



## City of Phoenix

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

### Staff Report: Z-51-22-7 August 31, 2022

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Z-51-22-7 is a request to establish Historic Preservation (HP) overlay zoning for the property located at the northwest corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Van Buren Street [600 West Van Buren Street] known historically as the City Center Motel. Maps and photos of the subject property are attached.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that rezoning request Z-51-22-7 be approved.

#### **BACKGROUND**

In 2011, the subject property was one of 80 properties featured in *Midcentury Marvels: Commercial Architecture of Phoenix 1945-1975*, published by the City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Office. The book noted that the City Center Motel was “a rare, surviving local example of Googie-style roadside design.” At that time Historic Preservation staff also determined the motel was eligible for listing on the Phoenix Historic Property Register and National Register of Historic Places.

On December 11, 2021, the property owner, Fabius Enterprise LLC, filed an application to demolish both the main motel building fronting Van Buren and a secondary building located further to the north. Because the property was over 50 years old, had a commercial use, was located in the Downtown Code area, and was flagged as historically eligible, the demolition application was subject to a 30-day hold. The owner’s stated reason for demolishing the existing buildings was to replace them with a new multi-story hotel on the same site.

Concerned about the loss of the eligible historic property, the City of Phoenix HP Commission initiated HP zoning for the motel on December 20, 2021. Shortly thereafter, staff filed rezoning application Z-5-22-7, and the owner withdrew the application for demolition.

After several weeks of discussion between staff and the owner, the owner presented a revised design that would allow for the new hotel to be built while preserving most of the existing main building. On February 14, 2022, the HP Commission accepted the

revised design and voted unanimously to withdraw the HP zoning application. Consequently, staff withdrew application Z-5-22-7.

As the project was going through the permit review process, it became clear that preserving the historic structure while building a new structure around it would present a challenge due to the building frontage and setback requirements set forth in the Downtown Code. While these issues potentially could have been addressed through the variance process, staff and the owner agreed that re-initiating HP zoning on the historic portion of the site was a better solution, as historic preservation standards prevail over the Downtown Code requirements. Following this discussion, the property owner submitted an Ownership Authorization Form and Waiver of Claims under Proposition 207 allowing the HP Commission to initiate HP zoning on his behalf. The HP Commission re-initiated HP zoning on June 13, 2022, and shortly thereafter staff filed this rezoning application.

## **PROPERTY OVERVIEW**

The buildings at 600 West Van Buren Street (main building) and 316 North 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue (annex) were constructed in 1959 as the City Center Motel. A July 13, 1958, article in the *Arizona Republic* states that the site had been cleared the previous week and construction would soon begin on a new downtown motel with 46 rooms. The article further states that plans for the new motel had been prepared by Bauer & Associates for the owner, Joseph Fliegel, and that the motel was to be divided into two separate buildings with a swimming pool and patio between them.

Building permits for both the main building and the annex were issued on February 25, 1959. The permits show the builder as Ben Paller, although an *Arizona Republic* article from March 29, 1959, states the builder was Dan Pallor. The article also notes that the building plans were prepared by William S. Knight, Jr., who apparently utilized Bauer's design and saw the project through to completion.

The primary building is a modern Googie-style concrete block structure designed with "space-age" features including a long, angular, "rocket-like" porte cochere and an extended sign with tall spires. The building is made up of two separate wings creating a U-shaped plan. It features covered parking spaces underneath one of the extended room wings with angled cast concrete structural support elements.

The annex building is still operated as part of the same motel, most recently a Travelodge. This secondary building features single and double rooms with a carport space on the ground level underneath the second floor. As an accessory building, it contributes to the significance of the property but is not individually significant. As a result of the agreement that was negotiated by the owner and HP Commission, the annex will be demolished to construct the new multi-story hotel and is largely excluded from the proposed HP boundary.

Alterations to the main building since initial construction include the deletion of windows on the south façade and the removal of a few spires from the rooftop sign. The fascia has been altered as well, resulting in the removal of the tailfin detail at the far-left edge. The post supporting the angular roof projection has been made more substantial, although it is possible that a slender interior post is now encased. Native fieldstone on the south and east façades has been partially replaced, and stucco has been applied to the projecting panels on the east side, which may have been painted steel originally. Despite these alterations, the building still conveys its original Googie-style design, retaining its dramatic, angular “space-age” form, the brise-soleil screening on the south façade, and the extended rooftop sign. The angular cast concrete supports separating the covered parking spaces on the east façade are also intact.

### **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

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

### **EVALUATION**

The City Center Motel is significant under Criterion A for its association with tourism-related development during the midcentury era. Its importance is reflected by its location on Van Buren Street (U.S. Highway 60, 70, 80 and 89), which was the main transportation corridor through Phoenix prior to the construction of Interstate 10. Unlike earlier hotels, such as the San Carlos and Westward Ho, the City Center Motel catered to visitors in automobiles, reflecting the growing influence of the car in postwar society.

It represents a rare property type, as one of just a handful of motels from the 1950s still surviving in Phoenix.

The property is also significant under Criterion C as a rare remaining local example of Google-style roadside architecture. This style was once prevalent in Phoenix, with such classic examples as the two Helsing's coffee shops on Central Avenue at Osborn Road and Camelback Road and the first McDonald's "Golden Arches" prototype drive-in in America on Central Avenue just south of Indian School Road. Typical of 1950s roadside architecture, the City Center Motel utilizes futuristic, striking shapes and signage to attract the attention of passing drivers. Its lobby and porte cochere make a bold architectural statement while the guest room wings are fairly simple functional buildings that are little more than decorated boxes.

Despite the alterations noted above, the property retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance under both Criteria A and C. It is still readily identifiable as a Google-style midcentury motel, and many of the changes are likely reversible if the property were to be restored. The portion of the main building that will be demolished is the least publicly visible part of the structure, and its loss will not prevent the remaining portion from conveying its significance.

### **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 encompasses 0.61 gross acres. It has been strategically drawn to include the portion of the historic building that will be preserved, as well as a buffer area to the north that would allow a greater setback for the new hotel and keep it from encroaching on the historic structure. While allowing this flexibility, the proposed boundary still follows parcel lines and street monument lines as much as possible.

## **CONCLUSION**

The rezoning request Z-51-22-7 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

8/31/22

### Team Leader

H. Ruter

### Attachments:

Sketch Map (1 page)

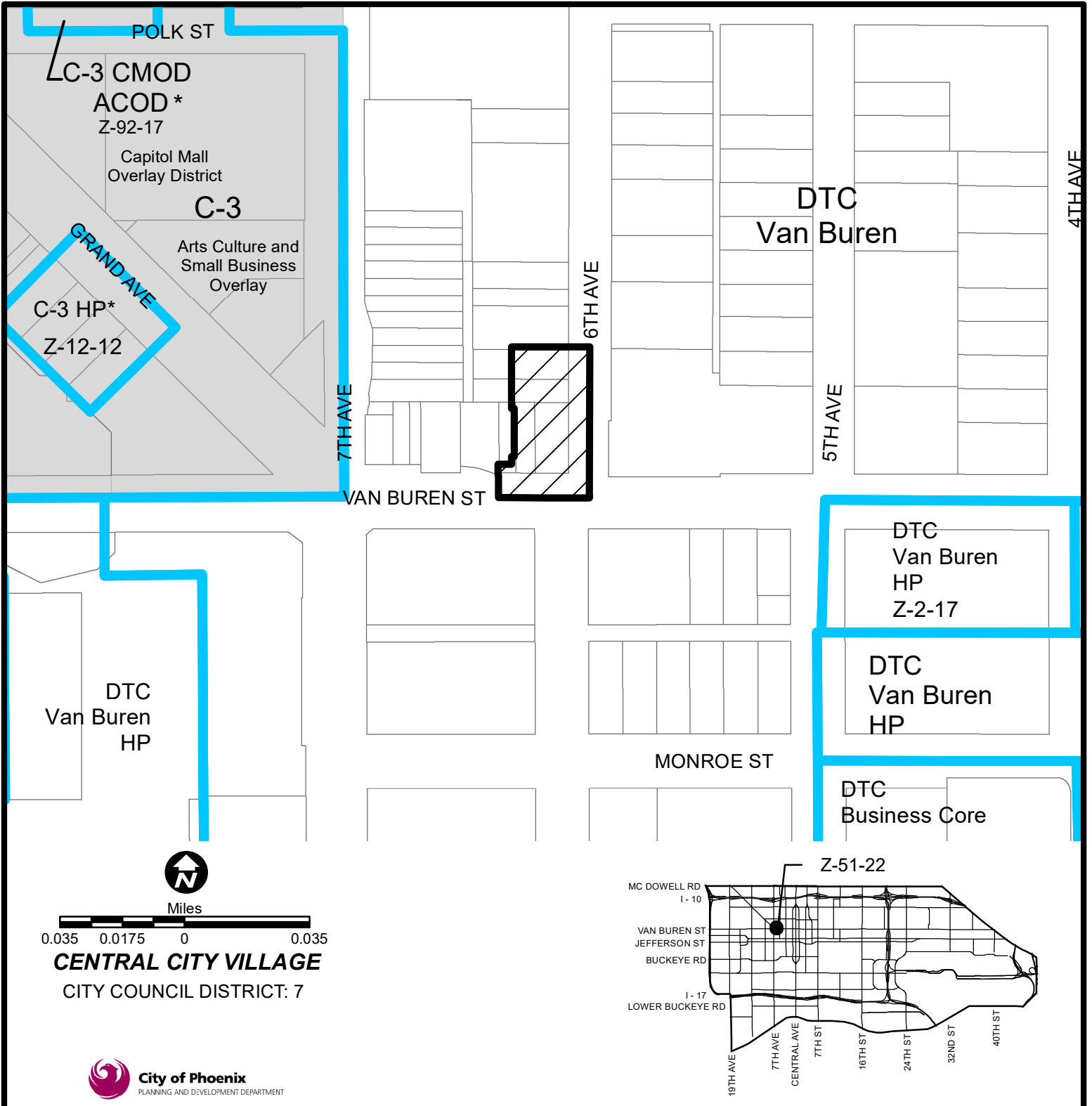
Aerials (2 pages)

Photos (4 pages)

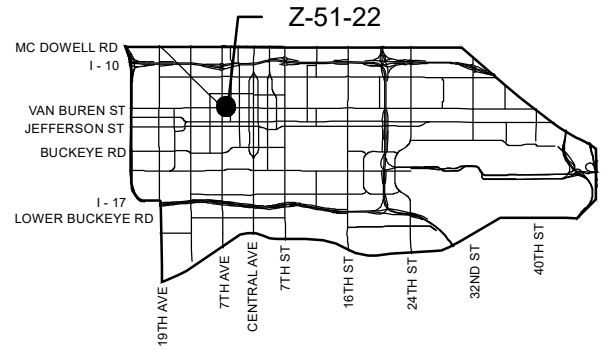
Newspaper Articles (2 pages)

Original Building Plans (1 page)

Proposed Building Plans (11 pages)

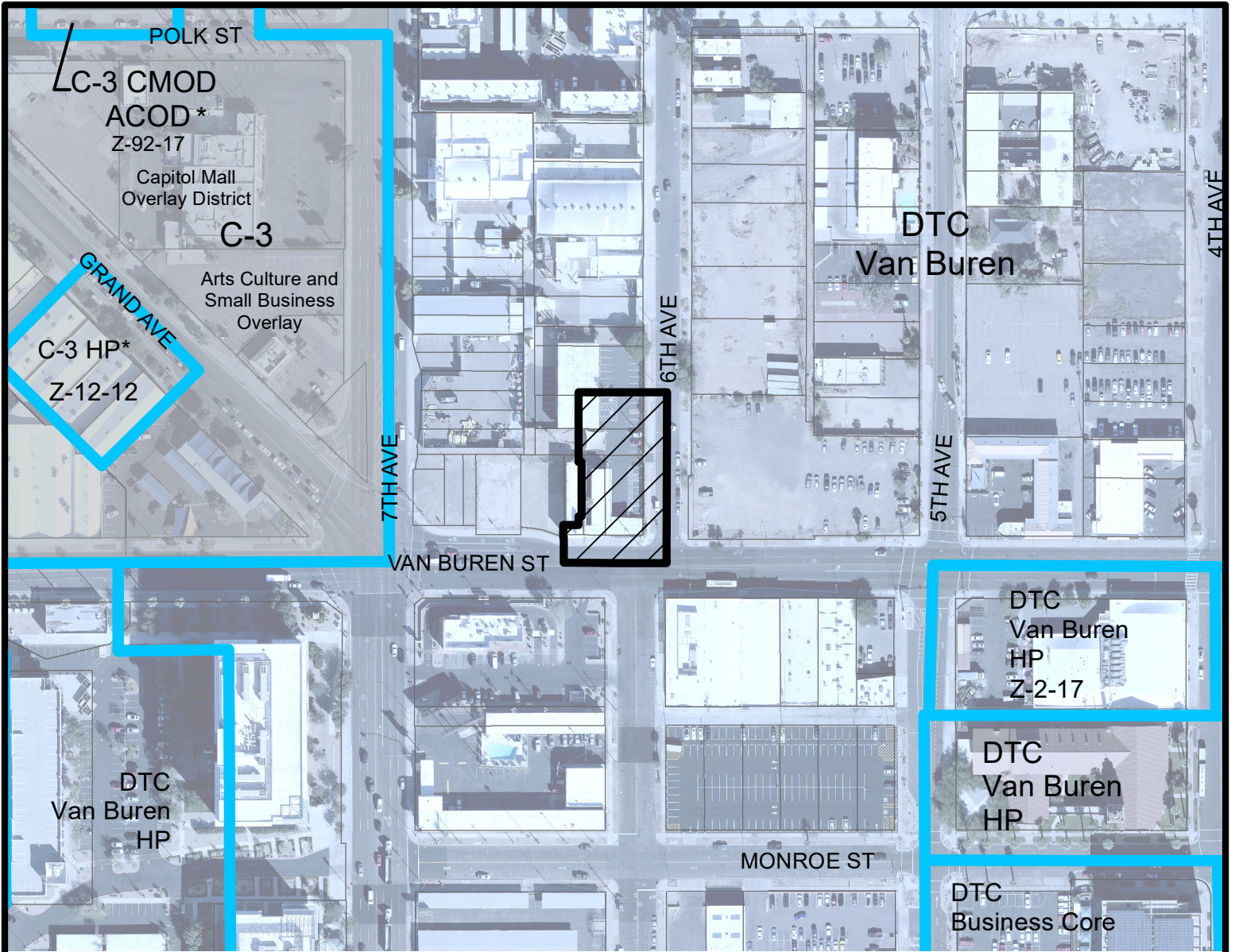


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**CENTRAL CITY VILLAGE**  
 CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT: 7



<b>APPLICANT'S NAME:</b> City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Commission		<b>REQUESTED CHANGE:</b> FROM: DTC-Van Buren ( 0.61 a.c.)	
<b>APPLICATION NO.</b> Z-51-22	<b>DATE:</b> 7/14/2022 <small>REVISION DATES:</small>	TO: DTC-Van Buren HP ( 0.61 a.c.)	
<small>GROSS AREA INCLUDING 1/2 STREET AND ALLEY DEDICATION IS APPROX.</small> 0.61 Acres	<small>AERIAL PHOTO &amp; QUARTER SEC. NO.</small> QS 11-27		
<b>MULTIPLES PERMITTED</b> DTC-Van Buren DTC-Van Buren HP	<b>CONVENTIONAL OPTION</b> 133 133		<b>* UNITS P.R.D. OPTION</b> N/A N/A

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



Miles

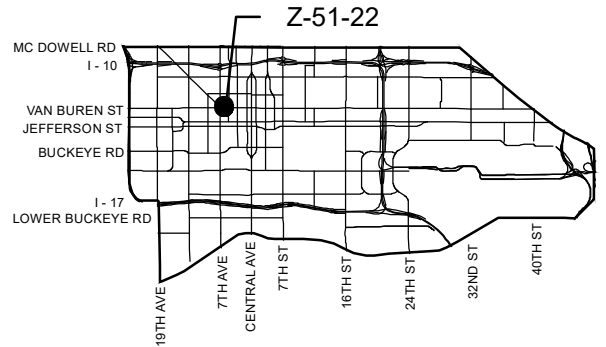
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**CENTRAL CITY VILLAGE**

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**City of Phoenix**  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT



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AERIAL PHOTO &  
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QS 11-27

ZONING MAP  
F-8

TO: DTC-Van Buren HP ( 0.61 a.c.)

MULTIPLES PERMITTED

DTC-Van Buren

DTC-Van Buren HP

CONVENTIONAL OPTION

133

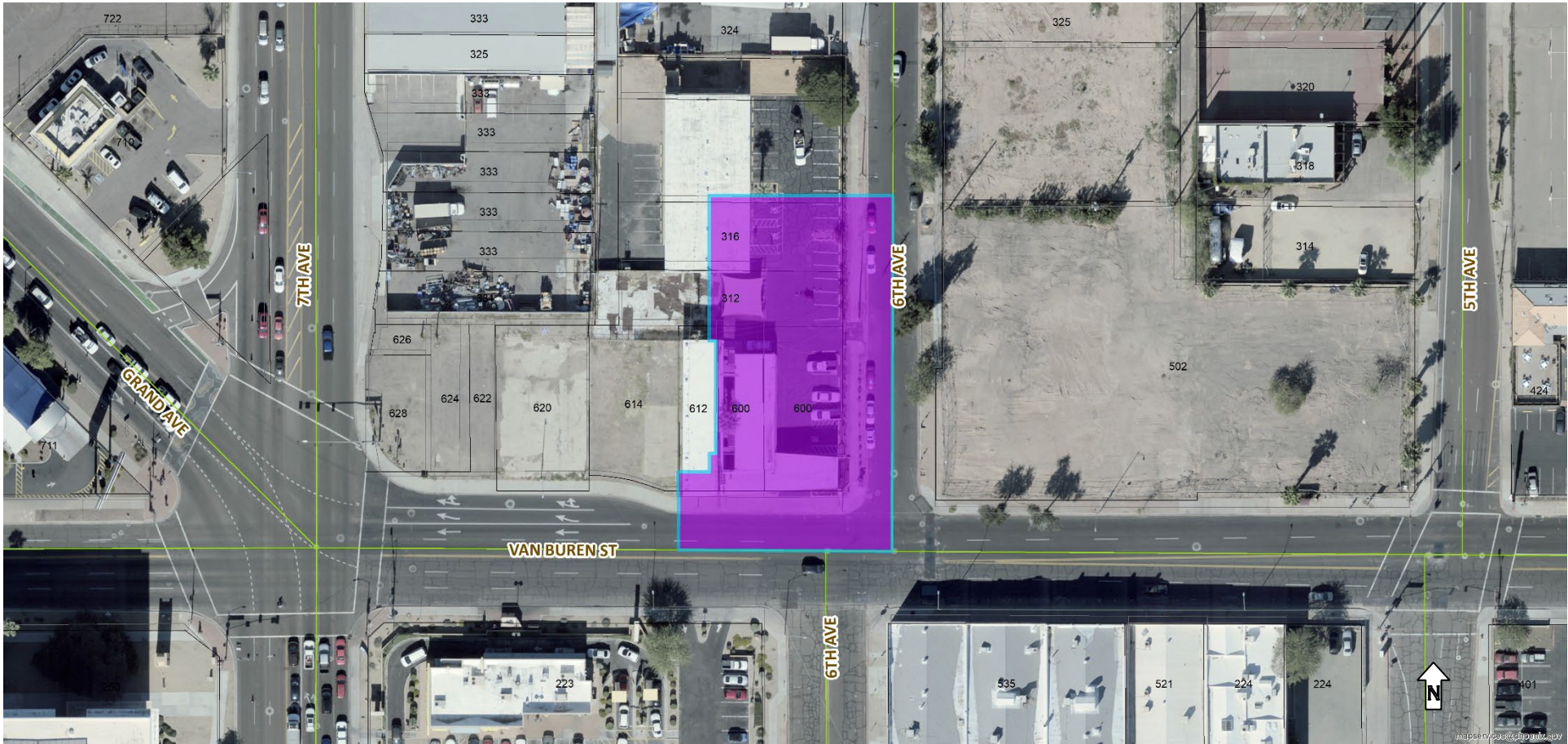
133

\* UNITS P.R.D. OPTION

N/A

N/A

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



# City Center Motel

## 600 West Van Buren Street

Proposed Historic Preservation (HP) Zoning Overlay shown in purple



Z-51-22-7  
600 West Van Buren Street  
City Center Motel



City Center Motel, photograph by Michael Lundgren, 2007.  
A Project of the Percent for Art Program, Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture, City of Phoenix.

Z-51-22-7  
600 West Van Buren Street  
City Center Motel



City Center Motel, photograph by Tom Reed, date unknown.  
Courtesy of Barbara Stocklin Postcard Collection.

Z-51-22-7  
600 West Van Buren Street  
City Center Motel



Main building, south view. Google image captured February 2020.



Main building, southeast view. Google image captured January 2021.

Z-51-22-7  
600 West Van Buren Street  
City Center Motel



Main building, northeast view. Google image captured February 2020.



Annex building, southeast view. Google image captured December 2020.



Annex building, east view. Google image captured December 2020.

# *2-Story Motel Is Planned*

Buildings were razed last week on the northwest corner of Van Buren and Sixth Avenue for construction of a downtown motel with 46 rooms.

Plans for the structure have been drawn by Bauer and Associates for the owner, Joseph Fliegel. He said contract for the construction will be awarded soon after Aug. 1.

The motel will be two stories and divided into two separate buildings with a swimming pool and patio between them.

# Work On New Motel Gets Under Way

Dan Pallor, contractor, has started construction of City Center Motel at Sixth Avenue and Van Buren for Joseph Fliegel, an Eastern investor.

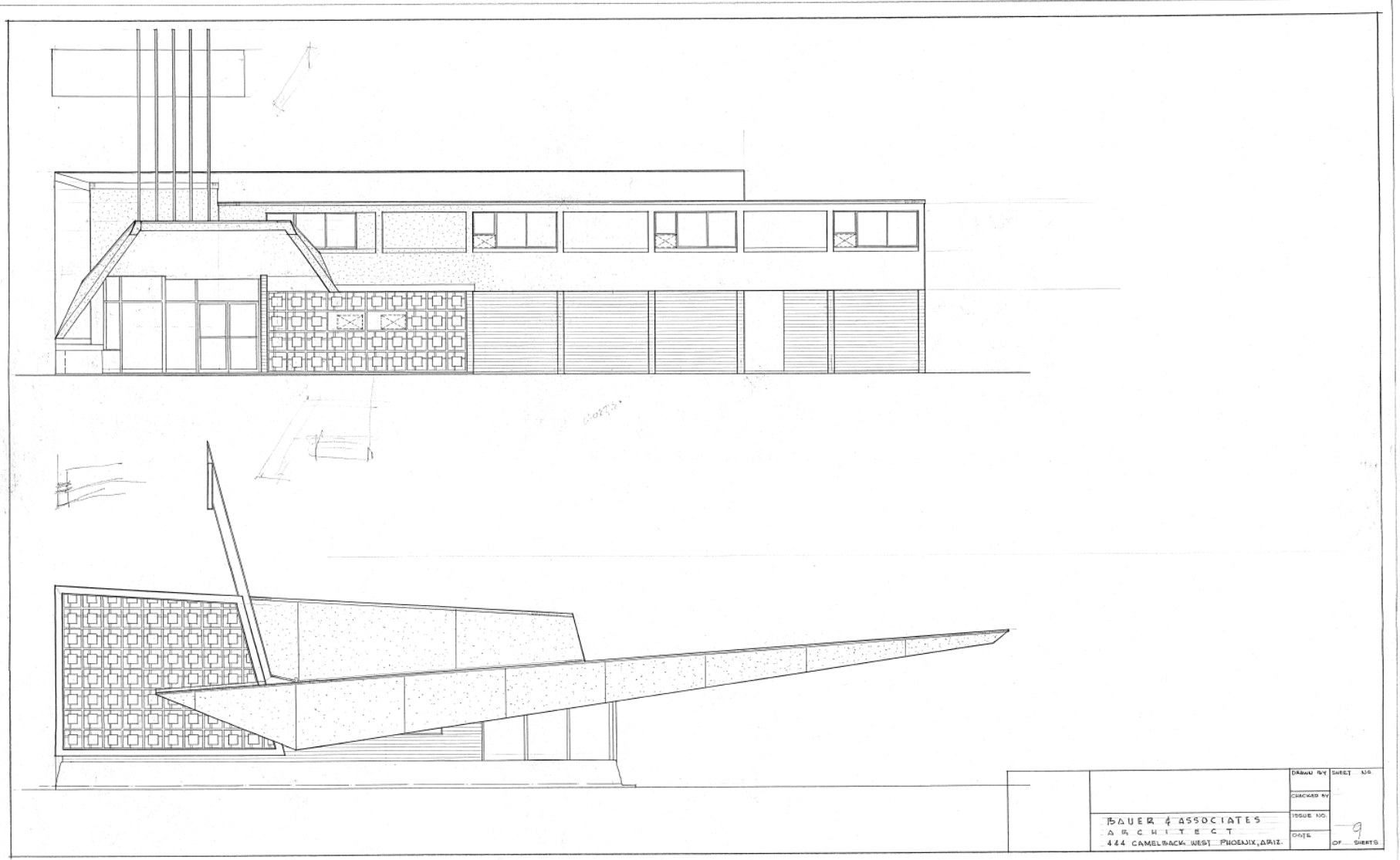
The structure will be in two sections. This is due to the fact an alley intervenes and an existing building adjacent was not purchased. It will have a total of 50 units, either single or double rooms, in its two stories.

Plans for the building were drawn by William S. Knight Jr., architect. A portion of the building's second floor is a free-standing arrangement, allowing for parking automobiles underneath.

In the annex section a driveway to parking in the rear is under one portion of its second floor. In addition to the necessary parking provisions, room has been found for a pool.

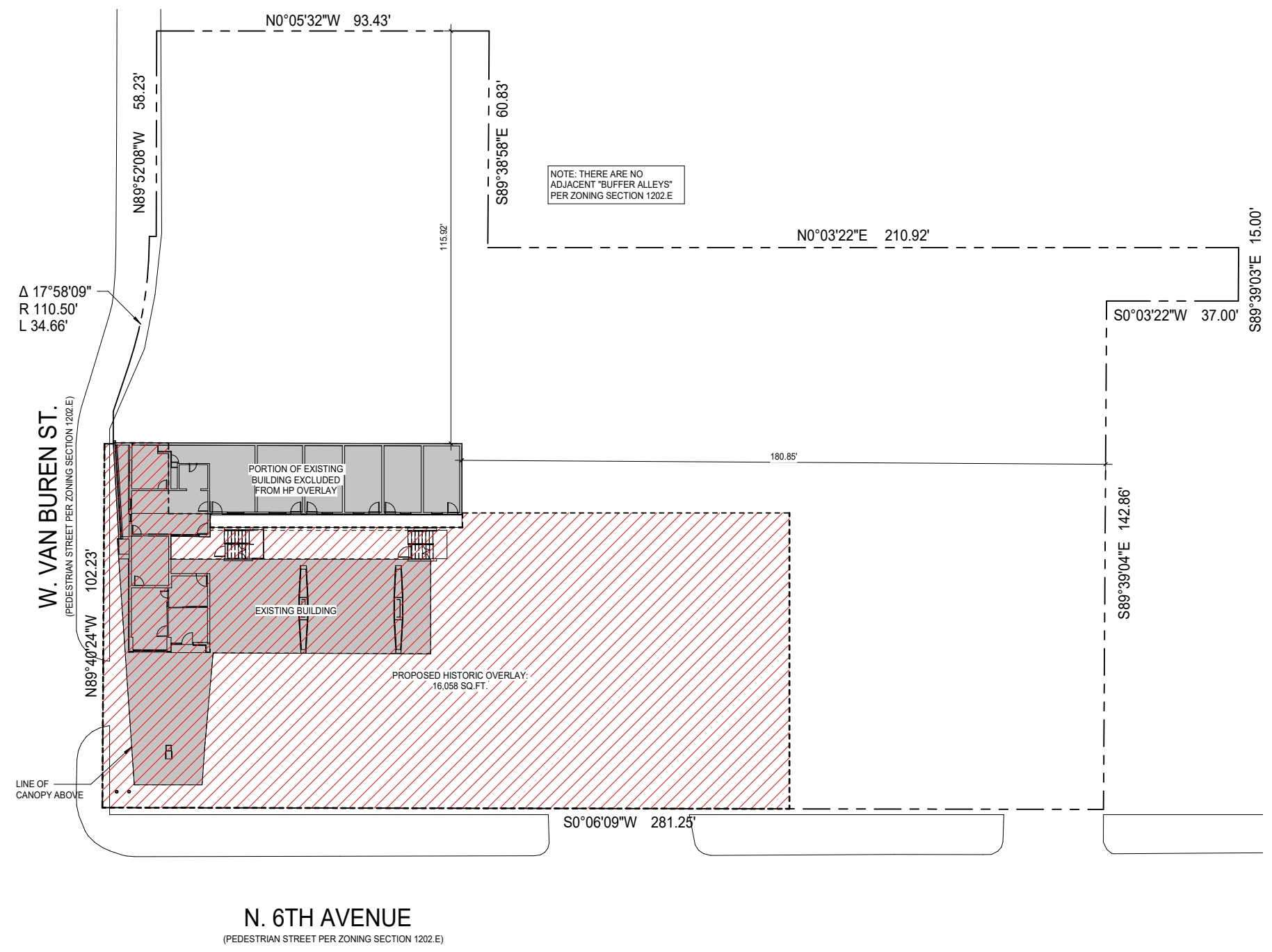
The structure is to be ready in early summer.

Z-51-22-7  
600 West Van Buren Street  
City Center Motel



Building plans by Bauer & Associates, 1958

# Site Plan





# Site Context



Portion of front building to be altered.

Rear Annex building to be removed.

W. Van Buren St.

N. 6<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Maintain front building, including canopy, signage, and concrete screen detail.

# Site Plan (Aerial)



W. Van Buren St.

N. 6th Ave.



# Site Plan (Ground Floor)



# Aerial View



# Van Buren St. Elevation



# Existing Building View from Van Buren St.



# South West Corner Street View



# 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. Elevation





# View from 6<sup>th</sup> Ave.



# View from 6<sup>th</sup> Ave.

