



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

**Thursday, June 1, 2023**

The Historic Landscapes Subcommittee of the Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission conducted a meeting on Thursday, June 1, 2023, at 11:02 a.m. via Zoom.

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

Meeting was called to order by Chair Grede at 11:02 a.m. Those present and absent were:

**Members Present:**

Steve Grede, Chair  
Geoffrey Ellwand  
J.J. Lamb

**Members Absent:**

Jan Mulder  
Alyce Sadongei

**Guests:**

Helen Erickson, TPCHC Member, Advisor  
Jodie Brown, City of Tucson Historic Preservation Officer  
Jon Choi, COT, Green Stormwater Infrastructure, Project Manager  
Eve Seid, El Encanto Neighborhood Resident  
Ava Butler, Villa Catalina Landscape Committee, Landscaping Chair  
Bill Dupont, Colonia Solana Neighborhood Resident  
Rebeca Field, Kimley-Horn  
Melinda Pittman, Kimley-Horn  
Ryan Fagan, COT Department of Transportation and Mobility, Project Manager

**2. Approval of Historic Landscapes Subcommittee Minutes from Meeting of: 2-27-2023 (Discussion/Action)**

Commissioner Ellwand moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of 4-26-2023 meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lamb and passed by a roll call vote of 3-0.

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

- a. Traffic triangle at 5th/6th Street and Country Club, in front of the individually listed Villa Catalina and west of El Encanto historic district

Mr. Fagan introduced the scope of the project which extends along 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Street from Campbell Avenue to Alvernon Way. The triangle at 5th/6th Street and Country Club provides an opportunity for water harvesting and landscape improvements. Mr. Choi spoke about the Storm to Shade program which utilizes street stormwater for planting irrigation needs.

Ms. Field presented the aerial photos of the triangle showing persistent palm trees persistent since 1958. The proposed design of the triangle to include concrete walkways, water harvesting, trees to be preserved, and additional plantings. The proposed design was to remove three Mexican fan palms, two California fan palms, two Canary Island date palms, and a dead palm trunk.

Commissioner Erickson commented that the palms create a visual connection between the triangle and the Country Club Apartments to the north, and El Encanto Historic District to the east. Palms are not water intensive and are representative of that historic landscape style.

Ms. Field suggested that the three palms (two California fan palms and one Canary Island date palm) would be easy to preserve in place. The Canary Island date palm near the bus stop may not be as old but probably over 50 years, would also be easy to preserve in place as it does not impact the water harvesting design.

Commissioner Lamb asked about the public outreach process for the maintenance of the shrine on the site. Mr. Fagan replied that there is communication with the family members, and it will be presented to the community during the outreach process.

Ms. Field will work to incorporate as many of the palms as possible into the next design iteration and could present to the HLS at an upcoming meeting.

Commissioner Lamb moved that the HLS recommend the plan be developed to include as many palms as possible and be reviewed at a future meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ellwand and passed by a roll call vote of 3-0.

Commissioner Erickson thanked the presenters for their sensitivity to historic landscape.

- b. Villa Catalina, 521 N. Country Club Rd., Landscape – Possible use of synthetic turf

Ms. Butler gave an overview of Villa Catalina's landscape rehabilitation process and design. The landscape plans were approved by SHPO and Villa Catalina is currently implementing the design.

Ms. Butler proposed that due to Tucson's increased water restrictions, can the approved lawn areas be artificial turf? When artificial turf was proposed in the past, the HLS members raised concerns about loss of cooling from lawn evaporation and more dust. Artificial turf has improved since it was first discussed in 2017, but its overall impact on microclimates is not known.

Commissioner Grede noted that artificial turf visually mimics lawn but does not respond the same way functionally. He suggested that the narrower lawn areas seen in the plan are less efficient to irrigate and perhaps they could be transitioned to artificial turf first. The larger areas beside the swimming pools are more likely to be functional.

Ms. Butler explained that the entire irrigation system needs to be replaced and keeping some part of the lawn would be challenging. The lawn is not used directly since none of the residents sit on the lawn, instead using chairs along the courtyards near the pools.

Commissioner Erickson noted that there is a lack of preservation guidance about artificial turf; perhaps Villa Catalina could serve as a test case. By monitoring temperature and humidity to determine the change in comfort and microclimate when exchanging turf for artificial turf, the project would help the HLS give appropriate guidance in future cases.

Commissioner Lamb moved that the HLS recommend the replacement of lawn to artificial turf at Villa Catalina as a test case, providing a research opportunity so the HLS can make more informed recommendations in the future. Villa Catalina will collaborate with HLS and provide feedback information for five years. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ellwand and passed by a roll call vote of 3-0.

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

##### **a. Reid Park**

Commissioner Erickson reported that the HLS had made numerous requests to the COT Parks and Recreation department to consult with HLS before making plans for Reid Park so that there would be base-line evaluation of historic character-defining features. The consultant's process was to survey the community with wish-list items rather than considering the overall planning of a historic park.

Mr. Dupont updated the HLS about the most recent meeting about the survey. The highest rated topic was planting more trees. Of concern was that only 18% of respondents were Latino, a population that makes up about 47% of the population that uses the parks. There was only one introductory meeting with the surrounding neighborhoods before the surveys went out.

Ms. Brown reported that she is not aware of a master plan at this time. Commissioner Grede suggested that we request the Reid Park design consultants and COT Parks and Recreation update on the masterplan and process and their thinking at the next HLS meeting. She will reach out to the Deputy Director. Commissioner Erickson stated that the HLS has standing with a historic park and should be included in conversations.

b. Armory Park

Ms. Brown reported that she has not yet talked to the COT Parks and Recreation about Armory Park. Commissioner Erickson reported that there is a Historic American Landscapes Survey and a 2017 Conservation Plan for Armory Park. She will send it to Ms. Brown to distribute.

c. Issues for collaboration between Transportation Subcommittee and Historic Landscapes Subcommittee

Commissioner Lamb gave an update on Vail Crossings, recommending accommodations for historic features, and connectivity between the old and new parts of Vail.

Ms. Brown reported on the El Encanto Neighborhood streetlight pole proposal along 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Research is being done on potential light standards that will not create a false sense of history and are appropriate in scale.

Commissioner Lamb stressed the importance of the three motels owned by Pima Community College to the Drachman Streetscape. Loss of structures will be irreversible, representing a significant loss to the historic streetscape. She will request this item be put on the TPCHC agenda for the 6-14-2023 meeting. Pima Community College is its own jurisdiction and, unlike the University of Arizona, is not under the supervision of the Board of Regents.

d. Historic Landscape Subcommittee's possible role in researching, nominating, and reviewing rural and cultural landscapes.

No action at this time.

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

No action at this time.

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

Commissioner Erickson suggested we continue to discuss the Drachman motel structures as elements in a landscape.

Ms. Brown has queried SHPO about the use of artificial turf and will report back. She recommended having a panel discussion on the impact of artificial turf on National Register Properties at the upcoming Arizona Preservation Conference. Commissioner Erickson asked if we could bring in National Park Service expertise for such a panel.

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

No comments were received by the deadline.

**7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:57 p.m.