



February 16, 2015

City of Tucson Bond Project Advisory Committee  
c/o Lynne Birkinbine, Coordinator  
Via e-mail: [lynne.birkinbine@tucsonaz.gov](mailto:lynne.birkinbine@tucsonaz.gov)

RE: Support for the of the historic Eckbo TCC landscape rehabilitation as a proposed 2015 bond project

Dear Members of the City of Tucson Bond Project Advisory Committee:

At its full commission meeting on February 11, 2015, and again at the Plans Review Subcommittee meeting on February 12, 2015, the Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission directed me to forward a letter to the City of Tucson Bond Advisory Committee asking the committing to support inclusion of the rehabilitation of the historic Eckbo-designed landscape at the Tucson Convention Center in the proposed 2015 bond election.

The landscape has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the National Level of Significance. Garrett Eckbo was one of the most renowned American landscape architects of the twentieth century, and this landscape sequence is his only plaza design in Arizona. As custodians of this historic legacy, we support its full rehabilitation and are concerned that a failure to protect this legacy will compromise Tucson's heritage. We urge Tucson not to make the same mistake as the City of Fresno, California, when the decision was made not to preserve the Eckbo-designed public landscape in their city.

The 2.75-acre landscape is made up of three sections: Veinte de Agosto Park, the Walkway between the hotel and La Placita, and the Fountain Plaza – the central campus linking the Music Hall, Leo Rich Theater, and Arena. Of this central Tucson open space, one contiguous area of the Fountain Plaza and walkway has been identified as being in greatest need of intensive rehabilitation. A map is included for reference (Appendix 1).

The plaza was designed to serve a variety of purposes as a public space. Not only an entry sequence to the venues of theater, music hall and arena, it also offers a site for outdoor events, such as musical and theatrical entertainments and larger civic events such as Tucson Meet Yourself – all of which draw people into the center of Tucson. It is the proposed venue for Modernism Week 2015 – Modernism Week being a growing tourist attraction that draws thousands of visitors to Tucson. These two events alone demonstrate how the appropriate use of historic resources provides economic benefits to our community.<sup>1</sup>

The Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission supports adaptive rehabilitation, including the opportunity to use contemporary water technology to gather rainwater and condensate from the surrounding buildings, as well as reengineering of water features to minimize water use.

Another important aspect of the proposed rehabilitation will be to renovate the grids and stands of trees that provide shade for informal lunching and socializing while reducing urban heat island effect. The project will replace aging trees in supported root areas that absorb and retain rainwater and offer uncompressed soil for maximum growth. A demonstration area completed in the fall of 2014 illustrates some of the possibilities (Appendix 2).

The Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission has been working closely with the City of Tucson to ensure that the proposed rehabilitation of this area not only supports current civic goals but also maintains the historic character of the original design. The Historical Commission is part of a larger coalition of

---

<sup>1</sup> See Donovan Rypkema and Caroline Cheong, "Measuring Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation: A Report to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation," (2011), <http://www.achp.gov/docs/economic-impacts-of-historic-preservation-study.pdf>.

business and cultural entities that advocate renovation and ongoing care of this invaluable resource by means of maintenance protocols, ongoing evaluations of need, and stewardship planning.

Please support this project at the originally proposed dollar amount.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Teresita Majewski".

Teresita Majewski, Chair  
Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission