



City of Phoenix
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Staff Report: Z-31-16-8
July 26, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Z-31-16-8 is a request to establish Historic Preservation (HP) overlay zoning for the property known historically as the General Sales Company Warehouse, located at the southeast corner of Grant Street and the 5th Street alignment [515 East Grant Street]. Maps and photos of the subject property are attached.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that rezoning request Z-31-16-8 be approved.

BACKGROUND

In April 2016, the City of Phoenix HP Office received a letter from Michael T. Cowley, representing the owner of the subject property, 515 Grant Holdings LLC. The letter requested that the subject property, which is a 122,220-square-foot warehouse constructed in 1946, receive HP overlay zoning. The property was recommended eligible for historic designation several years ago and was featured in the City of Phoenix publication *Midcentury Marvels: Commercial Architecture of Phoenix 1945-1975*, published in 2011. At Mr. Cowley's request, the City's HP Commission formally initiated HP overlay zoning for the subject property on April 18, 2016.

In conjunction with the HP zoning application, the property owner has submitted a grant application to the City's HP Office, requesting funding assistance to rehabilitate the vacant building and convert it to office use. It is anticipated that the work will be completed in late 2016. Future tenants of the building will be tech companies WebPT and Galvanize, Inc. The grant request, in the amount of \$250,000, is tentatively scheduled for City Council approval on October 5, 2016.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The eligibility criteria for HP overlay zoning and listing on the PPHR 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 General Sales Company Warehouse, 515 East Grant Street, is located south of downtown Phoenix on two lots that were originally platted as part of the Linville Addition to the Phoenix townsite. The 300' x 220' building has a simple rectangular plan. In the mid-1950s an irregularly shaped addition with a barrel roof was constructed at the rear of the warehouse extending its storage area to the rear property line. The massing of the building is symmetrical, utilizing a classic central block and wings layout. The warehouse is primarily one-story in height but the central block is two-story. The building's construction materials include concrete, masonry, and steel. The foundation, floors, interior walls, and stairs are reinforced concrete. The exterior walls are brick, and the main roof, the roof trusses, and the exterior canopies are steel. The building's roof is flat with unembellished parapet walls.

The primary entrance for pedestrian access is located in the central block's north facade. The main entrance door is a double-leaf wood door with a single large glass panel in each of the two leaves. On either side of the entry door are sidelights with four divided lights. Four rectangular transom windows top the entrance. The exterior stairs to the entrance door are concrete flanked by two low concrete walls. Windows are only found on the central block portion of the warehouse. They are located on its north facade and at the second-story level. The steel windows are square and rectangular in form with divided lights of various sizes. The windows are fixed, although a segment of the middle lights in each of the windows can be opened to tilt outwards to provide for ventilation.

The loading docks are the most prominent architectural feature of the warehouse, extending over 600 feet along the east and west sides and on either side of the central block on the north elevation. The docks are concrete, covered with metal canopies, and illuminated with fluorescent lights. Wood logs are installed along the dock edges to serve as bumpers. The loading docks are of two different heights related to the transport mode they served—those along the east and west sides of the building were designed to accommodate railroad cars and the docks on the north facade served trucks. Access to the storage area from the loading docks is provided through large square openings. Doors within these openings were originally wooden, roll-up doors. The size of the openings and their doors vary on the north façade. The set of seven doors to the east of the main entrance are the smaller in size, 8' x 8', as these docks

handled truck traffic. The three doors to the west of the entrance are larger at 16' x 12' and similar in size to the openings found on the docks that were utilized by the railroad cars.

The 90,000+ square feet of the warehouse's first floor interior is open span with the roof trusses visible. Only in the northeast corner of the first floor storage space are there walls. These partitions are related to its earlier use for cold storage. In the open storage area, rows of widely spaced, slender metal poles provide support for the roof structure. Their wide spacing allows for the maneuverability of mechanized equipment as well ample room to stack palettes. The warehouse's 22,000 square foot basement is also open with square concrete piers providing structural support for the floor above. The basement also houses the building's mechanical electrical and HVAC equipment.

The first floor of the central block contains a small entrance lobby and an office with a service window originally used by vendors utilizing the storage or distribution services of the warehouse. The second floor of the central block is laid out with three large spaces and a number of smaller rooms. The three larger spaces were designed as offices for the General Sales Company, including a conference room, employee lunchroom, and a display room for model retail equipment. The space along the north and east walls was divided into eight small rectangular offices used by their vendor and sales representatives of agricultural and food-related companies. These second-level spaces are quite modest in their appointments with simple wood strips used for baseboards and interior door and window trim.

At the southwest corner of the property there is a detached 860-square-foot brick building originally constructed to house a shop for warehouse operations. Although ancillary, the small building contributes to the industrial warehouse character of the property. It has a flat roof and a parapet wall on its north, south, and west façades. A single entry door provides access to the building, which has been vacant for many years.

The area surrounding the irregularly shaped parcel in which the General Sales Company Warehouse sits is industrial in character. Chain link fencing defines the perimeters of most properties, and there is no landscaping or pedestrian lighting. The property is adjacent to the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks on the south and a railroad spur that ran from the main line onto the lot on its east side. To facilitate its distribution functions, the building is set back over 100 feet from the Grant Street frontage to allow space for vehicular circulation.

SIGNIFICANCE

The General Sales Company Warehouse is architecturally significant under Criterion C as an excellent, locally significant example of a specific building type—the warehouse which developed in the mid-twentieth century in Arizona. The General Sales Company Warehouse is important because it illustrates the evolution of this building type from earlier eras. Its intact physical form and features reflect the best of the practices that were made to respond to changes in the local and national transportation systems and infrastructure, more efficient storage and distribution practices, and greater fire

protection and building safety requirements. The General Sales Company Warehouse clearly possesses the defining characteristics that distinguish this building type during the period of growth in Phoenix in the decades before and after World War II.

The arrival of the Maricopa and Phoenix Railroad to Phoenix in 1887 provided the impetus for the early development of warehouse building in Phoenix. With the ability to now export agricultural produce to other regions, the variety and amount of produce increased. With this growth in output, the beginnings of a warehouse district appeared. It consisted of small agricultural processing plants and storage facilities locating along the railroad tracks in the vicinity of modern day Jackson and Harrison Streets. In October of 1926, after being served only by a spur line for decades, Phoenix was finally connected to the Southern Pacific's main line route from Los Angeles eastward. With expanded markets, warehouses proliferated along the railroad tracks and on the streets in the railroad's vicinity in the south downtown during the 1920s and 1930s. Several dozen warehouses were built during this time as storage shells or combined with offices, retail shops, or manufacturing and processing facilities.

The Great Depression and World War II hampered the growth of the warehouse building in Phoenix during the 1930s and 1940s. During this same period, there were advancements in transportation technologies that had important implications for the distribution and storage industries. As the twentieth century progressed, Phoenix, like the rest of the nation, became increasingly reliant on the automobile as its primary form of transportation. After World War I, the expansion of the federal highway system became a spending priority of the New Deal. Phoenix benefitted from this, as the city was served by four major federal highway routes. With improved access, trucking was becoming as important as railroad transport for the movement of goods and products.

Phoenix rebounded relatively quickly from the Great Depression and this was reflected in the increased rate of building that occurred in the early 1940s. The Federal Housing Administration and its associated programs spurred the production of relatively inexpensive housing which, in turn, attracted people and businesses seeking to relocate to a more affordable and hospitable environment. With a growing population and economic base, a number of new industrial and commercial buildings were constructed. During the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, approximately 20 warehouses were built in the area south of downtown along the Southern Pacific right-of-way. These buildings are larger in scale than their 1920s predecessors. Many were originally constructed of brick but were sheathed with stucco at a later date. Painted block is the other primary material found. Windows are steel and most door and entrances into the interior have been changed over time.

The General Sales Company Warehouse was constructed in 1946 adjacent to the Southern Pacific Railroad line in downtown Phoenix. It was designed by Lescher & Mahoney, a prominent local architectural firm and constructed by the Del Webb Construction Company, a prolific and respected builder. The warehouse was built for the General Sales Company, which in 1947 was owned by seven Phoenix businessmen—Frank Brophy, Charles E. Orr, H.R. Keeton, George Hepburn, A.A.

Hayes, Charles Atkerson, and R.E. Nelson. Frank Brophy, however, became the most active in the management and operation of the warehouse.

Frank Brophy was the son of William H. Brophy, who came to Arizona from San Francisco in 1881. William Brophy founded the Bank of Bisbee and co-founded the Bank of Douglas. When William Brophy died in 1922 he left Frank his banking businesses and three ranches with over two million acres of land and herds of cattle and sheep. Frank's mother, Ellen, died in 1936 and she bequeathed Frank her Sphinx Date Company & Ranch and the family's 47-acre home and groves in East Phoenix. In 1936 Frank Brophy further augmented his land holdings with the purchase of the 34,000-acre Babacomari Ranch in Cochise and Santa Cruz counties in Arizona. Given Brophy's many agricultural pursuits, it is easy to understand why he led the effort to establish a state-of-the-art warehouse in Phoenix adjacent to the Southern Pacific Railroad line that could be used for the sale and distribution of the crops and products he produced.

Ground was broken for the \$500,000 warehouse in January of 1946. The Del Webb Company newsletter, *Webb Spinner*, reported that the warehouse was designed to be a "Class A fireproof with reinforced concrete walls, a steel roof carried on steel trusses and insulated concrete floors and concrete stairs to the basement and the two central section." Advertisements for the 100,000+ square foot building emphasized the volume of the 1,603,000-cubic-foot space available for storage. The General Sales Company warehouse was built with all the appointments, features and conveniences that distinguished mid-twentieth century warehouses. The loading docks were covered and illuminated with fluorescent lights and built of different heights to accommodate both rail and truck transportation. A specialized dock allowed direct the unloading and loading between the two modes. The General Sales Company had a fleet of 28 trucks which could be used in the transport of products to and from the warehouse or vendors could use their own.

The basement level originally contained a cleaning and packing plant for dry goods. The warehouse also offered cold storage. A promotional piece at the time of the warehouse's opening touted that twelve railroad cars of frozen food could be stored within the facility at below zero temperatures.

The warehouse operated successfully for several decades serving a variety of food-related businesses. The General Sales Company operated in the building from 1947 to 1954. Following that it served as the main office for Fry's Food Stores through the 1960s. In the 1970s Motorola used the warehouse as a distribution center. Despite the ownership and tenant changes, the building has been well-maintained and its original architecture and the character-defining features remain intact. As such, it is one of the most significant warehouses dating from the mid-twentieth century in downtown Phoenix.

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 follows the current parcel boundary. It includes the main warehouse building in its entirety and the detached shop building, which contributes to the property's historic character. The total area to be rezoned is 4.6 acres. This boundary is recommended by staff and supported by the property owner.

CONCLUSION

The rezoning request Z-31-16-8 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.

Writer

K. Weight

7/22/16

Team Leader

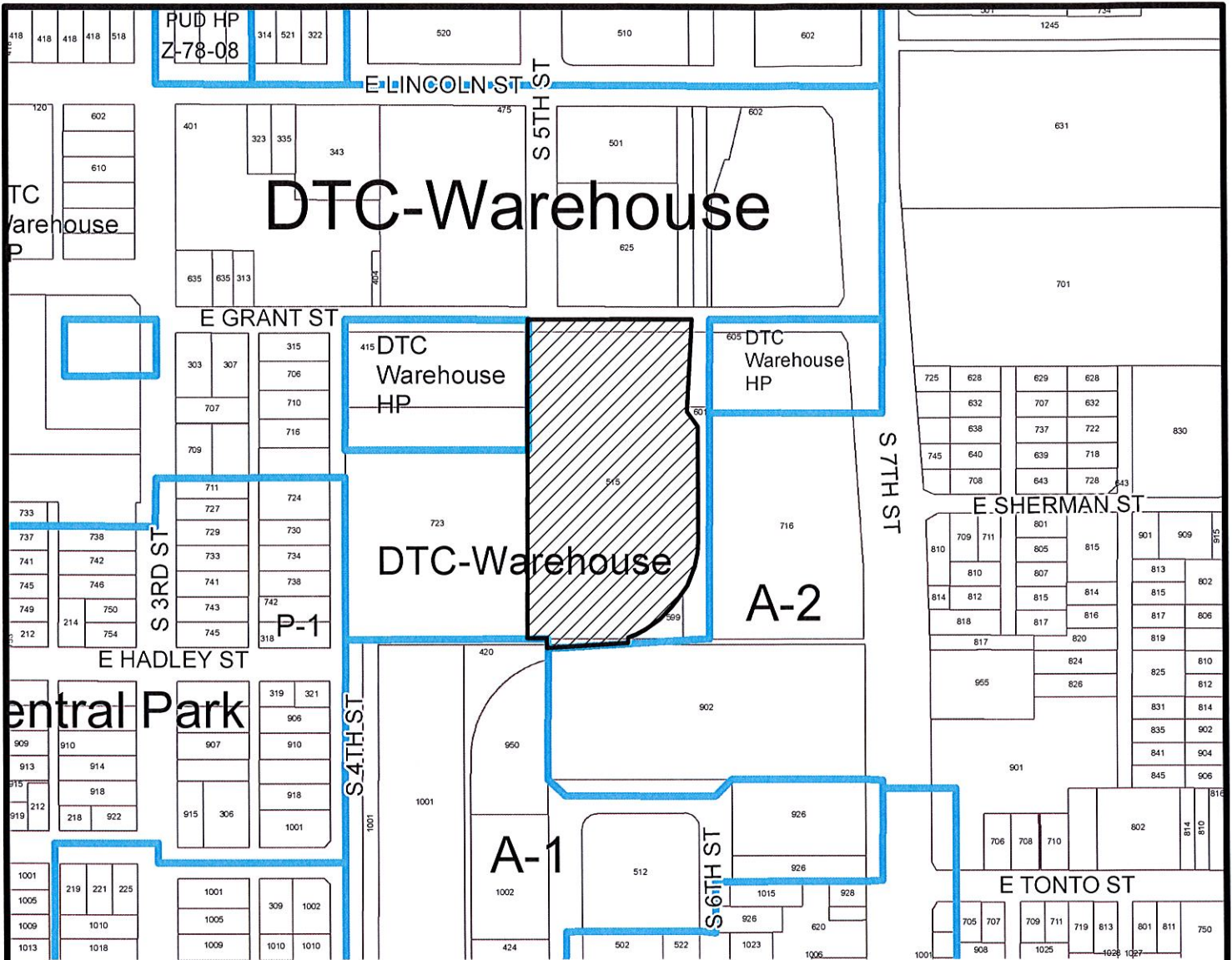
M. Dodds

Attachments:

Sketch Map (1 page)

Aerial (1 page)

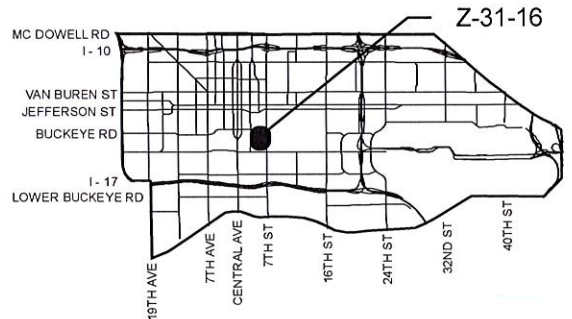
Photos (6 pages)



Feet



CENTRAL CITY VILLAGE
CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT: 8



APPLICANT'S NAME: City of Phoenix Historic Pres Comm

APPLICATION NO. Z-31-16

GROSS AREA INCLUDING 1/2 STREET AND ALLEY DEDICATION IS APPROX.

4.6 Acres

DATE: 5/19/16
REVISION DATES:

6/9/16

AERIAL PHOTO & QUARTER SEC. NO.
QS 9-28

ZONING MAP
F-8

REQUESTED CHANGE:

FROM: DTC-Warehouse, (4.6 Acres)

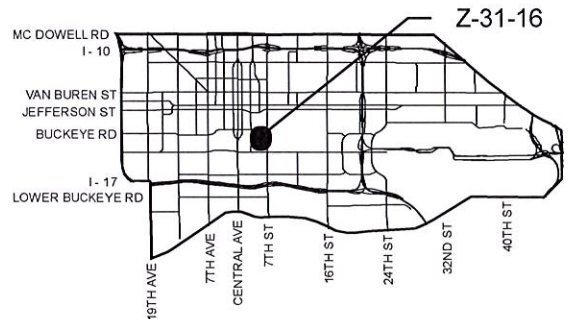
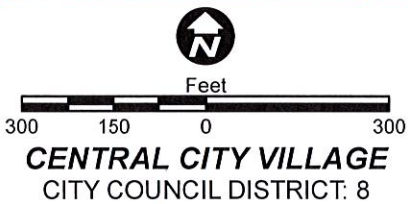
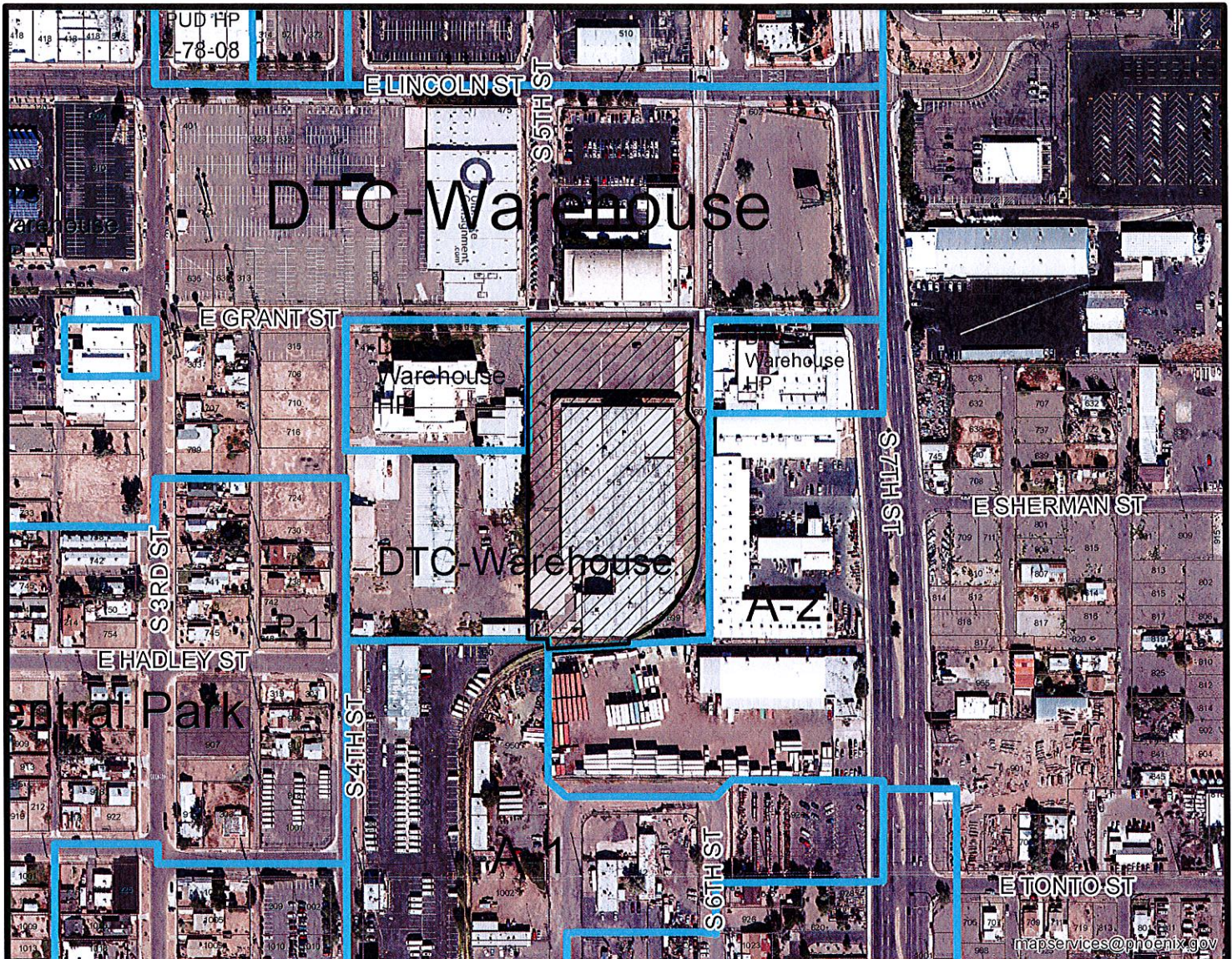
TO: DTC-Warehouse HP, (4.6 Acres)

MULTIPLES PERMITTED

CONVENTIONAL OPTION

* UNITS P.R.D. OPTION

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



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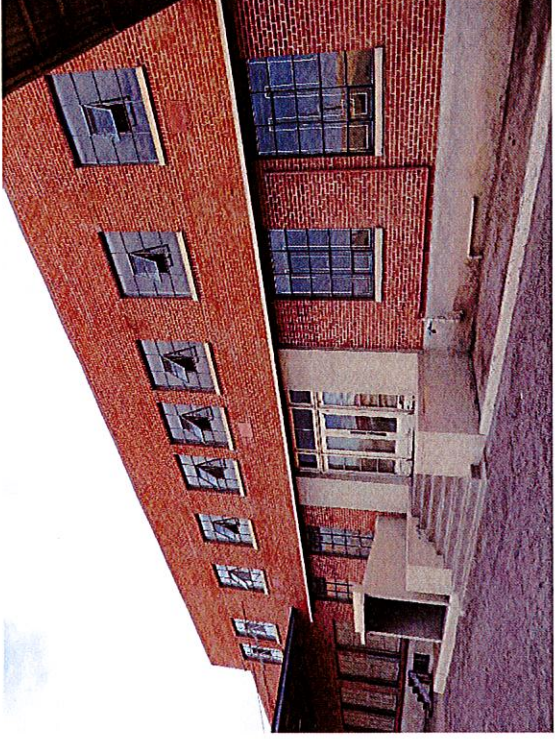
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Z-31-16-8
General Sales Company Warehouse
515 E. Grant St.



1. North and west facades, camera facing southeast.



2. Building entrance on north facade, camera facing southeast.



3. Railroad tracks located on adjacent land east of the warehouse, camera facing south.



4. Loading docks on north façade, eastern portion, camera facing southeast.

Z-31-16-8
General Sales Company Warehouse
515 E. Grant St.



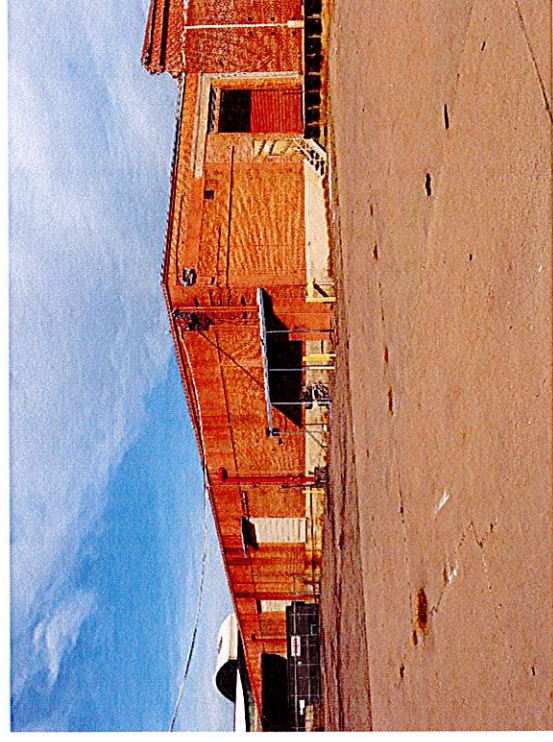
5. Building entrance and loading docks on north façade, central and western sections, camera facing southwest.



7. Loading dock doors on west façade, northern section, camera facing northeast.



6. Loading docks on west façade, camera facing northeast.

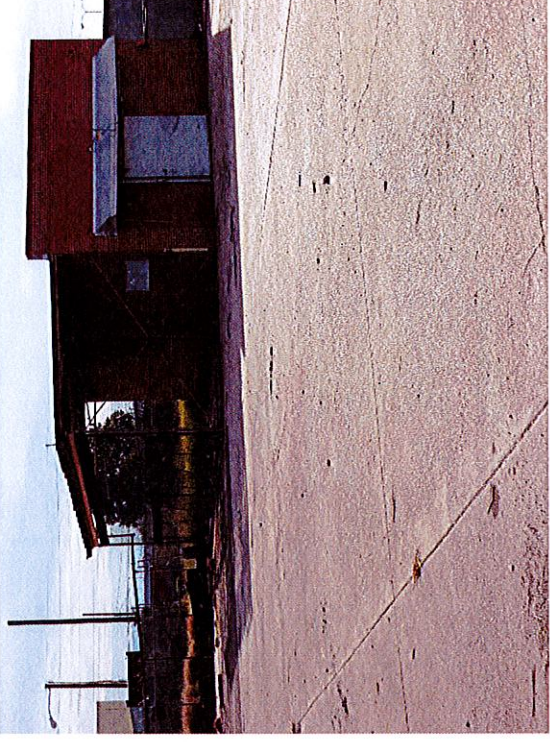


8. West façade, southern section and south façade, camera facing northeast.

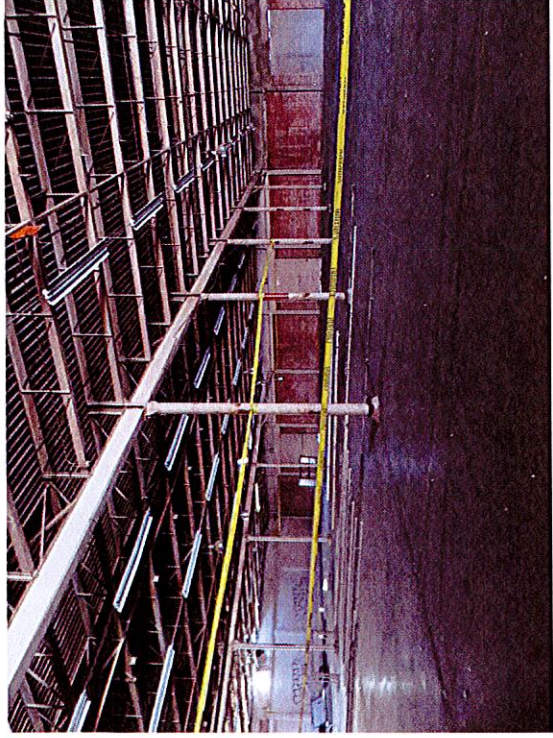
Z-31-16-8
General Sales Company Warehouse
515 E. Grant St.



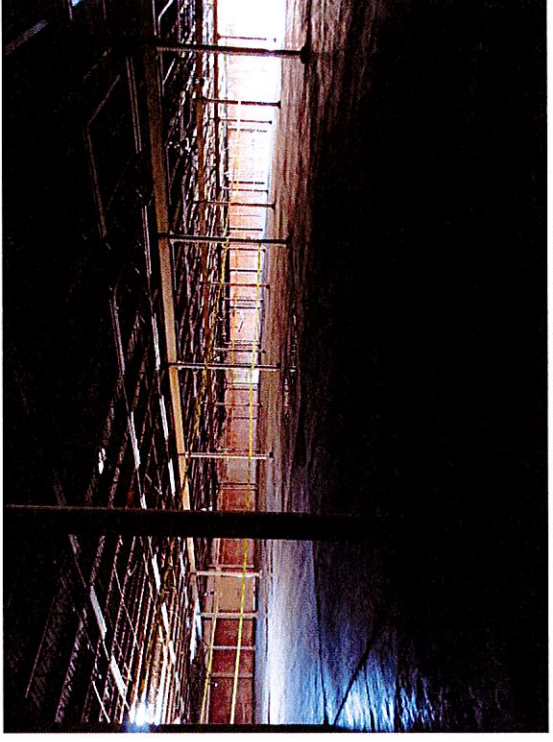
9. Building addition's west façade, camera facing east.



10. Ancillary building's north and east facades, camera facing southwest.

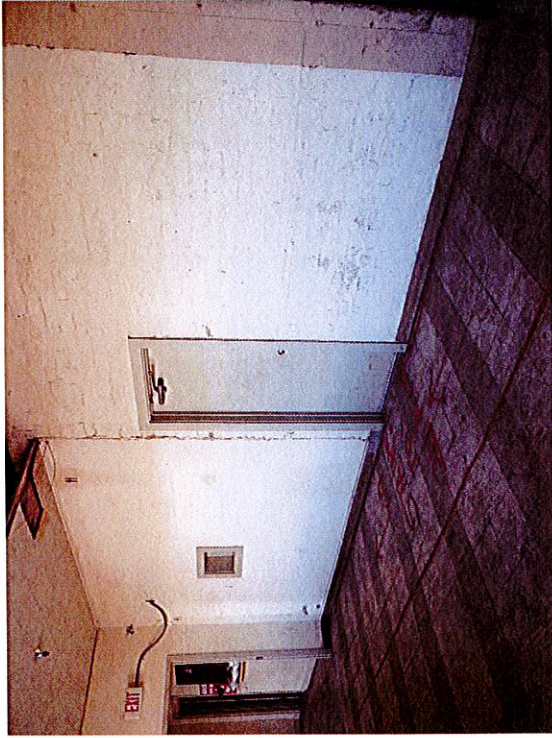


11. Interior open space, camera viewing northeast.



12. Interior open space, camera viewing southeast.

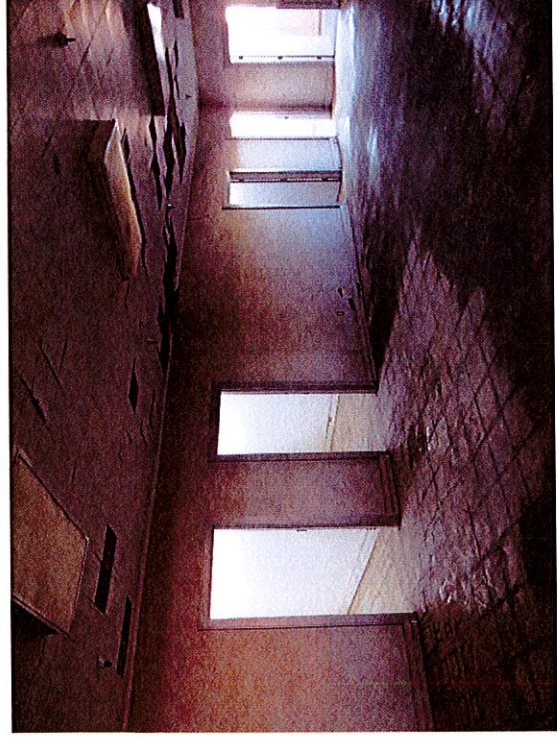
Z-31-16-8
General Sales Company Warehouse
515 E. Grant St.



13. Interior lobby south wall, camera facing southeast .



14. Interior second floor partition, camera facing north .



15. Interior second floor partition, camera facing northwest.



16. Interior second floor east wall, camera facing southeast.

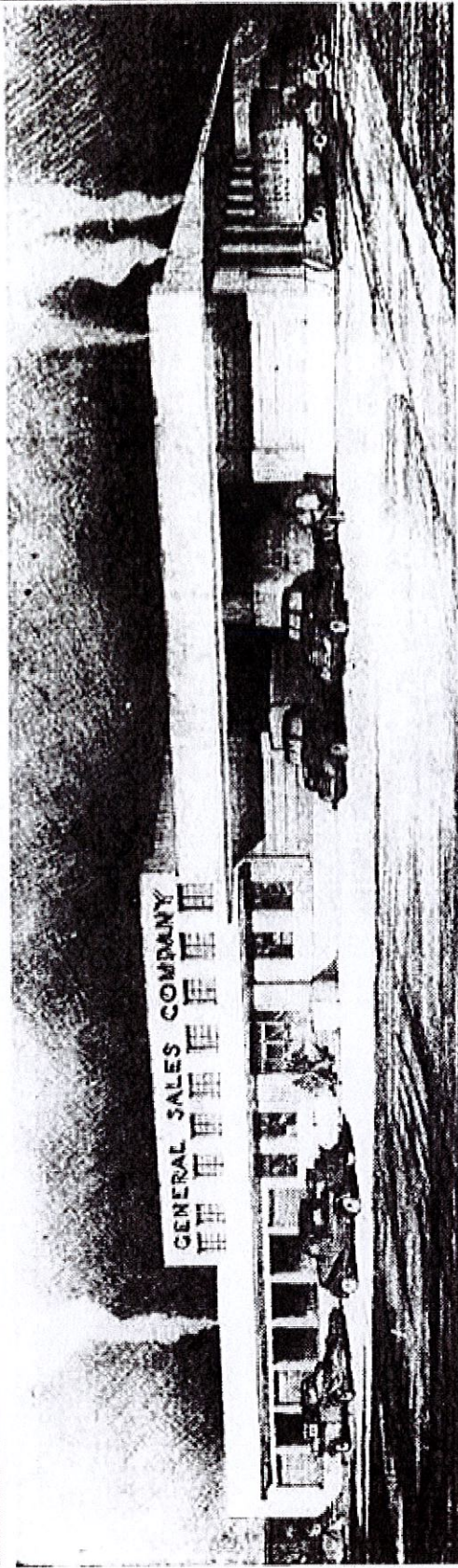
ARIZONA REPUBLIC

INDEPENDENT
THE STATE'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER

56th Year, No. 228 — 14 Pages

Tuesday, January 1, 1946

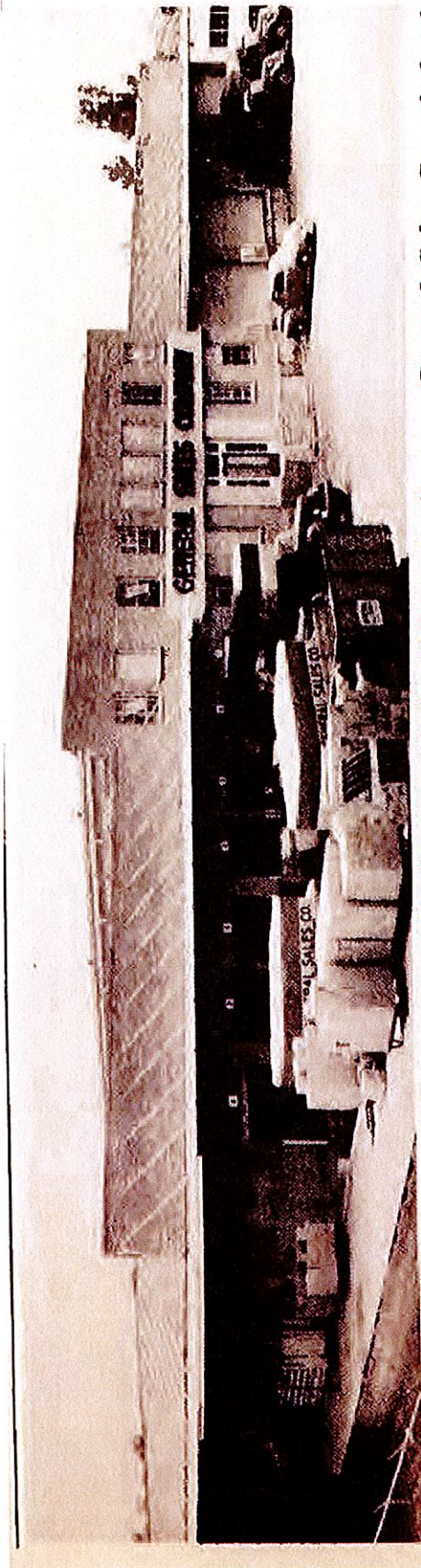
Telephone 3-3111, Single copies 2c daily, 10c Sunday, \$1.25 per mo., Published every morning at 312 N. Central Av., Phoenix, Arizona. Entered at P. O. as second-class matter under Act of Congress, March 3, 1879.



Here is the architect's sketch of the \$450,000 structure the General Sales Company will erect at Seventh and Grant streets. It will be the largest building of its kind in the Southwest, containing 1,603,000 cubic feet of space and having a railroad and truck loading platform 600 feet in length. While strictly a commercial structure and even outside the city limits by a few feet, an effort has been made to make it architecturally as attractive as possible. The building, 250 by 300 feet, will

be placed on a site 305 feet in size and the plans were drawn with expectation that future additions will be necessary as the city continues to grow. The General Sales Company is a wholesale grocery firm largely supplying independent retail stores in many parts of the state. Its new quarters will have special space for frozen foods, vegetables and dry produce storage, as well as canned goods. It will be a Class A, fireproof building in every possible detail.

17. Arizona Republic article from January 1, 1946 announcing the construction of the General Sales Company Warehouse.



NEW GROCERY WAREHOUSE. Largest of its kind in the Southwest is the new General Sales Co. wholesale grocery warehouse constructed at Fifth and Grant streets, Phoenix, by the Webb Company. Ground was broken in January, 1946, and the warehouse was occupied in mid-December after materials shortages delayed completion several months. Containing 1,603,000 cubic feet of space, the 300-by-220 foot building is a Class A fireproof structure with reinforced concrete walls, a steel roof carried on steel trusses and insulated, concrete floors and concrete stairs to the basement and the two-story central section. Offices are on the second story, together with a model grocery store where the latest retail merchandising fixtures are displayed, an employees cafeteria, rest rooms and other space units, all reached from a buyers lobby on the first floor. To right and left and in rear of this lobby extend vast stock sections where packaged goods are stored for delivery over Arizona by the firm's fleet of 28 trucks, or loading in private trucks at the warehouse doors. Handling of stock from freight car onto the concrete loading ramp and to the stockpiles, or from stockpile to truck is mechanical. An Arizona concern, General Sales Co. is owned and operated by seven Phoenix men, Frank Brophy, Charles E. Orr, H. R. Keeton, George Hepburn, A. A. Hayes, Charles Atkinson and R. E. Nelson.

18. *Webb Spinner* article from March 1947 announcing the completion of the General Sales Company Warehouse.