



City of Phoenix

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Staff Report: Z-175-24-6 March 3, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Z-175-24-6 is a request to establish Historic Preservation (HP) overlay zoning for the property located at the northwest corner of 7th Street and Las Palmaritas Drive [8314 North 7th Street], known as Hansen Mortuary. Maps and photos of the subject property are attached.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that rezoning request Z-175-24-6 be approved.

BACKGROUND

In 2011, the subject property was one of 80 properties featured in *Midcentury Marvels: Commercial Architecture of Phoenix 1945-1975*, published by the City of Phoenix HP Office. At that time, the property was also determined eligible for listing on the Phoenix Historic Property Register and National Register of Historic Places.

In September 2024, Julia Taggart of the Sunnyslope Historical Society contacted HP staff to request historic designation for the property. Ms. Taggart also prepared an historic property inventory form, which was updated by HP staff, and contacted the property owner, Hansen Mortuary Inc., whose representative, Patricia H. Kerr, signed an Ownership Authorization Form and Waiver of Claims under Proposition 207 allowing the HP Commission to initiate HP zoning on its behalf. The HP Commission formally initiated HP zoning on October 21, 2024; shortly thereafter, staff filed this rezoning application.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The eligibility criteria for HP overlay zoning and listing on the PPHR are set forth in Section 807.D of the City of Phoenix Zoning Ordinance. To qualify, a property must demonstrate significance in local, regional, state, or national history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture, according to one or more of the following criteria:

- A. The property is associated with the events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history;
- B. The property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;

- C. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represents the work of a master, possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. The property has yielded or may likely yield information integral to the understanding of our prehistory or history.

In addition to the significance requirement, the property must also be at least 50 years old or have achieved significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance. The property must also possess sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its significance.

EVALUATION

Criterion A - Historic Events/Trends

Hansen Mortuary is significant under Criterion A at the local level in the area of Commerce. Continuously owned and operated by the Hansen family, the mortuary has been an integral part of the Sunnyslope community since its founding 75 years ago.

Born and raised in Sidney, Nebraska, Chester “Chet” Hansen, served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Following the war, he attended the University of Arizona and graduated from the California College of Mortuary Science. Chet and his wife, Janice, moved to Phoenix in 1949 and settled in Sunnyslope for Janice’s health. The following year, Chet partnered with Robert Lundberg to open the first mortuary in Sunnyslope. Located at Central and Dunlap avenues, Lundberg-Hansen Mortuaries offered complete mortuary facilities, as well as emergency ambulance service and oxygen service. The firm was a member of the Order of the Golden Rule, an international affiliation of funeral directors open only to members of high professional standing. The firm opened a second mortuary in Glendale, with Lundberg overseeing the Glendale location and Hansen continuing to operate the Sunnyslope location.

In 1957, the partnership dissolved, with Lundberg staying in Glendale and Hansen in Sunnyslope. In 1961, Hansen announced the construction of a new building at 8314 North 7th Street. Construction started later that year and was completed in early 1962. Hansen held an open house in February of 1962, welcoming the community and conducting tours of the new building, which were well attended.

In 1967, Hansen Mortuary joined with A. L. Moore & Sons and Whitney & Murphy to create a new firm called Associated Ambulance Services, Inc. Chet Hansen served on the board of directors for the new firm, which operated vehicles 24 hours a day equipped to handle any medical emergency. A spokesperson stated that the collaborative new firm was necessary “due to the complexity of modern ambulance service and emergency patient care.”

Chet Hansen continued to operate Hansen Mortuary into the 1970s and 1980s, until he retired in 1986. At that time, he passed the business on to his four children, Rae Jean, Bradley, Craig, and Patricia.

Chet left an imprint on Sunnyslope not just as a businessman but also as a community leader. He served on the John C. Lincoln Hospital Board for 37 years. In 1996, the John C. Lincoln Hospital Foundation honored Chet with the Spirit of Philanthropy Award. He was also president of the Arizona Funeral Directors Association and secretary of the National Funeral Directors Association. Janet also engaged in community service, serving as president of the John C. Lincoln Hospital Auxiliary and chairperson of the first Night of Gold fundraising ball in 1968. Janet passed away in 1986, followed by Chet in 1998.

The Hansen children have continued their parents' legacy, operating the family business and serving on community organizations in Sunnyslope. In the 1990s, the business expanded to include Chapel of Prayer Mortuary in Mesa, Mercer Mortuary in Phoenix, and Hansen Desert Hills Mortuary and Cemetery in Scottsdale. DECA Cremation Services and Hansen Planning Center were also established during this decade of expansion. Rae Jean and Craig retired in 2015, and Bradley retired in 2023, leaving Patricia as the current owner. Bradley's son Stuart and Patricia's son Tanner are third generation Hansens working in the business.

Criterion C - Architecture

The Hansen Mortuary building is significant under Criterion C at the local level in the area of Architecture. It is an excellent example of the A-frame subtype of Expressionist Modern architecture, commonly seen in high-style religious buildings from the 1960s.

According to *Midcentury Marvels: Commercial Architecture of Phoenix 1945-1975*, "At a quick glance, the Hansen Mortuary could be mistaken for a small church campus set on the bank of a canal amid a well-manicured, mature-landscaped site. An enormous Aleppo pine and three soaring palms frame the front façade of the mortuary." The pine has since been removed, and the lawn replaced with desert landscaping, but the "church campus" description is still appropriate.

The book continues, "The lofty triangular front gable of the chapel is the focus of the facility. Its heavy timber rafters at the deep-set gable are solidly planted into the earth. Each plane of the gable overhang is pierced by a series of five rectangular openings that allow sunlight to play across the wood-veneered gable wall. The lower wall of the chapel is veneered with native stone. The chapel façade is engaged by a thin flat roof at the height of the first-floor ceiling. This cantilevered overhang extends across the entire face of the long, low-profile building unifying and organizing its various elements. The front entrance immediately to the right of the chapel leads into a reception hall. The

windows of the visitation rooms further to the right look forward into landscaped gardens hidden from the street by decorative block screen walls.”

The A-frame design is religiously evocative, appropriate for a chapel. In *The Suburban Church: Modernism and Community in Postwar America*, historian Gretchen Buggeln states that the A-frame design was frequently perceived as “praying hands, a triangle representing the Trinity, a tent for God’s people on the move, an inverted ark, or even a cave for quiet renewal.” One of the quintessential examples of this style is the 1956 Air Force Academy Chapel in Colorado Springs, Colorado, designed by Walter Netsch of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill.

Architect Pierre Woodman of Upland, California, created the initial design for Hansen Mortuary in 1958, utilizing the characteristic A-frame building form to evoke a feeling of comfort and faith. A local architect, William A. Lockard, drafted a full architectural set in 1960 based on the Woodman plans and is the architect of record for the building. The building permit application, dated April 5, 1961, shows Valcon Builders as the contractor.

Integrity

The building was expanded a couple of times after its construction, with Lockard designing an addition at the north end that was built in 1976. A rear addition was constructed in 1991. Despite these alterations and the changes to the landscaping, the building still retains excellent integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. It remains in its original location and the setting is still generally intact. Integrity of feeling and association are also sufficient to convey the building’s historic significance.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Section 807.E states that, when applying the evaluation criteria in Section 807.D, the boundaries of a historic district should be drawn as carefully as possible to ensure that:

1. The district contains documented historic, architectural, archaeological, or natural resources;
2. The district boundaries coincide with documented historic boundaries such as early roadways, canals, subdivision plats or property lines;
3. Other district boundaries coincide with logical physical or manmade features and reflect recognized neighborhood or area boundaries; and
4. Other non-historic resources or vacant land is included where necessary to create appropriate boundaries to assist in meeting the criteria in Section 807.D.

The proposed HP zoning boundary encompasses 1.65 gross acres. It has been drawn to include the subject property in its entirety as well as the adjacent portion of the right way, as is customary in rezoning cases. The proposed boundary contains the

documented historic resources and follows parcel lines and street monument lines as much as possible.

CONCLUSION

The rezoning request Z-175-24-6 to establish Historic Preservation (HP) overlay zoning for the subject property should be approved for the following reasons:

1. The property meets the significance, age, and integrity requirements for HP overlay zoning set forth in Section 807.D of the Zoning Ordinance; and
2. The proposed boundaries meet the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 807.E.

Writer

K. Weight

3/3/25

Team Leader

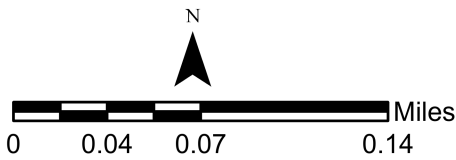
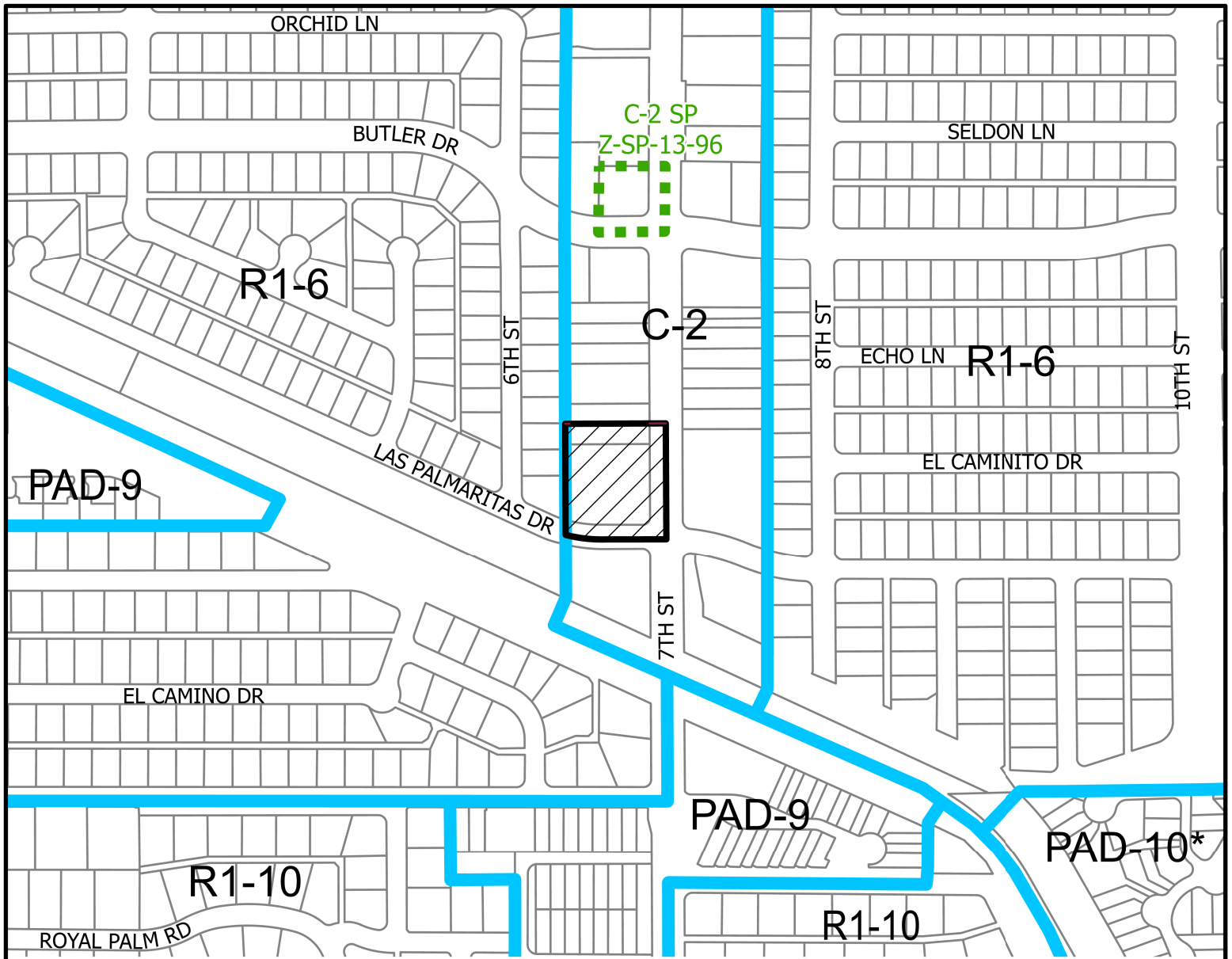
H. Ruter

Attachments:

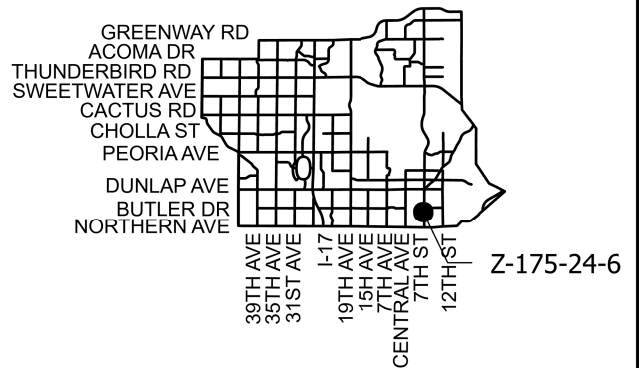
Sketch Map (1 page)

Aerial (1 page)

Photos and Excerpts (5 pages)

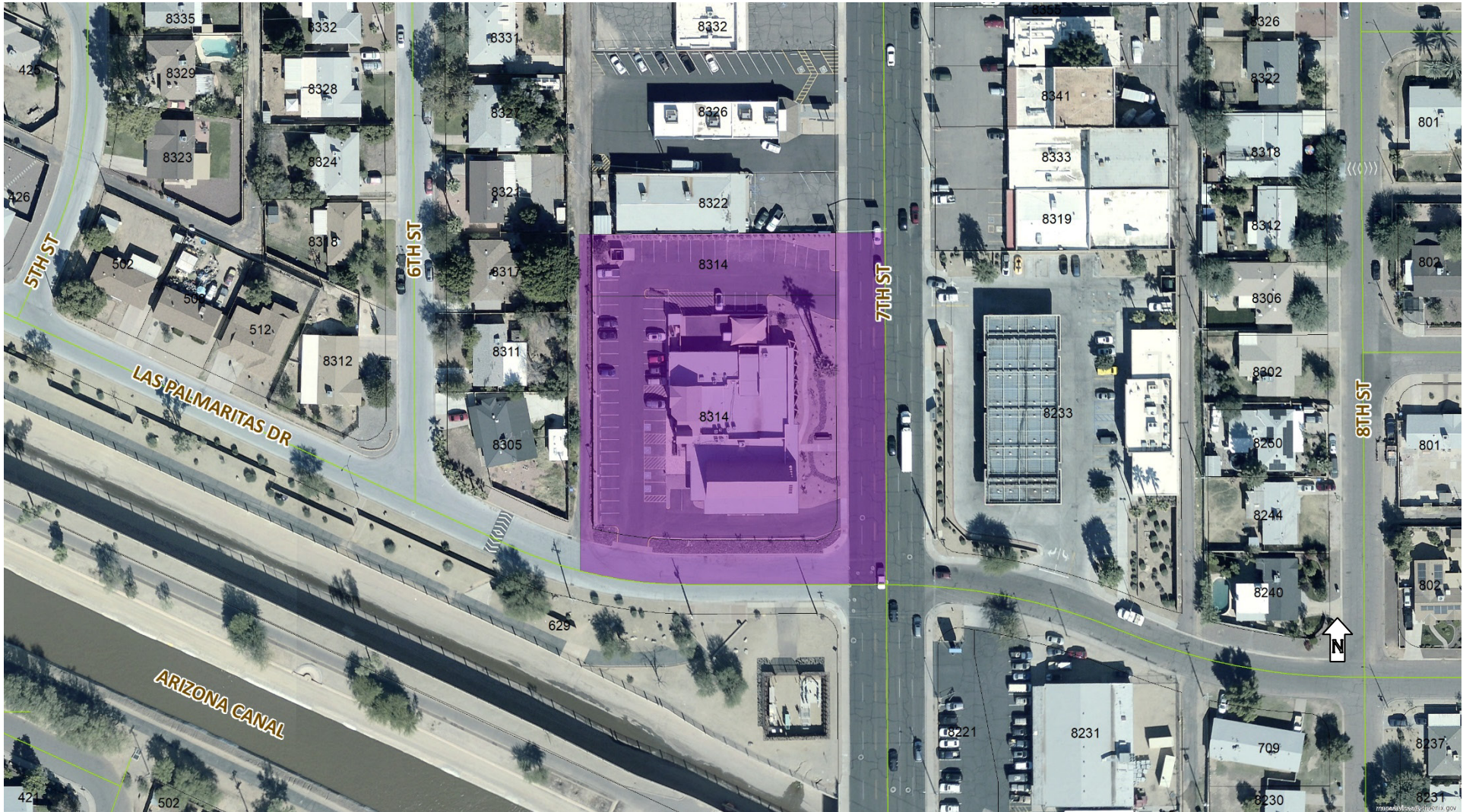


NORTH MOUNTAIN VILLAGE
COUNCIL DISTRICT: 6



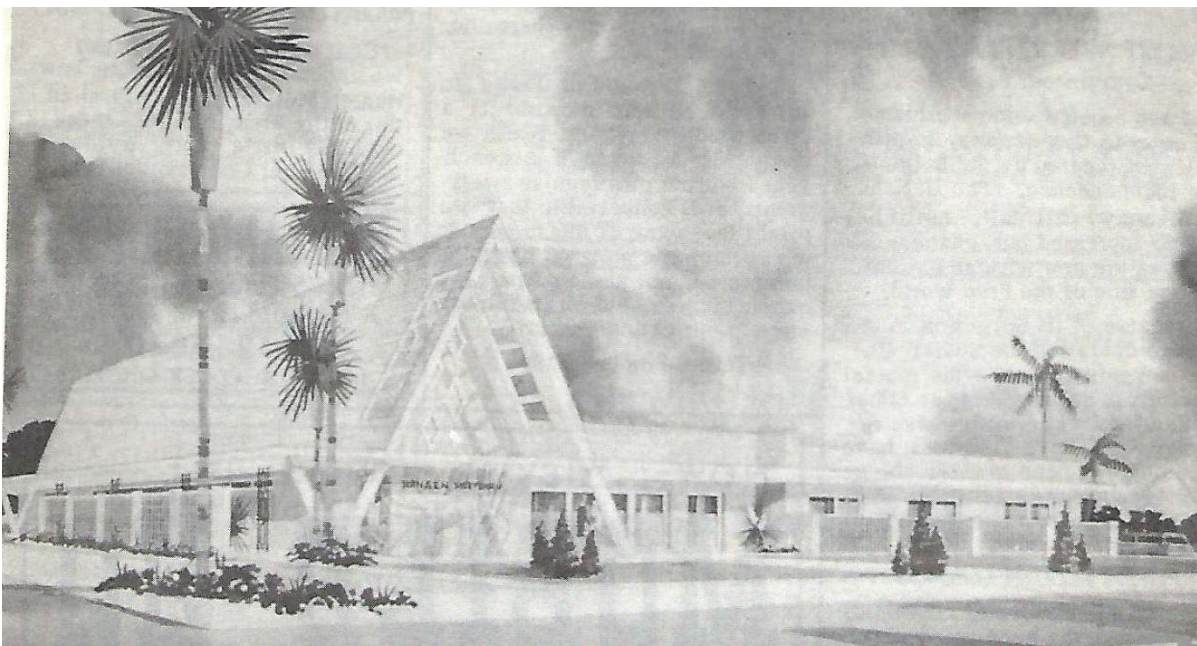
APPLICANT'S NAME: City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Commission		REQUESTED CHANGE:	
APPLICATION NO: Z-175-24-6	DATE: 12/31/2024	FROM: C-2 (1.65 ac.)	
GROSS AREA INCLUDING 1/2 STREET AND ALLEY DEDICATION IS APPROX. 1.65 Acres	REVISION DATES:		TO: C-2 HP (1.65 ac.)
	AERIAL PHOTO & QUARTER SEC. NO. QS 25-28	ZONING MAP J-8	
MULTIPLES PERMITTED C-2 C-2 HP	CONVENTIONAL OPTION 24 24	* UNITS P.R.D OPTION 28 28	

* Maximum Units Allowed with P.R.D. Bonus



**Hansen Mortuary
8314 North 7th Street**

Proposed Historic Preservation (HP) Zoning Overlay shown in purple



Artist's rendering from Open House article, SAGE Newsletter, February 22, 1962.

Open House

SATURDAY - FEBRUARY 24TH

10 A.M. UNTIL 6 P.M.

SUNDAY - FEBRUARY 25

1 P.M. UNTIL 7 P.M.



You Are Cordially Invited To Attend. . .

The doors of the all-new Hansen Mortuary--the finest in this area--will be open to you and your friends this Saturday and Sunday. You are cordially invited to pay us a visit.

We ask you to accept this as your personal invitation to see for yourself what a truly beautiful mortuary we make available to Phoenix-area families. We promise you an interesting, pleasant and informative experience.

You will have an opportunity to inspect ALL the facilities of a truly modern funeral establishment during our Open House. Courteous staff members will show you through, answering any and all questions you may have about funeral procedure, funeral practices and funeral prices. Make plans now to attend this unique event!

HANSEN MORTUARY

8314 N. 7TH ST.

PHOENIX

HANSEN MORTUARY 1961

8314 North
7th Street



The Hansen Mortuary has a slightly religious image, creating an aspiring feel of faith that can provide comfort to the bereaved. This worshipful character is created by the steep-pitched A-framed roof of the chapel—an Expressionist form seen in the 1956 Air Force Academy Chapel by Walter Netsch/SOM Architects.

At a quick glance, the Hansen Mortuary could be mistaken for a small church campus set on the bank of a canal amid a well-manicured, mature-landscaped site. An enormous Aleppo pine and three soaring palms frame the front façade of the mortuary.

The lofty triangular front gable of the chapel is the focus of the facility. Its heavy timber rafters at the deep-set gable are solidly planted into the earth. Each plane of the gable overhang is pierced by a series of five rectangular openings that allow sunlight to play across the wood-veneered gable wall. The lower wall of the chapel is veneered with native stone. The chapel façade is engaged by a thin flat roof at the height of the first floor ceiling. This cantilevered overhang extends across the entire face of the long, low-profile building unifying and organizing its various elements.

The front entrance immediately to the right of the chapel leads into a reception hall. The windows of the visitation rooms further to the right look forward into landscaped gardens hidden from the street by decorative block screen walls. This asymmetrical façade composition—an A-frame roof with attached low building wing—seems to be a locally popular motif seen also at the Tempe Mortuary, 405 East Southern Avenue (Tempe), and at Christ Church Lutheran, 3901 East Indian School Road.

from *Midcentury Marvels: Commercial Architecture of Phoenix 1945-1975*, published in 2010 by the City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Office



Front façade, Hansen Mortuary website, 2024.



Chapel interior, Hansen Mortuary website, 2024.



Native stone sheathed wall on front gable of subject building, 2024.



Offset screen wall on front façade of subject building, 2024.



Chapel gable and breezeway, rear façade of subject building, 2024.



Decorative columnar breezeway supports, south façade of subject building, 2024.