



City of Phoenix
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Staff Report: Z-72-16-8
November 10, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Z-72-16-8 is a request to establish Historic Preservation-Landmark (HP-L) overlay zoning for the property known as George Washington Carver High School, located at the southeast corner of 4th and Grant Streets. Maps and photos of the subject property are attached.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that rezoning request Z-72-16-8 be approved.

BACKGROUND

In July 2016, the City of Phoenix HP Office received a letter from Princess Crump, representing the owner of the subject property, the Phoenix Monarchs Alumni Association of Phoenix, Arizona, Phoenix Chapter. The letter requested that the subject property, which is currently zoned DTC-Warehouse and DTC-Warehouse HP, have its HP zoning overlay expanded to cover the entire 5.1-acre site (at present the HP overlay only covers the north 2.1 acres). Realizing that the property was eligible for landmark designation, staff asked Ms. Crump if the owner would support upgrading the entire site to HP-L zoning. The owner agreed, and the City's HP Commission formally initiated HP-L overlay zoning for the 5.1-acre site on August 15, 2016.

LANDMARK DESIGNATION

The rationale for HP-L overlay zoning is explained in Section 808 of the City of Phoenix Zoning Ordinance:

A classification of historic preservation zoning, landmark, is created to recognize that there are some historic properties that possess historic or architectural significance, integrity, distinctive visual character and quality that is a level of exceptional significance among historic properties. Designation by this category gives public recognition of the importance of these properties.

Section 803 of the Zoning Ordinance defines a landmark as:

A structure or site which contains an outstanding or unique example of an architectural style, which contains or is associated with a major historic event or activity, which contains important, intact archaeological resources, which is a site or structure of unique visual quality and identification, or which is a site of general historic or cultural recognition by the community. A landmark shall also meet all criteria for designation as an HP District (as set forth in Section 807.D and 807.E).

The Ordinance further states that landmark designation can occur for a property already within an HP District or in conjunction with designation as an HP District, and that the review and hearing procedures are the same as for regular HP designation. The only exception is that with landmark designation the HP Commission is required to adopt a set of findings documenting the uniqueness and significance of the subject building or site.

SIGNIFICANCE

George Washington Carver High School qualifies for landmark designation under the second category listed in Section 803 of the Zoning Ordinance:

2 – Associated with a major historic event or activity

Summary

Constructed in 1926, George Washington Carver High School is exceptionally significant for its role in African American history in Arizona. It was the only high school in the state built specifically for African Americans. Although segregated high schools were not mandated by state law, Carver High School was constructed due to local sentiment which urged racial separation among high school students. This sentiment increased dramatically after World War I. Carver High School strived to provide a strong academic environment and produced several notable graduates, ultimately becoming a source of pride for the African American community in Phoenix. This building is one of the few remaining structures that was built for blacks during the period of enforced segregation from 1912 to 1954.

History

In 1895, Arizona's Territorial Legislature passed a law stating that high schools could be formed in districts with a minimum of 2,000 residents. Many residents of Phoenix jumped at the chance to form a new high school. In September of that year, the high school class met for the first time on the second floor of the Central elementary school building with approximately 90 students. It is unknown whether any of these students were African American. By 1897, it was evident that the Central building was inadequate to serve as both an elementary and a high school. That year voters passed a bond to purchase the Churchill mansion at 5th and Van Buren Streets and convert it to Phoenix Union High School. The building was enlarged and remodeled in 1899.

In 1910, due to an increase in population, Phoenix residents approved a \$150,000 bond to start the Phoenix Union High School complex. In 1913, Elizabeth Harris, the first recorded African American student, graduated from Phoenix Union High School. As more African American students attended classes at Phoenix Union, a separate black high school was proposed.

When Arizona achieved statehood in 1912, only two laws addressed the question of segregation. One of these laws prevented “intermarriage between persons of Caucasian blood and their descendants with Negroes.” The other law provided for the establishment of segregated elementary schools. By 1925, Phoenix had three black elementary schools—Dunbar, Frederick Douglass, and Booker T. Washington.

Phoenix was not required to build a separate black high school and did not for several years. It was only after anti-African American sentiment increased following World War I, that it was deemed necessary to separate black and white high school students. In 1918, the “Department for Colored Students,” later known as the Phoenix Union Colored High School, was established. This school had only one teacher—Mrs. C.B. Caldwell—and was housed in a rear room of the Commercial building. As separatist sentiments in Phoenix became more pronounced and African American enrollment increased, these students were sequestered into two small cottages separated from the main campus by an irrigation ditch. In 1923, the school board appropriated \$125 a month to rent a house for the black students on the corner of 9th and Jefferson Streets. The following year, a special provision was passed by the state legislature that allowed Phoenix to pay for a separate black high school. On August 3, 1925, the school board commissioned the architectural firm of Fitzhugh & Bryon to prepare plans for the new building. On August 18, 1925, the school board passed a resolution which allowed for the purchase of a 5-acre site at 415 East Grant Street for \$10,500.

The African American community protested the selection of this site at a community meeting on August 28, 1925. The resolution they adopted stated the site was undesirable because it was “bounded on the north and east sides by a growing industrial district,” that “the high school board has admitted that the site is of such location that it will require the services of a watchman to protect children going to and from school,” and that “the district just south of the proposed site is admitted by physicians to be a hot bed and nucleus of virulent contagious diseases to which we do not want our children exposed.” Despite the protests, the site acquisition moved forward and on December 21, 1925, general contractors Pierson & Johnson, who had submitted a bid of \$110,000, were awarded the construction contract. Phoenix Union Colored High School, the only structure in Arizona's history built to be as a black high school, was dedicated on September 13, 1926 and opened for classes the next day.

On June 7, 1943, the name of the school was officially changed to Carver High School, in honor of the great African American scientist and educator, Dr. George Washington Carver. The change was recommended by the school's faculty and many civic organizations, and approved by the school board.

In succession, Mrs. C.B. Caldwell, Millard T. Woods, Roy A. Lee, and W. A. Robinson served as principals of the school. All were well-qualified administrators who helped

make Carver High School an excellent educational institution. In particular, Principal Robinson traveled throughout the United States recruiting instructors with master's degrees, well before an M.A. was required. Some of these outstanding teachers included Arlena Seneca, Gussie Wilson, Mattie Hackett Moore, Alice Marriot, Bettye Fairfax, Deloris Adkins, Thelma Shaw, and Estelle Burnette. Educators like Arlena Seneca—a science teacher—also became active in the community. Seneca founded Careers for Youth, restarted the Urban League Guild (the women's auxiliary for the Phoenix Urban League), and joined other professional and activist groups. In 1967, she became the first African American woman to receive the Phoenix Woman of the Year award.

In 1948, under Principal Robinson's leadership, Carver received much needed remodeling and enlargement. This included the construction of new shop facilities and a new 1,000-seat stadium. While Robinson's energetic leadership was vital, the renovations were also completed because Phoenix's white community acknowledged that the school needed improvements to remain open and maintain segregation.

In spite of the acknowledged deficiencies of Carver's facilities, students were able to acquire a quality education. Many graduates of the school have held professional and management positions. Carver graduates include Doug Nelson, Assistant Chief of Police for Phoenix; Travis Williams, City of Phoenix Human Resources Director; Dr. William Maxwell, President of Fresno Community College; Dr. Morrison F. Warren, Phoenix City Councilman and Professor at Arizona State University; Hadie Redd, Assistant District Attorney in San Francisco; and Calvin C. Goode, the longest-serving City Council member in Phoenix history.

Carver High School had a high profile in the African American community. The faculty's determination to provide a quality education instilled pride within the community. Carver's auditorium was Phoenix's largest public facility that housed black activities. Sporting events, plays, lectures and other social events were held there. During the Great Depression, Carver provided adult evening school to retrain out-of-work black Phoenicians. Carver also turned out quality athletic teams and concert bands. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Carver's football, basketball, and track teams all won state championships. In 1952, Leon Jordan was nominated for Arizona Basketball Coach of the Year. In both 1952 and 1954, A.H. Shaw was nominated for Arizona Football Coach of the Year. In 1949, Carver's concert band was noted for its excellence and won the statewide trophy in the Phoenix Jaycee Rodeo.

During the post-World War II era, ending school segregation became a top priority for many African Americans in Arizona. In the late 1940s, the multi-racial Greater Phoenix Council for Civic Unity, the NAACP, the Urban League, and other organizations spoke out against school segregation. The Council for Civic Unity, started in March of 1948, led the fight. In 1951 several teams of students attempted to register at predominantly Anglo schools near their homes in Phoenix. Louise Phillips, president of the Maricopa Branch of the NAACP, escorted these children. She also led a suit in federal court challenging segregation. These actions were part of a national grassroots effort by NAACP chapters to initiate test cases that would eventually reach the U.S. Supreme Court and end segregation across America. Black legislators Hayzel B. Daniels and

Carl Sims introduced the bill, which would ultimately pass the same year, giving local school boards the option to voluntarily desegregate. However, Phoenix school districts chose not to do so.

In 1952, the interracial team of Herb Finn and Hayzel B. Daniels filed a suit (*Phillips vs. Phoenix Union High School District*) in Maricopa County Superior Court against the Phoenix Union High School District Board on behalf of three African American students who attempted to register at Phoenix Union High School. On February 9, 1953, Superior Court Judge Fred C. Struckmeyer Jr. declared segregation in Phoenix high schools was unconstitutional, noting that “democracy rejects any theory of second class citizenship” and that “a half-century of intolerance is enough.”

Finn and Daniels attacked the issue again, focusing on elementary schools. That same year, they filed suit against the Wilson Elementary School District. In 1954, three months before the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Superior Court Judge Charles Bernstein desegregated local elementary schools. With these achievements, Carver High School closed its doors in 1954 and the historically African American grade schools integrated, primarily with Hispanic children.

It was with mixed emotions that African American students and community members watched as Carver High School closed its doors. While they mourned the loss of a nurturing and academically challenging environment, they were pleased that this chapter in racial inequality was over. Phoenix Union, Carl Hayden, and South Mountain High Schools took on the bulk of the African American students. In 1954, all 22 teachers from Carver were reassigned to different high schools. Principal Robinson took on a new job in administration for the Phoenix Union High School District.

Carver High School was converted to office space and storage for the Phoenix Union High School District. From 1956 to 1960, several of the old classrooms were partitioned to increase the amount of offices. The auditorium was modified to increase its storage capacity, and the main entrance was modified from a double door to a single door entrance. The grounds behind the school were converted from athletic fields and open space to storage and maintenance structures for the Phoenix Union School District.

On March 15, 1996, the Phoenix Monarchs Alumni Association purchased the facility from the Phoenix Union High School District for \$200,000. They established the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center and listed the building on the Phoenix Historic Property Register and National Register of Historic Places. The property was also the recipient of a “Save America’s Treasures” grant in August 2008 administered by the National Park Service. Presently situated on the site are the main school and shop building, grandstand, and two temporary metal-framed buildings formerly used by Phoenix Union High District and now being utilized by tenants. The former athletic field has been paved over but the grandstand remains.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

According to Section 807.D of the Zoning Ordinance, 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. In this case, the building was constructed in 1926, meeting the age requirement. It also retains sufficient historic integrity to be recognized as a historic school building, despite the fact that some of its features have been altered.

Section 807.E further 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-L zoning boundaries follow the current parcel boundaries and coincide with the historic boundaries of the high school. The total area to be rezoned is 5.1 acres. This boundary is recommended by staff and supported by the property owner.

CONCLUSION

The rezoning request Z-72-16-8 to establish Historic Preservation-Landmark (HP-L) overlay zoning for the subject property should be approved for the following reasons:

1. The property meets the requirements for landmark designation set forth in Sections 803 and 808 of the Zoning Ordinance;
2. The property also meets the eligibility criteria for age and integrity set forth in Section 807.D; and
3. The proposed boundaries meet the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 807.E.

Writer

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11/10/16

Team Leader

M. Dodds

Attachments

Sketch Map (1 page)
Aerials (2 pages)
Photos (1 page)

Newspaper Articles (4 pages)