

REGULAR MEETING OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMISSION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2025, AT 6:00 PM, IN THE TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, LOCATED AT 775 N. MAIN STREET, FLORENCE, ARIZONA.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Knight called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

ROLL CALL:

Present: Knight, Olgin, West, and Butterworth

Absent: Reid, Cathemer

Council Liaison Neil Was Present

Staff Present: Andrew Birkelbach, Maricella Benitez

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

CALL TO THE PUBLIC/COMMISSION RESPONSE:

Call to the Public for public comment on issues within the jurisdiction of the Historic District Advisory Commission. Individual Commission members may respond to criticisms made, may ask staff to review a matter raised or may ask that a matter be put on a future agenda. However, members of the Commission shall not discuss or take action on any matter during an open call to the public unless the matters are properly noticed for discussion and legal action.

Chair Knight opened the call to the public. Seeing nobody wishing to speak, she closed the call to the public.

DISCUSSION/APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL of the meeting minutes for the regular meeting conducted on April 30, 2025.

On motion by Commissioner West, seconded by Chair Knight, and carried 4-0, to approve the regular meeting minutes of April 30, 2025.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. PRESENTATION/APPROVAL/APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS/DISAPPROVAL of new front awning located at 230 N. Main Street.

Maricella Benitez, Senior Planner, presented the Design Review application. This application was for a design review request for the replacement of an awning at 230 North Main Street. The original awning had been removed due to deterioration, and the

applicant had indicated at the time of demolition that they would return for approval once they were ready to replace it. This application included visual documentation of the front elevation and how the new awning will appear. The replacement is designed to be similar to the original, using a tin roof that is consistent with other buildings along Main Street. The awning will be flush with the building façade, serving primarily to shade the front area.

The applicant provided structural plans showing the attachment details. They also plan to coordinate with the Town of Florence to obtain a right-of-way permit, which will allow them to block off part of the sidewalk during construction. While awnings themselves are not historically significant features of the buildings, they are considered important within the historic district. They contribute to visual consistency along the sidewalk and provide practical shading. The materials proposed, including corrugated metal and appropriate color schemes, align with the Historic District Guidelines.

Commission members expressed satisfaction with the proposal, noting the applicant's efforts to maintain consistency with the guidelines. They also commended the applicant for their work cleaning up the site and following proper procedures. The design was praised for closely resembling the original, restoring shade to that portion of Main Street.

On motion by Vice-Chair Olgin, seconded by Chair Knight, and carried 4-0, to approve the new front awning located at 230 N. Main Street with the following conditions:

1. The Project shall comply with all applicable Town codes, including, but not limited to, building, fire, and engineering code requirements.

B. PRESENTATION/APPROVAL/APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS/DISAPPROVAL of new front awning located at 220 N. Main Street.

The next application was for a Design Review for a new awning at 220 North Main Street, which is directly adjacent to 230 North Main Street. This proposal seeks cohesion with the awning at 230 North Main Street, with plans to install a new awning using similar materials, including wood posts and corrugated metal roofing. While the structural plans were not yet available at the time of the meeting, the applicant confirmed they would be completed shortly. The same engineering team working on 230 North Main is preparing the documents for 220 North Main as well. Visually, the new awning at 220 will be slightly different in design and height but still consistent in purpose and materials.

The Commission noted that the materials, colors, and overall aesthetic are aligned with the e-sign guidelines. The intention is to recreate an awning similar to what previously existed, thereby maintaining continuity along the Main Street frontage. The applicant will pursue both building and right-of-way permits necessary for construction and installation. Town staff confirmed that the proposal adheres to the historical district's standards and recommended approval to preserve the shaded, cohesive look along the sidewalk.

Commissioners expressed their approval of the proposal and echoed previous sentiments of appreciation, commending the applicant's efforts to work within the established guidelines.

On motion by Chair Knight, seconded by Commissioner West, and carried 4-0, to approve the new front awning located at 230 N. Main Street with the following conditions:

1. The Project shall comply with all applicable Town codes, including, but not limited to building, fire, and engineering code requirements.

C. DISCUSSION of the proposed new Pinal County office buildings within the Historic District.

The Commission placed this agenda item in response to a request made during the public comment portion of the previous April meeting. The discussion concerned potential plans by Pinal County to construct a new building within the county complex located along Butte Avenue. However, Town staff clarified that no formal site or design plans had yet been submitted to the Town of Florence. While there are indications that such plans are being developed, no concrete proposals or timelines currently exist. The discussion was primarily informational, given that the area under consideration lies outside the boundaries of the historic district.

Per municipal code, the Historic District Advisory Commission is only authorized to review and make recommendations for developments within the established historic district boundaries. Therefore, any area just outside that line, even if visually or historically adjacent to the district, falls outside their jurisdiction for official review or action. The staff emphasized that any personal opinions or concerns expressed by Commission members regarding developments outside the district must be made as private individuals, not as representatives of the Commission.

During the discussion, several members expressed a desire for informal involvement despite the jurisdictional limits. Vice-Chair Olgin noted past instances, such as the Circle K development, where developers voluntarily brought proposals before the Commission to gather feedback and align their designs with the aesthetic character of the historic district. That development, though technically outside the district, benefited from the Commission's input and ultimately incorporated design features that harmonized with the surrounding historic context. Vice-Chair Olgin stressed that even if the Commission has no decision-making authority, its advisory role could be valuable in influencing outcomes that maintain the district's visual integrity.

Concerns were raised about the potential for future buildings to clash with the historic district's architectural character, particularly if new structures are driven by cost-saving decisions that disregard aesthetic compatibility. Commissioners emphasized the importance of preserving the courthouse's visual prominence and ensuring that any adjacent construction respects the area's historic identity. They highlighted the courthouse's symbolic and cultural value, especially for visitors and during historic tours, and expressed hope that county officials and architects will remain mindful of this when drafting their plans.

Commissioners expressed a strong desire to continue this kind of dialogue going forward, even if informally, and concluded by reiterating the hope that their advisory perspectives will be considered as plans for the County complex evolve.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

A. Historic Preservation Conference 2025

Vice-Chair Olgin expressed sincere gratitude for the opportunity to attend the historic preservation conference in Phoenix. The experience proved to be educational and thought-provoking, particularly during a session that examined a redevelopment project in Phoenix's Garfield Historic District. This project involved placing three homes on a single lot, a move driven by the growing need for affordable housing. Initially, Olgin felt hesitant from a preservationist standpoint, but came to appreciate the thoughtful and almost invisible design that respected the visual character of the neighborhood while adding density. The homes were constructed within the existing property envelope in such a way that from the street, only the original structure was visible. Although the idea initially seemed radical, especially given the lack of yards and limited access, the innovative use of alleyways and compact design ultimately led to a successful two-year negotiation process and city approval.

Olgin emphasized how this project represented a necessary balancing act between preserving the integrity of historic districts and adapting to modern housing needs. The story highlighted the importance of staying open-minded and examining proposals from all perspectives, especially as community needs evolve. The conference also allowed participants to explore historic structures, such as a once-burned three-story building now functioning as an event center that integrates natural elements like wild-growing trees into its design. This example of creative reuse further reinforced the value of seeing potential in historic spaces.

Andrew Birkelbach, Planner, reflected on the same Garfield project, emphasizing the difficulty of achieving it, requiring four separate variances and a two-year approval timeline. The outcome was described as impressive, particularly because the additional buildings were imperceptible from the street, demonstrating that dense infill can coexist with historic preservation when executed carefully. Mr. Birkelbach also noted a recurring theme in the sessions: the importance of multi-generational engagement in historic preservation. Youth involvement was a particular focus, with suggestions to connect younger generations with older community members who carry deep knowledge of local history. This intergenerational interaction helps young people form a meaningful "sense of place," something the speaker personally related to, having developed an interest in preservation after volunteering at their hometown's historical society during the pandemic.

Further discussions at the conference addressed broader policy concerns. Attendees were encouraged to advocate for continued support at the local and state levels to ensure the sustainability of preservation efforts. The conference also looked ahead to the upcoming 250th anniversary of the United States, identifying it as a major opportunity to draw public interest to preservation activities through events like historic home tours. Practical skills were also

emphasized; the Town's Building Official, Kevin Wall, attended a hands-on workshop about Adobe construction and repair, gaining valuable insights applicable to Florence's architectural heritage. There was also interest in potentially hosting a similar Adobe workshop in Florence, which would provide a public demonstration of traditional building methods and further engage the community in preservation efforts. Overall, the conference provided a wide range of insights and inspiration, leaving attendees with renewed appreciation for both the challenges and opportunities in historic preservation today.

B. Founder's Day

The discussion centered on the idea of organizing a Founders Day celebration, particularly championed by Commissioners West and Cathemer. While the Historic District Commission itself is limited to reviewing applications and conducting design reviews—and therefore cannot officially sponsor or plan the event—individual commissioners are welcome to pursue the celebration independently. There was interest in potentially tying Founders Day into the upcoming 40th Annual Historic Home Tour, which notably coincides with both Arizona's birthday and Valentine's Day.

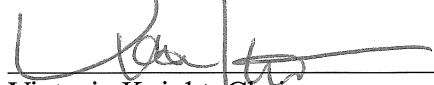
Commissioner West noted that he and Commissioner Cathemer had discussed the idea in more depth and felt that the time of year was ideal, despite the possibility of rain, due to the generally mild weather. Commissioner West had also researched how other cities in Arizona conduct their home tours and believed that while Florence may not be able to replicate everything in its first attempt, it could at least initiate something meaningful. Commissioner West emphasized that Florence is steeped in history, with nearly every part of the town—from the streets and cemetery to historic homes—reflecting the legacy of its early pioneers. The goal would be to honor those original settlers and the rich heritage they established.

CALL TO THE COMMISSION-CURRENT EVENTS ONLY:

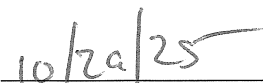
Commissioners mentioned the rising temperatures and the upcoming 4th of July holiday.

ADJOURNMENT:

On motion by Chair Knight, seconded by Commissioner West, and carried 4-0, to adjourn the meeting at 6:28 pm.



Victoria Knight, Chair



Date