

Jefferson Park Historic District
Name of Property

Pima County, Arizona
County and State

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins in 1900, the approximate construction date of the first house in the neighborhood, which is no longer standing, and ends in 1964, when construction of homes in the neighborhood was essentially completed. Of the 788 properties in the district, 744 (94.4 percent) are at least 50 years old. Construction of homes in the neighborhood was essentially completed in 1964, and only 4 houses built 1961-1964 (0.5 percent) are listed as contributors. Because this is such a small percentage of the contributing properties in the district, Criteria Consideration G does not apply.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

Jefferson Park Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A for its association with Community Planning and Development in Tucson. Jefferson Park was originally developed as a rural neighborhood on the outskirts north of Tucson (ultimately consisting of five subdivisions). The first subdivision plats were filed by Anna Lester and Haskell Cohen, who had acquired patents to the land and developed their own domestic water systems to serve the area. Harry F. Bryant acquired most of the remaining blocks and lots in the area in the 1920s and accelerated the development of the neighborhood. Before World War II the area was characterized by large homes on large lots. After the war, the expanding economy and increased demand for housing near the University of Arizona brought rapid infill development of the remaining lots in the two oldest subdivisions of the neighborhood—Monterey Addition and Jefferson Park Addition—the opening of new tracts on small pockets of undeveloped land, and the extension of city services such as street paving and incorporation into the municipal water system. The Jefferson Park Historic District is unique as a rare surviving example of an unplanned rural neighborhood that was slowly built out, one lot at a time, over a period of 60 years, and incorporated into the fabric of the city. While 20th century residential development is generally characterized by adherence to modern subdivision design standards, the eclectic and accretional character of the Jefferson Park Historic District is illustrative of the last, large, unplanned historic community in Tucson with a very different evolution—as a more libertarian community shaped more by individual initiative, without zoning restrictions. Most other communities with a similar developmental history have been demolished, rezoned, or otherwise altered.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

JEFFERSON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Jefferson Park Historic District shows its origins as a more informal rural community, built with no restrictions on lot size, home construction, or race. Unplanned rural subdivisions were still common at midcentury, but most remained undeveloped for decades, and in many cases were later rezoned for commercial or industrial uses.

All four of the early subdivisions (Monterey, Ponderosa, Jefferson Park, and Biltmore Additions) were originally located outside of city limits, but all were reviewed and approved by the Tucson Common Council. Though the city did not have legal authority to review plats outside of its corporate limits until 1946, subdivision developers apparently voluntarily submitted plats for approval, and the Common Council did review most of the subdivisions located just outside the city limits.

Two of the first landowners, Haskell Cohen and Anna Stattelma Lester, subdivided their properties for residential development. Haskell Cohen was a Russian immigrant who first settled in New York City (Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives 1996; Tucson Citizen 1928b). It was there he learned the optician's trade, and when he arrived in Tucson around 1888, he worked as a street peddler, selling eyeglasses on downtown corners—a business he maintained well into the 20th century. Within just three years of his arrival in Tucson, Cohen obtained a transferable land warrant originally issued to Nelson Van Alstine for his military service in the Mexican War and redeemed the script at the General Land Office in exchange for a 158-acre tract north of town. More than 30 years later Cohen subdivided the Jefferson Park Addition.