

# Staff Summary Report

Historic Preservation Commission Date: 08/11/11

Agenda Item Number: \_\_\_\_

**SUBJECT:** Hold a public hearing for a Historic Overlay for the HARRIS HOUSE, located at 823 S. Maple Av

**DOCUMENT NAME:** HH-SSR.doc PLANNED DEVELOPMENT (0406)

**COMMENTS:** Request for HARRIS HOUSE (PL110191) (Jenny Lucier & Dan O'Neill property owners; Tempe Historic Preservation Office, applicant) consisting of Historic designation and listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register for the Harris House, consisting of one (1) lot on approximately 0.16 acres, 823 S. Maple Avenue, Tempe, in the R-3, Multi-Family Residential Limited District. The request includes the following:

HPO 1104 (Ordinance No. 2011.19) – Historic Designation consisting of one (1) lot.

**PREPARED BY:** Joe Nucci, HPO (480-350-8870)

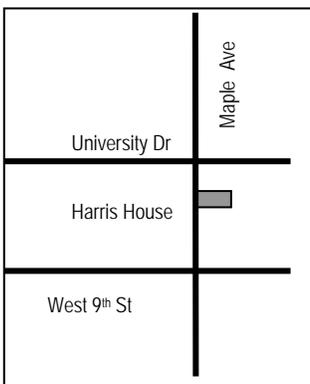
**REVIEWED BY:** Lisa Collins, CDD Deputy Director (480-350-8989)

**LEGAL REVIEW BY:** N/A

**FISCAL NOTE:** N/A

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff – Approval  
Historic Preservation Commission – (04/14/2011)

**ADDITIONAL INFO:** Net site area 0.16 acres  
Total Lots 1



A neighborhood meeting was held on July 14, 2011 for this application.

**PAGES:**

1. List of Attachments
2. Comments
3. Reason for Approval / Conditions of Approval
4. History & Facts / Zoning & Development Code Reference

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Ordinance No. 2011.19
2. Waiver of Rights and Remedies Form
3. Owner's letter requesting historic property designation
4. Tempe Historic Property Register Nomination Form
5. Photos

**COMMENTS:**

The Harris House, located at 823 South Maple Avenue, has been nominated for historic designation and listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register at the request of property owners Jenny Lucier and Dan O'Neill. Built in 1931, the house is in the upper ninety-ninth percentile (99.7%) of all Tempe properties in terms of age. The Harris House is also significant for its association with the Gage Addition; Tempe's oldest standing residential subdivision. Surviving with architectural integrity substantially intact, the Harris House provides an excellent example of the Southwest style house.

The Harris House was built in the historic (but not designated) Gage Addition, which lies adjacent to and south of downtown Tempe, adjacent to and west of the main campus of Arizona State University, and adjacent to and east of the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way. The Gage Addition describes the northern portion of the Maple-Ash Neighborhood, Tempe's oldest intact residential neighborhood, which includes 338 households mostly built between the 1910s and the 1950s. Tempe had been experiencing a housing shortage in the early decades of the twentieth century and the Gage Addition (1909) and later the Park Tract Subdivision (1924) were designed to provide comfortable and modern family housing to meet the increasing demand. The Harris House is historically associated with the early 20<sup>th</sup> century growth of Tempe beyond its original settlement area, and provides an example of the few remaining pre-WWII "suburban" houses.

**PUBLIC INPUT:**

On July 14, 2011, Tempe Historic Preservation Commission held a neighborhood meeting to notify property owners, residents, and neighborhood/homeowner association representatives of the process and request for historic designation. At that meeting neighbors indicated unanimous support of the nomination. Staff reported receiving support for the designation and listing from citizens by phone, by email, and by USPS. The following persons had indicated support at the time of the neighborhood meeting; David Arkules, Phil Douglass, Karyn Gittis, Dave Hausman, Lupe Martinez, John Minett, Jason Minos, Becky Rowley, Chris Rowley, Andy Weed, Maren Völkening, and Elna Rae Zeilinger. In addition, the Maple Ash Neighborhood Association provided a letter in support of the nomination and additional neighborhood support for the designation continues to arrive at Tempe HPO. Tempe Historic Preservation Commission reached consensus to hold a public hearing, take input from the owners, stakeholders, and interested persons and to make a recommendation regarding the proposed designation and listing.

**PROJECT ANALYSIS:**

The Harris House has been nominated for historic designation and listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register at the request of property owners Jenny Lucier and Dan O'Neill. The property is historically significant and is considered to be potentially eligible for this action by the Historic Preservation Office. The property survives as a rare example of pre-World War II residential construction in Tempe; it is also significant for its association with Gage Addition and as an excellent example of the Southwest style house.

The Harris House was built as part of the first wave of expansion of the small, mostly agricultural Tempe community. The historic 1931 Harris House is located on Lot 2 of Block 21 of the Gage Addition to the Town of Tempe. This 7,000 sf parcel lies midway between University Drive and 9<sup>th</sup> Street on the east side of Maple Avenue at the northern reach of historic residential development. Subdivision of the Gage Addition predated adoption of a zoning ordinance by the Tempe Town Council and this property is currently zoned R-3: Multi-Family Residential Limited.

Today all of block 21 along University Drive and Mill Avenue has been redeveloped for use as commercial property. Only the properties along South Maple Avenue retain their historic residential use. Situated mid-block between University Drive and 9th Street on the east side of South Maple Avenue, this 1920s Southwest style home takes on the character of a landmark – and survives as a rare example of residential development from Tempe's prewar growth period which coincided with the completion of Roosevelt Dam, Arizona statehood, tremendous expansion of the agricultural economy, increased development of subdivisions, of city services, of the Normal School, and of transportation systems linking Tempe to the rest of the Valley and throughout the region.

The Harris House is significant as one of the few remaining examples of pre-war Southwest style frame houses in Tempe, and has changed little from 1931, when this classic Southwest design first made an important addition to the new neighborhood. The historic 1931 Harris House continues to convey its architectural qualities of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling.

**AGE:**

The Harris House is one of only three Tempe properties believed to survive from 1931. Based on data from the Maricopa County Assessor's Office and Tempe HPO files, 144 standing Tempe properties are thought to predate this historic house having year-built dates earlier than 1931. The house is in the ninety-ninth percentile ( $n = 145/53,665 = 99.7$ ) of all Tempe properties in terms of age and, therefore, is constitutes a rare surviving example of pre-WWII residential architecture in Tempe.

**CONDITION:**

The 1931 Harris House has been well maintained, remains completely intact, and retains most of its original materials. Mature landscaping surrounding the house is typical for the Maple-Ash neighborhood. Southwest style architecture became prolific in Maricopa County during the 1930s. The form is a hybrid, blending Pueblo Revival styling with the so-called Mission style or Spanish Colonial Revival architecture to produce something of genuine origin in the 1930s American Southwest.

The Harris House is in excellent condition and retains the majority of its original Southwest style form and features intact. The most prominent character-defining features of late Southwest style include: smooth stucco finish (newly painted in a period correct pastel color), red roof tile accents at the entry porch and rear sun room, and the pueblo-like modulated parapet lines combine to typify materials characteristic of the Southwest style. The presence of original wood sash double-hung windows, doors, and exterior trim further reinforces the historic character of the Harris House.

**INTEGRITY:**

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its historic significance. To be listed in the Tempe Historic Property Register, a property must be historically significant under ordinance criteria and must also possess adequate integrity to communicate that significance to persons familiar with the property and to the community at large. The integrity of a property is evaluated according to aspects that must be present in different combinations, depending on the property type and the criteria upon which historic significance is based. A building eligible for listing under NPS Criterion A must possess integrity of Location, Materials, Feeling, and Association. A building eligible for listing under NPS Criterion C must possess integrity of Design, Workmanship, Materials, and Feeling. Tempe HPO considers the subject property to maintain these aspects of integrity sufficiently to qualify for historic designation and listing under National Park Service Criterion A and C, at the local level of significance. As seen in the following discussion, the property exceeds these minimum requirements and retains more than adequate integrity to qualify for designation and listing.

**Location** – This property exists in its originally developed location. The Gage Addition subdivision encompasses a collection of historic resources directly associated with the early growth and development of Tempe and the Salt River Valley. The evolution of Tempe over the past 140 years holds national, state, and local significance for its important role in the development of the Salt River Valley as a center of commerce and education, as a critical link in the transportation networks during the settlement of the Territory, and for its associations with important political figures. Tempe's unique heritage is exemplified in its significant residential architecture and infrastructure. These exist today in the Gage Addition as manifestations of those Arizona pioneers who transformed the desert environment of the Salt River Valley into a community of enduring consequence.

Situated on the east side of Maple Avenue mid-block between University Drive and 9th Street, the Harris House is located on land that was originally included within the boundaries of the 1894 Tempe Townsite. Although not subdivided until fifteen years later, the Gage Addition was never annexed into the corporate limits of Tempe – rather uniquely, it was an integral yet undeveloped part of Tempe from the onset. Today, this historic subdivision includes a vibrant residential neighborhood. The clear and present landmark character of the Maple Ash Neighborhood retains popular historic identity recognized throughout the community and beyond.

**Design** – Design is the composition of elements that constitute the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. Because properties change through time, changes may acquire significance in their own right and do not necessarily constitute a loss of design integrity. The Harris House continues to maintain original spatial relationships between major features, visual rhythms, layout and materials, and the relationship of other features as they were originally constructed and developed. Southwest style architecture came into high-fashion during the 1930s in California and the Southwest. The form is a hybrid of Pueblo Revival style and Spanish Colonial Revival style. This blending of architectural forms produced something of genuine origin in the 1930s American Southwest. Architects initially embraced the style and adapted it for larger estates and commercial projects. As they perfected the form over time they gradually simplified design details, making them more elegant and refined. Design aspects of the Harris House typify the Southwest style and continue to communicate this aspect of integrity.

**Setting** – Setting is the physical environment of a historic property that illustrates the character of the place. Although integrity of setting is not a condition precedent to designation in this case, the property nevertheless retains many important connections to the physical environment of its surroundings. The flood irrigated landscape has matured to enhance the setting of this property and emphasizes the connection of the house and the landscape. Original relationships of buildings and structures to the streetscape and landscape, layout and materials of alleyways and walks, and the features of flood irrigation and other infrastructure also remain intact and reinforce this aspect of the property's integrity.

**Materials** – Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. A property must retain key exterior materials dating from the period of its historic significance. Integrity of materials determines whether or not an authentic historic resource still exists. The Harris House retains key physical elements as they were originally configured to reveal the preferences, to indicate the availability of particular types of materials, and to exemplify technologies characteristic of the Southwest style house form. Specifically the smooth stucco finish recently painted in a period-correct pastel color, the red tile accents at the entry porch and rear sun room, and the pueblo-like modulated parapet lines combine to typify materials characteristic of the Southwest style. The presence of original windows, doors, and exterior trim further reinforces the historic character and the ability to convey historic significance.

**Workmanship** – Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period of history. Workmanship is important because it can furnish evidence of the technology of the craft, illustrate the aesthetic principles of an historic period, and reveal individual, local, regional, or national applications of both technological practices and aesthetic principles. Fenn Harris built this house himself, by hand, as a home for his family. Fenn was a carpenter and worked as "head of buildings and grounds" at ASTC / ASU for 32 years. In 1931, he built his family home at 823 South Maple Avenue. Before WWII, houses were typically built by hand – one or two men completing the entire project. One man forming the foundation, laying masonry walls, framing partitions and roof, placing stucco and setting the roof tiles, working from rough carpentry to finish trim, doors and windows, with maybe another man or a family member to help when the job required it. The craft of the house builder included many trades: electrical, plumbing, painting and plastering were all done by the builder. Most of the construction was done on site using only hand tools. It was only after World War II that the skilled tradesman began to be replaced by new materials and methods that saved time and money on the job site by value added in manufacturing. Not here though; the Harris House conveys physical evidence of the crafts attendant upon Southwest style masonry residential construction in Tempe during the 1930s. The Harris House was built by hand and it was built to last.

**Feeling** – Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. This property expresses the aesthetic sense of its interwar period of significance. The physical features of the Harris House remain sufficiently intact to convey their significance to someone familiar with the original property as well as to persons throughout the community to whom the property distinguishes itself as historic. Retention and good maintenance of original design, materials, workmanship, and setting as described above is sufficient to create a discernable sense of place at the historic property.

**Association** – Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and an historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and it remains sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Like feeling, association requires the presence of physical features that convey a property's historic character. The Harris House remains emblematic of the consecutive waves of pre-WWII suburbanization that pushed outward from Tempe's original settlement along the Salt River.

**CONCLUSION:**

The Harris House, located at 823 South Maple Avenue in the 1909 Gage Addition subdivision, has been determined eligible for historic designation and listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register by the Tempe Historic Preservation Office. Built in 1931, this house is in the upper ninety-ninth percentile (99.7) of all Tempe properties in terms of age. The property is also significant for its association with the historic, but not designated, 1909 Gage Addition subdivision. The property is additionally significant as an excellent early example of the Southwest style house as it both embodies the distinctive characteristics of the type and survives with a high degree of architectural integrity.

The basis for historic designation and listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register is provided by Tempe City Code Sec. 14A-4. Designation of landmarks, historic properties and historic districts –

(a) The following criteria are established for designation of an individual property, building, structure or archeological site:

- (1) It meets the criteria for listing on the Arizona or national register of historic places;
- (2) It is found to be of exceptional significance and expresses a distinctive character, resulting from:
  - a. A significant portion of it is at least fifty (50) years old; is reflective of the city's cultural, social, political or economic past; and is associated with a person or event significant in local, state or national history; or
  - b. It represents an established and familiar visual feature of an area of the city, due to a prominent location or singular physical feature; or
- (3) If it has achieved significance within the past fifty (50) years, it shall be considered eligible for designation as a landmark if it is an integral and critical part of an historic district or demonstrates exceptional individual importance by otherwise meeting or exceeding the criteria specified in paragraphs (1) or (2) of this subsection above. At such time as a landmark becomes fifty (50) years old, it will automatically be reclassified as an historic property.

**REASONS FOR APPROVAL:**

- 1. The Harris House is significant as a rare surviving example of a once-common type; the 1931 property falls in the upper ninety-ninth percentile (99.7) of all Tempe properties in terms of age. .
- 2. The Harris House is significant for its association with the 1909 Gage Addition subdivision, Tempe's oldest intact residential subdivision.
- 3. The Harris House is significant as an excellent surviving example of the Southwest style house, as it both embodies the distinctive characteristics of the type and survives with a high degree of architectural integrity.

**CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:**

None

**HISTORY & FACTS:**

04/03/1909	Gage Addition plat filed by George N. Gage and L. W. Blinn on behalf of the Tempe Land & Improvement Company on April 3, 1909. As originally filed, the plat spanned east and west of Mill Avenue from the MP&SRV RR tracks to Willow (College) Avenue, excepting the blocks southeast of Mill and 8th Street (University Drive) which were shown as "School Property" and keeping the northern portions of the 3 westernmost blocks free from residential lots.
07/01/1919	Gage Addition plat amendment filed for land sale to Tempe Normal School.
11/17/1919	Tempe Land and Improvement Company deeds vacant Lots 2 and 3 of Block 21 Gage Addition to Maggie A. Windes 19190004066
11/27/1922	R. A. & Maggie A. Windes deed vacant Lots 2 and 3 of Block 21 Gage Addition to to Dudley W. Windes 19220004290

- 12/26/1923 Dudley W. Windes and Hope G. Windes, husband and wife, mortgage Lots 2 and 3 of Block 21 Gage Addition to Frank Haywood for \$1,500.00
- 05/17/1927 Dudley W. Windes and Hope G. Windes, husband and wife, deed Lots 2 and 3 of Block 21 Gage Addition to Ellen M. Bell
- 03/19/1929 Ellen M. Bell mortgages Lots 2, 3, and 4 of Block 21 Gage Addition to Tempe National Bank for \$350 19290010696
- c.1931 Fenn John Harris and his wife Mildred build their family home at 823 South Maple Avenue after Fenn's mother, Ellen M. Bell (who lived two doors down at 24 West 9th), secured a series of mortgages on lots 2-3-4, Block 21 to finance the house's construction. Fenn, a World War I veteran and carpenter, lived in the house until his death in 1973. Mildred remained in the house until 1998.
- 04/04/1940 E B Tucker, City Engineer, implements Improvement District Number 30 to extend sidewalks, pavement, curb & gutter to Gage Addition.
- 10/11/1951 Tempe's third zoning ordinance went into effect; Ordinance No. 209 extended multi-family zoning throughout older Tempe neighborhoods and rezoned properties north of Ninth Street from single family to multi-family.
- 02/06/1957 Tempe's fourth zoning ordinance went into effect; Ordinance No. 268 rezoned the entire Maple-Ash residential area Multi-Family districts similar to the current district area boundaries within Maple-Ash today.
- 02/22/1994 Mildred C. Harris, wife of Fenn John Harris, deceased 1973, acquires title to residence at 823 South Maple Avenue through probate
- 06/06/1994 Mildred C. Harris quits claim to title to residence at 823 South Maple Avenue to Mildred Harris Hall
- 08/28/1998 Gerald Dan O'Neill & Jeanette L Lucier acquire Lot 2, Block 21, Gage Addition, according to Book 3 of Maps, Page 58, records of Maricopa County, Arizona from Lyle Hall dealing with his wife's sole and separate property – 823 South Maple Avenue.
- 12/14/2001 Tempe Historic Preservation Commission produces the Post World War II Subdivisions Survey (Solliday 2001). The study recommended the Gage Addition, Park Tract, and College View subdivisions for designation as historic districts.
- 02/04/2011 Owners nominate the Harris House for historic designation and listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register.
- 07/14/2011 A neighborhood meeting is held by the Historic Preservation Commission for historic designation and listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register for the Harris House. Nomination receives broad-based public support from neighborhood residents.
- 08/11/2011 A public hearing is held by the Historic Preservation Commission for historic designation and listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register for the Harris House.
- Aug 23, 2011 Scheduled Development Review Commission public hearing for this request
- Sep 08, 2011 Scheduled Tempe City Council introduction and first public hearing for this request
- Sep 22, 2011 Scheduled Tempe City Council second public hearing (action) for this request

**CODE REFERENCES:**

Zoning and Development Code, Section 6-304, Zoning Amendment

City Code, Chapter 14a, Historic Preservation