



## **City of Phoenix**

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

### **Staff Report: Z-1-18-8 January 31, 2018**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Z-1-18-8 is a request to establish Historic Preservation (HP) overlay zoning for the property known historically as the Sacred Heart Home for the Aged (now Garfield Commons), located at the northwest corner of 16<sup>th</sup> and Portland Streets [1110 North 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 1111 North 15<sup>th</sup> Street]. Maps and photos of the subject property are attached.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that rezoning request Z-1-18-8 be approved.

#### **BACKGROUND**

In December 2017, the City of Phoenix HP Office received a letter from Reid Butler of Butler Housing Company, Inc., representing the owner of the subject property, 1110 N. 16<sup>th</sup> St, LLC. The letter requested that the City of Phoenix initiate an application to establish HP overlay zoning for the Sacred Heart Home for the Aged. Per Mr. Butler's request, and at the recommendation of HP and Planning staff, the Planning Commission initiated HP zoning for the subject property on January 4, 2018. (The HP Commission, which normally would have initiated the application, did not meet in January 2018.)

The subject property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in February 2010. The National Register listing was done in conjunction with a rehabilitation project to convert the building from senior housing to veterans housing. Completed in 2014, the rehabilitation was certified by the National Park Service. The project received a 2014 Governor's Preservation Honor Award.

#### **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

The eligibility criteria for HP overlay zoning and listing on the PHPR are set forth in Section 807.D of the City of Phoenix Zoning Ordinance. To qualify, a property must demonstrate significance in local, regional, state, or national history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture, according to one or more of the following criteria:

- A. The property is associated with the events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history;
- B. The property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- C. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represents the work of a master, possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. The property has yielded or may likely yield information integral to the understanding of our prehistory or history.

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.

## **DESCRIPTION**

The Sacred Heart Home for the Aged is located at 1110 North 16<sup>th</sup> Street in central Phoenix. The 94,935-square foot building occupies the eastern portion of the block bounded by Interstate 10 on the north, Portland Street on the south, 16<sup>th</sup> Street on the east, and 15<sup>th</sup> Street on the west. The building's primary façade faces east onto 16<sup>th</sup> Street. There is a parking area at the front of the building, which wraps around the north side. The surrounding neighborhood contains a mix of uses, although the abutting properties to the south and west are primarily residential. These homes are part of the North Garfield Historic District and date from the early twentieth century.

Completed in 1960, the Sacred Heart building is a two-story structure with a symmetrical façade that conveys a traditional Classical image, yet the building clearly incorporates design elements and materials typical of the Modern Movement of the mid-twentieth century. Its plan is in the form of a hollow square with a chapel as the central feature and matching wings extending from its front corners.

The building is constructed of a cast-in-place reinforced concrete system of posts, beams, and decks with infill panels of tan brick. The foundation stem walls are cast-in-place concrete with a smooth finish. Significant character-defining elements of the building facades are cast stone features that imply the internal concrete structural system and delineate the window and door openings. Cast stone molded cornices trim the shallow roof eaves. The building has aluminum windows, which are sheltered by steel and aluminum shade canopies that project from the façade. They provide integrated sun shading and are characteristic of midcentury modern design.

The main entrance consists of a shallow pediment expressed as a concrete frame. This motif surrounds the front door and second-floor window above. The main entrance consists of a pair of aluminum doors with sidelights. A symbolic open bell tower sits

atop the roof over the entrance. This metal cupola-like feature has a bell-cast hipped roof topped by a cross and contains three suspended, non-functional bells.

Notable interior features include terrazzo floors ornamented with inlaid patterns of intersecting circles. The terrazzo shapes are also distinguished by color, with varying shapes of gray and beige, outlined by inlaid brass. The lobby walls are veneered with blonde-colored ash wood paneling and trim. The dominant detail of the lobby area is the pair of leaded, stained glass doors with sidelights that lead into the chapel. The two-story chapel has a traditional basilica plan and also features terrazzo floors, stained glass, and a formal altar at the west end.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

### *Criterion A*

Sacred Heart Home for the Aged, completed in 1960, is eligible under Criterion A as a significant example of the development of retirement housing in postwar Arizona. The period following World War II was an era of rapid change for Arizona, as the state had one of the highest in-migration rates in the country. The favorable climate and low housing costs attracted a large number of retirees who relocated to Phoenix and its adjacent suburbs. During the 1950s, the Phoenix metropolitan area experienced a 104 percent increase in the population of people 65 and older, and by the early 1960s Arizona was one of the three leading retirement states in the country.

By the late 1950s, housing for the elderly became an increasingly important issue and the federal government began offering mortgage insurance under the Federal Housing Administration's Section 231 program targeted specifically for the development of senior apartments and nursing care facilities. Private funding also spurred development of senior housing unit complexes and nursing care institutions. For those who could afford to own, developers offered membership plans in complexes where residents could reside in their own unit and receive housekeeping and meal plan services as well as use of on-site medical and recreational facilities. However, with a poverty rate of almost 20 percent among the population 65 and over in metropolitan Phoenix, needs were often met by nonprofit religious groups, many of whom relied upon private donations to generate funding for construction of nursing care facilities.

The Little Sisters of the Poor was an order of nurses that operated 46 retirement care homes in Europe and 42 major cities of the United States. Though their principal facility was in Peoria, Illinois, money was raised through national and international funding drives and then applied to projects in different locales. Phoenix was selected by the order because of its mild climate, emerging prominence as a population growth area, and need for indigent elderly care services.

The Little Sisters of the Poor initially established a convent in Phoenix in 1956 at 11<sup>th</sup> and Culver Streets. In 1958, the international congregation of Roman Catholic nuns commissioned the architectural firm of Lescher & Mahoney to design the Sacred Heart Home for the Aged. The William Peper Construction Company was the builder. Ground was officially broken on June 13, 1958, and the facility was dedicated on October 30, 1960. The completed building offered 137 living units.

The Little Sisters had a talent for fundraising and were able to fund the construction of Sacred Heart entirely with donations. Throughout their tenure the nuns continued to solicit donations to cover operating expenses. Donations in kind were often received from prominent local businesses, like Dial Corporation, which contributed soap to sell in the home's general store, as well as from individuals.

Sacred Heart served primarily low-income residents, although no expense was spared in the construction of the Phoenix facility. With extensive use of reinforced concrete, brick, steel beams, and imported roof tiles, the structure was built to last and to discourage any rapid spread of fire, which could be particularly detrimental to an older, less ambulant population. Its design included dedicated space for many on-site medical services, such as leaded walls for x-rays and dental labs, which had traditionally been unavailable in skilled nursing home settings. Terrazzo floors, wood paneling, and solid wood doors and room built-ins called out the quality of the building. The facility was among the most desirable retirement facilities operated by the Little Sisters, and there was always a waiting list for admission.

In 1986, Sacred Heart Home for the Aged closed its doors. According to newspaper accounts, the decision to close the home was based on three factors: a shortage of nuns to provide adequate service, the need for extensive remodeling, and the proximity of the new freeway to the building. Many Phoenix residents were transferred to other Little Sister facilities before the building closed. The building remained vacant for many years before it was rehabilitated in 2014.

### Criterion C

The subject property is also eligible under Criterion C as a significant late work of the prominent and prolific Phoenix architecture firm of Lescher & Mahoney. Founded in 1910, the firm produced an extensive body of work throughout Arizona. To create the Sacred Heart Home, Lescher & Mahoney drew upon 50 years of professional experience in designing senior housing, apartments and hotels, hospitals and clinics, community centers, churches and convents. The building's plan, systems, features, and construction physically illustrate the changing philosophies that guided the development of modern care facilities. The building is architecturally significant for Lescher & Mahoney's combination of state-of-the-art building technology and modern design principles.

The selection of the prominent Phoenix architectural firm of Lescher & Mahoney to design the Sacred Heart Home for the Aged was a logical decision by the Little Sisters of the Poor. Lescher & Mahoney specialized in large-scale commercial, institutional buildings and churches. They operated under a pragmatic approach that stressed the importance of the client's needs over the architect's ego. In a 1981 interview, Leslie J. Mahoney summarized the firm's approach saying, "We didn't have any preconceived ideas of design. We would sacrifice design for business because I was a commercial architect." Despite this approach, many of the firm's designs are today considered among the best examples of the popular architectural styles of the day.

From the time Royal Lescher started the firm in 1910 up until it was sold in 1975, Lescher & Mahoney were both prolific and progressive. Mahoney kept careful track of each job; when he retired, the firm's list of jobs totaled 2,541. Over 19,000 of the firm's drawings are preserved at the archives of the Arizona Historical Society in Tempe. The firm designed most of the major public and institutional buildings in Phoenix through the 1950s as well as buildings throughout the state. Much of their early work centered on public buildings such as schools, courthouses, and hospitals. After 1930, their major projects shifted to commercial commissions, primarily in Phoenix.

Throughout their careers Lescher & Mahoney were known for being at the forefront of the latest developments in structural systems, as well as mechanical and electrical systems. They were able to justify the benefits of such modern systems to their clients in terms of long-term economy of maintenance and operation. This situation is most evident in their design of the Sacred Heart Home. The architect and client agreed to spare no expense in constructing a high-quality building for those in need. The home's gas-fired cooling system was the latest advancement in air conditioning systems for the time. A full-page ad in the March 1961 *Arizona Architect* proclaimed the efficiency of "the nation's finest heating and cooling equipment." The Little Sisters were committed to the long-term operation of the facility and wisely determined to build for ease of maintenance and economy of operation of this large institutional facility. The use of sustainable materials on the exterior of the building avoided expensive maintenance over the years. Exposed concrete, natural brick, cast stone, aluminum windows, and glazed ceramic roof tiles resisted deterioration caused by the ravages of sun, low humidity, and high heat in the Phoenix desert environment.

## **INTEGRITY**

The subject property retains its historic integrity, particularly on the exterior and the significant interior spaces. The building is in its original location and, despite the intrusion of the freeway, the residential setting to the south and west remains intact. The building's design and materials are also largely intact. Windows were replaced as part of the rehabilitation project but were done in a manner that was approved by the National Park Service. Early additions within the courtyards constructed in the 1970s

are distinguishable as later construction but were designed at a size and scale to be subordinate to the historic building.

### **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

Section 807.E 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 zoning boundary encompasses 5.57 gross acres and contains the Sacred Heart Home for the Aged property in its entirety. It follows documented historic boundaries as much as possible, being bounded by the freeway and the three adjacent streets.

As part of the aforementioned rehabilitation project, the property was replatted in 2013 and split into two lots. Lot 1 of the subdivision encompasses the eastern portion of the property, where the historic building is located. Lot 2 covers the western portion of the site; which was historically part of the Sacred Heart property but is now vacant land. Both lots are included in the proposed HP zoning overlay.

The applicant intends to construct additional housing units on Lot 2 at a future date. If the HP overlay is approved, this construction will be subject to the Certificate of Appropriateness process and will be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Office in a public hearing.

### **CONCLUSION**

The rezoning request Z-1-18-8 to establish Historic Preservation (HP) overlay zoning for the subject property should be approved for the following reasons:

1. The property meets the significance, age, and integrity requirements for HP overlay zoning set forth in Section 807.D of the Zoning Ordinance; and
2. The proposed boundaries meet the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 807.E.

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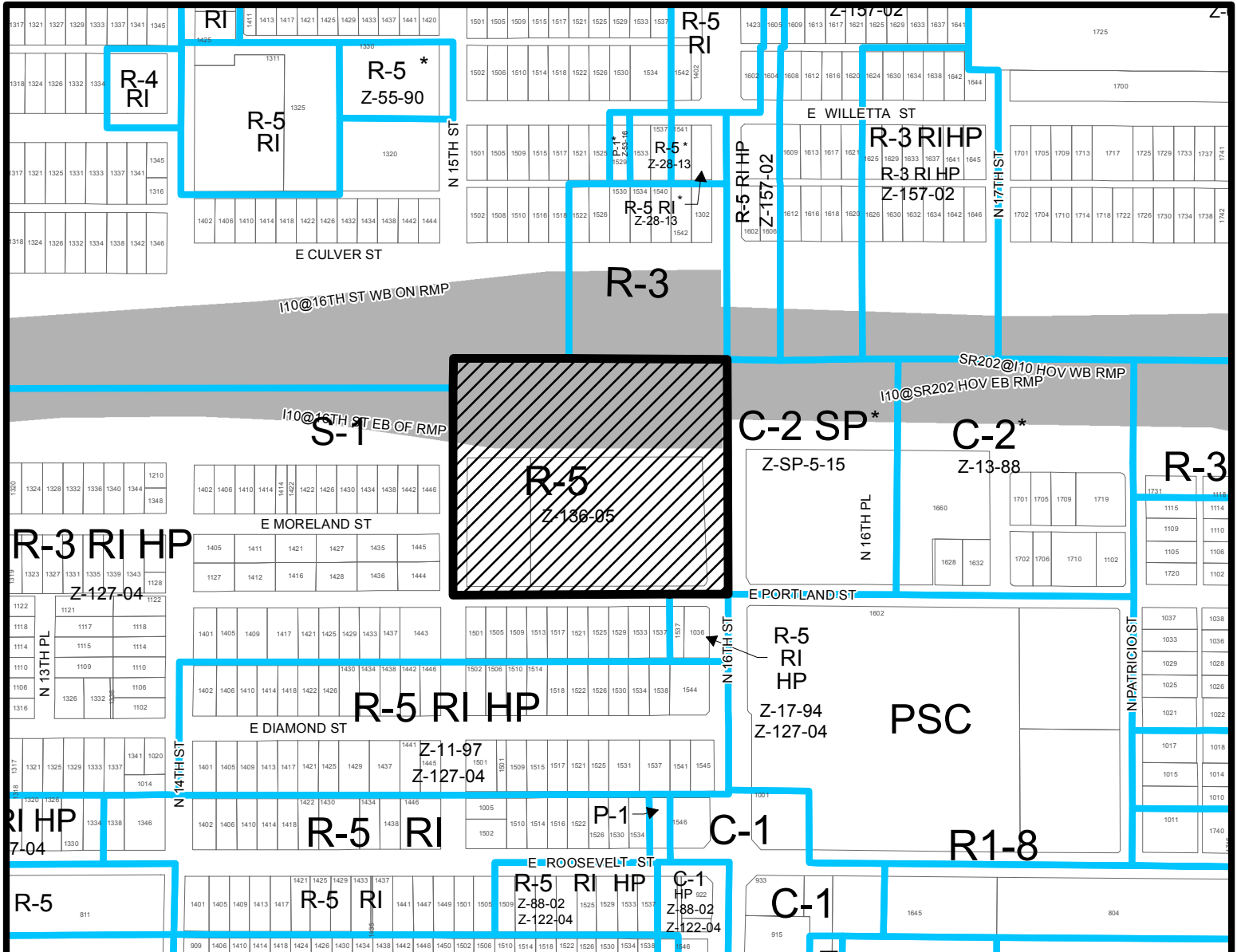
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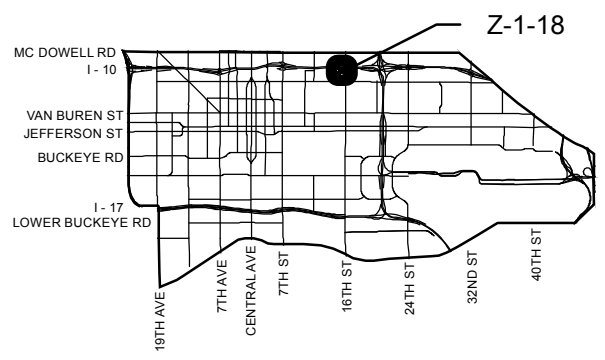
Aerials (2 pages)

Photos (4 pages)

Newspaper Articles (2 pages)



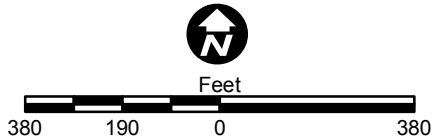
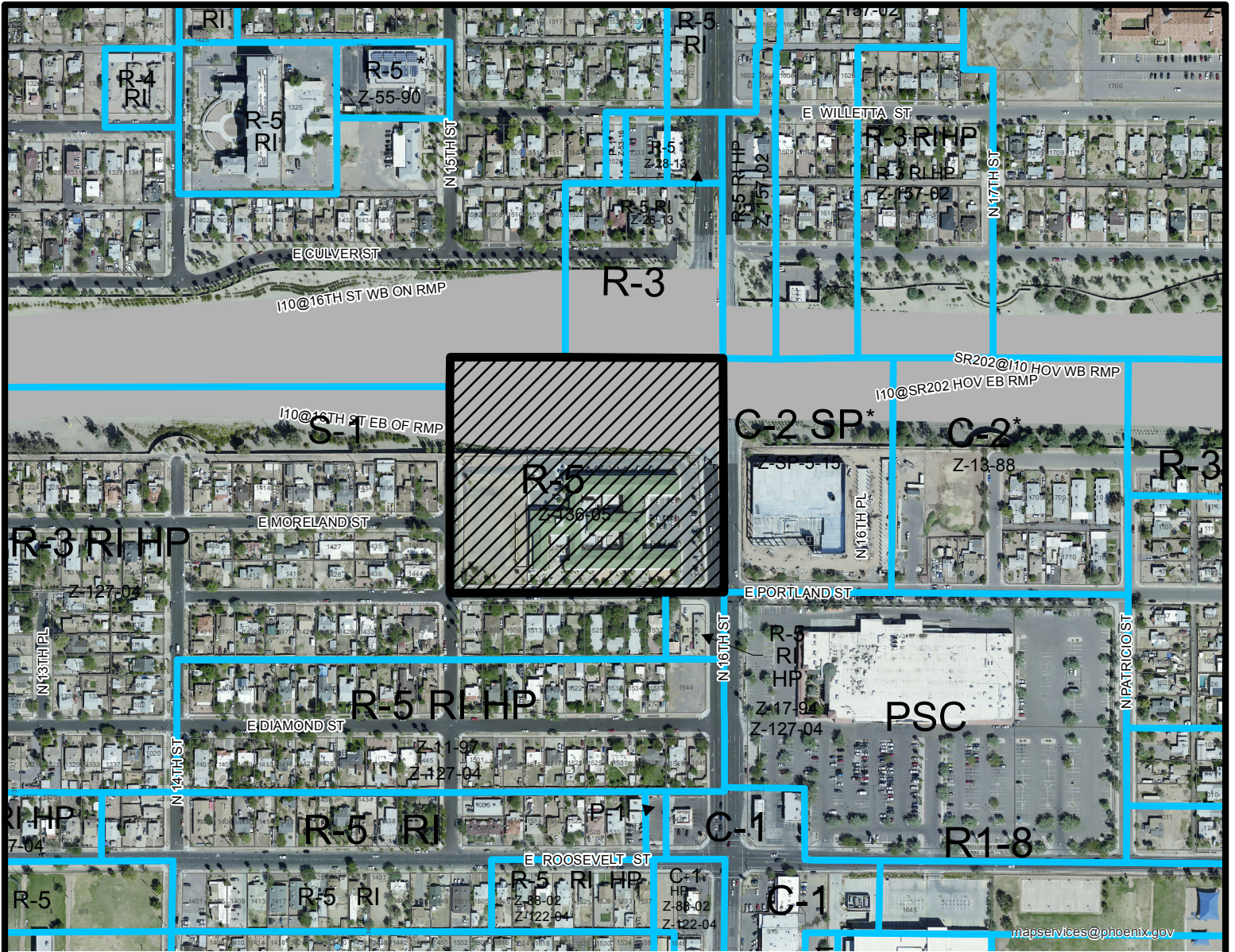
**CENTRAL CITY VILLAGE**  
CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT: 8



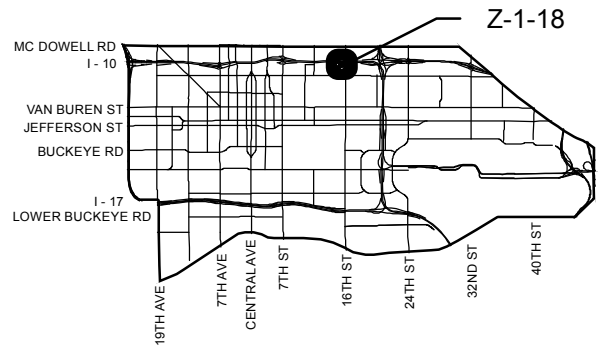
<b>APPLICANT'S NAME:</b> City of Phoenix Planning Commission		<b>REQUESTED CHANGE:</b> FROM: R-5 (5.57 a.c.) TO: R-5 HP (5.57 a.c.)	
<b>APPLICATION NO.</b> Z-1-18	<b>DATE:</b> 1/9/2018 REVISION DATES:		
GROSS AREA INCLUDING 1/2 STREET AND ALLEY DEDICATION IS APPROX. <b>5.57 Acres</b>	<b>AERIAL PHOTO &amp; QUARTER SEC. NO.</b> QS 12-30	<b>ZONING MAP</b> G-9	
<b>MULTIPLES PERMITTED</b> R-5 EG R-5 EG HP	<b>CONVENTIONAL OPTION</b> 242 242	<b>* UNITS P.R.D. OPTION</b> 291 291	

\* Maximum Units Allowed with P.R.D. Bonus





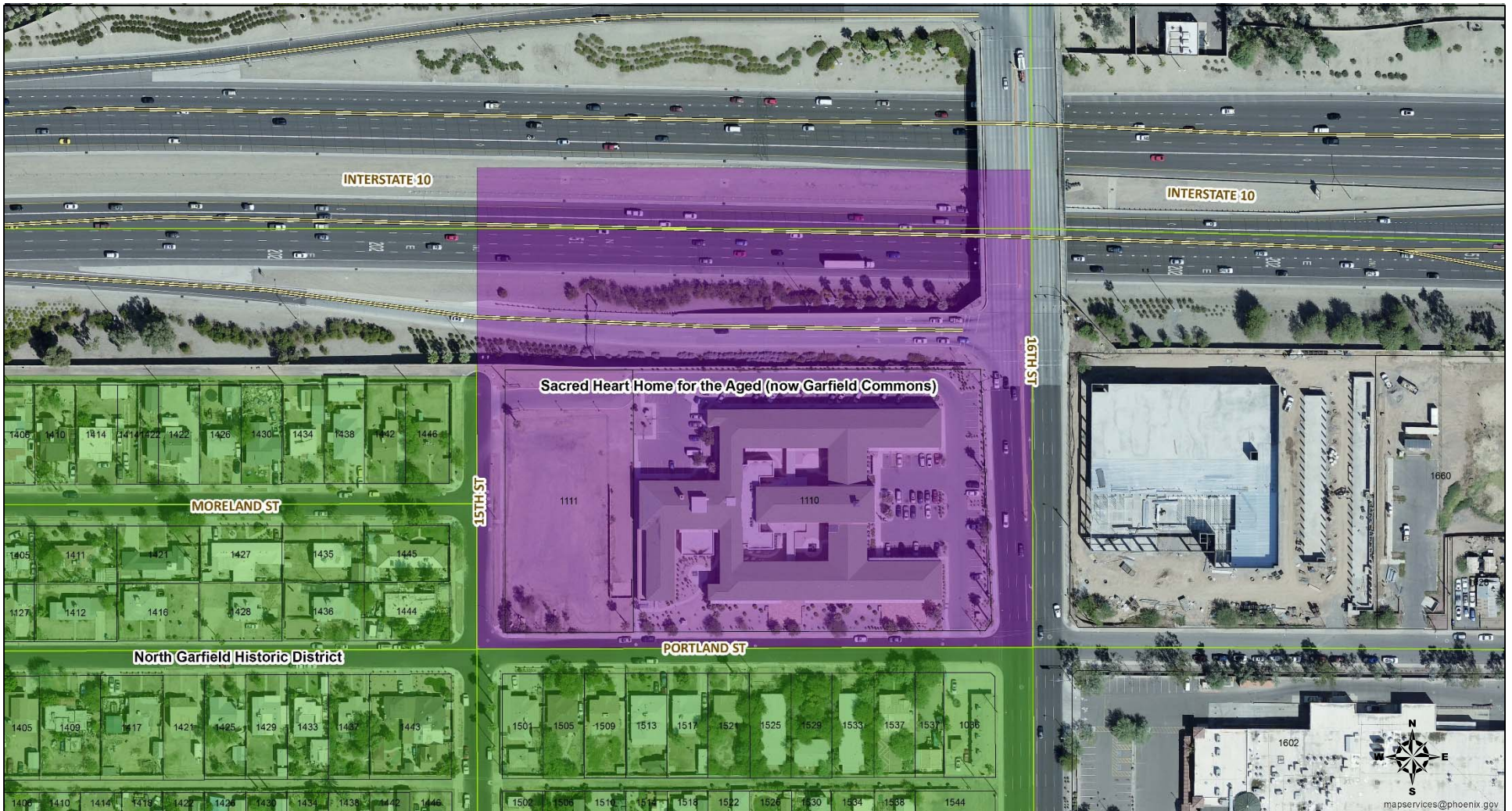
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## **Sacred Heart Home for the Aged (now Garfield Commons)** **1110 North 16<sup>th</sup> Street (also 1111 North 15<sup>th</sup> Street)**

**Proposed Historic Preservation (HP) Zoning Overlay shown in purple**  
**Existing Historic Preservation (HP) Zoning Overlay shown in green**



**Z-1-18-8**

Sacred Heart Home for the Aged (now Garfield Commons)

1110 N. 16<sup>th</sup> St.



**Photo 1.** View of subject property, looking west across 16<sup>th</sup> Street.



**Photo 2.** Same as #1, close up.



**Photo 3.** View of subject property, looking northwest across 16<sup>th</sup> Street.



**Photo 4.** View of subject property, looking southwest across 16<sup>th</sup> Street.



**Z-1-18-8**

Sacred Heart Home for the Aged (now Garfield Commons)  
1110 N. 16<sup>th</sup> St.



**Photo 5.** Plaque at main entrance of building indicating architects and contractor.



**Photo 6.** Plaque at main entrance of building indicating date of construction.



**Photo 7.** View of chapel, looking west from lobby doors toward altar.



**Photo 8.** View of chapel, looking east from altar toward choir loft and lobby doors.



**Z-1-18-8**

Sacred Heart Home for the Aged (now Garfield Commons)  
1110 N. 16<sup>th</sup> St.



**Photo 9.** View of stained glass windows, looking north from front of chapel.



**Photo 10.** View of terrazzo floors in chapel, looking west from lobby doors.



**Photo 11.** View of chapel doors and terrazzo floor in lobby, looking west from building entrance.



**Photo 12.** Same as #11, close up.



**Z-1-18-8**

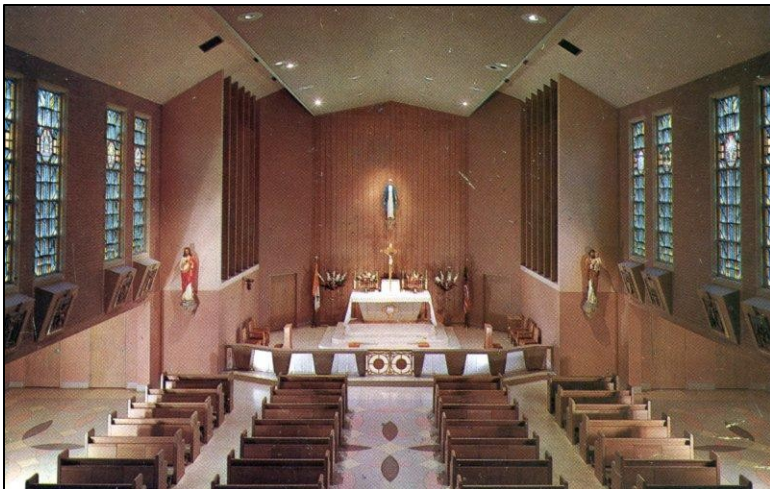
Sacred Heart Home for the Aged (now Garfield Commons)  
1110 N. 16<sup>th</sup> St.



**Photo 13.** Early postcard showing front of building (courtesy Reid Butler).



**Photo 14.** Early postcard showing aerial view of building (courtesy Reid Butler).



**Photo 15.** Early postcard showing view of chapel (courtesy Reid Butler).





**Groundbreaking** Ground was broken yesterday for little Sisters of the Poor's \$1,200,000 Sacred Heart Home for the Aged at 16th St. and Portland, operated by the Little Sisters of the Poor. Building will include clinic hospital and other facilities for elderly guests. Present at ceremony were, from left, Marlene Lohmiller, of Marian Aides, Little Sisters of the Poor; Father Victor G. Bucher; Mrs. L. G. Hyatt, president of Little Sisters of Poor Auxiliary; Matthew J. Scott, president, Particular Council, St. Vincent de Paul; Mother Emilie, assistant provincial, Chicago; Mother Benedict, provincial, Chicago; Mother Luovine, Phoenix superior, and Patricia Milani, president of Marian Aides. Kneeling is Carol Lohmiller, Marian Aides. (Republic Photo)



**HOME FOR THE AGED**—This \$2.5 million structure at 16th Street and Portland will be completed this summer as a Sacred Heart Residence for the Aged, owned and operated by the Little Sisters of The Poor. Designed by Lescher and Mahoney, architects, it is being built by the William Peper Construction Co. Its green tile roof tops walls of

buff-color brick and aluminum window sash. It has accommodations for 172 men and women, 20 nuns of the order and 12 aged nuns. Of Class A construction, the building has six dining rooms, two elevators; an unusually well equipped infirmary, and a large private chapel. The dedication will be in the fall.—(Republic Photo)