

MEMORANDUM



TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Ambika Adhikari, Principal Planner; and Jacob Payne, Senior Planner
DATE: March 6, 2024
SUBJECT: Agenda Item 5: Character Area 6 – Southwest Tempe Outreach and Planning Process

PURPOSE:

This memo provides an introduction and update on the planning process for Character Area 6: “Southwest” Tempe.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Tempe’s General Plan provides a vision of what Tempe will look like, and how it will function as a community. It also supports Tempe’s ability to maintain sustainable and livable communities. Themes woven throughout the Plan include developing Tempe as a leader in urban living; expanding pockets of urban activity centers or “hubs”; and enhancing pedestrian, bike, and transit connections to produce a “20-minute City.”

To further the goals of Tempe’s General Plan, Tempe was divided into eight Character Areas. A Character Area Plan is a policy-level plan for the area to help guide new development, redevelopment and public investment in the area to be consistent with the character of the area and reflect the aspirations of community. Six Character Area Plans have already been adopted. Staff is now working to develop the Character Area 6 plan. After completing this plan, staff will work on developing a plan for Character Area 2.

Character Area 6 – Southwest Tempe

Character Area 6 consists of approximately 6.21 square miles that is roughly bounded by Ray and Knox roads on the south, Kyrene Road and the Union Pacific Railroad on the east, the US-60 highway to the north and I-10 and the City boundary on the west. Outreach for the planning process includes input from area residents, the business community, and stakeholders to create principles that will be taken through the Tempe City Council adoption process. The plan will provide an enhanced policy framework to guide planning and land use decisions in the area that has more than 28,000 residents.

Scope of Work

People who live, work, learn, and play in each area know the community the best. Through several public meetings, and surveys we are looking to the community to help define issues related to the following plan elements:

- *Scope:* A high-level policy-level plan for CA-6 area.
- *Vision:* Diverse housing options, increased transit options, ease traffic congestion, maintain open spaces, increased residential land use, shaded trails, bike paths, and canal-oriented development, and other elements.
- *Character-Defining Elements:* History; design aesthetics; landscape; open spaces; Western, Highline Lateral, and Kyrene Branch canals, Landmarks and other notable places e.g., Arizona Mills Mall, Arizona Cardinals HQ, Emerald Center, and multi-family and single-family homes.
- *Design Guidelines/Principles:* Walkability, bikeability, multi-use trails, connectivity, durable materials, energy efficiency, historic preservation, extreme heat mitigation, and climate friendly and sustainable development
- *Historic Preservation Principles:* guidelines and principles for retaining important architectural detail, styles, and properties in the area. One locally designated place exists in CA6: Guadalupe Cemetery.

The scope for the Character Area Plan also includes elements not specifically addressed in General Plan or Tempe’s Zoning and Development Code, including answers to the following questions:

- What sets this area apart and makes it unique from other parts of Tempe or the Valley?

- Does this area include the types of places, businesses, and infrastructure people look for when deciding where to live or invest?
- What elements should be preserved, enhanced, changed, added, or connected in a meaningful way?
- Is this an area where one can be young and old; can one age in place?
- How can we provide a vision that enhances human health, options, prosperity, and the environment?
- What design criteria can we put in place to improve the quality of projects and promote sustainability?
- How will this plan carry out the vision of the General Plan?

Outside the Scope of Work

The Character Area Plan is a policy document. It cannot change any existing regulatory elements such as the following:

- A parcel's legal Land Use / Density.
- A parcel's legal Zoning.
- Private property rights.
- Prohibiting specific brand-name businesses/retailers, which is against the law.
- Residential/Commercial Code compliance.

More Information

This exciting community-driven process is an opportunity to help shape the future of Character Area 6. Questions or comments on Character Area Planning can be directed to characterareas@tempe.gov. Additional information, including examples of previous Character Area Plans, as well the 2024 Public Meeting Series, is available at characterareas.tempe.gov.

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