



**Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission**  
Historic Landscapes Subcommittee  
Legal Action Report

**Wednesday, September 28, 2022**

The Historic Landscapes Subcommittee of the Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission conducted a meeting on Wednesday, September 28, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom.

1. **Call to Order / Roll Call**

Meeting was called to order by Chair Grede at 11:03 a.m. Those present and absent were:

**Members Present:**

Steve Grede, Chair  
Geoffrey Ellwand  
Jan Mulder  
Alyce Sadongei

Helen Erickson: (joined 11:46) [recording erroneously notes that Ms. Erickson is a Non-voting Citizen Advisor to the commission, but she recently was appointed to the commission as a full member and is thus a full member of the subcommittee.]

**Members Absent:**

J.J. Lamb

**Guests:**

Julie Barbier Bularzik: Neighbor  
Bill Du Pont: Vice President, and former President of the Colonia Solana Neighborhood Association  
Manon Getsi: Former Co-Chair and Director of Save the Heart of Reid Park, appointed as Commissioner by Paul Cunningham on the Parks and Rec. Commission

2. **Approval of Historic Landscapes Subcommittee Minutes from Meeting of: 5-18-2022 (Discussion/Action)**

Commissioner Ellwand moved approval of the minutes from the meeting of 5-18-2022. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sadongei, and passed by a roll call vote of 4-0.

3. **Review Cases (Discussion/Action)**

a. Gene C. Reid Park Master Plan Development

Commissioner Grede clarified that Reid Park is not currently within the Colonial Solana National Register Historic District, but the sense of the TPCHC is that Reid Park is likely a historic park (TPCHC Reid Park Letter 7-22-21). He then read from the Overview of Landscape Characteristics (Page, Robert R., Cathy A. Gilbert, and Susan A. Dolan. 1998. *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques*. Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships, Park Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes Program). This recognition served as a basis for the discussion of the park's character-defining features and in relationship to the three concept plans provided for community feedback.

The history of the park was discussed.

Landscape characteristics were defined as presented by the National Park Service (Page et al. 1998):

Landscape characteristics include tangible and intangible aspects of a landscape from the historic period(s); these aspects individually and collectively give a landscape its historic character and aid in the understanding of its cultural importance. Landscape characteristics range from large-scale patterns and relationships to site details and materials. The characteristics are categories under which individual associated features can be grouped. For example, the landscape characteristic – vegetation – may include such features as a specimen tree, hedgerow, woodlot, and perennial bed. Not all characteristics are always present in any one landscape:

- Natural Systems and Features: Natural aspects that often influence the development and resultant form of a landscape.
- Spatial Organization: Arrangement of elements creating the ground, vertical, and overhead planes that define and create spaces.
- Land Use: Organization, form, and shape of the landscape in response to land use.
- Cultural Traditions: Practices that influence land use, patterns of division, building forms, and the use of materials.
- Cluster Arrangement: The location of buildings and structures in the landscape.
- Circulation: Spaces, features, and materials that constitute systems of movement.
- Topography: Three-dimensional configuration of the landscape surface characterized by features and orientation.
- Vegetation: Indigenous or introduced trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers, and herbaceous materials.

- Buildings and Structures: Three-dimensional constructs such as houses, barns, garages, stables, bridges, and memorials.
- Views and Vistas: Features that create or allow a range of vision which can be natural or designed and controlled.
- Constructed Water Features: The built features and elements that utilize water for aesthetic or utilitarian functions.
- Small-Scale Features: Elements that provide detail and diversity combined with function and aesthetics.

Each landscape characteristic was discussed in relationship to the three concepts and concerns were raised when design characteristics were impacted by a concept.

Natural Systems and Features:

Reid Park's drainage wash system heavily influenced the design of the south and west portions of the park. The importance of the wash is indicated by allées of olive trees and bridge features.

Concept 1 respects the existing configuration of the wash, Concepts 2 & 3 do not.

Spatial Organization:

Reid Park's spatial organization is predominantly open with focal features that integrate the spaces. The geometry is modernist in that it is naturalistic. The forms are generally organic. The central part of the park is not open to motor vehicles, and parking is clustered toward the perimeter of the park. Lawn open space is not empty space but serves multiple functions for park users. It also provides buffering between uses and site lines between features. It is evocative of idealized nature.

All three concepts include pathways that tend to segment the space, disrupting the visual connectivity. Concept 3 with the vehicular loop is most incompatible with the park's spatial organization. Parking modifications can negatively impact the park's spatial organization.

Concern was expressed that the design of all three concept plans may turn the quietest and most introspective spaces into entertainment meccas. Removing parking adjacent to 22<sup>nd</sup> street will impact not only the adjacent area but also the central area of the park. Area residents appreciate the park as open space, and are opposed to making it a high-intensity area of activity.

Land Use:

The park is focused on passive recreation (open to strolling, picnicking, and other unstructured activities) with the exception of the ball fields in the north-east section. Throughout there is an emphasis on informal social interaction.

Concept 1 inserts rectangular active recreation features such as the multi-use courts and horse-shoe courts into the park's organic shapes and disrupt passive, unstructured recreation. Concept 2 removes parking from the south side which supports nearby functions. The new zoo entrance seen in Concept 3 will increase traffic in the central area of the park and consequently diminish the current use of the park for such activities as informal picnicking, dog walking, and bird watching.

Cultural Traditions:

The Mexican American/Latino communities have historically and continuously utilized the park for large, intergenerational social gatherings.

Concept 2 removes parking from the south side which supports those picnic areas.

Cluster Arrangement:

Clusters of features and activity spaces are spatially buffered from one another in the park matrix. The spatial separation of clusters is an important characteristic of this open-space park.

In all three concepts, the continuity of open space will be overly segmented. Concept 1 segments the landscape the least.

Circulation:

Vehicular circulation is restricted to the perimeter areas of the park. Circulation within the park is largely informal except for the path around the North Pond. Most paths are curvilinear. The turf serves for unstructured will-ways (people-developed walking patterns).

Concept 2 incorporates more walkway surface and a bicycle path that segments the open space of the park. Concept 3's vehicular loop has the greatest negative impact in this respect. most incompatible with the park's historic spatial organization. Maintaining parking at the periphery of the park and restricting vehicle access to the park interior will best respect the open-space design by providing a traffic-free central area.

Relocating the zoo's entrance as seen in Concept 3 is of particular concern, as it would increase vehicular use in general and open up the park to additional traffic, air pollution, and noise.

Topography:

The designed topography celebrates the existing wash system and enhances it with mounded earth hills. The washes and hills provide a buffer between spaces. Topography enhances wayfinding and is inextricably linked to views and vistas both in and out of the park.

Changing the position of the performance space should be carefully considered in relationship to the existing topography. Modification of the park's wash system will impact the overall balance of the hills, ponds, and open space.

Vegetation:

Turf is the unifying and multi-functional element of the park's ground plane. Predominantly Mediterranean vegetation such as Aleppo pines, olives, and palms support a desert oasis theme. The turf and shade trees are naturally cooling and are a large part of the park's character and appeal.

Insertion of desert vegetation or the removal of turf cover will seriously impact the historic oasis-like character of this park as well as its functionality. Inserting a desert garden area will further impact the open space character, as well as duplicate better desert garden demonstration areas available throughout Tucson.

Buildings and Structures:

Structures are dispersed throughout the park matrix. Structures do not disrupt the sense of open space or dominate the park. The Demeester Outdoor Performance Center built in 1974 employs a turfed hill for seating. It is a beloved community open air gathering space.

All three concept plans appear to redevelop the Demeester Outdoor Performance Center, a potentially historic structure and beloved community resource. Enlarging the space or fencing it off would further disrupt the open-space concept of the park.

Views and Vistas:

From Barnum Hill, there is a view of all of Tucson's mountain ranges, in particular a dramatic view of the Santa Catalinas.

There are also designed vistas within the park. Barnum Hill provides a vista of the North Pond and the park itself in all four directions. The hills also provide an immediate vista of the water features while controlling the view of other park resources – thus avoiding a sense of clutter. The wash offers an important visual separation from the surrounding roads and streets.

The vehicular loop of Concept 3 will interrupt important vistas within in the park. The changed wash configuration of Concepts 2 and 3 will eliminate vistas that are a key characteristic defining feature of the park.

Constructed Water Features:

There are a range of water features in this oasis. The North Pond is a formal water feature. The South Pond is a naturalistic water feature. The channels and waterfalls are dynamic and appeal to multiple senses. The water features create bird habitat, which animates the landscape and draws many

of the visitors. The designed topography celebrated the existing wash system of the land.

All the concepts appear to be respectful of the North and South Ponds, although the potential intrusion of additional elements in the immediate area will impact the naturalistic surroundings. Concepts 2 and 3 fail to recognize the role of that feature in separating the outside traffic from the central open space.

Small-Scale Features:

The small-scale features support the overall style and design of the park. They tend to be integral and harmonious.

Changes in small-scale features, such as lighting, have not been made available for evaluation. In considering additional lighting, surface lighting and dark skies issues must be taken into account.

Commissioner Mulder moved that the Historic Landscapes Subcommittee has reviewed the three landscape concept plans for Reid Park and recommends that the chair, Commissioner Grede, prepare a letter and presentation to the full TPCHC outlining HLS concerns to the historical character of the park. HLS members wish to express their concern that the current park community comment process favors addition of multiple new features to the park that may negatively impact the historic open-space character of the park. Of particular concern is the relocation of the zoo entrance. Commissioner Ellwand seconded the motion, which passed with a roll call vote of 4-0.

**4. Current Issues for Information (Discussion/Action)**

- a. Review of TPCHC Plans Review Subcommittee draft of best practices to follow when naming City- and County-owned assets (discussion/action).

Commissioner Sadongei updated that the report is in review.

- b. Historic Landscape Subcommittee's role on divided historical commissions

No action at this time.

**5. Future Agenda Items for Upcoming Meetings**

The TCC music hall temporary fence.

**6. Call to the Audience (Information Only)**

No comments were received.

7. **Adjournment**  
The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.