



## Planning and Zoning Board

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### *Case Information*

**CASE NUMBER:** Z14-032 (PLN2014-00218)  
**LOCATION/ADDRESS:** 15 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Ave  
**GENERAL VICINITY:** Located at the southeast corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Center Street  
**REQUEST:** Rezone from DR-2 DE to DR-2 DE HL  
**PURPOSE:** This request will establish a Historic Landmark Overlay.  
**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** District 4  
**OWNER:** First United Methodist Church  
**APPLICANT:** James Ripley  
**STAFF PLANNER:** Kim Steadman, RA

### **SITE DATA**

**PARCEL NUMBER(S):** 138-45-036B  
**PARCEL SIZE:** 4± acres  
**EXISTING ZONING:** DR-2 DE  
**GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION:** Town Center (TC)  
**CURRENT LAND USE:** Church

### **SITE CONTEXT**

**NORTH:** (across 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue), The Mesa Arts Center – zoned DC  
**EAST:** Mostly residential – zoned DR-2, with some commercial – zoned DB-1  
**SOUTH:** Residential – zoned DR-2.  
**WEST:** (across Center St.) a church – zoned DB-1, City of Mesa offices – zoned DR-3

### **ZONING HISTORY/RELATED CASES:**

**July 15, 1883:** Annexed into the City of Mesa on date of Mesa's incorporation (Ord. #1)  
**Dec 8, 1987:** Approval of Town Center zoning with associated development standards (Z87-40)  
**Nov 7, 2011:** Approval of a Downtown Events Overlay District (Z11-017)  
**May 22, 2014:** Historic Preservation Board recommends approval of HL Overlay (HL14-001)

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Approval with Conditions

**HP BOARD RECOMMENDATION:** ☒ Approval with conditions. ☐ Denial

**P&Z BOARD RECOMMENDATION:** ☒ Approval with conditions. ☐ Denial

**PROPOSITION 207 WAIVER SIGNED:** ☒ Yes ☐ No

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION/REQUEST

The Trustees of the First United Methodist Church of Mesa have initiated a rezoning request to establish a Historic Landmark (HL) zoning overlay for specific historic structures within its campus at 15 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, to include the sanctuary and steeple, Stewart chapel, and the bell tower atop the columbarium. (See the vicinity map.) The campus is primarily zoned DR-2 DE with additional parcels zoned DB-1 DE. With the added Historic Landmark overlay the historic structures will be zoned DR-2 DE HL.

This request seeks approval of an overlay district that:

- recognizes the historic nature of the buildings;
- commits to preserving the sanctuary/steeple, Stewart chapel and columbarium tower;
- allows modifications and additions to the rest of the campus.

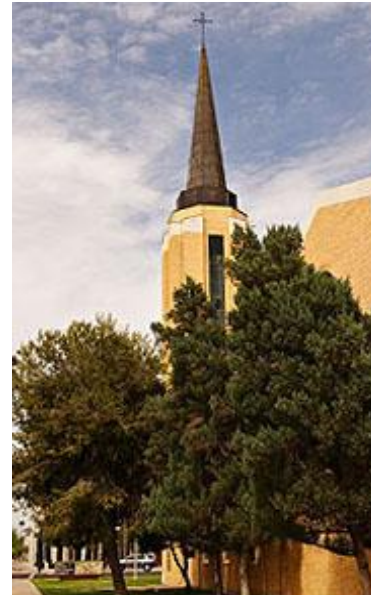
## BACKGROUND

The building recognized today as the United Methodist Church of Mesa is actually the third structure on the site. Its predecessors were:

- 1893 – Methodist Episcopal Church, a one-room brick structure with a steeply-pitched, shingled roof and gothic-revival detailing.
- 1913 – A larger, Spanish Colonial style church was built on the site 20 years later. Materials from the first church were incorporated in this structure along with sand and gravel, hauled by the congregation from the Salt River bed for the concrete. The architecture of the building included plastered walls, round-headed windows and a bell tower. The bell tower is now a part of a columbarium (mausoleum) located east of the main church structure. In 1945 the congregation became known as First Methodist Church of Mesa. Population growth in the mid-twentieth century resulted in a need for a larger church. By 1947 the Church was making plans to build an entirely new church on an expanded site.



- The current church was designed by Martin Ray Young, Jr, A1A who, in 1948, was the first architect to establish a practice in Mesa. The new church would include a 120-foot-tall steeple, a 550-seat sanctuary, a 125-seat balcony, a choir room, a robe room, classrooms, an upper floor at the south end of the sanctuary and the Stewart Chapel east of the main entry on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Breaking ground in 1951 the first element completed was the steeple. In 1954 the congregation began meeting in the sanctuary as the structure neared completion. By 1958 the construction debt was retired and the church was dedicated on February 2<sup>nd</sup>.



- The campus continued to develop in the ensuing decades until it now fills a large part of a city block. The current request for landmark designation is limited to (1) the original elements built during the period from the 1951 groundbreaking through the 1958 dedication, and (2) the bell tower relocated from the second church to the columbarium.



Current view of campus from north

## **Historic Landmark Designation**

The following features can be used to support historic designation of this building:

- “Any part of it is more than 50 years old”
  - It has been 60 years since the congregation moved into the church in 1954.
  - The bell tower of the columbarium dates to the 1913 church.
- It has “value as a significant reminder of the cultural, historical, architectural, or archeological heritage of the city, state, or nation.”
  - In existence since the late 1800s the church campus is the oldest one still in continuous use in Mesa. Its steeple has had a presence on downtown Mesa’s skyline since the early 1950s.
- It is “identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the city, state, or nation.”
  - In 1893 Dr. E. W. Wilbur donated two parcels of land on 1st Ave for the construction of the first and second churches.
  - Later, in 1951, John Dobson bought additional lands, donating them as a memorial gift from the Dobson family. This gift expanded the Church property west to Center Street and south to Second Avenue.
  - The church is also significant as the church home to the late U. S. Congressman John J. Rhodes (1916 - 2003) who represented Mesa for 30 years.
  - This congregation sponsored Mesa’s first Boy Scouts of America troop. Troop #1 was organized in 1922 by the Reverend W. C. Miller. The troop was subsequently changed to #51, and is now #451.
- It is “identified as the work of a master building, designer, or architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, state, or nation.”
  - As Mesa’s first architect Martin Ray Young, Jr., AIA is credited with designing over 1,600 projects in a career that spanned more than 50 years. His collected drawings, files and photographs have been acquired by the Arizona State University Architecture and Environmental Design Library Special Collections.

## **Ongoing Campus Growth**

Protection of the 1950s elements of the church campus and the 1913 bell tower, while allowing for continued growth and modification of the rest of the campus requires standards of protection. The Historic Landmark designation is being applied specifically to the structures identified in the accompanying map. These elements should remain intact, as viewed from the exterior. If modifications or additions to these structures are desired at a future date they will require the review of the Historic Preservation Officer (HPO) who will issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work.

The balance of the campus is not protected by this Historic Landmark Overlay.

## **HISTORIC OVERLAY STANDARDS**

In order to preserve the historic structures the following standards will apply to this Historic Landmark overlay:

- a) Routine maintenance of the interior and exterior will continue without any requirements for review by the Historic Preservation Officer.
- b) Changes to equipment on the roof of the protected structures, not visible from the street do not require review or approval by the Historic Preservation Officer. Anything visible from the Street would require review and approval by the Historic Preservation Officer.
- c) Deconstruction of building elements to provide emergency repairs is allowed and authorized without review or approval of the Historic Preservation Officer. Reconstruction plans will subsequently be provided to the Historic Preservation Officer to show the building is being returned to its condition before the emergency work.
- d) Interior remodeling of the building will not require review or approval by the Historic Preservation Office. Any proposed interior changes that would be perceived from the exterior require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Officer.
- e) Exterior modifications, alterations, or additions to the building should not be allowed. If proposed, modifications, alterations, or additions would require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Officer to ensure the historic integrity of the building is maintained.
- f) Demolition of the structures could be approved following the requirements of the zoning ordinance. Those requirements include a maximum 180 day delay in issuing a demolition permit to allow for consideration of alternatives.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD PARTICIPATION**

The United First Methodist Church of Mesa has completed a Citizen Participation Plan, which included mailing written notifications to all property owners within 500' of the site. The notification included a background on the building and an explanation of the request.

At the time of writing this report Staff has not received any inquiry regarding the proposal.

## **CONFORMANCE WITH THE GENERAL PLAN**

The proposed HL overlay for 15 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue conforms to the City's adopted 2025 General Plan, specifically Section 6.1.2 Redevelopment and Historic Preservation in Mesa. The site is located within the Town Center Redevelopment Area which specifically calls for the preservation of historical assets in the City.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS**

### **SUMMARY:**

The importance of the First United Methodist Church congregation to Mesa's history along with the architectural significance of its building and designer strongly recommend for the protection of these structures through historic designation. The proposed standards will preserve this piece of history.

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

Staff recommends approval with the following conditions:

### **CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:**

1. Compliance with the vicinity map included with this report.
2. Compliance with the Historic Overlay Standards provided in this report.

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