

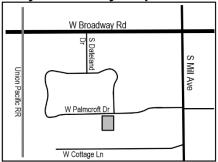
CITY OF TEMPE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Date: 04/19/2023 Agenda Item: 8

ACTION: Request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for carport demolition at and garage and bedroom additions to the **Rice-Barnard House**, located at 103 West Palmcroft Drive, a contributing property in the Tempe Historic Property Register-designated Date Palm Manor Historic District. The applicant and presenter is Nicholas Tsontakis. **(PL230079/HP0230002)**

<u>RECOMMENDATION</u>: Approve, with conditions

Project Vicinity Map



Property Owner: Nicholas Rice / Jenna Barnard Applicant: Dwell Boldly (Nicholas Tsontakis) Tempe Hist. Prop. Reg. Status: Designated (Contributing) National Register Status: Listed

ATTACHMENTS: Plan Set for 103 West Palmcroft Partial Demolition/Additions

<u>STAFF CONTACT(S)</u>: Zachary J. Lechner, Historic Preservation Officer, 480-350-8870

Department Director: Jeff Tamulevich, Community Development Director Legal review by: N/A Prepared by: Zachary J. Lechner, Historic Preservation Officer

COMMENTS:

The property (103 West Palmcroft Drive) is located in the Date Palm Manor Subdivision, which is situated one mile south of downtown Tempe, directly south of Broadway Road and west of Mill Avenue. As the Date Palm Manor Historic District's National Register nomination states, "The 11.9-acre neighborhood is laid out along four streets—Dateland, Palmcroft, Dromedary, and Palmdale Drives—in a curvilinear rectangle. The Date Palm Manor Historic District has 37 properties, including 36 single-family houses and one small multi-family apartment block. Thirty-six of the properties were built [from] 1954-1962, and one house was built on the last remaining lot in 1975." 103 West Palmcroft Drive is a contributor to the Historic District, an area listed in both the Tempe Historic Property Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Staff evaluation of the Certificate of Appropriateness request employed the Date Palm Manor National Register nomination and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as guidance.

HISTORIC OVERVIEW:

The Date Palm Manor Historic District is an example of a well-preserved neighborhood of custom-built homes, which exhibit the highest artistic expression of midcentury Ranch-style architecture.

Excerpt from the Date Palm Manor Historic District National Register <u>nomination</u>:

The Ranch style was introduced in California in the 1930s and quickly became a popular regional style. After the war, its innovative design and construction fit well with emerging social, economic, and technological trends. Eventually it became the dominant architectural style in the United States where, particularly in the West, it would represent the most ubiquitous house-form for the next 30 years. In contrast to previous Period Revival styles, early Ranch architecture was deeply rooted in the American West. The Ranch style drew its inspiration from the 19th century adobe ranch houses of California, as well as the Craftsman style and early Frank Lloyd Wright Prairie houses. The simple and sparsely adorned houses reflected the romantic imagery of the past and the new social trends of informality and casual home life embodied in post-war suburbia. The Ranch house typically featured a lowpitched roof with deep eaves and a few traditional elements such as clapboard, false shutters, and a small entry porch. It also reflected the growing importance of the automobile, which brought sprawling subdivisions with larger lots, allowing the broadest side of the house to be the primary façade. The low horizontal profile of the home facing the street shows many visible planes and angles, creating a bigger, more spacious look for a small house. The new orientation of the house also placed more emphasis on the back yard, and large windows, glass doors, and patios often faced a landscaped private refuge at the rear of the lot. The substantial break from the more exotic designs and materials of the earlier Period Revival styles reflects the new postwar optimism for the future and modernism's tenets of simple, clear, unpretentious design.

Perhaps the greatest advantage that the Ranch style had in the early postwar period was its simplicity of design and construction, which allowed fast and efficient mass production of homes to meet the growing demand for affordable housing. Construction on a cost-efficient concrete slab surmounted by traditional wood frame, brick, or concrete block bearing walls was typical. The introduction of steel casement windows and other standardized building components cut construction time and costs considerably. The typical house built in the late 1940s or early 1950s was generally small with a simple design and a stark exterior with little or no ornamentation; collectively, all of the houses in a subdivision reflected the same standardized design with only slight variations. The early postwar Ranch style was greatly constrained by the restrictive guidelines of the Federal Housing Administration and the urgent need to efficiently build millions of new homes.

By the mid-1950s, building restrictions were eased and the typical Ranch house incorporated

more decorative elements, such as brick wainscot, scroll-cut fascia, board-and-batten siding, eyebrow dormers, wrought iron porch posts, and weeping mortar. At this time, concrete block, and particularly pumice block made from native volcanic scoria materials, became the building material of choice for the majority of Arizona builders. It was cheap, costing an average of \$500 less per house than wood, and was locally manufactured. Superlite Builders Supply Company was established in Phoenix in 1945, and within 15 years grew to be the largest block manufacturer in the United States. Its pumice block was lighter in weight with a higher fire rating, a higher R value, and was more effective for sound absorption (NRC rating). Of course, larger concrete masonry units also reduced labor as fewer blocks were handled to construct the same wall area. Ultimately, concrete block would become the least expensive and most readily available building material in the Phoenix metropolitan area, largely as a result of the phenomenal postwar success of the locally operated Superlite Company.

However, Date Palm Manor was unlike any other residential development in Tempe at the time. The houses were not built fast and efficiently, but with skilled craftsmanship and attention to detail that represent the highest artistic expression of the Ranch style. As there was clearly a growing market for expensive houses, there were no restraints on size and design. The Agnew Construction Company used a variety of building materials and decorative elements. As every house had a unique design, the neighborhood as a whole exhibits every plan and profile associated with the Ranch house. There are two houses not designed in the Ranch style, but rather, representative of the Contemporary and Split-Level styles. Agnew did use the nearly universal concrete block as his primary building material, but exterior walls were usually not plain block surfaces. Other contrasting materials—brick, wood, stucco, pierced block, metal and stone—were often overlaid or imbedded in the masonry for unique effect. Date Palm Manor was strikingly different in the mid-1950s, but it was a precursor to a new style of building that would become more common in the 1960s. *The Housing Act of 1954 recognized the changes in the market, and lowered the amount of* down payment required for houses costing up to \$25,000. This made it possible to finance larger houses. By 1960 there was much greater diversity in residential architecture. Houses generally became larger and more richly decorated, and builders started offering a greater variety of different models with more optional features.

Contributing resources in the Date Palm Manor Historic District exhibit a very high level of architectural integrity. The neighborhood clearly conveys its historic appearance and sense of place merit recognition for its outstanding examples of Ranch style architecture.

PROJECT ANALYSIS:

The project proposes three substantial changes to this historic home: the demolition of the original carport, as well as the construction of garage and bedroom additions.

Guidelines from the <u>Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties</u> relevant to this proposal call for:

• Constructing a new addition on a secondary or non-character-defining elevation and limiting its size and scale in relationship to the historic building;

- Designing a new addition that is compatible with the historic building;
- Ensuring that the addition is subordinate and secondary to the historic building and is compatible in massing, scale, materials, relationship of solids to voids, and color;
- Using the same forms, materials, and color range of the historic building in a manner that does not duplicate it, but distinguishes the addition from the original building;
- Distinguishing the addition from the original building by setting it back from the wall plane of the historic building;
- Ensuring that the addition is stylistically appropriate for the historic building type (e.g., whether it is residential or institutional); and
- Considering the design for a new addition in terms of its relationship to the historic building as well as the historic district, neighborhood, and setting.

Staff considers the demolition of the carport acceptable. While most contributing properties in the Date Palm Manor Historic District feature original carports, others feature historic garages or carports that were enclosed either during or after the period of significance (1954-1962). For example, the property directly to the east of the **Rice-Barnard House**, 25 West Palmcroft Drive (aka, the Roberts Residence] (note: HPC approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for this property at its October 2022 meeting) was built with a garage, though on the western, non-street-facing elevation. Several other historic garages in the district, like the one at 10 West Palmcroft Drive, do face the street, though. While enclosing the carport, rather than demolishing it entirely would be preferred from a historic preservation standpoint, the carport's demolition does not constitute a substantial blow to the home's historical integrity.

The height of the proposed additions is also acceptable, as it is no higher than the existing roofline, and the sketches accompanying the request suggest a balanced appearance to the altered home that does not draw undue attention to either addition. On the downside, the garage will be clearly visible from the street and the additions will not be subordinate to the original portion of the home. Ideally, the additions would be placed in the backyard to maintain the historic home's original curbside appearance; however, as the applicant explains, "The main reason for putting [the additions] in the front is that an addition to the rear would occupy most of the backyard since there is already [a] storage building back there. The rear yard is already small. This is not ideal for the residents but also for property value. Also, placing the garage in the front preserves the traditional fabric of the neighborhood—with carport/garage facing the street. Other homes in the area have garages on the street (including the home directly across the street)" (Tsontakis to Lechner, 3/24/23) (note: The garage across the street is actually located in the rear of the home [102 West Palmcroft Drive], with access via a rear alley.)

Per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, the material and color of non-historic additions should be differentiated, but compatible with the material and color of the historic building. In an email dated April 10, 2023, staff recommended that the applicant reconsider his plan to use brick for the garage and bedroom additions in order to match the brick of the historic portion of the home. While using brick for the additions would create visual continuity between the non-historic additions and the historic structure, that visual continuity would create a false sense of history by disguising the fact that the additions are not original to the home. To avoid this, staff suggested that the applicant choose "compatible but differentiated" exterior building materials (and paint colors). As stated in <u>The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing</u>

Historic Buildings, "A new addition should be compatible, but differentiated enough so that it is not confused as historic or original to the building" (79). The applicant was amenable to staff's recommendation, proposing instead to "make a wood siding work to match what the carport had before" (Tsontakis to Lechner, 4/11/23). Staff considers this an acceptable solution, since the wood siding for the garage and bedroom additions would reference the demolished historic carport materials without causing an observer to mistake the additions as historic.

Finally, the applicant's plans reveal the homeowners' intention to install a carriage house-style door on the garage addition. This is inadvisable, as the carriage house design would clash with the raised-panel garage doors that populate most of the Date Palm Manor Historic District. Staff encourages the applicant to choose a more compatible style (e.g., raised panel) instead.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Based upon the information provided and the above analysis, should the Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed partial demolition/additions as part of case PL230079/HPO230002, staff recommends approval be subject to the following condition(s).

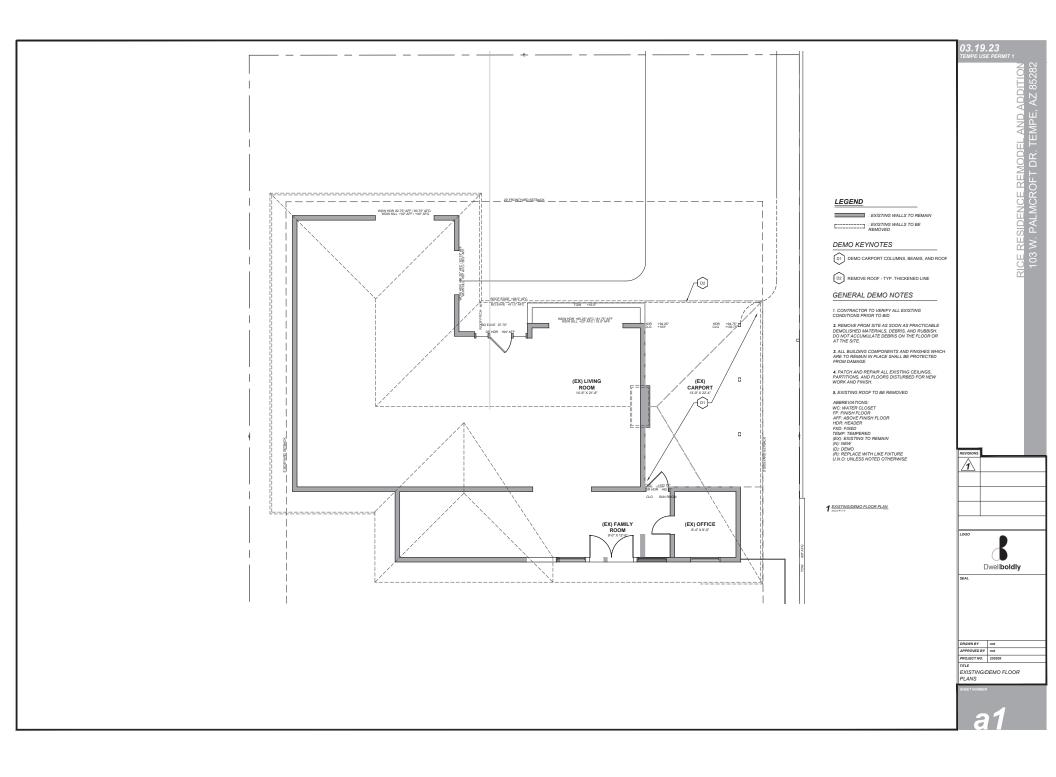
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

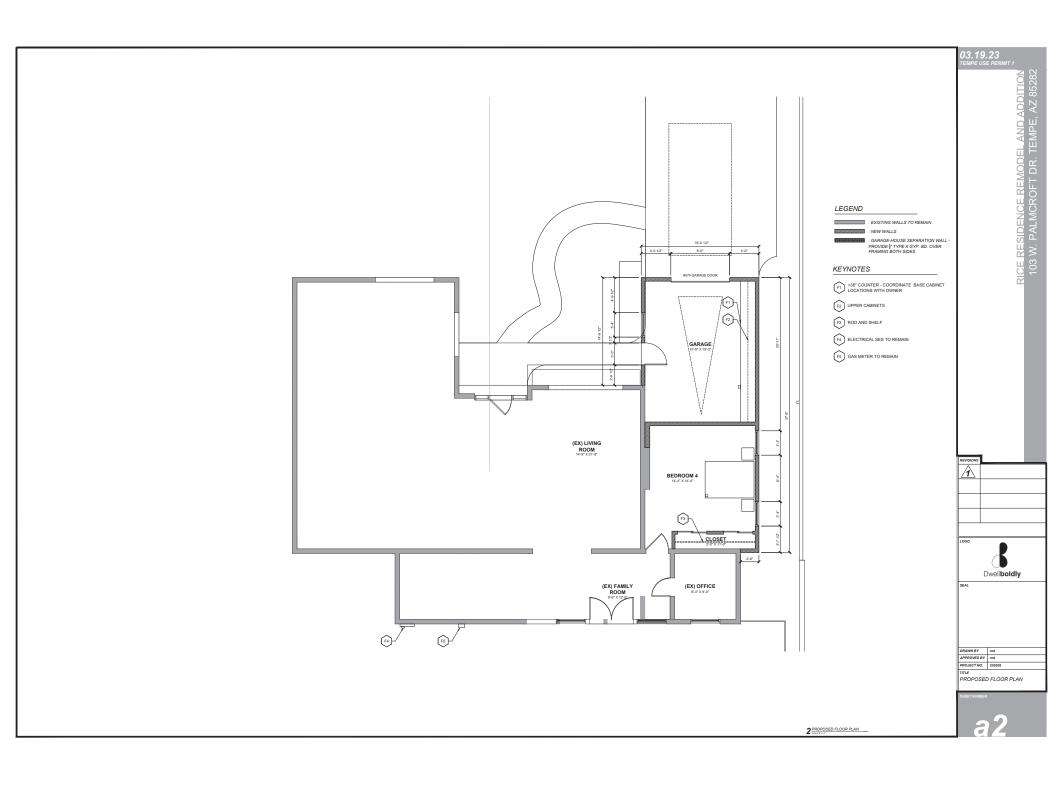
- 1. The Certificate of Appropriateness shall be valid only after the property owner obtains all other necessary entitlements from the Planning Division, including, but not limited to, a Use Permit for parking in the front yard setback.
- 2. The exterior building material and paint color(s) for the garage and bedroom additions shall be compatible with but differentiated from that of the historic home.
- 3. The new garage door's paint color shall be compatible with but differentiated from that of the historic home, and its style shall be compatible (e.g., raised panel) with other contributing properties' garages in the Date Palm Manor Historic District.
- 4. All plans are to be approved as submitted. Any changes to the plans as submitted shall be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Officer for compliance with the Certificate of Appropriateness and issuance of a Certificate of No Effect.

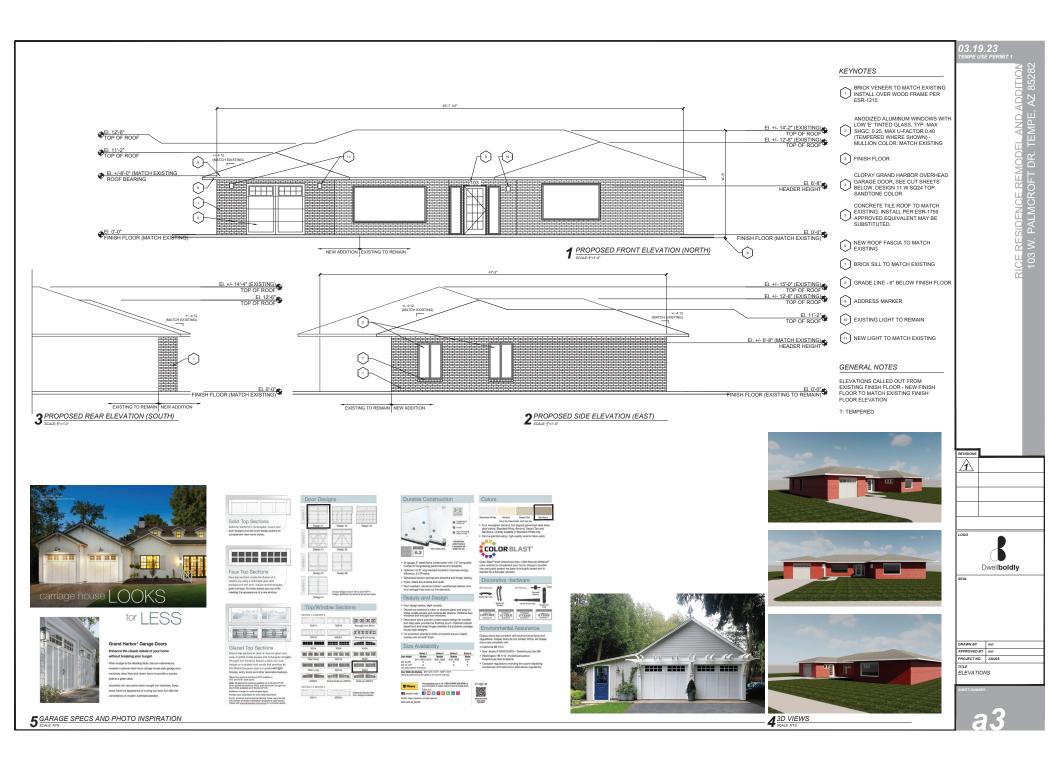
SAMPLE MOTION:

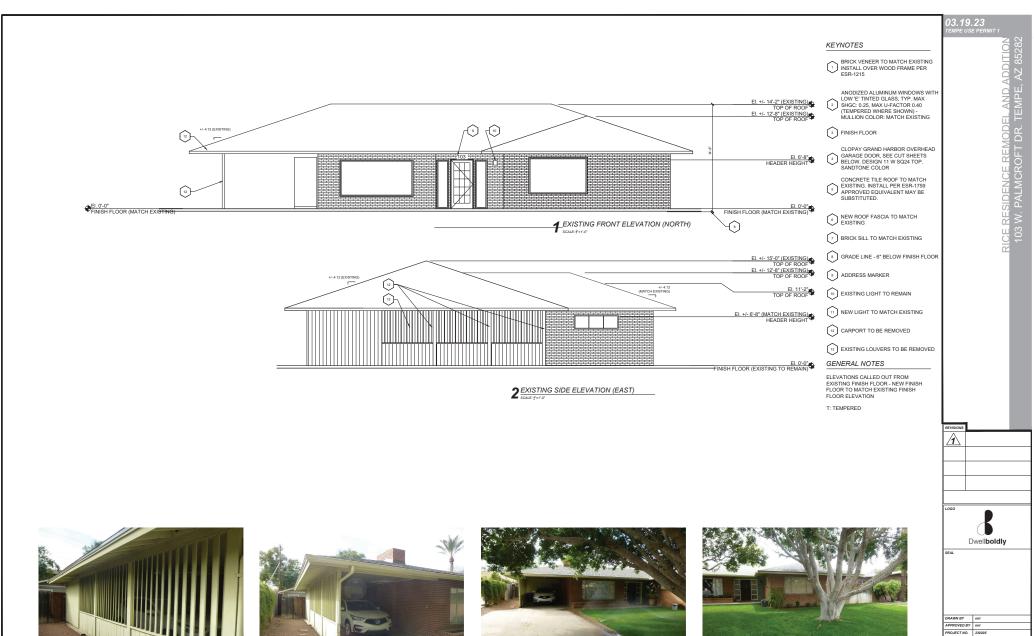
I motion to approve the applicant's request for a Certificate of Appropriateness, subject to the staff report's proposed conditions of approval, to demolish the carport and add a garage and bedroom addition to the **Rice-Barnard House**, located at 103 West Palmcroft Drive, a contributing property in the Tempe Historic Property Register-designated Date Palm Manor Historic District.











TITLE EXISTING ELEVATIONS

a4

3 EXISTING HOUSE PHOTOS