



City of Phoenix

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Staff Report: Z-68-25-3 August 8, 2025

Historic Preservation Commission August 18, 2025
Hearing Date:

North Mountain Village Planning August 20, 2025
Committee Meeting Date:

Planning Commission Hearing Date: September 4, 2025

Request From: R-5 HROD (Multifamily Residence
District–Restricted Commercial, Hatcher
Road Overlay District) (1.78 acres)

Request To: R-5 HP HROD (Multifamily Residence
District–Restricted Commercial, Historic
Preservation, Hatcher Road Overlay
District) (1.78 acres)

Proposal: Historic Preservation Overlay for
Sunnyslope Presbyterian Church

Location: Southeast corner of 2nd Street and
Hatcher Road

Owner: Franklin Educational Properties LLC

Applicant: City of Phoenix Historic Preservation
Commission

Representative: Kevin Weight, Principal Planner

Staff Recommendation: Approval

Background

In April 2014, City of Phoenix Historic Preservation (HP) staff received a letter from Pastor Mary Danforth of the Sunnyslope Presbyterian Church requesting historic designation for the subject property. After researching the property, staff formally determined it eligible for HP zoning in May 2014 and added it to the City's inventory of historic resources. However, no attempt was made to rezone the property as historic at that time because no Ownership Authorization Form or Proposition 207 Waiver were received.

In August 2024, staff received a request from Julia Taggart, President of the Sunnyslope Historical Society, to consider the subject property for HP zoning. By this time, the church had been sold to a new property owner, Franklin Educational

Properties LLC, for use as a charter school. In October 2024, Ms. Taggart provided an Ownership Authorization Form and Proposition 207 Waiver signed by the new owner, and the following month, staff completed an historic property inventory form for the subject property. On January 13, 2025, the HP Commission initiated HP zoning for the subject property.

Property Overview

The subject property consists of a single lot at the southeast corner of 2nd Street and Hatcher Road (known historically as Wabash Avenue). According to the Maricopa County Assessor, the lot measures 58,414 square feet, or 1.34 acres.

The lot contains four buildings, all of which contribute to the historic character of the property:

1. *Main Church Building.* Located near the northwest corner of the lot, facing 2nd Street, this stuccoed brick Mission Revival-style building with two-story bell tower was constructed in 1949.
2. *McCahan Building.* This H-shaped, single-story building is located to the south of the main building, facing 2nd Street. The stuccoed gable-roofed Ranch-style building was built shortly after the main building and housed Sunday School classes.
3. *Parsonage.* An L-shaped, single-story structure located to the east of the church, facing Hatcher Road, this building is also designed in the Ranch style and was constructed shortly after the main building.
4. *Memorial Building.* This rectangular-shaped, single-story classroom building is located near the southeast corner of the lot. The gable-roofed building was constructed in 1958 and displays both Modern and Ranch-style design elements.

In addition to the four buildings above, the historic church campus also included a day nursery building, located to the south of the McCahan Building; it was demolished in 1994.

The main church building was constructed by John McTaggart, a member of the church building committee. Most sources list the architect as Herman Bell (although one article from the *Arizona Republic* states that plans were prepared by Jake Knapp). The rectangular-shaped church was modified in 1964 when a small masonry storage addition was constructed at the rear of the building. Further remodeling took place in 1966 when restrooms were constructed at the rear of the church and the hipped roof entry along the front façade was extended to the south.

In 2018, decorative landscaping was removed from the west façade of the church to add a wheelchair accessible ramp to the main entrance. In 2021, attached patio covers were added to the north façade. The McCahan Building was also altered in 2021 as part of tenant improvements replacing one window on the west façade with a door.

The broader setting remains relatively unchanged since the church was first constructed. The church buildings were originally built on a 20-acre tract, along with the Desert Mission, Sunnyslope Development Company, and John C. Lincoln Hospital. As the medical center expanded, additional parking areas were created, with a garage now immediately to the east and a surface parking lot immediately to the south of the subject property. The church buildings are the oldest surviving structures left in the area.

History

The origins of Sunnyslope can be traced to 1911, when architect William Norton platted the original “Sunny Slope” subdivision. Located north of the Arizona Canal between Central Avenue and 3rd Street, the desert area was not irrigated and was considered a healthful place for people with lung diseases to settle. Sunnyslope was located outside the municipal boundaries of Phoenix, and as city leaders began to work to expel tubercular patients from Phoenix, more sick and indigent people settled in the area.

Elizabeth Beatty came to Phoenix from Pittsburgh in 1920 and became aware of the conditions of the residents of Sunnyslope. She secured assistance from a group of Presbyterian women affiliated with the First Presbyterian Church of Phoenix and began a ministry to the people of Sunnyslope in 1921, which would become the Desert Mission. In 1925, a Sunday School missionary from the Presbyterian Church, W.D. Himebaugh, established a Sunday School in the two-room home of a convalescent.

Sarah C. McCahan, a Presbyterian church member from Philadelphia, travelled through Phoenix in 1927 and, learning of the poor living conditions of the residents in Sunnyslope, donated \$750 to be used towards the construction of a chapel. The Mission created the McCahan Memorial Chapel and expanded with a recreation area, library, meeting hall, and day nursery. The Mission worked with community groups, the congregation, and volunteers to provide health services, Christian education, social services, and worship to the Sunnyslope community.

In 1938, members of the informal church of the Mission formed the Desert Mission Church and formally affiliated with the Presbyterian Church of the United States. The Desert Mission was classified as a mission of the Presbyterian Church that would carry out both religious and humanitarian work. Over time, the Mission evolved to include four separate but interrelated organizations.

In 1942, a devastating fire broke out, which destroyed the McCahan Memorial Chapel and several neighboring structures. As a result, the congregation temporarily relocated to a recreation hall on the Desert Mission campus.

By the late 1940s, the church had seen its congregation more than double, which created the need to separate the church from the Desert Mission. A new church building with a capacity for 400 people was planned on a broader 20-acre tract of land that also included the Mission and would ultimately house the John C. Lincoln Hospital and Sunnyslope Development Company. As part of the separation from the Mission, the church was renamed the "Sunnyslope Presbyterian Church." A ground-breaking ceremony for the new church building was held on January 6, 1949, with the cornerstone ceremony taking place on March 20, 1949, and the building completed in June of that same year.

The McCahan Building and adjacent day nursery building were completed shortly after the church, along with the parsonage. The McCahan Building allowed for five departments of Sunday School, and during the week the rooms were used for educational programs. The day nursery had been an early initiative of the Desert Mission, as many families were unable to pay for care for their preschool children because of sickness, or they had needs for childcare while mothers worked. The nursery also served meals and provided regular medical checkups.

In 1958, the church campus expanded with the construction of the Memorial Building for youth education. The congregation continued to grow into the early 1960s, with membership increasing from 138 in 1946 to 723 in 1962. This period of growth aligned with a period of national church growth in the United States. In 1966, the church building was remodeled with restrooms constructed at the rear and the hipped roof entry along the front façade extended.

The Church provided services and religious education and worked closely in the community holding events for seniors, working with nursing homes, and partnering with the Desert Mission Food and Clothing Bank. Buildings were also used to host local self-help organizational meetings.

From the late 1960s to the early 1980s, the church experienced a period of decline in membership, as it severed primary ties with the Desert Mission. During this time many of the community services the church provided were cut, such as the partnership with Lincoln Health Resources to provide free day care services to the Sunnyslope community. The day nursery building was demolished in 1994.

By 2014, the church had closed due to a decline in membership, and the space was leased to Tom & Cindy Franklin, who opened the Franklin Phonetic School, a charter elementary school, at the site. Looking to sell the property, the Presbyterian Church received an offer from HonorHealth John C. Lincoln Medical Center, which wanted the

space for a parking garage, as well as offers from other potential buyers. However, the Franklins were able to secure the funds needed for acquisition, purchasing the property in 2016. The Franklin Phonetic School continues to operate at the site today.

Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria for HP overlay zoning and listing on the PHPR 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

The Sunnyslope Presbyterian Church is significant under Criterion A at the local level for its association with Sunnyslope Community Development and Social History. The period of significance dates from 1949, when the main church building was constructed, to 1970 as the church entered a phase of declining membership.

The origins of the church lie in the efforts of Presbyterians to minister to and provide services to indigent health seekers in Sunnyslope. As the Sunnyslope Presbyterian Church separated in structure from the Mission in 1949, much of the work of the church continued to be focused on community support through their relationship with the Desert Mission and John C. Lincoln Medical Center. It is one of the oldest remaining intact properties reflecting early post-World War II development in Sunnyslope.

Integrity

The subject property retains sufficient integrity to convey its significant association with the community development of Sunnyslope from 1949 to 1970. This property has strong integrity of location, design, materials, feeling, and association. It appears to have had few alterations to the four surviving buildings, with their character-defining features preserved. The changes to convert the building into a school were minimal and/or reversible. While the day nursery was demolished in 1994, the remaining buildings are intact and contribute to the feeling of the original campus.

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 1.78 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.

Findings

The rezoning request Z-68-25-3 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.

Stipulations

None

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Writer

Kevin Weight

August 8, 2025

Team Leader

Helana Ruter

Exhibits

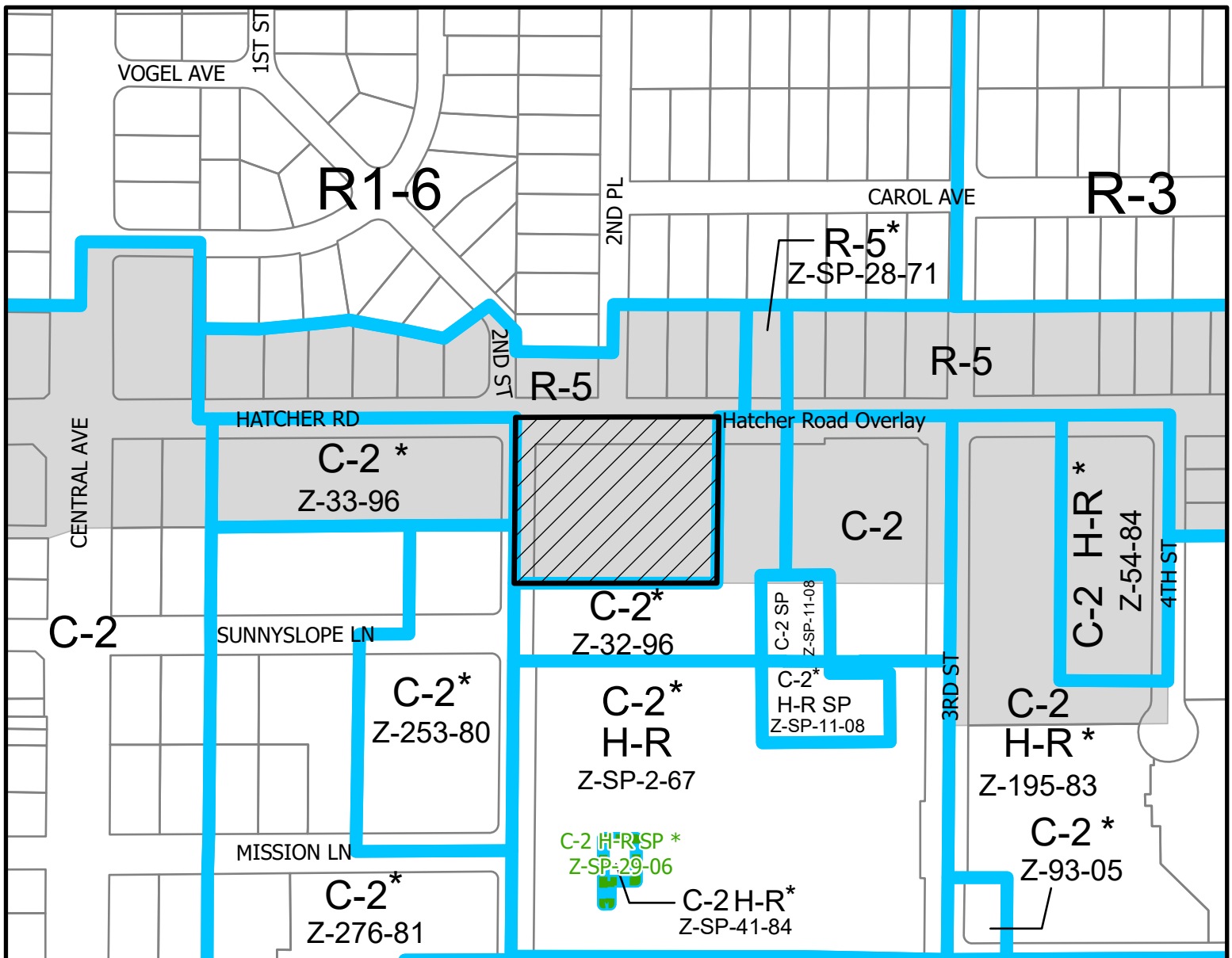
Sketch Map (1 page)

Aerials (2 pages)

Site Photos (4 pages)

Archival Photos (3 pages)

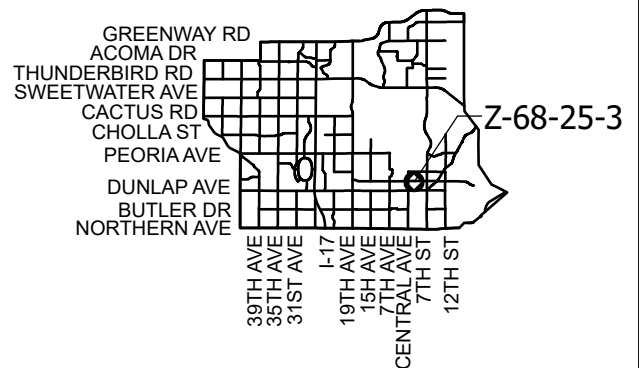
Newspaper Articles (3 pages)



NORTH MOUNTAIN VILLAGE
COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3

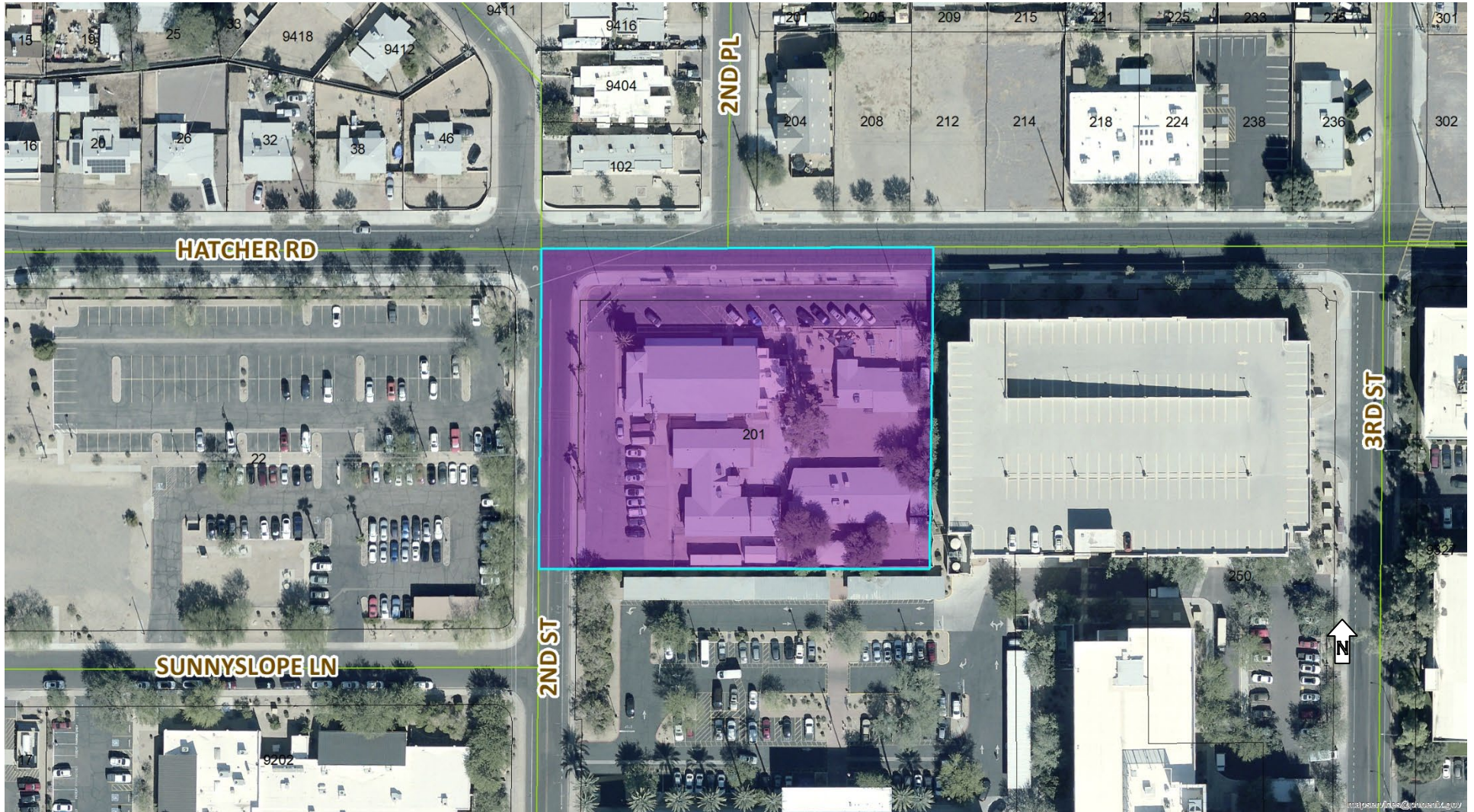


City of Phoenix
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT



APPLICANT'S NAME: City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Commission		REQUESTED CHANGE:	
APPLICATION NO: Z-68-25-3	DATE: 5/23/225 REVISION DATES:	FROM: R-5 HROD (1.78 ac.)	
GROSS AREA INCLUDING 1/2 STREET AND ALLEY DEDICATION IS APPROX. 1.78 Acres	AERIAL PHOTO & QUARTER SEC. NO. QS 27-28	ZONING MAP J-8	TO: R-5 HP HROD (1.78 ac.)
MULTIPLES PERMITTED R-5 HROD R-5 HP HROD	CONVENTIONAL OPTION 77 77	* UNITS P.R.D OPTION 93 93	

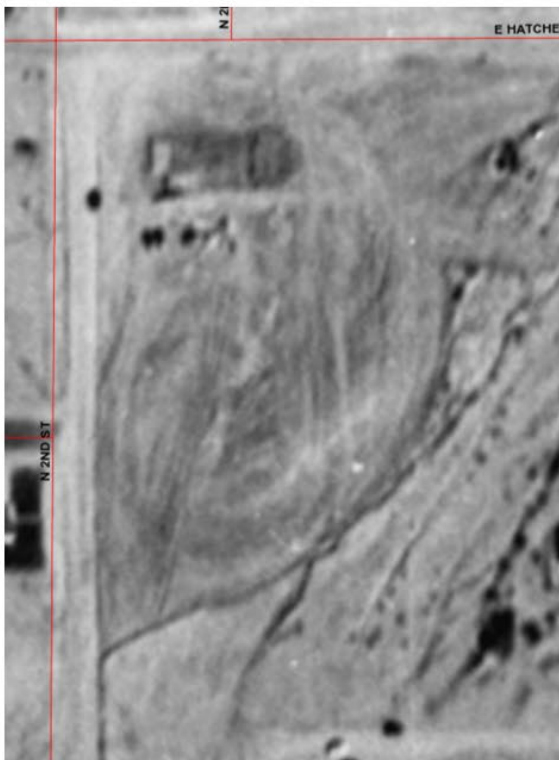
* Maximum Units Allowed with P.R.D. Bonus



Sunnyslope Presbyterian Church
9317 North 2nd Street (a.k.a. 201 East Hatcher Road)

Proposed Historic Preservation (HP) Zoning Overlay shown in purple

Z-68-25-3
9317 North 2nd Street
Sunnyslope Presbyterian Church



1949



1959



2025

Aerial photos from 1949, 1959, and 2025 showing campus evolution. Construction is just starting on the main church building in 1949. By 1959, all buildings are present on the site, including the day nursery at the south end of the property. By 2025, the day nursery is gone, and the adjacent medical center has expanded to the south and east of the subject property.

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Photo 1. View of subject property from intersection of 2nd Street and Hatcher Road, looking southeast, January 2021.



Photo 2. Front view of main church building, looking northeast from 2nd Street, July 2024.

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Photo 3. Front view of front of main church building and McCahan Building, looking east from 2nd Street, July 2024.



Photo 4. Front view of McCahan Building, looking northeast from 2nd Street, July 2024.

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Photo 5. Side view of main church building, with parsonage on left, looking south from Hatcher Road, June 2015.



Photo 6. Front view of parsonage, looking south from Hatcher Road, July 2013.

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Photo 7. View of Memorial Building west façade, looking southeast from rear of McCahan Building, August 2024.



Photo 8. View of Memorial Building north façade, looking west from east end of building, August 2024.

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Photo 9. Main church building under construction, 1949. Courtesy of Sunnyslope Historical Society.



Photo 10. Parsonage under construction, ca. 1950. Courtesy of Sunnyslope Historical Society.

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Photo 11. Completed church with adjacent McCahan Building and day nursery, ca. 1950. Courtesy of Sunnyslope Historical Society.



Photo 12. Interior view of church, 1960s. Courtesy of Sunnyslope Historical Society.

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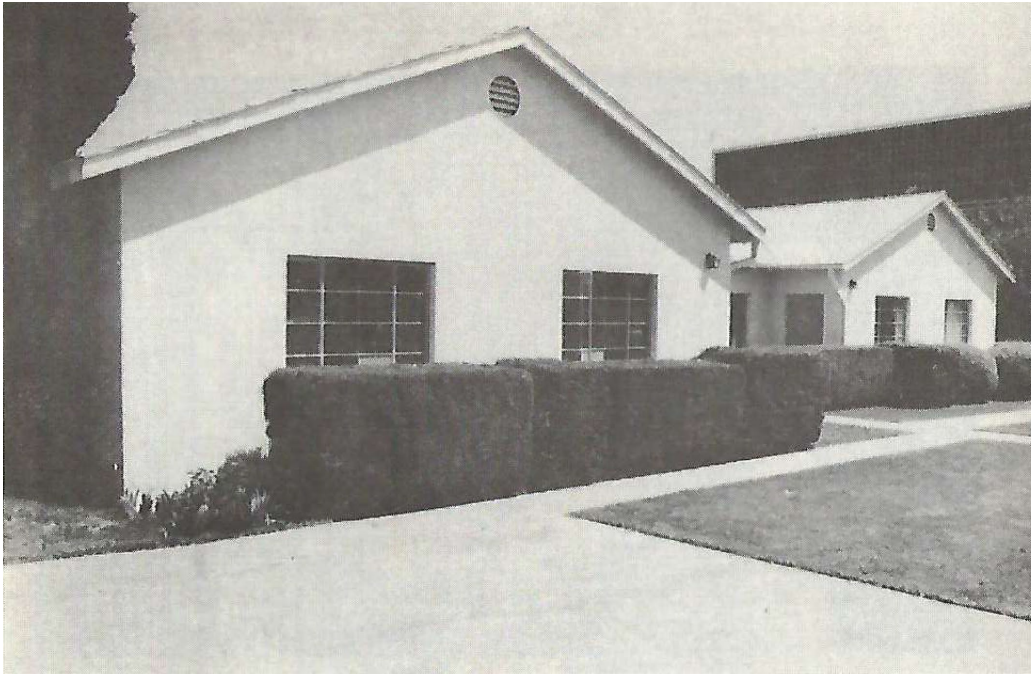


Photo 13. McCahan Building, 1960s. Courtesy of Sunnyslope Historical Society.

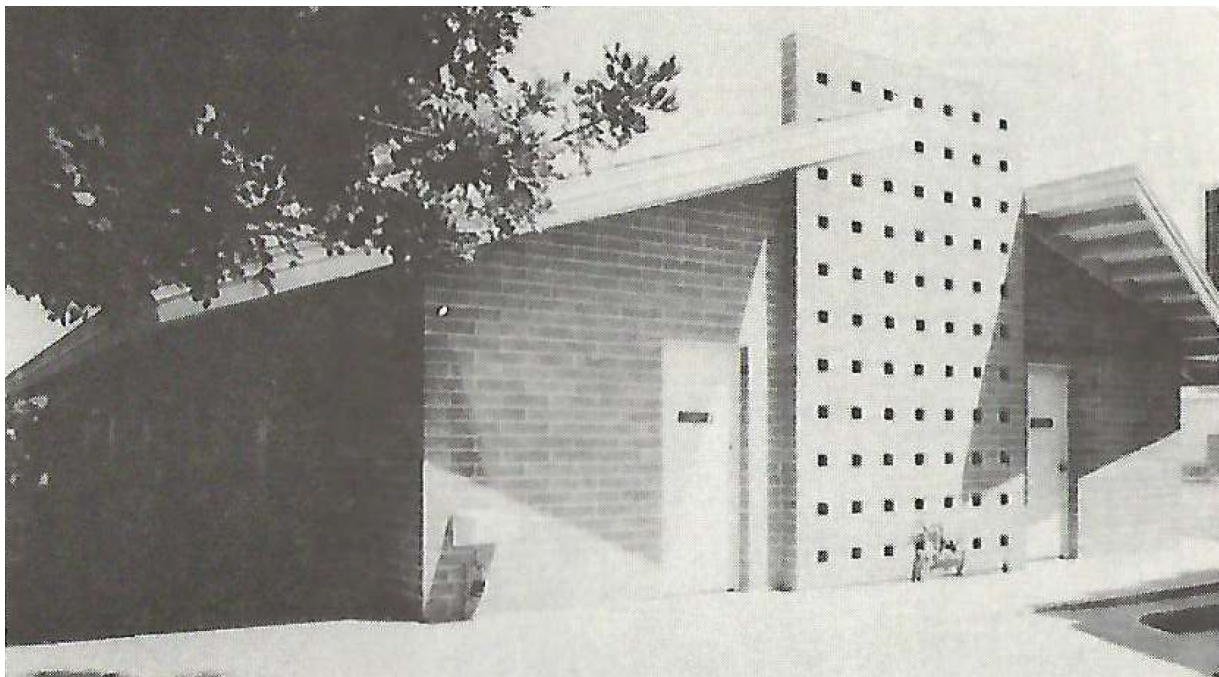


Photo 14. Memorial Building, 1960s. Courtesy of Sunnyslope Historical Society.

Ceremonies Set For New Church Start

A ground breaking ceremony will be conducted by members of the Sunnyslope Presbyterian Church congregation at 5:30 p. m. Thursday, it was announced Tuesday by Mrs. J. C. Lincoln, chairman of the building committee.

It is planned to erect a structure which will have a seating capacity of 400 persons, with provisions for the future addition of a Sunday School wing and a nursery.

Plans for the building were drawn by Herman Bell, architect. The construction will be undertaken by John McTaggart, a member of the church building committee. The church site is at Second street and Wabash avenue.

Mrs. Lincoln will preside for the program. The invocation will be given by the Rev. James Ord, interim pastor of the congregation. Mrs. Mildred Grubbs will have charge of music. H. F. Hancox, superintendent of Desert Mission, will state the purpose of the meeting.

Scripture will be read by the Rev. Dr. George H. Hall, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. Talks will be given by the Rev. George Walker and the Rev. Claude F. Morton, moderator. Members of the building committee are Mrs. Lincoln, McTaggart, H. H. Wasser, Everett Williams and Thomas E. McCall.

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Cornerstone Ceremony Set In Sunnyslope

Cornerstone laying ceremonies for the new Sunnyslope Presbyterian Church, North Second street and Wabash avenue, will be held at 3 p. m. Sunday, according to John C. Lincoln, building committee chairman.

Officiating at the ceremonies will be the Rev. George A. Walker, president of the Cooke Christian Training school and acting pastor of the present church, which is affiliated with the Sunnyslope Desert Mission. He will be assisted by the Rev. C. L. Morton, former president of the Phoenix Presbyterian, and the Rev. Gordon Aldrich, pastor of Bethany Presbyterian Church.

OTHERS PARTICIPATING in the event will be Everett L. Williams, member of the church session; John McTaggart, supervisor of construction for the structure, and Lincoln.

Future building plans call for construction of a church school and a nursery, Lincoln said.

Ground for the nearly completed red brick building was broken January 6, and completion of construction is slated for late spring. The church will be 124 feet in length and 50 feet wide. It will have a seating capacity of 400.

PLACED IN THE cornerstone will be documents containing a brief history of the Desert Mission project, which began in 1924 with a Sunday school class. Then followed the founding of the McCahan Memorial Chapel in 1927.

Following the ceremonies, which will be open to the public, an inspection tour of other mission facilities will be held.

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Sunnyslope Presbyterian Church

First Service Scheduled In New Sunnyslope Church

The first service in the recently completed Sunnyslope Presbyterian Church, North Second street and Wabash avenue, will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday.

Principal speaker will be H. F. Hancox, superintendent of the Desert Mission, Inc. His subject will be Practical Christianity—the Church and the Mission.

During the service, John McTaggart, contractor who built the church, will turn over the keys of the building to John C. Lincoln, building committee chairman of the Desert Mission, which founded the church. Lincoln in turn will present the keys to James Roeder, representative of the session of the church.

Article announcing opening of Sunnyslope Presbyterian Church in *Arizona Republic*, June 25, 1949