

Character-Defining Elements of the Jefferson Park Neighborhood

Streetscape

The Jefferson Park Neighborhood includes nearly 900 single-family houses. There is a broad range of building sizes, with large and small houses on relatively large lots. About 96 percent of all buildings are single-story houses; there are only eight historic houses that were originally built with two stories, and about 28 other two-story structures, including commercial properties, apartment complexes, and additions to single-family houses. Throughout the neighborhood there is considerable variability in lot width, house width, and spacing between houses, but consistent setbacks produce uniform depth of front yards.

Gridded streets with fairly uniform blocks are typical throughout most of the neighborhood, with the exception of Desert Highlands, a post-World War II subdivision in the northwest corner of the proposed district, which has two curvilinear streets. The primary orientation of the streetscape is east-west. Almost all houses front on the east-west streets, and the north-south streets provide pedestrian and vehicular access into the neighborhood and to the alleys. Campbell Avenue, Euclid Avenue/First Avenue, and Grant Street are major arterial streets that define the boundaries of the neighborhood. Park Avenue and Mountain Avenue are the primary north-south streets that handle most of the non-local traffic through the neighborhood.

Many parts of the Jefferson Park Neighborhood do not have public sidewalks, and most of the existing sidewalks are of relatively recent construction. One resident pointed out the faint traces of a pedestrian trail that cut across the fronts of lots and stated that originally there were no sidewalks due to the low number of children that lived in the area. Most parts of the neighborhood have square poured concrete curbs, while some areas have no curbing. Several traffic circles were recently constructed at intersections as traffic calming features. Alleys with an east-west orientation bisect each block, providing access to the backs of lots, which occasionally have garages or carports.



Santa Rita Avenue, looking south from Grant Street—a typical Jefferson Park street with no sidewalks

Residential Site Characteristics

A notable characteristic of the Jefferson Park Neighborhood is the high incidence of raised lots, many of which are one foot or more above street grade. The prevalence of this type of home site suggests that the streets were originally excavated below the general grade of the neighborhood, perhaps to provide drainage away from houses. Raised lots generally have low retaining walls to create front yards that are level with the house or incorporate landscaping features which emphasize the sloped terrain. The most typical treatment is a low retaining wall of brick masonry, stone, or landscape timber across the front of the lot, creating a linear demarcation between the front yard and the street. There are also nonlinear arrangements of stacked bricks, blocks, or stone to form a terraced or sculpted border. Private walks from the street to the front entry often have two or more steps near the front of the lot to provide easy access to higher level of the property.



A low retaining wall creates a raised front yard

Many houses have various forms of screening across the front of the lot to provide security or privacy. Some properties have an extremely dense overgrowth of vegetation, including low hanging trees, shrubbery, tall ground cover plants, and vines trained on trellises. In some cases the vegetation is so dense that it completely obscures the view of the house. Perimeter walls around the entire front yard are also common. These walls are often 5–8 feet in height, and are usually of masonry construction with a stucco finish and large ornate entry gates. Less common are semi-private courtyards with walls of varying heights and irregular arrangement which define outdoor living area.

There is little consistency in driveways. Most are paved, some are gravel, and some houses have no visible drive or area for parking on the front of the lot. Most houses have a straight private walk leading from the street to the front entry or porch.



A typical linear retaining wall



A sculpted border between the raised yard and the street

Buildings

Predominant architectural styles of the Jefferson Park Neighborhood include Period Revival, particularly Spanish Colonial Revival and Southwest, Bungalow, and Ranch. Most of the houses were built after World War II, and there is broad representation of most of the different postwar Ranch types that have been identified for Tucson. Houses also exhibit broad diversity in design within a particular architectural style. There is one readily identifiable common house design, a Transitional Ranch model, that is found throughout the neighborhood. It is typically of brick construction and is distinguished by a broad front-gabled wing and a short side-gabled wing. The front entry is on the side of the front-gabled wing, facing onto a broad porch across the width of the side-gabled wing formed by an eave extending from the main roof, which is usually supported by wood posts. The plan of this house appears to be standardized, but there are various design elements which make each house unique. Most of these houses have a distinctive focus window on the front near the door, which may be small narrow wood double-hung or steel casement window, a square light of four glass blocks, or fixed round portal.

The predominant building material in Jefferson Park is red brick. Less common are burnt adobe, concrete block, or wood frame with stucco. Houses have a variety of different floor plans and façade styles.



Bungalow



Spanish Colonial Revival



Pueblo Revival



A typical postwar Transitional Ranch house in Jefferson Park



Another variation of the same model



Simple Builder Ranch



Simple Custom Ranch



Modern Ranch



Postwar Territorial



Postwar Pueblo



Tucson Ranch

Typical window types are wood double-hung, steel casement, and large picture windows. There is a particular tripartite arrangement of grouped windows that is seen throughout the neighborhood. Spanish Colonial Revival and Southwest style houses that were built prior to World War II often have a set of three arched windows on the front, with a large fixed picture window in the center flanked by narrow operable windows, usually wood casement or single-hung sash. In postwar construction there is a rectangular variation of this tripartite theme that is even more widespread. It consists of a large steel sash picture window flanked by narrow vertical casement windows.



A 1928 Spanish Colonial Revival style house with the tripartite set of arched casement windows



The tripartite theme in wood single-hung arched windows



The postwar tripartite window—a steel sash picture window flanked by vertical casement windows

The most common roof types are side gable or cross-gable with asphalt shingles. They are generally low pitched to very low pitched. Occasionally gable roofs are clad with clay tile. Flat roofs with parapets are also typical. Parapets are usually straight, but occasionally shaped or crenelated, and the top edges may be flat or rounded, and sometimes capped with brick coping.

Many of the houses in Jefferson Park do not have carports or garages, largely due to the age of houses (mostly were built before 1950), and the relatively few alterations that have been made. Recently constructed carports and garages are often located at the rear of the lot and are accessible from the alley.

Land Use

Almost all of the buildings in the Jefferson Park Neighborhood are single-family houses on a residential lot. Occasionally there are two separate residences on the same parcel, one in the front and one in the back. A few large multi-family residential buildings and apartment complexes are located along the arterial streets. There is also considerable encroachment of new multi-family residential construction on single-family lots in the Biltmore Addition, in the southwest corner of the district. There is minor encroachment of commercial properties on the arterial streets and the boundaries, but this is limited to the area west of Park Avenue. With very few exceptions, the area between Park and Campbell avenues is exclusively single-family homes.

There are just a few neighborhood institutions within the boundaries of district, including Jefferson Park Elementary School and two churches. There are two small public parks within the boundaries of the neighborhood—a linear park along the west side of Campbell Avenue which serves as buffer between the Jefferson Park Neighborhood and the traffic and noise of this arterial street, and the Likins Lester Street Landscape Garden in the 1500 block of East Lester Street.

Summary of Character-Defining Elements

Streetscape

- Single-story houses of various sizes on relatively large lots
- Variability in lot width, house width, and spacing between houses
- Consistent setbacks that create uniform depth of front yards
- Gridded streets, with the exception of the northwest corner of the neighborhood (Desert Highlands) which has two curvilinear streets
- Houses usually face onto the east-west streets
- Alleys at the rear of the lots between the east-west streets
- Raised lots are common, particularly in the northwest corner (Desert Highlands) and the east end (Jefferson Park Addition) of the neighborhood
- Continuous public sidewalk on the main arterial streets that form the boundaries of the neighborhood (Grant Road, Euclid/1st Avenue, and Campbell Avenue)
- Within the neighborhood, continuous public sidewalk only on Hampton Street, Warren Avenue, and Mountain Avenue, and on Seneca and Edison streets between Park and Campbell avenues
- No public sidewalks on Lester, Linden, and Waverly streets, and on Tyndall, Park, Fremont, Santa Rita, Highland, Vine, Cherry, and Martin avenues; there are occasionally short segments of sidewalks on these streets, usually constructed by individual homeowners
- Square concrete curbs throughout the neighborhood
- Dense vegetation in the front yards of many houses, with a variety of trees, shrubs, and ground cover plants; in some cases vegetation obscures the view of the house to the extent that it can render a property noncontributing
- Remnant landscape type predominates throughout the neighborhood

Architecture

- Houses built during the initial development of the neighborhood, 1898–1945, reflect a variety of architectural styles including Bungalow, Spanish Colonial Revival, Pueblo Revival, Southwest, and National Folk
- Most of the houses of the neighborhood were built after World War II, and reflect a broad range of postwar styles including Transitional Ranch, Simple Builder Ranch, Simple Custom Ranch, Modern Ranch, Tucson Ranch, Postwar Pueblo, and Postwar Territorial

Exterior Walls

- Exterior walls of houses are generally of one primary material
- The typical building material for exterior walls in the neighborhood is natural red brick; other common materials include burnt adobe, concrete block, and stucco over wood frame or masonry walls

Roof Types

- Low pitched side gable, cross-gable, and hip roofs with asphalt shingles predominate, particularly on the postwar houses
- Flat roofs—both cantilevered or with parapet—covered with built-up or prepared roll roofing, are also common

Porches

- The predominant type of front porch, particularly in postwar Ranch houses, is formed by extended eaves supported by wood or decorative iron posts; some variants are simply broad overhanging eaves with no supports
- Period Revival and Postwar Pueblo houses usually have shed-roofed porches with clay tile roofs supported by wood posts; arcaded porches and vestibules are also common

Windows

- Typical windows in houses built before World War II are wood casement or wood double-hung
- Some Period Revival houses have a tripartite group of arched windows on the front, with a large fixed picture window in the center flanked by narrow operable windows
- Houses built 1940–1960 generally have steel casement and fixed steel sash windows
- Many houses built after World War II have a rectangular tripartite group of steel sash picture window flanked with casement windows
- Houses built after 1960 generally have aluminum sliding and fixed sash windows