recognizing a permanent historic district be focused in this area.



MODELS

- Alpine
- Bellaire
- Capri
- Catalina
- Cedar-Vue
- Citation
- Colonial
- Continental
- Country Squire
- Evergreen
- Gable Greenbrier
- Greenbrier
- Model 3
- Northwood
- Olympian
- Rivera
- San Juan
- Skylark
- Suburban
- Sunset
- Tri-Lander 1
- Tri-Lander 2
- Tri-Vue
- Western Family
- Westerner
- Westwood 2
- Westwood: Modern
- Young Modern
- Needs Further Research

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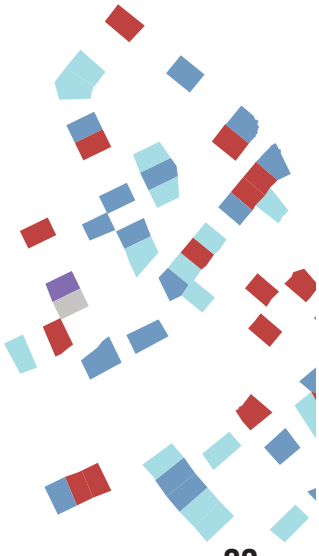
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