



Date: October 17, 2016
To: Mayor and City Council
Through: Kari Kent, Deputy City Manager
From: Christine Zielonka, Development Services Director
John Wesley, Acting Historic Preservation Officer
Subject: Consideration and approval of designating the Washington-Escobedo neighborhood as a Heritage Neighborhood District 4

Initiatives



Strategic

Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of this report is to provide the City Council with the information and background needed to consider the designation of the Washington-Escobedo Neighborhood as the City of Mesa's first Heritage Neighborhood.

Staff and the Historic Preservation Board recommend approval of the proposed designation.

Background

As staff and the Historic Preservation Board (HPB) have worked with some neighborhoods over the years, we have found that there are situations where a neighborhood has historic significance to the City, but does not meet the requirements for historic district designation. In order to address the importance of such neighborhoods to the City, the designation of "Heritage Neighborhoods" was developed. The consideration for establishing this designation is based more on the social and cultural make-up of the neighborhood and the basic pattern of development and less on the historic significance and integrity of the structures in the neighborhood. The benefits of receiving this designation include listing on the City's website, documentation of the history of the neighborhood, signage designating the neighborhood, and support to maintain the historic nature of the neighborhood.

The process for creating such a designation starts with the neighborhood recognizing the importance of the history of their area and wanting to preserve that history. The neighborhood residents, with input and direction from the Historic Preservation staff, work together to identify what is important about their area. The process requires that they hold neighborhood meetings to involve neighbors in the process. Once they have sufficiently put together the story about their neighborhood they can submit an application for designation. That

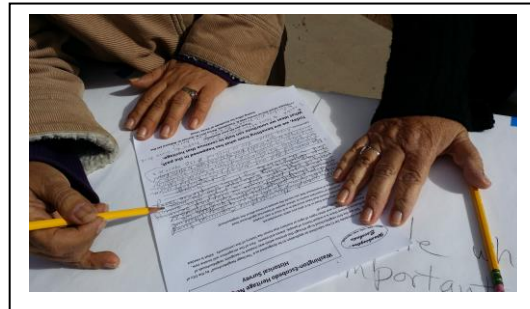
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application is reviewed by staff and submitted to the HPB for review and recommendation to the City Council. The City Council will then hold a meeting and determine whether or not to grant approval of the designation.

The Heritage Neighborhood designation does not include any regulatory requirements.. It will, however, encourage maintaining key physical features such as street patterns, lot sizes, building scale, etc. so the sense of the place can be maintained. Recognition is provided through placement of signs similar to the historic district signs and placement of their history on the City's website.

Discussion

Staff has been working with the residents of the Washington-Escobedo area for a couple of years to see if they could qualify for this designation. The residents of the area have spent many hours talking about and documenting the social and cultural heritage of their neighborhood. They have worked together to capture stories about life in this neighborhood and prepare their application.



The area being proposed for receiving this designation is from Center to Mesa Drive between University and 6th Street.



The Washington-Escobedo area has a history that dates back to the early 1900's when it became the first area to allow African-Americans to purchase property in the Mesa area. In the 1920's another subdivision was opened up that was targeted toward Hispanic residents. In the 1940's the Escobedo Apartments and the Washington Activity Center were built to provide a place for the "Colored" soldiers at Williams Army Air Corp base. Because of segregation, the area had its own stores, schools, churches and doctors. Children who grew up there were part of a close-knit community.

The attached summary document (Attachment 1) further describes the character and history of this area. The neighborhood included its own churches, schools, stores, and even its own doctor. During World War II, and after, they had their own activity center where the neighborhood gathered for social events.

In addition to the social history of the neighborhood it is clear there was a development pattern of small, narrow lots and houses with front porches that allowed for and encouraged an active street life for those who lived there. This pattern of development is also a character defining element of the neighborhood.

In November 2012 the Washington-Escobedo neighborhood completed the development of a Neighborhood Quality of Life Plan. That plan, developed by the neighborhood, defines several

areas of emphasis within the neighborhood to maintain a good quality of life for the residents. One of the strategies in that plan is for the neighborhood to receive historic designation.

The neighbors in the Washington-Escobedo neighborhood have worked hard over the last four years to implement their plan. Over the last 2 years, their energies have been focused on working together to provide the information necessary for this designation as called for in their plan. Attachment 1 to this report is a summary of the information that has been provided by the neighborhood that justifies the establishment of this designation. Attachment 2 is the full documentation they have submitted.



Approval of this designation will have the following impacts on the neighborhood:

- Signs will be added to the street signs entering the area with the designation of the area as a Heritage Neighborhood;
- The history that has been compiled will be added to the City's website along with the historic districts; and,
- The documented physical development pattern will be used to encourage residents to maintain the historic scale and pattern of the development.

Alternatives

1. Approval of the designation (recommended).
2. Continue for further information.
3. Determine this neighborhood does not meet the requirements and recommend denial of the application.