NPS Form 20-
900 (Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

OMB No. 1024-0018
RECEIVED
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ARIZONA STATE PARKS/SHPO

this form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See Instructions in How to Complete the Nationa Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being nominated, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the Instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheetins (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Blenman-Elm Historic District

Other name/site number: None

2. Location

area bounded by Grant to north, Country Club to east, Speedway to south, Campbell to west

☐ Not for Publication

City/Town: Tucson ☐ vicinity

State: Arizona Code: AZ County: Pima Code: 19 Zip Code: 85716 & 85719

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering propertes in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ____nationally ____statewide ____ locally. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official — Date

Signature of Federal agency and bureau

☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

Signature of Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is: — Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other (explain):

Property Name: Blenman-Elm Historic District

County, State: Pima | Arizona

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- [x] private
- [x] public-local
- [ ] public-state
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

- [ ] building(s)
- [x] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Non-contributing	
908	395	buildings
0	22	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
908	417	total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listing in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Residence, Commercial Store, School, Church

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Residence, office, Not in use/Vacant, Commercial Store, School, Church

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Nat'l. Folk, Sonoran, Territorial, Hipped Box, Spanish Colonial, Bungalow, Tudor, Pueblo Revival, Colonial Revival, Transitional Ranch, Early Ranch, Ranch, Transitional Ranch, Art Moderne, Southwest, Contemporary

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Concrete

Walls: Brick, wood frame

Roof: Wood shingles, asphalt shingles, tile

Other-materials: sheathing of stucco, exposed brick, wood siding

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Property Name

Blenman-Elm Historic District

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- [x] **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [x] **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

- [ ] **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religiious purposes.
- [ ] **B** removed from its original location.
- [ ] **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- [ ] **D** a cemetery.
- [ ] **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] **F** a commemorative property.
- [ ] **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Planning and Development, Architectural styles

Period of Significance

1903 - 1952

Significant Dates

1903 - Olsen's Addition Platted, 1926 - Blenman-Elm Platted, 1934 - New Deal Acres Platted

Signifcant Person

(Complete if CriterionB is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

J.T. Joesler (many homes)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation shee

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation she

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- [ ] preliminary determination of individual listing
- [ ] (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- [ ] previously listed in the National Register
- [ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
- [ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

  HABS #:
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

  HAER #:

Primary location of Additional Data:

- [ ] State Historic Preservation office
- [ ] Other State Agency
- [ ] Federal Agency
- [ ] Local Government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

  Name of Repository:

Property Name: Blenman-Elm Historic District

County, State: Pima, Arizona

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 473

UTM References

(Place additional UTM References on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	12	506100	3568160	C	12	506900	3566590
B	12	506900	3568160	D	12	505320	3566590

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Verbal Boundary Description

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Don W. Ryden, AIA, Debora M. Parmiter, RA, Doug Kupel, Ph.D.

Organization: Ryden Architects

Date Prepared: 7/25/2002

Street and Number: 902 W. McDowell Rd.

Telephone: (602)253-5381

City or Town: Phoenix, AZ 85007

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FHPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

Name:

Street and Number:

telephone: ( ) - 0

City:

State:

Zip code: 0

SUMMARY

The proposed Blenman-Elm Historic District is significant architecturally as Tucson's vanguard neighborhood for Ranch Style houses.

Although land speculators conceived and replatted the subdivision layout in the first half of the twentieth century with a vision of bungalows and revival style cottages, its actual housing development from the late-1930s through mid-1950s made it one of Tucson's earliest Ranch Style residential neighborhoods.

Survey Research Statistics

The area surveyed to date (November 2000) includes 1309 properties; 913 of which are determined as contributing (70%) and 396 of which are non-contributing (30%). There are still about 154 properties yet to be surveyed. Thus the total count of properties within the full survey area will likely be 1463.

Architectural Styles

Although the Blenman-Elm Neighborhood contains examples of 17 different popular twentieth century styles and sub-styles, it is the Ranch Style era houses with Spanish eclectic influences which characterize its architecture. 616 contributing houses (64%) comprise the Ranch Style-era dwellings which include the following sub-styles: Early Ranch, Ranch, Spanish Colonial Ranch, Territorial, and Contemporary. Other earlier period revival styles are well represented in the neighborhood and are closely related to the region's Hispanic origins. There are the Pueblo Revival style with 92 examples and Spanish Colonial Revival with 37. And yet another early twentieth century style, second in popularity here only to the Ranch Style, are the 133 Southwest Style houses which are amalgamations of many Spanish eclectic features. All together the 848 Ranch Style and Spanish Eclectic houses represent over 88% of the survey area's inventory and characterize its architectural image.

Development Chronology

Lying far outside the original townsite and slowed by the Great Depression, the development of the Blenman-Elm Neighborhood got off to a slow start in the first thirty-five years of the twentieth century with only a total of 104 buildings having been completed on the approximately 1309 parcels ultimately available. Home construction began in earnest with FHA financing of inexpensive Ranch houses between 1936 and 1940 with 245 housing starts, continued at about the same rate between 1940 and 1955, reaching a peak of activity in 1955 with 1055 starts, and declined abruptly thereafter when the subdivision approached in-fill with about 203 parcels left to develop.

Period	Project starts	Total buildings to date
1900-1910	3	3
1920-1925	16	19
1926-1930	64	83
1931-1935	21	104
1936-1940	245	349

1941-1945	225	574
1946-1950	283	857
1951-1955	198	1055
post-1955	203	1258
	28 circa	
	23 vacant	

Development Patterns

The general sweep of construction in the Blenman-Elm neighborhood through the era of development from 1903 to 1955 began in the southwest portion (1903 Olsen's Addition) and moved eastward (1926 Blenman Addition) and then northward (1934 New Deal Acres and 1939 Blenman Annex). The pattern of development generally follows the successive opening of subdivisions and the sale of residential parcels.

Olsen's Addition developed at a very slow rate. Only a handful of houses were constructed in Olsen's Addition between 1903 and 1919. Today this portion of the neighborhood contains a scattering of buildings from every decade of development. The ages of the houses in Olsen's Addition imply that lots and blocks may have been held by speculators until purchased and developed by individual homeowners.

Construction in the Blenman Addition appears to have begun in about 1936 and remained very active through 1945. Homebuilding evidently in this 1926 subdivision appears to have been deferred until affordable home loans became available from the Federal Housing Administration. The remaining scattered vacant parcels were then developed between 1946 and 1950 (about 44 lots) and between 1950 and 1955 (about 26 lots).

New Deal Acres was subdivided in 1934, probably in response to FHA home loans. However, it appears that little housing was built here until the decade after World War II. The majority of the houses was constructed between 1946 and 1955.

It is interesting to note that Blenman Annex, subdivided in 1939, contains nearly an equal number of houses from the late depression recovery and war years (1939 to 1945) as from after the war (1946 to 1955).

DESCRIPTION

Location

The Blenman-Elm residential neighborhood (circa 1936-1954) is located in Tucson, Arizona, sixty-five miles north of the Mexican border, in the broad Santa Cruz River Valley of southern Arizona's Sonoran desert. At 2,400 feet above sea level, the city is surrounded by four mountain ranges. The Blenman-Elm neighborhood is located in central Tucson, immediately northeast from the University of Arizona campus. Along with the Catalina Vista neighborhood of large custom homes (circa 1940-1960), Blenman-Elm lies within a section

bounded by Grant Road on the north, Speedway Boulevard on the south, Campbell Avenue on the west and Country Club Road on the east. East-west-running Elm Street and north-south-running Tucson Boulevard divide the section into four quarter-sections. Catalina Vista occupies the northwest quarter-section of this section with Blenman-Elm filling the other three quarter-sections. Within the Blenman-Elm neighborhood stands prestigious Arizona Inn, an individually-listed National Register property. This significant period revival style resort hotel from the 1920s predates most of the development of the Blenman-Elm and Catalina Vista neighborhoods whose sites were still virgin desert at the time of the hotel's opening.

Streetscape

The L-shaped Blenman-Elm neighborhood is currently composed of four subdivisions: Olsen's Addition (1903); Blenman Addition (1926); New Deal Acres (1934); and Blenman Annex (1939). The streets and blocks were laid out in a rectangular grid with most parcel frontages facing north or south. Thus, traveling east and west one experiences a series of short blocks comprised of six to ten parcels. Traveling north and south one passes along the sides of the corner houses. Very few houses face east or west.

Eleven east-west streets crossing the interior of the neighborhood are intersected by eleven north-south streets. The Blenman-Elm neighborhood was laid out with alleys primarily in the southwest and southeast quadrants. A few alleys exist in the northeast quadrant. Where alleys exist, they are primarily chip sealed. Overhead power lines on wooden poles pass through utility easements at the common rear property lines of parcels where alleys usually are found. The public rights-of-way are fully improved with asphalt-paved streets, concrete curbs and some sidewalks.

Residential Properties

Most of the residences are single-story, box-like houses set at the front and center of their narrow, rectangular lots with a single carport at the side or a detached garage in the backyard. Each house presents its primary facade parallel to the narrow street frontage whether on a corner or interior lot. A shallow front yard of desert landscaping with no grass provides the setting and separation between the street and house. Occasionally the Southwestern Style houses will have original low walls tightly surrounding the front porch and terrace. Since about 1990 numerous homeowners along the busy arterial streets have erected six-foot-high walls as a privacy and noise buffer. (Unlike in other cities, the Tucson zoning ordinance allows such walls.) These visually intrusive walls have drastically altered the open space shared by adjacent front yards and obscured the facades of the historic houses. Although the original house facades may be intact behind them, the high front yard walls make those properties ineligible for listing as properties contributing to the historic district because of the architectural interruption of the streetscape.

Other Properties

While the vast majority of the historic structures in the Blenman-Elm neighborhood are single-family residences and a few small garden apartments, there exist several other non-residential building types which supported the local residents and the community as a whole. Notable as the educational and social center of the neighborhood

is the Blenman Elementary School (BE39-01). A spiritual and parochial educational center is the Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church (BE48-1) and Elementary School (BE49-1). Of particular architectural interest as an innovative post-war building type are the Ranch Style garden medical suites (BE33-1a through -1h) built between 1950 and 1953. Of great importance to Tucson's role as a world-famous tourist destination was (and still is) The Arizona Inn, a previously listed National Register property. Along Grant Road are several post-WWII commercial buildings.

Architectural Styles

Vernacular Building Traditions

National Folk (1869-1955 nationally)

- Anglo folk culture; style-less houses of simple massing and pitched roofs

Sonoran (1790-1848) [not found within Blenman-Elm]

- Mexican folk culture; flat-roofed adobe with brick coping at parapets, based on an urban row house of Sonora, Mexico; examples found in the Tucson barrio

Transformed Sonoran (1848-1880) [not found within Blenman-Elm]

- Influence of Anglo culture on Mexican folk culture; same as the Sonoran but with a light-weight Anglo hipped roof added to an originally flat-roofed adobe; examples found in the Tucson barrio

Anglo Territorial (1848-1880) [not found within Blenman-Elm]

- Influence of Mexican folk culture on Anglo culture; same plan and light-weight roof as Eastern architecture but constructed with adobe walls; examples found in the Tucson barrio and at Fort Lowell

The Victorian Era (1885-1905)

Hipped Box

The Bungalow Era (1905-1925)

Classical Bungalow

The Period Revival Era (1915-1940)

Tudor Revival
American Colonial Revival
Spanish Colonial Revival
Pueblo Revival
Southwest Style

The Modern Era (1910-1945)
- Art Moderne
- Pueblo Deco

The Ranch Era (1935-1960)
- Transitional Ranch
- Early Ranch
- Spanish Colonial Ranch
- Territorial Ranch - 1936 through 1950
  - flat-roofed, exposed brick coping or cornice, stepped-in parapet, no detail
  - Exposed or painted or mortar-washed red brick or exposed or mortar-washed burnt adobe
  - Steel casement windows, vertical or square openings, sometimes corner windows
- Contemporary

Commercial Buildings
- Commercial Box

The Territorial Ranch Sub-Style

Whereas numerous architectural styles are represented within the Blenman-Elm neighborhood which reflect its 55-year historic period of development, it is the Ranch Style house and several of its sub-styles which characterizes the district. In fact, the Blenman-Elm district is Tucson's vanguard neighborhood for the local popularization of the Ranch Style house. It was here in the late 1930s that the earliest concentration of Ranch Style homes were built in Tucson signaling a departure from the generally popular Spanish Eclectic period revival styles of the 1920s. But with such a strong Hispanic cultural influence equaled in only a few other Arizona towns, Tucson's architects and builders continued to weave unique local vernacular building characteristics into the nationally popular Ranch Style house.

Unlike Phoenix and Yuma, Tucson and Florence have retained a good representation of the Sonoran tradition of vernacular adobe houses. Being originally constructed by people continuing in their uninterrupted cultural tradition of adobe construction, the Hispanic buildings of Tucson and Florence could be considered as "Sonoran Survival" rather than Sonoran Revival. It is the imitation of the original architecture by twentieth-century architects that gives rise to the term of period revival.

The Spanish Colonial and Sonoran Revival styles are eclectic reinterpretations of the historic architecture of Spain and Mexico. Both styles are recognized for their smooth stucco walls, arches, and elaborate wrought-iron ornamentation. They differ greatly in the shape of the roof. Spanish Colonial roofs typically are low-pitched with clay tiles and shallow overhangs. By contrast, the Sonoran Revival style roofs are flat with parapets capped with a brick coping or decorative cornice. Rain spouts called *canales* pierce the parapet walls to allow

rain water to leave the roof. The Sonoran Revival style is based upon the simple urban row house facades of colonial towns in Sonora, Mexico, while the Spanish Colonial Revival style relates to free-standing haciendas and churches.

The Hispanic-built Sonoran Style adobe row houses in Tucson's barrio and the American army-built structures of Fort Lowell (1866-1890) served as the inspiration for a unique local variation of the nationally popular Ranch Style house. The local sub-style, which we call **Territorial Ranch**, differs from the Early Ranch Style houses primarily because the roofs are flat with parapets rather than pitched with shingles. Furthermore, where Early Ranch house exterior walls typically were of painted common brick, the Territorial Ranch houses tended to use exposed or mortar-washed common brick, exposed or mortar-washed burnt adobe, or stuccoed brick or adobe. It appears that in Tucson, more than in Phoenix, designers and homeowners preferred the richer textures and earthy colors afforded by the exposed natural masonry than by the painted common bricks. An additional benefit of exposed natural masonry over paint is that maintenance time and cost is considerably less.

Few, if any, examples of the Territorial Ranch style house have been identified in the contemporaneous residential historic districts of Phoenix, leading to the conclusion that the Territorial Ranch sub-style is a unique Tucson variant of the nationally popular Ranch Style. The blending of the typical Ranch Style characteristics of plan layout, massing, painted brick walls, and steel casement windows with the special Sonoran Revival Style flat roofs and wall treatments define the "Tucson twist" to the Ranch Style. The use of the Sonoran flat roof with parapets is what primarily distinguishes the Territorial Ranch house from the pitched-roofed Early Ranch house.

It is in the Blenman-Elm neighborhood where this Territorial Ranch sub-style of residential architecture may have first appeared in 1936 with the Bernice Kagan House (BE73-15) at 1202 North Norris Avenue. It is significant in national style chronology to note that the Kagan House was built only one year after the generally accepted date of the national publication of the Ranch Style house by California architect Cliff May. In Tucson, the Kagan House quickly bridged the time gap between Spanish Eclectic period revival houses and the subsequent Ranch Style houses.

The integration of local vernacular characteristics into high style architectural designs can be seen in the work of Tucson's many architects and builders. Tucson's premier architect between 1928 and 1956, **Josias Thomas Joesler**, designed many of the houses in the Blenman-Elm neighborhood. His architectural ideas influenced many other architects, house designers and builders. As a world traveler and master of nationally popular eclectic styles, Joesler was attuned to both the high style and vernacular architecture of Spain and of the Latin American countries. He understood the context in which Tucson's barrio row houses were created. He borrowed from the architectural heritage of the Hispanic culture to develop a local flavor to nationally popular high styles. This cultural inspiration can be readily seen in the Broadway Village Shopping Center where, in 1939, Joesler blended Spanish Colonial architectural forms with rustic mortar-washed bricks to give the walls a feeling of antiquity. These same characteristics of natural materials, color, and texture are found in many of the

Territorial Ranch houses of the Blenman-Elm neighborhood. Smooth stucco with natural brick copings are also quite common allusions to the Sonoran Revival precedent.

Josias Joesler was born in Zurich, Switzerland and educated throughout Europe. He traveled extensively through Europe, North Africa, and South and Central America. In 1926 he and his wife, Natividad Lorenzo Joesler of Spain, moved to Los Angeles. While in California the Joeslers were introduced to Helen and John Murphey, an ambitious developer/contractor from Tucson. Murphey found in Joesler the talents needed for developing innovative, eclectic architectural designs. From 1928 to 1932, and from 1936 to 1941, the Murpheys and Joeslers collaborated on a broad range of building types including residences, commercial buildings, university buildings, and churches. Many of Joesler's earliest residential designs have been identified in the Blenman-Elm neighborhood. This collection of houses may be the largest cluster of Joesler-designed homes in mid-town Tucson. These modest homes foreshadowed the larger, up-scale houses he designed as custom homes in the adjacent Catalina Vista neighborhood and in the suburban Catalina Foothills Estates and the eastside Country Club Estates.

Joesler-designed Houses in the Blenman-Elm Neighborhod

BE30-01	1640 N. Campbell Ave.	1937 · 1928
BE30-02	1916 E. Elm St.	1935 · 1936
BE30-10	1903 E. Lee St.	1933
BE47-08	2045 E. Adams St.	1937 · 1931
BE47-09	2041 E. Adams St.	19?? · 1935
BE70-04	2040 E. Drachman St.	1937
BE72-09	1222 N. Campbell Ave.	1950
BE90-02	2416 E. Helen St.	1928 ·
BE90-03	2422 E. Helen St.	1928 ·
BE90-04	2428 E. Helen St.	1928 ·
BE90-06	1137 N. Tucson Blvd.	1928 ·
BE90-13	1130 N. Norton Ave.	1928 ·
BE90-14	1136 N. Norton Ave.	1928
BE91-04*	2322 E. Helen St.	1927 ·
BE91-05*	2328 E. Helen St.	1927 · 1928
BE91-06*	2334 E. Helen St.	1927 ·
BE91-16*	1134 N. Wilson Ave.	1928 ·
BE92-09	2231 E. Speedway Blvd.	1933 · 1928
BE92-10	2223 E. Speedway Blvd.	1933 · 1928
BE95-05	1946 E. Helen St.	1943
BE95-06	1948 E. Helen St.	1951

* These homes were the first to be designed by Joesler in Tucson.

INTEGRITY

The Blenman-Elm neighborhood is a visually cohesive residential area, densely and almost completely developed, with a historic streetscape appearance with few altered or modern buildings. The pattern of house placement on lots is very consistent with the building setbacks regulating the rhythm of the structures within each block. The mature landscape of the neighborhood is fairly typical of Tucson residential neighborhoods as a mixture of native desert plants and trees with imported low-water-using plants and palm trees.

Through a process of *reconnaissance* level evaluation, 913 buildings (approximately 70 percent) of all 1309 structures in the full survey area have been preliminarily identified as contributors to the potential historic district. This number could change slightly upon completion of the *comprehensive* survey of the area.

Association/Age

The contributing properties in the Blenman-Elm neighborhood are associated with two important local contexts:

1. Community Growth and Development of Tucson, 1900-1955, and
2. Residential Architecture in Tucson, 1903-1955

The neighborhood's era of significance spans from 1900 to 1955. It begins in 1900 with the construction of the house at 1208 N. Plummer (BE75-14) in what would become Olsen's Addition in 1903, the earliest existing subdivision in the survey area. The era ends in 1955 which reflects the customary 50-year cut-off date for defining the start of the modern era. As of 1955 only about 15 percent of the neighborhood (203 parcels) remained vacant and undeveloped.

Location

District remains intact except around the edges and a few holes in the middle. This large neighborhood of nearly 1,500 single-family houses has suffered encroachment of modern commercial redevelopment along Speedway Boulevard and Grant Road. Houses along these busy street frontages have either been remodeled for commercial uses or have been demolished and replaced by modern buildings. Within the survey area a scattering of modern-era buildings have in-filled vacant lots or replaced demolished historic structures. The scale and visual character of most of the in-fill buildings does not seem visually intrusive to the surrounding historic houses.

Setting

The gently rolling topography, straight roadways, curbs and sidewalks and gravel desert-landscaped front yards have sustained little alteration as the setting for the rows of historic houses. Mountain range vistas are unchanged and, for the most part, remain uninterrupted by high-rise buildings.

Integrity of the residential setting along busy arterial streets (Grant, Speedway, Country Club, and Campbell) as

well as neighborhood collector streets (Elm St. and Tucson Blvd.) have been adversely impacted by the introduction of six-foot-high masonry walls surrounding entire front yards in an effort by homeowners to buffer noise and screen for privacy. Also, where the original zoning along arterial streets has been changed to allow professional offices or commercial businesses, the front yards often have been paved and signs erected.

Rolling hills within the district create a vertical modulation of space as one travels the straight streets. Where other neighborhoods on flat land achieve a picturesque experience of wandering through winding streets, in the Blenman-Elm historic district the gently changing elevations alternately hide and reveal the properties along the straight streets.

The scarcity of water in Tucson, as compared to Phoenix, influenced the approach to landscaping in the Blenman-Elm neighborhood. The similar Phoenix neighborhoods, built upon former agricultural fields, were served by a pre-existing, inexpensive flood irrigation system fed by the Roosevelt Dam. By contrast, in Tucson the neighborhoods were built upon rolling, dry desert lands which were served only by the City's domestic water system delivering expensive, pumped well water. The character of Tucson's residential desert landscaping was driven by the expense and scarcity of water, the rolling topography, and development directly upon desert lands rather than on farm lands. Of necessity, Tucson was using modern xeriscaping techniques in residential settings a century before it became popular in Phoenix during the 1980s.

Feeling

The historic character and spirit of the neighborhood is retained through the adequate maintenance of the properties. The feeling evoked by the general condition of the neighborhood is close to that experienced there at the height of development in the mid-1950s. The general integrity of regional architectural styles, unique local masonry work, and spare desert landscaping give the district a feeling of being in Tucson during the 1950s.

Design

Architectural styles of the district are decidedly of a Western flavor (national use of Ranch Style) with a Southwestern touch (regional use of flat-roofed Southwest Style, Territorial and Pueblo Revival) and a Tucson twist (local use of mortar-washed red brick). Most of these custom-designed houses have retained the individual historic character of their original facades. Some historic wood windows have been changed to modern aluminum. Some masonry exterior walls have been sheathed with modern-era textured stucco. Few front porches were even large enough to consider in-filling. Few additions to fronts or sides of houses can be found.

Materials

The utilization of a limited palette of materials in a wide variety of ways gives the neighborhood a pleasing character manifested through unity and diversity. Painted brick and subtly textured stuccoed walls are very typical of the Ranch Style and Southwestern buildings of Arizona, but it is the mortar-washed red brick and red burnt adobe which gives Tucson buildings a unique character. These materials are still very much intact and

evident as character-defining features of the district.

Workmanship

The quality of historic masonry work in the houses has been retained and contributes significantly to the character of the district. The variety of masonry details in parapet silhouettes and cornice profiles, in arched openings, in stepped site walls, and in bonding patterns is still in evidence throughout the district. Also, the skillful application of the subtle historic stucco textures also is notable and distinctive from modern, heavy-handed Spanish lace textures which are used on exterior walls today to hide poor workmanship of modern masons and carpenters. A local tradition of skilled masons and plasterers is evident in the workmanship of Tucson buildings.