

## COMMENTS ON FT LOWELL MASTER PLANNING

For the Ft Lowell Restoration Advisory Committee, March 11, 2009

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members, I'm Bob Jones, 5487 E. Ft. Lowell Rd., resident of the Old Ft. Lowell Neighborhood. I have a short comment about water as it relates to master planning, then a follow-up on what John and Barry have said.

First, may I acknowledge Patsy Waterfall? ... who is, besides a member of our Advisory Committee, known worldwide for her booklet *Rainwater Harvesting*. I learned her name ten years ago when the booklet was first published, and I was looking for sources that I could use in the design of my own rainwater harvesting system. Another name that I am thinking of is Rodney Glassman, our City Councilor, who is a strong advocate of rainwater harvesting and other sustainable water practices. With these advantages and friends, it would be hard to imagine that we would not create a park that would employ and demonstrate the best examples of sustainable water and landscape management.

Returning to the current draft of the master plan, John and Barry have spoken of impacts on the Old Ft. Lowell Neighborhood. Again, the critical zone is the interface or boundary zone between the existing park and the neighborhood. The Commissary, of which Barry has spoken, is on the north side of this zone. Here, the five current residential apartments are layered directly on top of army structures. Consequently, there is really no question of restoring army period conditions, except for the portions that were not rebuilt, primarily the root cellar. The Adkins parcel is on the south side of this zone. Here, the Adkins family structures are placed mainly beside military structures. It happened this way, I suppose, for the simple reason that there was open space here, roughly a portion of the former army parade ground, where open space was available to build on. In any case, it is fortunate because both sets of structures can, and ought to be, preserved and interpreted relative to their respective roles in neighborhood cultural history. However, if I read the planning map correctly, this zone would feature a reconstruction of the western portion of the former army parade ground, and to do this the Adkins structures would be largely demolished. Remaining would be some remnants or markers to indicate where these structures had been. Such an outcome would be a very major loss to the cultural history of the neighborhood. A better approach would be the reverse, the preservation and interpretation of the Adkins family structures, and some type of markers to indicate the former parade ground. This seems obvious, but I wouldn't be so bold as to relate neighborhood history to this group. Let me just mention one point, in closing, that connects to the subject of water. The Adkins family steel fabrication business produced welded steel water tanks. These tanks have a reputation in southern Arizona as the highest quality available. Next to the workshop, where these tanks were built, stands the Adkins family water tower and windmill by which well water was pumped and stored. These structures, then, are vivid symbols in the story of water, which story is bound to central to the interpretive function of the park.

Our neighborhood is like a complex and fragile ecosystem. It is hard to understand fully, to interpret adequately, and, as we are attempting tonight, to defend convincingly. Let us at least have the humility to know when we do not know, and, when in doubt, leave it as it is.

Thank you.

REMARKS ON FT LOWELL MASTER PLANNING  
Fort Lowell Restoration Advisory Committee Meeting  
March 11, 2009

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

I'm John Meaney, 4840 E. Ft. Lowell Rd., resident of the Old Ft. Lowell Neighborhood.

**Why is there concern about the Master Plan?**

One of the major concerns about the plan as it was presented in the third public meeting involves the specific changes proposed for the entrance to the historic neighborhood at the intersection of Craycroft and Fort Lowell Roads. The potential loss of neighborhood people from the Commissary buildings and the elimination of the structures on the Adkins property would I think have a major impact in that they are irreplaceable markers of the historic neighborhood's unique physical and social character. For many years the eastern entrance to the neighborhood has consisted of the Adkins property on the south side and the Commissary buildings on the north side inhabited by neighborhood people. Personally I have enjoyed this entrance to our community for more than 40 years. The proposed plan would alter this entrance forever by changing the landscape of the Adkins property to a more open configuration and transitioning the Commissary buildings to non-residential uses. Each of these alterations would represent significant losses for the environmental and cultural "face" that the eastern entrance has been for this neighborhood for more than 75 years.

**Why is there a need for balance in the Master Plan?**

I have been actively engaged in the feedback process for the Master Plan by submitting the forms distributed at the meetings or submitting comments online. When the Fort Lowell Master Plan Variables were presented for comment online, I favored a balance of history and recreation. However, I cautioned at the time that I would not prefer this balance if it compromised in any way the need to preserve the Fort Lowell Neighborhood and its own unique sense of time and place. The need for balance in the historical aspects of the plan comes to the fore at the intersection between what were the actual fort grounds and what developed subsequent to its abandonment. I am concerned that the military fort aspects seem to have taken some precedence over the integrity of the historic neighborhood in the current plan. I am not opposed to plans to tell the story of the military history of the fort; after all it was the fort that gave its name to the neighborhood. However, the area already had many unique aspects from farming and other uses and certainly developed a unique character over the many years following the abandonment of the fort. This unique character would be significantly diminished by the destruction of some of the physical and environmental elements that define the eastern entrance to the historic neighborhood and the loss of individuals who through time have always been important contributors to the unique social history of the neighborhood.

Thank you.

**COMMENTS REGARDING FUTURE USE OF COMMISSARY AS OUTLINED  
IN THE PROPOSED FORT LOWELL MASTER PLAN**

**Barry Spicer 4/9/09**

- 1) **THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO YOU.**
- 2) **MY NAME IS BARRY SPICER AND I LIVE IN THE OLD FORT LOWELL NEIGHBORHOOD.**
- 3) **AS THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND <sup>Advisory Comm</sup> ~~COUNCIL~~ DEVELOP THEIR THOUGHTS REGARDING THE FORT LOWELL MASTER PLAN, I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS THE FUTURE OF THE COMMISSARY APARTMENTS AS PROPOSED IN THE FEBRUARY VERSION OF THE PLAN.**
- 4) **THE OPTIONS SUGGESTED ARE TO USE THE APARTMENTS FOR EITHER A MUSEUM OR FOR COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES SUCH AS SHOPS OR A SMALL CAFE.**
- 5) **I WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST A THIRD OPTION, AND THAT IS TO CONTINUE ITS 100 YEARS OF RESIDENTIAL USE.**
- 6) **OUR NEIGHBORHOOD IS A LIVING ACTIVE COMMUNITY. ITS CORE, PAST AND PRESENT, ARE THE INDIVIDUALS, THE FAMILIES, THE PEOPLE THAT LIVE HERE.**
- 7) **THE COMMISSARY AND ITS OCCUPANTS HAVE BEEN, AND CONTINUE TO BE, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ONGOING CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.**

8) DURING ITS 136 YEARS THE COMMISSARY HAS BEEN OCCUPIED BY PEOPLE WHOM AS PART OF THE COMMUNITY, HAVE HELPED TO SHAPE THE FORM AND CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. FOR ITS FIRST 18 YEARS, IT WAS THE FORT LOWELL QUARTERMASTER AND HIS STAFF THAT USED IT IN THE CONDUCT OF THEIR MILITARY DUTIES.

9) NEARLY 100 YEARS AGO, THE THEN ABANDONED BUILDINGS WERE RECLAIMED BY FUERTEÑO FAMILIES, SOME OF WHOSE DESCENDENTS STILL LIVE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. THEY WERE FOLLOWED BY THE BOLSIUS FAMILY WHO NOT ONLY MODIFIED THE BUILDINGS INTO APARTMENTS, BUT ALSO USED THEM THEMSELVES.

10) AND FINALLY, THE APARTMENTS HAVE BEEN LIVED IN FOR THE LAST 60 YEARS OR SO SINCE THE BOLSIUS. MANY OF THOSE WHO HAVE LIVED, AND NOW LIVE IN THE APARTMENTS HAVE HELPED TO MAKE THIS NEIGHBORHOOD WHAT IT IS TODAY.

11) TO DISPLACE CURRENT FAMILIES OR PREVENT FUTURE ONES FROM LIVING IN THE COMMISSARY WOULD CUT SHORT ITS CONTINUITY WITH EARLIER WAYS OF LIFE AND DEPRIVE THE COMMISSARY AREA, AND, INDEED, THE WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD OF PART OF ITS IDENTITY.

**SUMMARY OF COMMENTS ON THE OVERALL APPROACH TO THE FORT  
LOWELL MASTER PLAN AS PRESENTED IN THE FEBRUARY VERSION OF  
THE PLAN**

**Barry Spicer 9/11/09**

- 1) THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO YOU.**
- 2) MY NAME IS BARRY SPICER AND I LIVE IN THE OLD FORT LOWELL  
NEIGHBORHOOD.**
- 3) AS THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE FORT LOWELL RESTORATION  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE DEVELOP THEIR THOUGHTS REGARDING THE  
FORT LOWELL MASTER PLAN, I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS THE  
OVERALL APPROACH OF THE PLAN.**
- 4) MY COMMENTS THIS EVENING ARE A BRIEF SUMMARY OF A  
SOMEWHAT LONGER ESSAY I AM PREPARING ON THE SAME SUBJECT.**
- 5) THE CONSULTANTS THAT ARE PREPARING THE MASTER PLAN HAVE  
INDICATED A DESIRE TO TELL ALL THE HISTORICAL STORIES  
ASSOCIATED WITH THE FORT LOWELL SITE AND IMMEDIATE  
VICINITY.**
- 6) I WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST TWO INTERRELATED HISTORICAL  
STORIES THAT ALSO PROVIDE A UNIFIED CHRONOLOGICAL THEME.**

7) THESE ARE FIRST, THE STORY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF THE AREA THAT ALSO PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK FOR THE SECOND, WHICH IS THE STORY OF THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE AREA.

8) ONE WAY THIS CAN BE DESCRIBED IS TO COMPARE IT TO A DRAMATIC PRODUCTION.

9) THE STORIES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A) THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTAL STORY CONSISTS OF A STAGE BUILT BY GEOLOGICAL PROCESSES. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME 10-20 MILLION YEARS AGO, THE EARTH'S CRUST STRETCHED AND CRACKED, FORMING LARGE BLOCKS. SOME BLOCKS SETTLED TO FORM BASINS, INCLUDING THE TUCSON BASIN, AND OTHER BLOCKS THAT DID NOT SETTLE, OR WERE SLIGHTLY UPRAISED, WERE ULTIMATELY SCULPTED BY EROSION INTO THE MAGNIFICENT MOUNTAINS LIKE THE CATALINA AND RINCON RANGES THAT BORDER THE TUCSON BASIN.

B) SAND, GRAVEL, AND OTHER ERODED MATERIALS WERE DEPOSITED IN THE BASIN FORMING BOTH THE WATER AQUIFERS WE STILL USE AND THE GROUND SURFACES WE BUILD UPON. IN OUR AREA THE GROUND SURFACE WAS FURTHER MOLDED BY THE NORTHWARD MIGRATION OF AN ANCESTRAL RILLITO. THIS MIGRATION RESULTED IN FLOODPLAINS THAT WERE LATER ABANDONED AT SUCCESSFULLY LOWER LEVELS. THUS WERE FORMED THREE ABANDONDED FLOODPLAINS OR TERRACES AND FINALLY THE EXISTING RECENTLY ACTIVE RILLITO FLOODPLAIN.

YOU CAN SEE THESE TERRACES WHEN YOU LOOK NORTH DOWN CRAYCROFT OR SWAN FROM BROADWAY.

C) THE HOHOKAM VILLAGE, FORT LOWELL, EL FUERTE, AND FORT LOWELL ROAD ARE ALL BUILT ALONG A TERRACE THAT OVERLOOKS THE RILLITO FLOODPLAIN. THE SAN PEDRO CHAPEL IS BUILT ON THE NEXT HIGHER TERRACE.

D) OVER TIME AND AS CLIMATE PATTERNS CHANGED AND SOILS DEVELOPED DIFFERENT COMBINATIONS OF NATIVE PLANTS AND WILDLIFE FORMED DISTINCTIVE BIOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES. THESE ARE THE STAGE DECORATIONS OR SETS. EACH COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTED ELEMENTS TO LATER COMMUNITIES.

E) WHILE THESE CHANGING SITUATIONS ARE PRETTY DRAMATIC IN THEMSELVES THE DRAMAS WE ARE MOSTLY CONCERNED WITH ARE THE STORIES OF CULTURAL HISTORY THAT PLAY OUT ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL STAGE SURROUNDED BY BIOLOGICAL SETS.

F) THE SOILS OF THE TERRACES, THE WATER, INCLUDING FLOODWATERS, OF THE RILLITO, TANQUE VERDE, AND PANTANO, THE FLOODPLAIN GRASSES, THE TRUNKS OF THE RIPARIAN TREES, THE BRANCHES OF RIPARIAN SHRUBS, THE ANIMALS, FROM MAMMOTHS TO COTTON TAILS, ALL THESE HAVE SERVED AS RESOURCES FOR SUBSISTENCE AND BUILDING FOR EACH CULTURE GROUP FROM THE FIRST ARRIVALS 11 AND A HALF THOUSAND YEARS AGO TO THE PRESENT.

**10) EVEN THOUGH WE DON'T MAKE ADOBES, HUNT GROUND SQUIRRELS AND SMALL BIRDS, GATHER AND GRIND GRASS SEEDS OR MESQUITE BEANS, OR EVEN DO MUCH CULTIVATION AND IRRIGATION OF FIELDS, THE GROUND SURFACE, 150 YEAR OLD MESQUITES, EVEN OLDER CREOSOTE BUSHES, AND MANY OTHER NATIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS ARE STILL HERE AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE ATMOSPHERE AND CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.**

**11) THESE ARE THE STORIES THAT HAVE MADE OUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND THESE ARE THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT BIND THE NEIGHBORHOOD TOGETHER.**

COMMENTS ON FT LOWELL MASTER PLANING

For the Ft. Lowell Restoration Advisory Committee, March 11, 2009

Tamiyo

5487 E. Ft. Lowell Rd.

I am Tamiyo. I have lived in the Commissary for nine years. I tell friends that I feel very lucky to live in the Commissary because I like the building, I like the location, and I like the neighborhood. For example, today, coming to the meeting at the Chapel, walking along Fort Lowell road, I see the Adkins water tower with their water tank workshop. They are a set. And I see the TMC water tower from Beverly and Fort Lowell, and I reach to the Chapel. These three are icons among the residences of the Old Fort Lowell neighborhood. For me, they give a unique sense of place.

Thank you.