

Staff Report and Findings of Fact Nomination to the Spokane Register of Historic Places John F. and Barbara E. Phillips House – 620 S Montavilla Drive

FINDINGS OF FACT

- 1. SMC 17D.100.090: "Generally a building, structure, object, site, or district which is more than fifty years old may be designated an historic landmark or historic district if it has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the city, county, state, or nation."**
 - Originally built in 1955; the John and Barbara Phillips House meets the age criteria for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places.

- 2. SMC 17D.100.090: The property must qualify under one or more categories for the Spokane Register (A, B, C, D, E).**
 - The 1955 Phillips House at 611 S. Montavilla Drive is significant and eligible for listing in the Spokane Register of Historic Places under Category C in the area of design, for possessing high artistic values, and for representing the work of a master, Warren Heylman.
 - The single-family house exemplifies the Contemporary style in Modern residential design, which was popular in the mid-20th century in Spokane and across the country. It embodies the Modern design characteristics found in residential design at this time, regardless of the specific style, including open floor plans; an attempt to "bring the outdoors in;" a generous use of glass; the use of natural materials and finishes or alternatively, new materials; and a strong connection to the landscape. The Phillips House is a unique example of Contemporary design, however, in part because of the use of the projecting fins across the front façade that expresses the organization of the design and interior and exterior integration.
 - The house was designed by Spokane architect Warren Cummings Heylman. Best known for his more flamboyant commercial and institutional properties, this residence (his first to be nominated to the Spokane Register) is more understated and is representative of his mid-20th century residential work. It retains excellent integrity. The house was constructed in an outlying neighborhood of late 19th century parks and cemeteries and the historic Fort George Wright, which began to be developed with residences in the post-World War II era, as this house was. Today the Phillips House is one of four residences on two short, parallel streets that were designed by Warren Heylman, including his own family house, which is still extant.
 - The Phillips House was commissioned by John (Jack) and Barbara Phillips, a journalist and novelist, respectively, from the highly regarded Spokane architect Warren C. Heylman, their neighbor to the immediate west. Daughter Mary Anne Phillips, an artist and architect, inherited the Phillips House on her parents' deaths and began a renovation and addition that culminated in 2020. On Mary Anne's death in 2025 her brother Thomas Phillips, who is retired, inherited the house and is the present owner.

- 3. SMC17D.100.090: "The property must also possess integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association." From NPS Bulletin 15: "Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance...it is not necessary for a property to retain all its historic physical features...the property must retain, however, the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historic identity."**
 - Well-preserved with excellent integrity in original location, design, materials, workmanship, and association, the Phillips House is eligible for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places.

- 4. Once listed, this property will be eligible to apply for incentives, including:**

Special Valuation (property tax abatement), Façade Improvement Grants, Spokane Register historic property plaque, and special code considerations.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The John F. and Barbara E Phillips House is eligible for listing on the Spokane Register under Category C in the area of design, for possessing high artistic values, and for representing the work of a master, Warren Heylman.

Preservation Officer Review: Megan Duvall
Nominations Committee: Yes
Landmarks Commission Review: Pending

Report: 11/12/2025
Site Visit: 11/5/2025
Hearing: 11/19/2025