



## City of Phoenix

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

### Staff Report: Historic Preservation Plan – *PreserveHistoricPHX2025* August 22, 2025

#### INTRODUCTION

The first comprehensive plan for historic preservation in the city of Phoenix was adopted in 2015. *PreserveHistoricPHX2025* provides the opportunity to assess the achievements made after the adoption of the original plan, new challenges as well as new opportunities to advance historic preservation in Phoenix. A copy of the draft version of *PreserveHistoricPHX2025* can be accessed here: [PreserveHistoricPHX | City of Phoenix](#)

#### BACKGROUND

The city commissioned the preeminent historic preservation data analysis firm PlaceEconomics to conduct stakeholder meetings to identify challenges and create a series of recommendations to advance historic preservation in Phoenix based on practices occurring across the country. The city began a public engagement effort based on the findings of this PlaceEconomics study (included in plan as appendices) with a series of public meetings and a publicly posted survey from fall of 2023 through summer of 2024 to evaluate the relevancy of the original 2015 goals and to set priorities for the next decade.

The City Archaeology Office played an important role in developing recommendations for *PreserveHistoricPHX2025* because archaeology is a key component of historic preservation. The City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Ordinance – Chapter 8 of the Zoning Ordinance – mandates the identification and preservation of archaeological resources and the recognition that “archaeological resources found on public land are the property of all citizens and are not private property.” (§802.B.2(c))

These engagement efforts revealed that the original five goals of the 2015 plan continue to have relevance:

1. Protect Archaeological Resources
2. Protect Historic Resources
3. Explore Preservation Incentives
4. Develop Community Awareness
5. Promote Partnerships

The goals and tools can be found starting on page 54 of the draft *PreserveHistoricPHX2025* plan.

## PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Village Planning Committees (VPCs) considered the request for plan approval throughout June, with an additional meeting in July. Two VPCs recommended approval, per the staff recommendation; twelve VPCs recommended approval, per the staff recommendation, with direction and one VPC did not meet quorum.

The City of Phoenix Historic Preservation (HP) Commission considered the request on July 14, 2025, and recommended approval per the staff recommendation.

Following these public hearings, updates have been made to the draft plan to address comments as well as the direction from the VPCs to assess how the Middle Housing Law (A.R.S. § 9-462.13) will impact historic districts within one mile of Phoenix’s Central Business District.

## STAFF REQUEST

Staff recommends plan approval with the following changes:

Location in HP Plan	Proposed Changes
Page 3 Acknowledgements	Amend Council, Commission and Staff members as needed
Page 10 Under Create a Network of Vibrant Cores, Centers & Corridors	Replace as follows: “Commercial areas with a concentration of heritage buildings, such as the historic Grand Avenue or Miracle Mile corridors, are magnets for small businesses, legacy businesses, and businesses in the creative and technology sectors.”
Page 10 Under Connect People & Places	Add as follows: “Residents of Phoenix’s historic districts live closer to museums, libraries and other cultural institutions compared to the city overall.”
Page 10-11 Under Strengthen our Local Economy	Add as follows: “Phoenix’s heritage commercial areas are home to 20% of all jobs in arts, entertainment and recreation.”
Page 11 Under Celebrate our Diverse Communities and Neighborhoods	Replace as follows: “Phoenix’s historic neighborhoods are great models of diversity, not only in architectural style or housing unit type, but also in resident demographics.”  “As a share of housing stock, Phoenix’s historic districts have 6% of 2-to-4-unit structures versus 1% for the remainder of the city. A much wider range of housing unit options yields a diversity of housing and rent prices.”  “Historic districts have both a slightly higher share of high income and low-income residents as compared to the city overall reflecting economic diversity.”  “With rapid population growth between 2010 and 2020; Phoenix’s historic districts gained fewer white residents

	<p>and lost fewer residents of other races than the rest of Phoenix, maintaining levels of population diversity in these areas.”</p> <p>“The city’s inventory of older housing stock is providing affordable housing largely without subsidy, likely due to its age, condition and smaller unit size.”</p>
<p>Page 11 Under Build the most Sustainable Desert City</p>	<p>Delete:</p> <p>“Historic neighborhoods in Phoenix are walkable—most rated “Very Walkable” as contrasted to “Car Dependent” for the city as a whole.”</p> <p>Add as follows:</p> <p>“Phoenix’s historic neighborhoods are significantly more pedestrian, bike and transit friendly than the city has a whole.”</p> <p>Modify as follows:</p> <p>“Reusing existing buildings encourages adaptive reuse and diverts waste from our landfills while also reducing carbon emissions that result from new construction.”</p>
<p>Page 42 under table</p>	<p>Replace as follows: “Current real estate market conditions are evident in the top four challenges selected by respondents and for good reason. Demand for housing and increasing real estate prices have placed direct pressure on historic resources. Arguments that existing housing is inefficient or expensive to maintain result in proposals for demolition and redevelopment and continue to lead to the loss of historic buildings in Phoenix. Additionally, some property owners, unaware of historic preservation requirements, or as a result of market conditions, undertake renovation or demolition work without obtaining the necessary plan reviews and permits. Respondents expressed concerns about limited enforcement mechanisms and the resulting difficulty in ensuring compliance with historic preservation requirements.</p> <p>A new state law, A.R.S. § 9-462.13, related to middle housing has heightened the concern of historic district residents about the impact of market pressures on their neighborhoods. A.R.S. § 9-462.13 requires cities to allow up to four units on single-family zoned lots within one mile of a city’s downtown or central business district. In Phoenix, while historic districts make up only 1% of the total land area of the city, they make up 78% of the single-family zoning acreage within the one-mile area of downtown, making them disproportionately impacted by</p>

	<p>this legislation. The law allows for this additional density, by right, but does not prohibit historic preservation plan review. The City of Phoenix Planning and Development Department will continue to require historic preservation plan review (demolition and/or new construction) on all housing proposals for historically designated properties</p> <p>As the long-term impacts of A.R.S. § 9-462.13 to historic districts are not yet known, city staff will monitor and collect data on new development in historic districts related to middle housing. A report will be prepared and presented at each annual work session of the Historic Preservation Commission.”</p>
Page 44 Under first paragraph	<p>Add as follows: “A primary concern expressed about the potential impact of A.R.S. § 9-462.13 to historic districts relates to the possible demolition of historic dwellings for the construction of new multi-family dwellings on the existing parcel.</p> <p>While A.R.S. § 9-462.13 grants increased rights, it does not alter the provisions of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, including the authority to impose a one-year stay of demolition for properties with HP overlay zoning.</p> <p>As part of strategies to preserve historic resources, the city may explore amending the Historic Preservation Ordinance to allow for the extension of demolition stays beyond one year. Such a measure could further discourage speculative redevelopment that undermines the historic character of neighborhoods.”</p>
Page 45 Under table	<p>Add as follows: “In the time since the original public outreach effort prioritized the development of a “pattern book” for Accessory Dwelling units (ADUs) the city has begun an initiative to develop standardized accessory dwelling unit (ADU) plans that will be preapproved and made available free to the public. Specific designs will also be preapproved for historic districts. While noted as “ADU’s” these preapproved plans will expedite the permitting of small, sensitively designed housing units which can add density in districts under A.R.S. § 9-462.13.”</p>

<p>Page 53 Mission statement following last sentence</p>	<p>Add as follows: “The August annual work session of the Historic Preservation Commission will provide the opportunity for staff to report on plan achievements made the prior year and discuss action items for the coming year.”</p>
<p>Page 57 Implementation Table</p>	<p>Add row in table as follows: “Create Enhanced Design Guidelines – HPO Partnering with consultants – Medium to long term”</p> <p>Revise timeframes for the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Context development and surveys of post-World War II property types - Short to medium term</li> <li>• Explore creation of honorific Heritage Property/District Classification - Short to medium term</li> </ul>
<p>Page 61 Implementation Table</p>	<p>Modify third row in table as follows: “Present on relevant HP topics at neighborhood and organization meetings to include Village Planning Committee meetings.”</p> <p>Revise timeframes for the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop educational tools for real estate professionals - Medium term</li> <li>• Create an HP 101 Series - Short term</li> </ul>

**PROJECT TIMELINE**

PreserveHistoricPHX 2025 is tentatively set to go before the Council Transportation, Infrastructure and Planning Subcommittee on October 15, 2025, and to City Council on November 19, 2025.

**WRITER/TEAM LEADER**

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 8/22/2025