

# Armory Park Neighborhood Association

14 August 2020



# Fact Checking

the

## ***Findings of Conditions Report***

*Prepared by* Office of Economic Initiatives City of Tucson

August 11, 2020



# The Situation

An important effort to expand the Central Business District (CBD) is underway. A powerful motivation for the effort to enlarge the CBD, and the *Findings of Conditions Report* which supports that effort, is to increase economic activity and City government revenues. The Armory Park Neighborhood Association (APNA) has no objection to that motivation. The problem: the report which is labeled as factual is in error regarding the portion of the Stone/6th Avenue corridor which passes through Armory Park. At the 13 August public presentation, the group was told that the report was factual: 1) and not subject to change. 2) Our only recourse would be to appeal to Mayor and Council not to accept the report. In short, M&C and APNA would do staff work not properly done by City staff. Speaking only about the Armory Park portion, the report is seriously in error and cannot legally serve as basis for designating any of our streets as part of the CBD expansion. Here are some relevant quotes from other sources:

*Rhonda Bodfield, Arizona Daily Star, Jan 5, 2012, Updated Jul 15, 2014:* The city can't, by law, abate property taxes without such a district, which must be located in a geographically compact area entirely within a slum or blighted part of town and can be no larger than 5 percent of the total land within the city's boundaries.

"The improvement is located in a single central business district in the city or town and is subject to a lease or development agreement entered into on or after April 1, 1985." A.R.S. § 42-6209(A)(1).

"The City of Tucson is seeking to further encourage development in the downtown and the surrounding area. To this end, the City is proposing an expansion of the Central Business District (CBD), as shown on Map 1. In accordance with Arizona Revised Statutes 36-1471, the City of Tucson has determined that the proposed CBD area is a slum area where sound municipal growth is substantially arrested. Both of the following are true for this area: There is a predominance of buildings or improvements, both residential and nonresidential and the public health safety or welfare is threatened because of

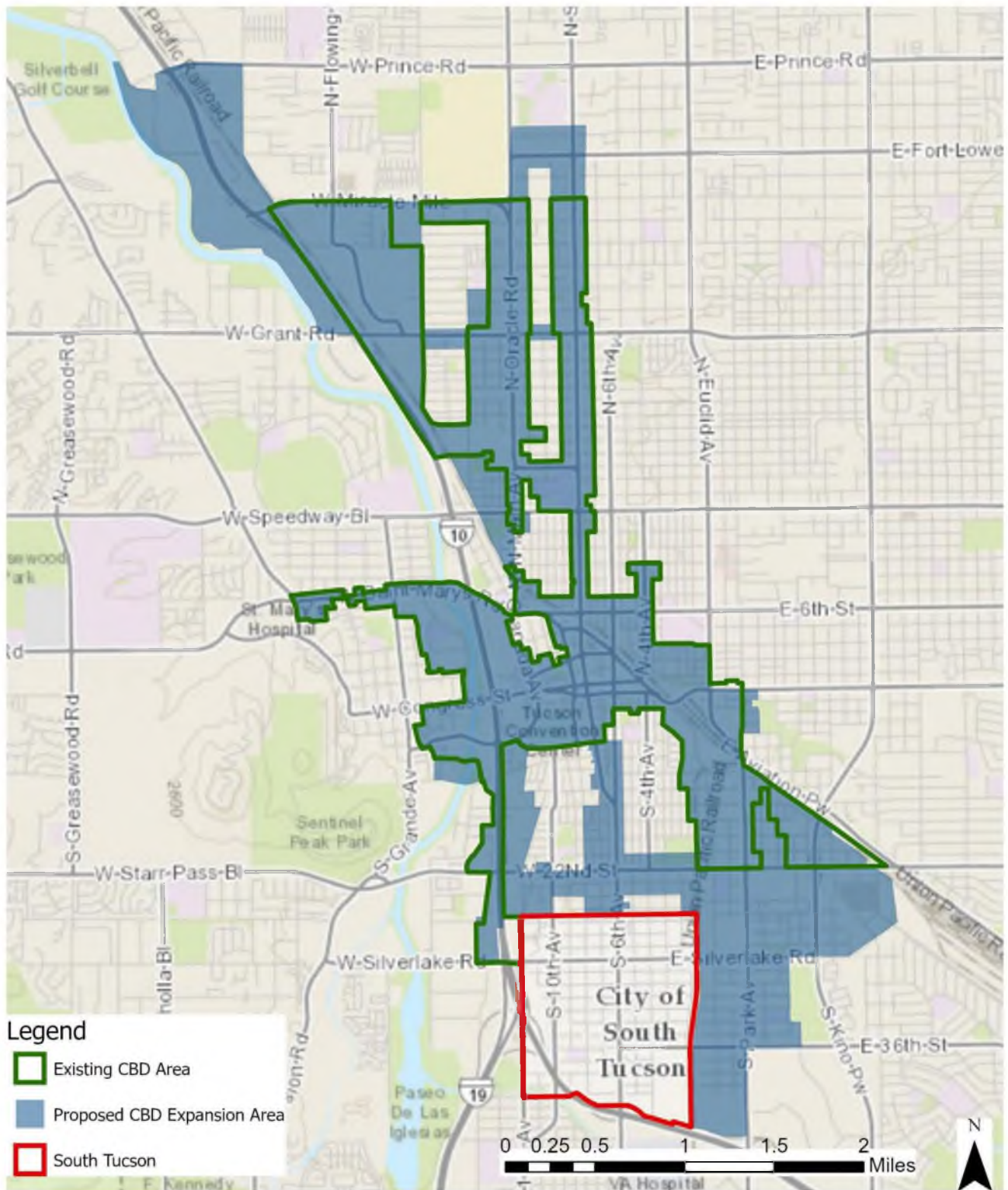
- a) dilapidated, deteriorated, aging or obsolescent buildings or improvements; and
- b) the existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes."

*Findings of Conditions Report, Office of Economic Initiatives City of Tucson, August 11, 2020*

Lest APNA's concerns seem unwarranted, remember that the Tucson Convention Center and its parking areas lie in what was once a dynamic barrio area. Armory Park was also threatened with partial destruction for a freeway south from the City's core. Labeling the areas as "blighted" was a part of the neighborhood destruction process.

APNA's first choice of remedy is for City staff to publish an errata sheet for the report deleting the Armory Park neighborhood from the map on page 3 of the PDF version of the report. The subject map is shown on the following page and an expanded view of the Armory Park portion is on the next page. We cannot speak for other neighborhoods or associations but there appear to be a number of other neighborhoods with the same issue.

# **MAP 1 - CITY OF TUCSON CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT**



Source: City of Tucson *Findings of Conditions Report*, Page 3



## Armory Park CBD Expansion Area

This map shows more detail of the proposed CBD expansion area as displayed on *page 3 of the PDF Findings of Conditions Report* (previous page of this document).

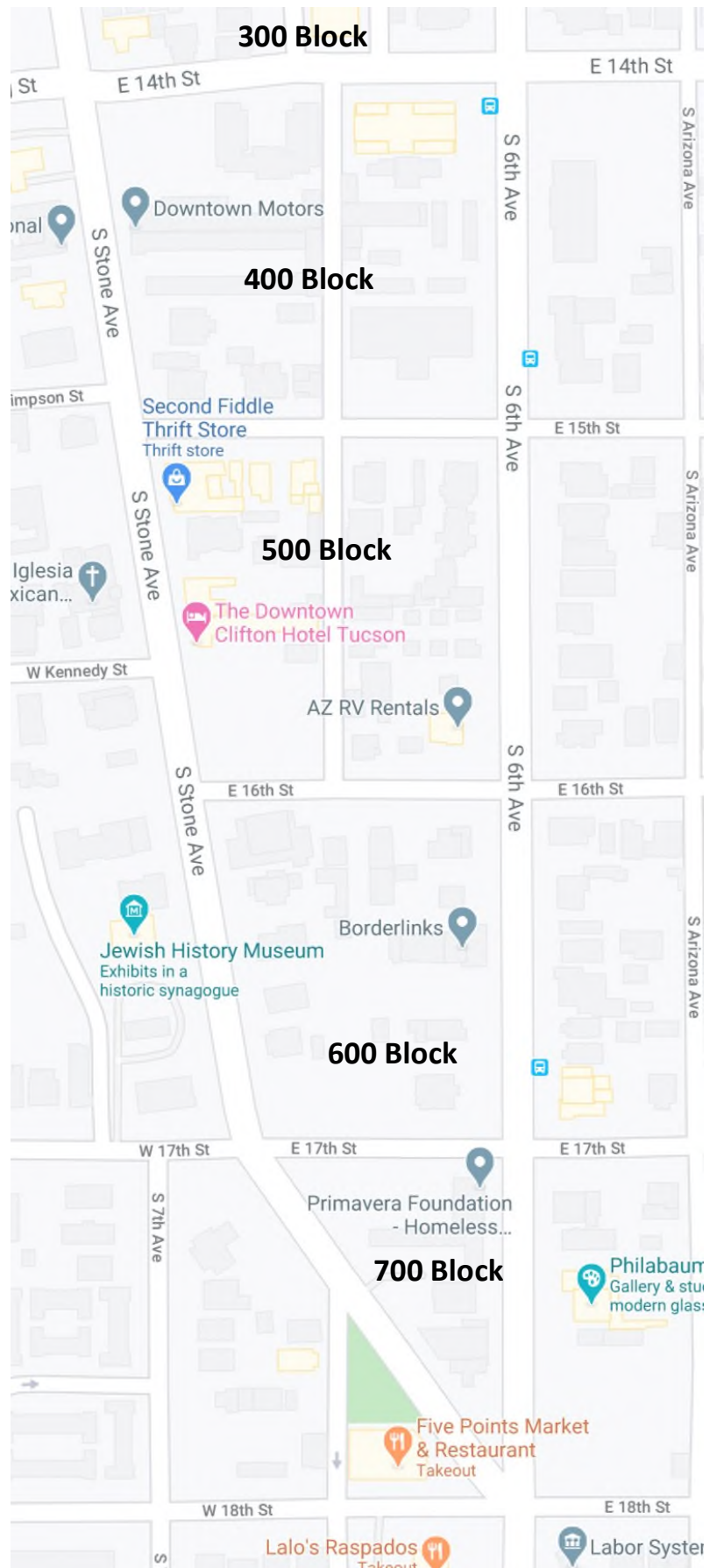
Some of the finest historic homes of Armory Park are located in this area. A walking survey of the area disclosed **no blighted structures** on the two avenues except for the former Catholic school now thought to be under the control of Peach Properties. Photos of representative properties follow in this document.

APNA objects to the characterizations in the report of the portion of our neighborhood included in the proposed CBD expansion. Not only may the unfavorable description lower our property values, it will also facilitate forms of development incompatible with historic preservation. We do not want GPLET or similar development incentives to be applied in any part of Armory Park. We only became aware of the proposed CBD changes on Tuesday last (8/11/20) and finalized this response on Friday (8/14/20). We are not aware of any effort to get community input regarding the *conditions report*.

Preservation of historic structures and a viable residential neighborhood is difficult enough without the motivation of perverse economic incentives.

Armory Park is the oldest National Register Residential District and the oldest Historic Preservation Zone in Tucson. It adds character and value to the City core. Our residents also enjoy the historic character and the sense of place found here. We work hard at preserving those qualities.

The remainder of this document contains photos of the subject area and some commentary. We hope the serious errors of fact in the *conditions report* are made clear so the report can be corrected.



## 400 Block, Stone Avenue



If age is the only determinant of obsolescent or blighted buildings, the Velasco House should definitely be demolished. The property dates back to the earliest days of Armory Park, the 1870s. It was exclusively residential for many years but now is mixed with some office uses.



The Downtown Clifton is a classic mid-century motel, cleverly decorated and serving visitors to Tucson's downtown. Without the benefit of a CBD designation, the Clifton has recently been enlarged by multiples of its former capacity.





## 500 Block, Stone Avenue



Though this residence is austere in appearance, it is well kept and is a functional building.

On the east side, bungalow houses are predominant. They are typical of the most common house style in Armory Park.



There is no “blight” to be seen here.



## 500 Block, Stone Avenue (continued)

These properties are on the west side of Stone Avenue. Though they are not in Armory Park, they are far from blighted and contribute to the historic and historic character and attractive nature of the neighborhood.



This well maintained property is typical of the larger structures in the block.

The Holocaust Museum and several religious buildings serve all of Tucson and reflect the diversity and viability of the Armory Park neighborhood.





## 300 Block, 6th Avenue

The neatly kept yards and excellent exterior maintenance are the farthest thing from “blight” in the historic Armory Park neighborhood.



Even properties with a rental configuration show the pride of ownership that characterizes the neighborhood.

This is another nicely kept yard. Notice the neatly trimmed hedge.





### 300 Block, 6th Avenue (continued)

The San Carlos apartments (right) have recently undergone a major historic preservation compatible renovation. The owner's attention to detail is praiseworthy. This shows the level of investor confidence without new governmental conditions or subsidies.



The larger structures are often multi-unit but reflect pride of ownership and compliance with historic preservation principles.



This is a rare (for Tucson) example of Sullivanesque architecture. The Greek style columns highlight the variety of historic architecture in Armory Park.



## 400 Block, 6th Avenue

The Academy Lofts structure is both historic and an attractive asset for the community.



This is the only significant blighted property in our Stone/6th corridor. It is a former Catholic school now under the ownership or control of Peach Properties.



This attractive former performance venue is also a Peach properties asset. It will contribute to the city and neighborhood when converted to a new use.



## 500 Block, 6th Avenue

Three of the finest historic properties south of Broadway Blvd. are located in this block. Two of the three have had extensive recent investment. The third has been maintained in excellent condition.



As with other blocks along 6th Avenue and Stone, use is a mixture of residential and light commercial/office.





## 600 Block, 6th Avenue

The star property on this block is the large house (right) which has had major renovation and is now used as a short term visitor accommodation. Yards on the block are well kept and show pride of ownership.



While all properties shown are residential, there is one retail “quick market” serving the community.





## 700 Block, 6th Avenue

While most of the structures in this block are light commercial in some form, the residences (as shown here) are well kept and are in good condi-



Also on this block, the Baffert project is being constructed with no help from CBD designation or GPLET support. The former Wanslee motors has had some redevelopment and will undergo more in time. Primavera Foundation owns properties on the west side and is in process of constructing a new facility.