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Staff Report

to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

From: Joe Nucci, Historic Preservation Officer (HPO)

HPC Neighborhood Meeting Date: February 9, 2006

Tomlinson Estates Historic District Historic Property Designation

DSD Project Review #: HPO-2006.14 Ordinance #: ORD NO. 2006.17

Background / Status

An application for designation of the above-referenced property as a Tempe Historic District and listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register was submitted by Charles Buss, Co-chair of the University Heights Neighborhood Association. The application has been reviewed by the Historic Preservation Office and all requirements for notification, posting and advertisement, as set forth in Chapter 14A "Historic Preservation" of the Tempe City Code, have been met and a public hearing scheduled. Present zoning of the proposed district is R1-6, Single-Family Residential. The area is identified as "Cultural Resource Area" in General Plan 2030. Note that the area zoned R-3, Multi-Family Residential Limited, at the southwest boundary was not originally part of the subdivision as platted in 1950. Note also that the arterial frontage zoned CSS Commercial Shopping and Services is the site of Tempe's first significant commercial development that was not located downtown, the 1956 A. J. Bayless Market and Shopping Center. Although part of the original subdivision plat, Staff does not recommend that this property be included within the proposed historic district boundaries which are recommended to include parcels zoned single-family only.

The following dates have been scheduled for the designation process.

HPC Public Hearing Date: March 9, 2006

P&Z Public Hearing Date: March 28, 2006

Council 1 Public Hearing Date: April 20, 2006

Council 2 Public Hearing Date: May 4, 2006

History

When Hugh Evans started building nine pumice block homes in the newly platted Tomlinson Estates subdivision in the summer of 1950, he was working to meet a demand for housing that had been long neglected. At the end of the World War II, servicemen returned home and new professors and students started arriving at Arizona State College. More people started coming to Tempe as thousands of servicemen who were trained at bases in central Arizona during the war returned to live in the area and many of the manufacturing companies that had come to the Valley during the war chose to stay. There had been virtually no new housing built in Tempe in the previous five years as building materials remained scarce even after the war ended. There was a clear need for new homes and in Tempe plenty of cleared agricultural land was available for development.

Context

The history of Tempe during the post-World War II period, 1946-1960, is characterized by rapid population growth in an expanding economy. From 1940 to 1950, Tempe's population grew from 2,906 to 7,686, an increase of 235%. In the following decade growth was even more pronounced. In 1960, the city's population reached 24,897 giving Tempe a rate of growth of 324% throughout the 1950s. More than one hundred new subdivisions were opened for development, and with frequent annexations, Tempe's city boundaries were constantly expanding. These characteristic trends are clearly reflected in the thousands of houses and structures that were built in Tempe during this period.

While Phoenix pursued its dream of becoming the leading commercial and political center of Arizona, Tempe remained strongly committed to agriculture until the war ended. Fields surrounding Tempe had long been productive and profitable, initially based on year-round production of alfalfa and grain, then shifting to cotton production, and finally after the Cotton Crash of 1920, returning to alfalfa and grain as a component of a more diverse agronomy. It was in the post war expansion period that housing demand would drive development-based land values to overcome the profitability of productive Tempe agricultural lands.

Tomlinson Estates was the twenty-ninth subdivision platted in Tempe after World War II. It is one of only 16 remaining from this group, the remainder having been lost to redevelopment or University expansion throughout the primary areas of Tempe's post-war development.

The following historic contexts have been identified by the Commission as a basis for evaluating the historic significance of candidate districts.

- NA • Arizona State University (association with development of the campus)
- NA • Custom Homes (architect designed, or builder variants)
- Tract Homes (association with the post-war metro housing boom)
- Flood Irrigation (residential utility service)
- NA • Prominent Persons (association with significant Tempe citizens)
- NA • Mom-and-pop developers (local small business or one-time enterprises)
- Corporate developers (see subdivision size classifications)
- Subdivision Size (National Association of Home Builders classifications: small <25 units, medium 26 - 100 units, large >100 units)

In October 2005, Commissioner Wilson prepared a matrix comparing characteristics of Tempe's HP Eligible 1950s Suburban Residential Districts. Information is provided for Tomlinson Estates as follows:

- year subdivision platted = 1950
- number of lots = 67
- build out 1950~1953 (highly successful 1-5 yrs)
- Subdivision Size = Medium, 26-100 homes
- Subdivision Type = tract
- Subdivision Operations = Hugh Evans (14 in 1950); Castleberry Construction (25 in 1950) Corporate Developers

- Average House Size (sq ft) = 1800 typical 1,300-1,699
- Street Patterns = grid/modified grid
- Landscape Patterns = irrigation
- Significance Summary = tract development / corporate developer / Significant physical design/construction characteristics = uniform house designs.

Chronology

March 27, 1950 – Tempe Common Council adopted Annexation Ordinance Number 201 providing annexation of 48.8 acres including the Borden Homes and Tomlinson Estates subdivisions and bringing Tempe's total land area to 2.316 sq mi.

May 4, 1950 – Plans for Tomlinson Estates are approved by the Tempe City Council, the tract was located east of Dorsey Lane and north of Apache Boulevard.

May 11, 1950 – Plat for Tomlinson Estates subdivision filed by L. J. Taylor, Vice President of the Phoenix Title & Trust Company.

July, 1950 – Hugh Evans started building nine pumice block homes in the subdivision. In December, he took out building permits for 32 more homes, to be built at a total cost of \$173,600. By this time, the Castleberry Construction Company had started building 25 pumice block houses and a small office-apartment unit on Hall and Lemon streets. Sales were handled by Sun Valley Realty Company.

July 27, 1950 – A. A. Tormohlen and R. O. Carlson advertise "We are now ready to take orders for 2 and 3 bedroom homes in the Tomlinson Estates subdivision adjacent to the site of the future A. J. Bayless Shopping Center.' Sun Valley Homes 2 Bedroom \$550 Down \$49/month – 3 Bedroom \$550 Down \$55/month.' These homes are the latest in home construction and include the following; pumice blocks, central heating, duct cooling, tile drain board, wardrobe, closets, flush mahogany doors, laundry and storage room, double laundry tubs, double kitchen sinks, double opening windows, 4 inch rockwool insulation, ribbon driveway, landscaped lot, water-cured floors and 3 years insurance." – Tempe Daily News

1950 – A. J. Bayless Markets bought the entire 1500 block of frontage on the north side of the Tempe-Mesa Highway (Apache Boulevard) near the Tomlinson Estates subdivision, but it was not until 1955 that the company produced plans to build a supermarket on the site.

1950 – East Thirteenth Street was renamed Apache Boulevard in 1950, and designated as a key link in several major routes through the state, including U.S. Highways 60, 70, 80, and 89, and State Route 93. During the 1950s, several new service stations and hotels were built on Apache Boulevard between Rural and McClintock, including the Whispering Wind Lodge (1814 E. Apache) and the Hudson Manor Hotel (1461 E. Apache).

April 29, 1951 – Sun Valley Realty & Insurance Company advertise Model Homes Only 13 Left.' 3 Bedroom Model Homes \$8265 Full Price \$1465 Down - 2 Bedroom Model Homes \$7465 Full Price \$1265 Down.' These are the most unique homes in the Valley.'

Open for your inspection.' Watch for red open sign on Apache Boulevard on side of highway, Mesa-Tempe Highway at East end of Tempe." – Tempe Daily News

September 19, 1951 – Postmaster Fred H. Miller reports city mail delivery will be extended to Borden Homes, Hudson Manor, and Tomlinson Estates subdivisions by authority of the Post Office Department in Washington D.C. These areas are currently served by mounted route delivery. – Tempe Daily News

August 13, 1952 – E. W. Daley, then Tempe Superintendent of Streets, implemented Improvement District Number 43 to provide irrigation system additions to serve the Borden Homes and Tomlinson Estates subdivisions. Tempe Daily News reports "Residents of Borden Homes and Tomlinson Estates subdivisions will be provided with an underground irrigation system in about six months if present plans are carried out.' The city council has accepted a petition from householders in the area and instructed plans and specifications be prepared.' Preliminary estimated cost of the project was \$235.50 a lot."

1955 – Homes and Sons, Phoenix contractors, began construction of the 302' x 136' block masonry building, which would include the 25,000-square foot A. J. Bayless Market and 19,500 square feet of additional commercial space divided into stores of various sizes. The building was set back 136 feet from the highway to provide 10,000 square feet of parking. The shopping center cost \$250,000 to build.

April 1956 – A. J. Bayless Market and Shopping Center holds formal opening marking the first significant commercial development beyond Mill Avenue in downtown Tempe. In addition to the shopping at the A. J. Bayless Market, customers could stop at the M&H Variety Store, Pioneer Camera Shop, Phebe's Dress Shop, E. L. Warner's Apache Liquor Store, Tri-City Drug Store, Don Urquhart Barber Shop, Rosamond's Beauty Shop, or Dick Frank's Laundromat. Other free-standing businesses were later built on both sides of the shopping center.

1958 – State Engineers began planning improvements to the Apache Boulevard roadway, including widening the pavement and installing medians and left turn lanes, however, this was not popular, especially with residents and business owners in the eastern portion of the city who were concerned that the medians would disrupt local traffic. More than a thousand people signed petitions protesting the road dividers and left turn lanes on Apache, but the redesign of the highway proceeded.

December 14, 2001, Tempe Historic Preservation Commission produced the Post World War II Subdivisions Survey (Solliday 2001). This study examined approximately 4,500 properties that were built in Tempe between 1946 and 1960. From this group inventory forms were completed for about 1,500 properties occurring in 62 subdivisions. The Context Study identified 31 subdivisions as candidates for designation as historic districts in two groups; 7 first-tier subdivisions each of which are recommended for designation now, and 25 second-tier subdivisions from which a representative sample of more contemporary districts can be drawn in the future. National Folk Ranch houses are found in Tomlinson Estates, State College Homes, Val Verde, Lindon Park, and Papago Parkway. In identifying Carlson Park, and Tomlinson Estates as subdivisions

that will become eligible as Historic Districts in the next ten years, Solliday 2001 reports, 24 subdivisions should be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as historic districts when most of the properties are at least fifty years old. He states, each of these subdivisions have some significant historic associations and most of the houses, as well as the subdivisions themselves, exhibit a fairly high level of historic integrity.

December 4, 2003 – Tempe Voters adopt Tempe General Plan 2030 providing Cultural Resource Area designation for 31 candidate historic districts (existing density allowed by zoning). Areas identified on the GP2030 density map, are considered culturally significant to the character of Tempe, based on the 2001 Post World War II Subdivision Study. It is desirable to maintain the character of these areas. The underlying zoning should remain the highest appropriate density for these areas. These areas are shown as Cultural Resource Areas, with a projected density to match the zoning at the time the plan was adopted – 4 December 2003.

October 7, 2004 – At the regular monthly meeting of the Tempe HPC it was determined to survey the various subdivisions comprising the University Heights Neighborhood Association area to identify the frequency of properties possessing a high degree of historic integrity as the first step in identifying potential historic district boundaries.

November 1, and November 9, 2004 – Tempe HPC Designation + Evaluation Subcommittee conducted field surveys of B-H Homes 1958~59, Borden Homes 1947~57, Carlson Park 1957~59, and Tomlinson Estates 1950~53, which together comprise the University Heights Neighborhood Association, a group of 226 households within the boundaries of the Apache Boulevard Redevelopment Project area and located in proximity to the proposed Central Phoenix / East Valley Light Rail Transit Project.

December 9, 2004 – At the regular monthly meeting of the Tempe HPC, the Evaluation + Designation Subcommittee brought forward the following recommendation for consideration by the Historic Preservation Commission. "Tomlinson Estates (1950-1953) exhibited a high degree of continuity, specifically when considering the structures within the subdivision. The presence of flood irrigation, mature mesic vegetation, and a formal subdivision layout are not as prominent as found in Borden Homes. At this time the subcommittee recommends further study of this subdivision as well as the entire group of Tier 2 subdivisions to gain a better contextual understanding of the condition, integrity, and significance of this group of potentially eligible historic resources. The subcommittee does feel a successful nomination of the Borden Homes subdivision would be an asset to a future nomination of Tomlinson Estates. The subcommittee recommends a delay of a Tomlinson Estates nomination at this time."

June 2, 2005 – Tempe City Council designates the historic 1947 Borden Homes subdivision as Tempe's first historic district, and directed that it be listed on the Tempe Historic Property Register. The purpose of the Borden Homes Historic Overlay District is to provide protection for significant properties which represent important aspects of Tempe's heritage; to enhance the character of the community by taking such properties

and sites into account during development, and to assist owners in the preservation and restoration of their properties.

November 10, 2005 – At the regular monthly meeting of the Tempe HPC it was determined to prioritize designating the first-tier + 2 subdivisions and refer to this group as “Priority Eligible Historic Subdivisions”. It was stated that if any of the remaining 18 historic subdivisions identified for further consideration were to approach the Commission, the Commission would have a very open ear to them.

Integrity

The Solliday 2001 evaluation of neighborhood integrity was based on several factors including the proportion of individual properties that possess a high level of integrity, the presence of all of a subdivision's key non-residential elements (streets, vegetation, irrigation system, etc.), and the absence of any significant non-conforming encroachments in residential areas. Only those houses that portray the highest level of architectural integrity (i.e., that still possess all elements of their original design) were reported. Solliday reported integrity in Tomlinson Estates at 49%. That is to say that roughly half of the 67 properties within the subdivision boundaries would be evaluated as contributing to an historic district. Solliday consistently used a more strict test for integrity than the currently accepted standard, as can be seen in his evaluation of the adjacent Borden Homes subdivision where he estimated 68% integrity. Subsequent fieldwork by the commission indicated closer to 82% integrity in Borden Homes which correlates to approximately 60% of the Tomlinson properties to be potentially contributing. Solliday 2001 evaluated the Tomlinson Estates subdivision as having medium integrity. This should be field verified by the Commission.

The Solliday 2001 identified a number of External Threats to maintaining neighborhood integrity including; the Apache Boulevard Redevelopment Project and the Central Phoenix/East Valley Light Rail Transit Project. He noted the neighborhoods that are most vulnerable to external threats tend to be in areas west of downtown Tempe (section 16) and east of Rural Road (sections 23 and 24). Since completion of Solliday 2001, Tempe has implemented a new General Plan and a new Zoning & Development Code. Each of these instruments seeks to facilitate a new urban vision for the community through infill and redevelopment accommodations. While this overarching goal may revitalize many areas, the potential impact on historic integrity in Cultural Resource Areas may be less certain. Often residents are most intimately aware of changes to the quality of life within their neighborhood. University Heights Neighborhood Association representatives have communicated their concerns about the risks facing this area in the near term and it is not inappropriate to consider the relative exposure to risk for specific resources in a determination of historic designation.

Significance

The Solliday 2001 survey included an examination of approximately 4,500 properties that were built in Tempe between 1946 and 1960. From this survey, inventory forms were completed for 62 subdivisions and nearly 1,800 individual properties. Each postwar subdivision was evaluated for its historic and architectural significance, as well as integrity. The significance of a subdivision was determined by its relation to historic

themes, such as community planning and development, federal housing policy, or association with prominent builders and developers.

From a universe of over 100 original post-war subdivisions, Solliday 2001 recommended seven subdivisions to be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as historic districts. Each of these subdivisions has some significant historical associations. Most or all of the houses in these neighborhoods were built before 1950, and most of the houses, as well as the subdivisions themselves, exhibit a fairly high level of integrity. Obtaining historic district status for these subdivisions would provide recognition and protection of all of the earliest residential areas in the city that still convey their historic appearance and sense of place.

Solliday 2001 identified the Tomlinson Estates subdivision among the group that will become eligible as historic districts in the next ten years. He noted resources generally must be at least fifty years old to attain historic significance. Most of the properties surveyed for this study were built after 1951, and so, in 2001, were not yet eligible due to age. Solliday 2001 recommended these twenty-four subdivisions be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as historic districts at the appropriate time, when most of the properties are at least fifty years old. Each of these subdivisions has some significant historical associations. Most or all of the houses in these neighborhoods were built between 1950 and 1960, and most of the houses, as well as the subdivisions themselves, exhibit a fairly high level of integrity. Solliday 2001 evaluated the Tomlinson Estates subdivision as having high significance, building out in only three years it is considered to be a highly successful medium size flood-irrigated tract subdivision based on a modified grid design with uniform house designs.

Recommendation(s):

Historic Preservation Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the nomination and recommend to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council that the property be designated as a Tempe Historic Property.

Staff considers the recommendations in Solliday 2001 to remain valid unless integrity conditions have substantially changed in the interim since the study was completed and the recommendations accepted by the Commission. Staff believes that Solliday 2001 judiciously narrowed the candidate field of 62 extant subdivisions appropriately to 31 potential districts recognized as Cultural Resource Areas in Tempe General Plan 2030. Further, the Commission has indicated that the 2001 test for integrity was more restrictive than commonly accepted standards. Staff would like to see a comprehensive application of an assessment of contextual significance to all Cultural Resource Areas, however, it is not recommended to forestall recognition and protection of apparently qualified districts from the candidate field.

Criteria for designation of an historic district and listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register are provided in Section 14A-4 of the Tempe Historic Preservation Ordinance. Staff submits that the historic 1950 Tomlinson Estates subdivision is of exceptional significance and expresses a distinctive character, resulting from a significant portion of it being at least fifty (50) years old; it being reflective of the city's cultural, social, political

or economic past; and it being associated with an event significant in local, state or national history.

Most of the commercial properties identified in Solliday 2001 are ineligible for National Register listing due to marginal significance and/or integrity. Solliday noted two exceptions – the A. J. Bayless Supermarket and Shopping Center and Tempe Center – which represent very significant aspects of Tempe's commercial development. He noted however that the Bayless Shopping Center has been substantially altered, and Tempe Center is slated for demolition in the near future. Nonetheless, Solliday 2001 recommended that the Bayless Shopping Center should be considered for further study and evaluation, and possible inclusion in an amended Tempe Multiple Resource Area nomination. Staff concurs with this recommendation.

REFERENCES:

Buss, Charles 2006 – University Heights Neighborhood Tomlinson Estates Subdivision Historic Designation Nomination Form

Ryden, Don 1997 – Tempe Multiple Resource Area Update, Tempe Historic Preservation Office.

Solliday, Scott 2001 – Tempe Post World War II Subdivision Study, Tempe Historic Preservation Office.

attachments: application
vicinity map
site plan
photographs
other