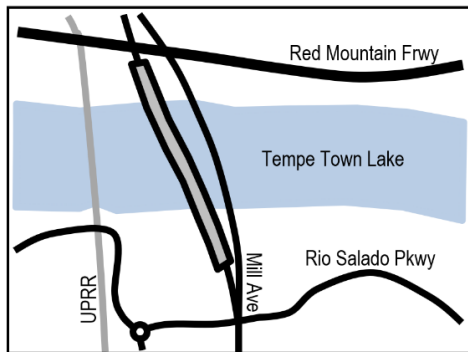


**CITY OF TEMPE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**Meeting Date: 07/13/2022
Agenda Item: 4**

ACTION: Request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of gates across the alcoves on the Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge, located at 1 S. Mill Avenue. The applicant is the Tempe Homeless Solutions Task Force. (PL220179/HPO220006).

RECOMMENDATION: None



Property Owner:	City of Tempe
Applicant:	Tempe Homeless Solutions Task Force
Tempe Hist. Prop. Reg. Status:	Designated
National Register Status:	Listed

ATTACHMENTS:

- Memo from Keely Varvel Hartsell, Chief of Staff, Mayor and City Council
- PowerPoint presentation (including gate design renderings)
- Drawing of proposed gate access points on alcoves

STAFF CONTACT(S): Zachary J. Lechner, Historic Preservation Officer, 480-350-8870

Department Director: Jeff Tamulevich, Community Development Director

Legal review by: N/A

Prepared by: Zachary J. Lechner, Historic Preservation Officer

COMMENTS:

The Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge is located at 1 South Mill Avenue. The bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1981 and designated as “Historic” by its inclusion in the Tempe Historic Property Register in 1999.

Staff evaluation of the Certificate of Appropriateness request utilized information on the Tempe Directory of Historic Buildings [website](#), the National Register of Historic Places [nomination](#), and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as guidance when analyzing the submittal.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW:

From the Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge [listing](#) on the *Tempe Directory of Historic Buildings*:

THEME / CONTEXT

The Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge is associated with the context of Community Planning and Development. It falls under the theme of transportation - bridge. . . .

SUMMARY

The Mill Avenue Bridge is the second oldest automobile crossing on the Salt River in the Phoenix metropolitan area, and has been in continuous use since its completion in 1931. It was the major transportation link in three transcontinental highways (U.S. Routes 60, 70, and 80) and Arizona’s only north-south route, U.S. Route 89, until the freeway system was begun in the 1950s. The bridge was built to replace an earlier highway bridge built twenty years earlier at Ash Avenue . . . [that] had become increasingly congested and was no longer able to adequately support wider and heavier vehicles. In 1928, a group of Tempe businessmen submitted a request to the Arizona Highway Commission that a new bridge be planned. The bridge was designed by the Arizona Highway Department in 1929. Ralph Hoffman, the bridge engineer for the State of Arizona, signed the contract with Lynch-Cannon Construction Company of Los Angeles, implementing Federal Project 2-B. The bridge was opened to traffic in August of 1931, but was not officially dedicated until 1933. Presiding at the ceremony was Arizona Governor B. B. Moeur, a Tempe physician.

The Mill Avenue Bridge is a ten-span poured concrete, open spandrel structure. The spans are multiple ribbed with open spandrels, each 140 ft. long, supporting a concrete roadway on beamed and webbed columns above the ribs. The ribs are designed as hingeless arches fixed at the piers. Two types of piers are used in the design and the spans are divided into groups of three, four, and three, separated by abutment piers. Abutment piers are of a typical column construction. Abutment piers are extended and carried above the roadway level in four hexagonal towers forming pedestrian rest bays with canopies. This effect is maintained with hexagonal pylons terminating the railings at each end of the bridge.

(HPO note: The alcoves that the Tempe Homeless Solutions Task Force is requesting to alter with the installation of gates, via a Certificate of Appropriateness, are the “hexagonal towers” and “rest bays” referenced above. Like the rest of the bridge itself, the eight alcoves (four on each side) are made of poured concrete. Their intended use was to provide pedestrians traversing the bridge with a shaded

sitting area.)

PROJECT ANALYSIS:

The applicant seeks to install ten-foot-high and approximately five-foot wide gates across each of the eight Old Mill Avenue Bridge alcoves for added security and to prevent the local homeless population from establishing encampments in the alcoves, vandalizing them, and otherwise using them improperly. To address the issue, City staff have been removing debris and various belongings from the alcoves daily. Weekly, they have been power washing the structures. The applicant is seeking a permanent solution to the homeless population's misuse of the alcoves, one that will allow City staff to end both its daily and weekly clean-up efforts. The applicant expresses concern over the amount of time that Engineering & Transportation Department and Human Services Department staff must commit to alcove cleanup and resulting outreach to the homeless population. The applicant also worries that continued power washing of the alcoves may eventually damage them.

The applicant's proposal will require drilling into the concrete structure of the alcoves at four separate points, with a two additional anchor points on the concrete of the sidewalk. The applicant's attached PowerPoint presentation slides indicate that the gate solution is "permanent." However, in the future, if the City elects to remove the gates, the drilled holes could be patched and painted over, so the damage to the historic structure would not necessarily be permanent.

The installation of gates will markedly change the appearance of the alcoves; it will also alter their historic use of providing an always accessible resting spot for pedestrians on the Old Mill Avenue Bridge. While the applicant states that their plan will actually help to preserve the alcoves' intended use, that does not take into account that each of the alcoves are typically still available for this purpose now, and the degree to which the alcoves will retain their historic use, once gated, will largely depend on how often the gates will be left open. The design presented by the applicant will allow for the gates to be opened and locked into place so that the alcoves' interiors may still be accessed, though the schedule for keeping the gates open has not been determined yet. The applicant indicates, in the attached memo, that the gates could kept open during the day and closed and "locked at night or other appropriate times," while noting that "the Engineering and Transportation Department staff would . . . work jointly with other City departments to determine the schedule for allowing the gates to be open versus locked."

The applicant has proposed several gate designs and color choices in its proposal. Virtually all of them are undesirable due either to the intricateness of the gate or the paint color choice. The most appropriate design and paint color is depicted on the following page:



In this rendering, the gate's slender pickets mirror non-historic gating at other historic sites owned by the City, including the Hayden Flour Mill complex, and would signal to passersby that the gate is not historic. Similarly, the proposed "Tempe Bronze" paint color would mirror the paint color used on the alcove's existing non-historic elements (i.e., light fixture supports).

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties include four distinct standards: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction. The Standards for Preservation (detailed below) are most applicable to the applicant's proposal. The most relevant Standards for Preservation in this case are as follows:

1. A property will be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that maximizes the retention of distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships. Where a treatment and use have not been identified, a property will be protected and, if necessary, stabilized until additional work may be undertaken.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate, and conserve existing historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.
4. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

5. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

The HPO encourages the HPC to consider whether the current staff-intensive approach to dealing with the homeless population's unauthorized use of the alcoves (with perhaps a switch to using a gentler cleaning process than power washing) might be a better option than installing gating. The applicant makes a compelling case (in the attached memo) for why temporary, removable barriers would be either unsightly or ineffective in blocking access to the alcoves. The two best options, then, are to carry on with some version of the status quo, or to install the gates.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Based upon the information provided and the above analysis, should the Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the applicant's proposed plan for installing gates across the alcoves of the Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge (PL220179/HPO220006), HPO recommends approval be subject to the following conditions:

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

1. Damage caused by drilling into the concrete alcoves to install gates across the Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge alcoves shall be reversible (via patching and repainting with a matching color and sheen) and virtually undetectable if repaired in the future.
2. The approved gate design and paint color shall adhere to the example depicted in the HPO staff report for the Certificate of Appropriateness request.
3. The alcove gate opening and closing schedule shall receive HPO approval, which must be received prior to installation of the gates.
4. The Certificate of Appropriateness shall only be valid after the applicant obtains all other necessary entitlements from the Planning Division.
5. Any changes to the gate design plan as submitted shall be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Officer for compliance with the Certificate of Appropriateness and issuance of a Certificate of No Effect.

SAMPLE MOTION:

"I move to approve the applicant's request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of gates across the alcoves on the Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge, located at 1 South Mill Avenue, contingent on adherence to the conditions of approval contained in the staff report.

(Commissioners may also amend the conditions of approval when making a motion.)

MEMORANDUM

TO: Zach Lechner
THROUGH: Andrew Ching, Keith Burke, Ryan Levesque, Paul Bentley, Isaac Chavira
FROM: Keely Varvel Hartsell, Chief of Staff, Mayor and Council
DATE: July 1, 2022
SUBJECT: Proposed gates for “pedestrian rest bays” on Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge



Background:

Completed in 1931, the Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge is an iconic landmark in Tempe and a historic gateway to our city, providing an automobile and pedestrian crossing of Tempe Town Lake and the Salt River. The bridge has been listed on the Tempe Historic Property Register since 1999 and has withstood many floods and strong monsoon storms due to its sturdy construction. Included in the construction of this historic bridge are four hexagonal towers on each side of the bridge which form a total of 8 canopied, “pedestrian rest bays” (also referred to as “alcoves” in this memo) along the southbound side of the bridge.

There has been an ongoing challenge with persons living unhoused in the Downtown Tempe and river bottom area utilizing the alcove spaces on the bridge as temporary shelter or even more permanent encampment locations. The result has been an accumulation of trash in the alcove areas and the spaces are regularly defaced with graffiti.

This continued activity prevents these spaces from being used for their intended purpose: to provide those crossing the bridge on foot to temporarily use the alcove benches as a pedestrian rest bay area, ideal for a break or to take in the scenery of the surrounding area.

Members of the Tempe City Council and the City Manager expressed concern about the issue of the unauthorized use of the alcove spaces on the bridge to the Tempe Homeless Solutions Task Force, a cross-department group of City staff working to implement strategies to reduce the number of unhoused individuals in Tempe and address the various human service, public safety and sanitary issues that homeless encampments present.

To address the bridge alcove issue, the City of Tempe Engineering and Transportation and Human Services Department staff members conduct daily visits to the bridge to remove trash and encourage those living unhoused in the bridge alcoves to seek shelter and services elsewhere. Engineering and Transportation Department staff also power-wash the pedestrian rest bay areas weekly and the Community Development Department works to remove any graffiti as quickly as possible. Maintenance of these alcove areas is very staff intensive and there is concern that continued power-washing of the

alcove walls could begin to deteriorate the bridge's construction materials. These efforts have reduced the frequency of unhoused individuals sheltering in the alcoves but have not eliminated this activity.

Recommendations:

Staff, working as part of the Tempe Homeless Solutions Task Force, request that the Historic Preservation Commission grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of visually appealing gates at each of the 8 alcoves or pedestrian rest bays on the Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge.

These gates could be locked at night or other appropriate times to discourage and prevent individuals from defacing the property with graffiti, leaving trash or using the alcove areas for unauthorized activity such as establishment of an encampment.

Other temporary barriers have been considered, but there is also concern that a temporary barrier, such as a construction/traffic barricades, metal fencing barricade or wood covering would be unsightly, drawing attention away from the beauty of the historic bridge's construction. Additionally, a nonpermanent barrier such as a barricade or a large planter likely would not keep individuals out of the alcove areas. These barriers could also become an item that can be made in to a "shade structure" by individuals wanting to utilize the space for unauthorized purposes. Temporary barriers may also obscure law enforcement officers' view of individuals utilizing the area behind the barrier for unauthorized purposes.

Next Steps:

Various artist renderings of potential gates are being considered. Examples of those options are attached. The Engineering and Transportation Department would be responsible for installing the gates and their staff would work collaboratively with the Tempe Historic Preservation Office to ensure as minimal impact or alteration to the bridge as possible. The Engineering and Transportation Department staff would be responsible for maintenance of the gates and would work jointly with other City departments to determine the schedule for allowing the gates to be open versus locked.

The cost to purchase and affix the gates to the bridge alcoves is approximately \$28,000 and funding has been identified to cover this cost. It is anticipated that the gates could be manufactured and installed by the end of the year if the HPC grants the certificate of appropriateness.

Historic Preservation Commission

Proposed gates for “pedestrian rest
bays” on the Tempe (Old Mill
Avenue) Bridge

July 13, 2022



Background

- Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge built in 1931; on Tempe Historic Property Register since 1999
- Construction includes hexagonal towers along the south bound side of the bridge with 8 total canopied alcoves or “pedestrian rest bays”
- Alcove spaces frequently are subject to graffiti, trash and used as shelter by unhoused

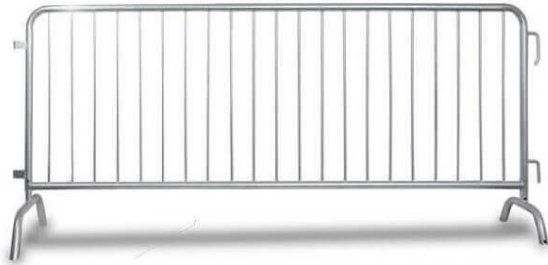


Background ,cont.



- Homeless Solutions Task Force, a cross-department work group, seeking to both address needs of the unhoused and allow the pedestrian rest bays to again be used for intended purpose
- Daily staff visits for trash removal and homeless services; weekly power washing; quick graffiti removal
- Maintenance of these areas is very staff intensive; power-washing may eventually damage bridge materials and efforts still have not resolved problem
- Many non-permanent options have been considered

Examples of temporary options



Examples of temporary options



Recommendation



- Homeless Solutions Task Force seeks Certificate of Appropriateness to install gates on the pedestrian rest bays
- Gates could be locked at night and other appropriate times to prevent vandalism and unauthorized use
- Temporary options such as barricade structures and planters have been considered but would not completely prevent access and could be used to facilitate unauthorized use by obscuring the view of what is happening inside the alcove area



Possible permanent options



Possible permanent options



Possible permanent options



Recommendation, cont.



- Cost would be approximately \$28,000; funds have been identified
- City of Tempe Engineering and Transportation Department staff would work with the HPC office to ensure installation of gates is done with as minimal impact or alteration of bridge as possible
- Engineering and Transportation Department staff would work jointly with other City departments to determine schedule of when gates are open or locked
- Gates could be installed by the end of the year, pending approval



QUESTIONS



Tempe

Making waves in the desert

