



**City of Phoenix**  
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

**Staff Report: Z-15-18-8**  
**March 12, 2018**

**INTRODUCTION**

Z-15-18-8 is a request to establish Historic Preservation (HP) overlay zoning for the property known historically as Beth Hebrew Synagogue, located approximately 100 feet west of the southwest corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Portland Streets [331 or 333 East Portland Street]. Maps and photos of the subject property are attached.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that rezoning request Z-15-18-8 be approved.

**BACKGROUND**

Temple Beth Hebrew was first identified as an eligible historic property in 2007. At that time, Mr. Michael Levine submitted documentation to the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and the SHPO recommended the property eligible for its architectural significance on November 13, 2007.

In March 2015, Nihao Feng, LLC, a limited liability company owned and managed by Mr. Levine, purchased the subject property. At that time, Mr. Levine indicated that he wanted to list the property on the City's historic register and to receive HP grant funds to rehabilitate the property. Per Mr. Levine's request, the HP Commission initiated HP zoning for the property on April 20, 2015.

After acquiring the property, Mr. Levine began work to rehabilitate its historic character, reversing many previous alterations. On January 29, 2018, he submitted a grant application to the City's HP Office requesting \$280,000 in funding assistance to complete the rehabilitation. Upon completion of the work, the former synagogue will be occupied and used as was originally intended—as a religious and cultural resource—as well as a community and educational space, and as a tourist destination.

Staff recommended approval of the grant funds subject to two conditions. First, in exchange for the grant funds, the city will receive a 30-year conservation easement on the property, which will require that the historic character of the property be preserved and that the property be insured and maintained in good condition. Second, because the property is not currently listed on the city's historic register, no grant funds will be disbursed until the after the HP zoning application is approved by the City Council.

Subject to these conditions, the grant request was approved by the HP Commission on February 12, 2018 and is scheduled for City Council action on April 4, 2018.

### **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

The eligibility criteria for HP overlay zoning and listing on the PHSR 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.

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

Beth Hebrew Synagogue is eligible under Criterion C for its architectural significance. Constructed in 1955, it was designed by architect Max Kaufman and built by Mardian Construction. It is nationally recognized as an outstanding example of modern synagogue architecture.

An *Arizona Republic* article from May 22, 1955 describes the building as follows: "A contemporary style structure 100 by 55 feet is planned. It will have lobby, sanctuary and kitchen in the front end of the synagogue, with pulpit and platform, flanked by two utility rooms at the other end. The plans featured special recessed ceiling ports for lighting, high windows and a roof skylight of translucent, corrugated glass."

A subsequent article appears on July 31, 1955 and included an architect's sketch. The caption reads, "Although modernistic in design, it preserves the traditional symbols of a meeting place of its character." These symbols included a 9' x 9' modified Star of David, with twelve amber stained glass panes set on each side of the star. Additionally, on the north face, there was a stylized 6' x 12' menorah featuring amber stained glass representing flame. The east and west-facing windows were blue stained glass with a

dot relief comprising the trapezoidal clerestory windows that followed the sloped roof line. There was also a center bimah surrounded at the roof line with 11 amber stained glass angled windows.

The groundbreaking took place on March 20, 1955, with Rabbi A.L. Krohn, rabbi emeritus of Temple Beth Israel presiding. The building was completed by September of that same year, with the first services held on Rosh Hashanah.

Max Kaufman was born in Chicago in 1918. From 1938 to 1939, he was educated at Lewis Institute (which later merged with Armour Institute to form Illinois Institute of Technology). He eventually moved to Arizona and worked as a draftsman for Kemper Goodwin. In 1953, he established his own firm. According to the 1962 and 1970 American Architects Directory, Kaufman's principal works include the following buildings, all in Phoenix:

- Colorado Fuel & Iron (1958)
- Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company (1958)
- Audiotone Corporation (1960)
- Camelback Village Apartments (1960)
- Park Central North Medical Building (1960)
- Arizona Daily Journal (1961)
- U.S. Plywood Corporation (1965)
- Arden Mayfair Bakery & Warehouse (1966)
- Temple Beth Israel (1967)
- J C Penney Company (1968)
- Pearce Distributors (1969)

In addition to the buildings listed above, Kaufman designed a chapel for Beth El Cemetery (1954), a medical building for Leon Mehagian at Central Avenue and Medlock Drive (1957) and a community center that was one of the first buildings at Del Webb's Sun City (1959). He served as director of the Central Arizona Chapter of the American Institute of Architects from 1963 to 1964. Kaufman passed away in Phoenix in 1988 at the age of 70.

Mardian Construction was one of the Phoenix's most prolific firms during the postwar era. Dan Mardian started the company in 1940, although he had previously been associated with his father and brother, Sam Sr. and Aram, in S. Mardian & Sons in southern California. The company's first job in Phoenix was Mehagian's Furniture Galleries at the corner of Central Avenue and Garfield Street. When Dan went into the service, his brother Aram ran the company. They incorporated the business in 1947 with all four brothers—Aram, Sam, Daniel and Robert—involved. By 1965, the company had three separate affiliates—Glen-Mar Manufacturing, Marco Equipment Co. and Mardian-Pyle-Wist Industrial Developers, Inc. On the company's twenty-fifth

anniversary, they opened a Modern office building at 3805 North Black Canyon Highway. Fifteen years later, they built a larger headquarters just east of that site. Mardian Construction became a subsidiary of Perini Construction in 1974. The firm's notable buildings include the Arizona Capitol House and Senate Wings, Sky Harbor Terminal 3, the Valley National Bank branch at 44<sup>th</sup> Street and Camelback Road, and Mountain Bell Plaza at 3033 North 3rd Street. The 1979 Top Honor Award from the Associated General Contractors of America for Terminal 3 cited the company for being a "pioneer in innovative construction techniques."

The significance of the building has been acknowledged by many organizations, including DoCoMoMo, the World Monuments Fund, Jewish Heritage UK and the Jewish Heritage Research Center. Samuel D. Gruber, Director of the Jewish Heritage Research Center, stated:

I consider Beth Hebrew, designed by Max Kaufman, an important and even exemplary example of early modern synagogue architecture in United States, and I count it among a handful of innovative modern interpretations of the traditional synagogue form which were built across the country—often by small congregations of modest means—in the first decade after World War II. These synagogues, almost all of which were inspired, sponsored or designed by Jewish refugees from Europe, laid the foundation for the widespread acceptance and use of modern architecture not only for synagogues in America, but for religious buildings of all denominations. Synagogue congregations, since they are independent bodies, could quickly decide to build in the new style for both practical and philosophical or religious reasons—they could be stylistic innovators and leaders, not followers. ... Orthodox Jewish congregations, of which Beth Hebrew was Phoenix's first, were particularly drawn to the modern style for religious and aesthetic reasons since they more strictly interpret the Bible's Second Commandment which forbids many types of decoration. Orthodox Jews also especially value the practical and symbolic qualities of light—in which Kaufman's design excelled.

The building also has merit under Criteria A and B for its religious and social history, as it was home to Phoenix's first Orthodox Jewish congregation. It was constructed by Holocaust survivors and World War II French Resistance fighters, including Elias Loewy, who is recognized as a "Jewish Schindler" for helping Jews escape concentration camps during World War II. The building is also where well-known movie director Steven Spielberg had his bar mitzvah.

According to information provided by the owner, the building was used as a synagogue from 1955-1977, then became the Outpour Centro de Los Milagros Church from 1978-1980, and finally the home of the Black Theater Troupe from 1983-2001. It was nearly

demolished and sat vacant for several years before the current owner acquired it in 2015.

### **INTEGRITY**

The subject property meets the minimum eligibility criteria for integrity. The building is in its original location. Although the residential setting has changed substantially, at least one large bungalow remains next door, with others across the street and on the next block. The modern design remains intact, as do the historic materials and workmanship. Integrity of feeling is also strong now that many of the previous alterations have been reversed.

### **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 contains the subject historic property and follows documented historic boundaries. It includes all of Lot 9 of Block 3 of the East Evergreen subdivision, as well as a portion of the abandoned alley and the adjacent street right of way, which is customary for all zoning cases. The gross acreage to be rezoned is 0.38 acres. This boundary is recommended by staff and the property owner.

### **CONCLUSION**

The rezoning request Z-15-18-8 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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Writer

K. Weight

3/12/18

Team Leader

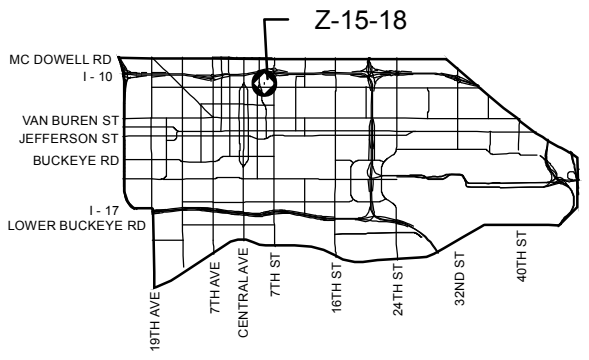
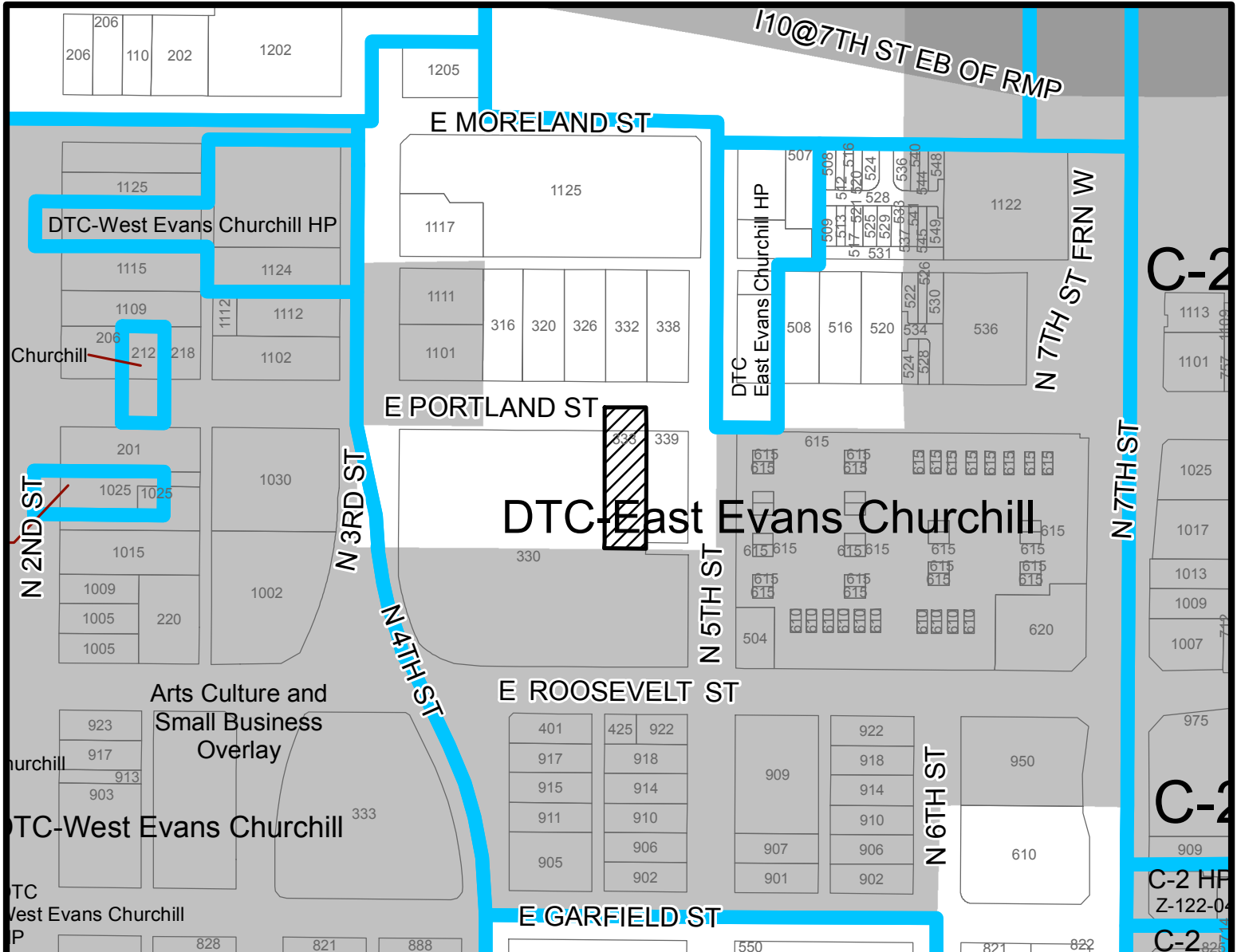
M. Dodds

Attachments:

Sketch Map (1 page)

Aerials (2 pages)

Photos and Newspaper Clippings (6 pages)



**APPLICANT'S NAME:** City of Phoenix Historic Pres Commission

**APPLICATION NO.** Z-15-18 **DATE:** 2/22/2018

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

**AERIAL PHOTO & QUARTER SEC. NO.** QS 12-28 **ZONING MAP** G-8

**REQUESTED CHANGE:**

FROM: DTC - East Evans Churchill (.38 a.c.)

TO: DTC - East Evans Churchill HP (.38 a.c.)

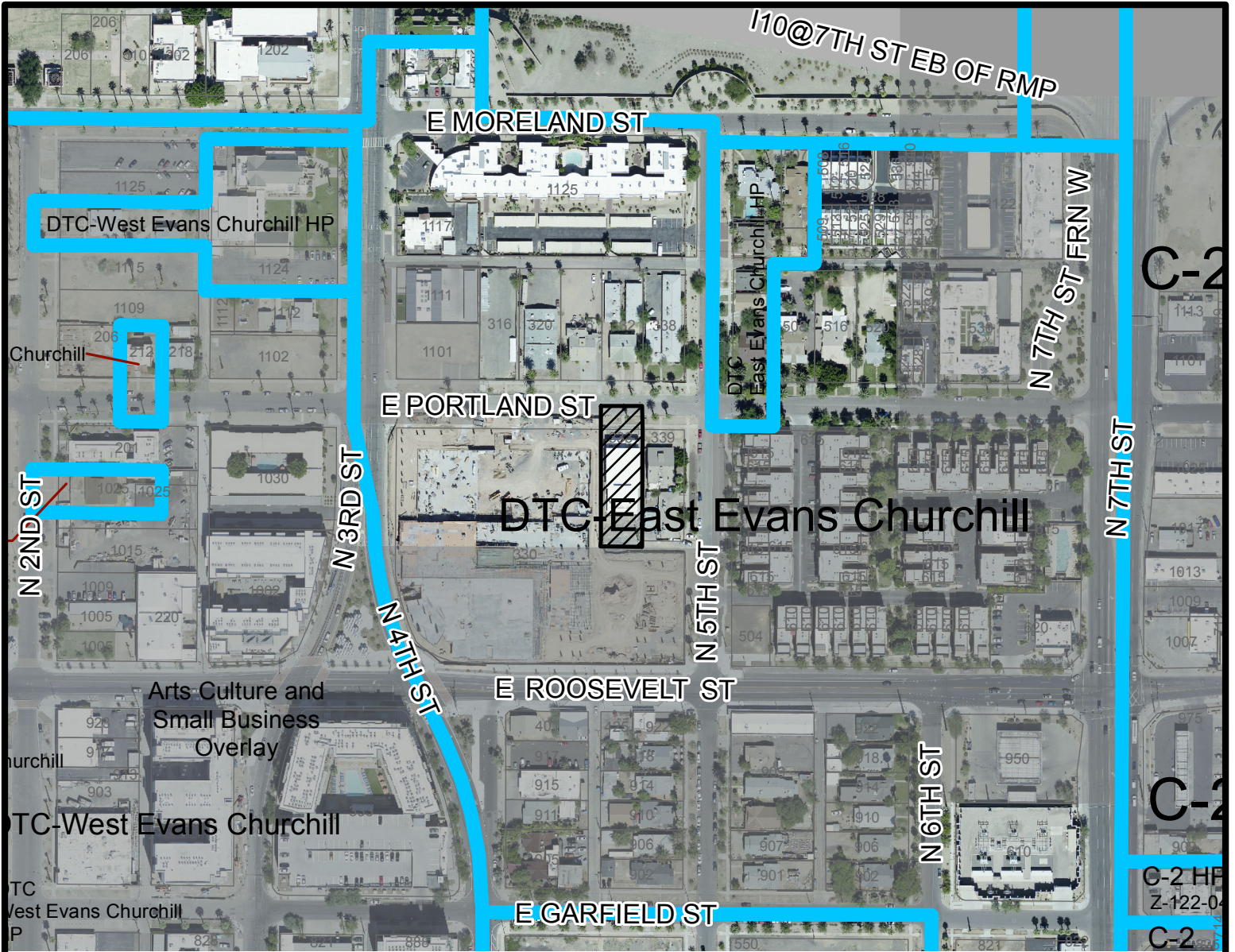
MULTIPLES PERMITTED
DTC - East Evans Churchill
DTC - East Evans Churchill HP

CONVENTIONAL OPTION
83
83

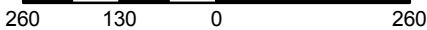
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N/A
N/A

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



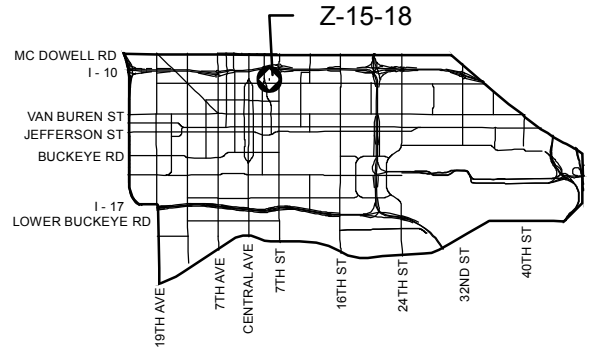


Feet



**CENTRAL CITY VILLAGE**

CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT: 8



APPLICANT'S NAME: City of Phoenix Historic Pres Commission

**REQUESTED CHANGE:**

FROM: DTC - East Evans Churchill (.38 a.c.)

APPLICATION NO. Z-15-18

DATE: 2/22/2018  
REVISION DATES:

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

.38 Acres

AERIAL PHOTO & QUARTER SEC. NO.

QS 12-28

ZONING MAP

G-8

TO: DTC - East Evans Churchill HP (.38 a.c.)

**MULTIPLES PERMITTED**

DTC - East Evans Churchill

DTC - East Evans Churchill HP

**CONVENTIONAL OPTION**

83

83

**\* UNITS P.R.D. OPTION**

N/A

N/A

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





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# Synagog Rites Near

Ground breaking ceremonies for the new Beth Hebrew Synagog will be held at 2 p.m. tomorrow at the building site, 333 W. Portland.

Rabbi A. L. Krohn, rabbi emeritus of Temple Beth Israel, will break ground, assisted by Sam Block, Joseph Eli, Maurice L. Hutt, and Morris Polesetsky, members of the ground breaking committee.

Beth Hebrew Congregation was founded in November 1950, and a rapid increase in membership has necessitated the expanded building project.

Classrooms for a Hebrew school, a chapel for daily services, an auditorium, and parking space, are included in the building plan.

Members and friends of Beth Hebrew Congregation are invited to participate in ceremonies. Refreshments will be served following the service.

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# Synagogue Under Way

Plans for a new synagogue to be erected at 333 E. Portland are being prepared by Max Kaufman, architect, it was disclosed yesterday.

The building will be erected by Congregation Hebrew, an orthodox unit. A. L. Krohn, rabbi emeritus of Temple Beth Israel, has been aiding in the organization of the new congregation.

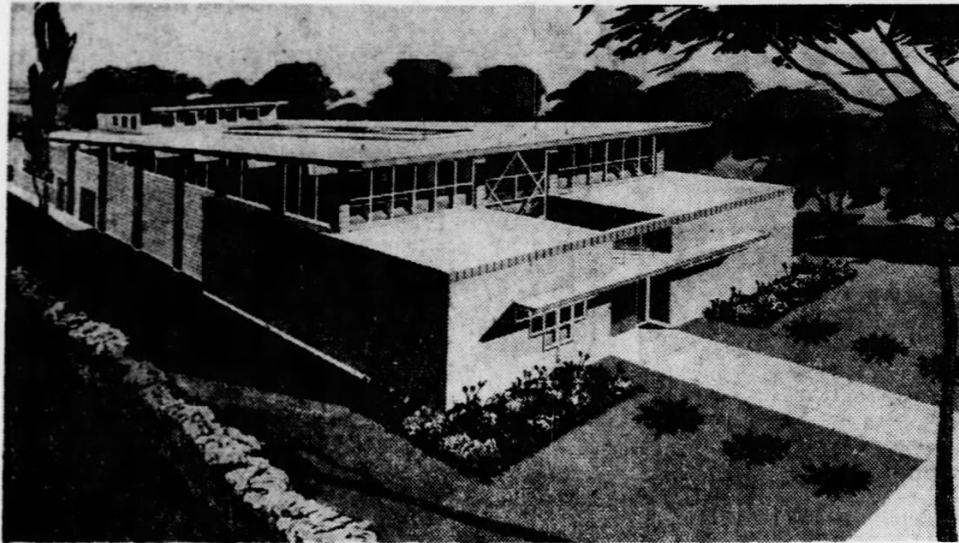
A contemporary style structure 100 by 55 feet is planned. It will have lobby, sanctuary, and kitchen in the front end of the synagogue, with pulpit and platform, flanked by two utility rooms at the other end.

The plans featured special recessed ceiling ports for lighting, high windows and a roof skylight of translucent, corrugated glass.

Ground breaking will be in June, if fund-raising efforts are successful by that time.

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The Arizona Republic, Phoenix, Arizona



**Synagog** This sketch by Max Kaufman, architect, is of the synagog now under construction at 333 E. Portland to house Congregation Beth Hebrew. Although modernistic in design, it preserves the traditional symbols of a meeting place of its character. It is to be completed in early fall.

## Synagog Building Progresses

Rapid progress is being made on construction of the new Congregation Beth Hebrew synagog at 333 E. Portland from plans prepared by Max Kaufman, architect.

The structure, 55 by 100 feet, follows a contemporary design on its exterior, employing masonry block walls with high windows of translucent corrugated glass just under the roof.

The roof, ceiled with acoustic tile, has an insulation layer of fiber glass under the water-proof top surface. There will be a special skylight penthouse over the altar section.

The synagog is divided into a lobby, kitchen sanctuary in the street end of the building, with two utility rooms each side of the platform, and altar at the rear of the sanctuary. At night specially designed recessed lighting ports will provide necessary illumination.

Rabbi A. L. Krohn, rabbi emeritus of Temple Beth Israel, has been doing much of the fund raising for the new synagog. Others on the building committee are Jerry Kelin, Morris Polesetsky, Sam Block, and Max Jacobson.

## First Of Park Lee Alice Tenants Take Up Residence

First tenants have moved into the new Park Lee Alice apartments, 17th Avenue and Camelback, and approximately 100 leases have been signed, Sam Bialac, owner-manager, reported yesterday.

The first family was that of Mr. and Mrs. E. M. Griffin now living at 4725 N. 17th Avenue.

"We ran a full page ad in last Sunday's Arizona Republic

and the response was so large we couldn't begin to take care of the persons who visited us," Bialac said.

"In all there will be 525 apartments in this development and we will be busy completing the last of them well into November. We are finishing about 100 apartments a month."

The units will be open for inspection today.



645 W. Coolidge  
279-6987

or 957-9267

Arab receptions and gala dinners,  
as well as visits from kings and  
sheikhs.



TIME  
CAPSULE

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**BETH HEBREW  
CONGREGATION**

333 East Portland Street

THE FRIENDLY CONSERVATIVE SYNAGOGUE

**WE OFFER:**

- \*Special family membership rates for couples 35 yrs. old and under - \$100.00 per year for first two years.
- \*Daily Services - 8:00 A.M.
- \*Central Location - Easy Parking
- \*Low Family Membership - \$175 per year (No bldg. fund or other assessments)
- \*Complete Hebrew School Education (Classes held at Jewish Community Center)
- \*Bar/Bat Mitzvah training under personal supervision of our spiritual leader and teacher Rabbi Joseph Berglas

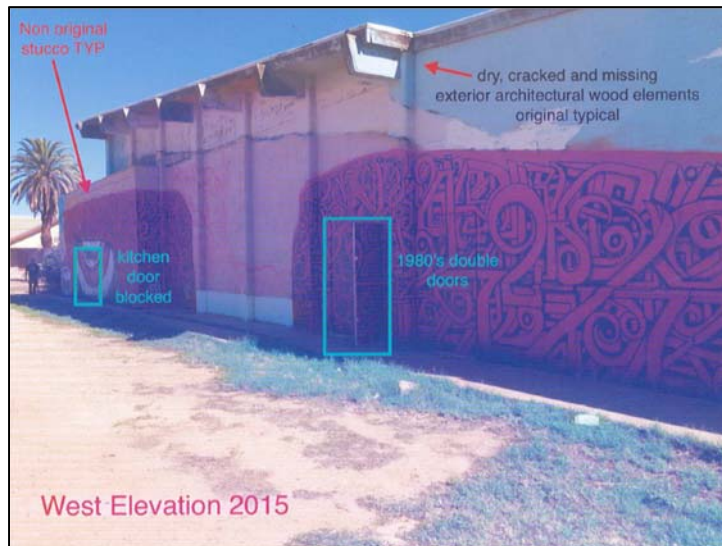
**Open House Sundays, Sept. 5-12-19 between 10 A.M. and Noon. Members of the Board of Directors and Mr. and Mrs. Club will be on hand to greet you and tell about our Synagogue.**

For further information call Synagogue Office:  
or Lydia Thalheimer, Membership Chairman:

258-3745  
944-2364

1962  
newspaper  
clipping

**Z-15-18-8**  
Beth Hebrew Synagogue



Photos of Beth Hebrew Synagogue in 2015



**Z-15-18-8**  
Beth Hebrew Synagogue



Photos of Beth Hebrew Synagogue in 2016  
showing rehabilitation in progress