



GREAT PLACES IN
AMERICA

The American Planning Association celebrates excellence in planning

2008
Great Public Spaces
YAVAPAI COUNTY
COURTHOUSE PLAZA
Prescott, Arizona

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INTRODUCTION

On October 8, 2008, the American Planning Association (APA) announced that the Yavapai County Courthouse Plaza in Prescott, Arizona was honored with the distinction of being named one of the Nation's 10 Great Public Places! This is the inaugural year of the Great Places designation, with others following in succeeding years, so it is a double honor, one could say, that the Plaza has been chosen in the *very* first year.

Why the Courthouse Plaza? Why not Central Park in New York City, the National Mall in Washington D.C., or the Boston Commons? Why us? Does size count? Yes. America is not composed only of metropolises of millions of people but also of cities small and in between which make this nation what it is. Sound planning is not reserved just for the large—it may be practiced at any scale. Prescott is blessed to have been a “*planned community*” from its inception in 1864. Enlightened residents, today, still take delight in the quality of their hometown. Traditional town planning never goes out of style—as many electives, citizens, and even planning professionals have been coming to realize. The Original Townsite of Prescott has been called a good example of neo-traditional planning by some planners — and, the fact is that the City has *always* had the *tradition*.

The Yavapai County Courthouse Plaza has five elements which makes it one of America's Great Places:

1. Symbolism of Hometown America: Sense of Place, Values, Safety, and Most Importantly . . . People

A number of people who move to Prescott comment that they appreciate these qualities that we have. Local residents have rallied a number of times over the past many years to support, improve, and preserve this “Sense of Place”.

2. Traditional Commercial Core and Neighborhood Context

In spite of the automobile and “big-box” development, people still support a human-scaled downtown core with a functioning Courthouse that offers generous and quality open space. One may have a short walk to the Plaza from their nearby home and still enjoy pizza, burgers, ice-cream, or buy new shoes—just moments away.

3. Design

Simplicity of design, trees and lawn, sightlines, multi-functional elements with the Courthouse steps serving as seating, offer a sense of beauty, retreat, and activity.

4. Maintenance

Yavapai County's first-class maintenance—something not commonly found in a government entity—exemplifies the “Everybody's Hometown” community spirit of quality, dedication, and care needed to provide a pleasant, people-attracting ambiance. This top-notch maintenance cannot be underestimated in its importance.

5. Special Events

Over 130 free events occur annually on the Plaza, with many summer events sponsored by the City of Prescott that attract both visitors and residents.

The following pages represent a combination of the two City application submissions which the APA reviewed and upon which the Great Places designation was based.

City of Prescott staff has prepared this booklet to offer residents the insight on the “how’s and why’s” of what has made the Courthouse Plaza one of America’s “Great Public Places”.

10 Great Public Places—2008 (Inaugural Year)			
http://www.planning.org/greatplaces/index.htm			
Great Public Place	Location	Population*	SMSA**
Central Park	New York City, NY	8,274,527	18,815,988
Church Street Marketplace	Burlington, VT	38,531	207,361
Mellon Square	Pittsburgh, PA	311,218	2,355,712
Pioneer Courthouse Square	Portland, OR	550,396	2,175,113
Santa Monica Beach	Santa Monica, CA	87,212	12,875,587
Union Station	Washington, DC	550,521	5,306,565
Waterfront Park	Charleston, SC	110,015	630,100
Waterplace Park	Providence, RI	172,459	1,600,856
West Side Market	Cleveland, OH	438,042	2,096,471
Yavapai County Courthouse Plaza	Prescott, AZ	42,265	212,635
*2007 http://www.factfinder.census.gov/ **2007 SMSA=Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (regional population) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Table_of_United_States_Metropolitan_Statistical_Areas			

Location, physical features, design, characteristics, and on-going maintenance.

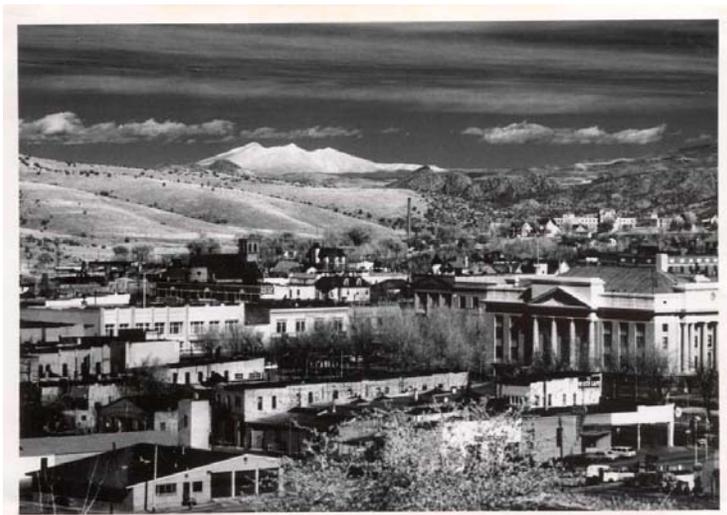
- 1.1 Describe the special physical, geographical, or other distinguishing features or attributes of the neighborhood, street, or public space that contribute to the area's uniqueness or its strong sense of place. Please be specific.

Prescott, Arizona is located on the northwest slope of the Bradshaw Mountains of Central Arizona at an elevation of 5,354 feet and was established following the discovery of gold and its later designation as the Territory's Capitol City. The City is bordered on three sides (west, south and a portion of the east) by the Prescott National Forest and partially on the north by the Yavapai Prescott Indian Reservation. Prescott is the County Seat of Yavapai County, which covers 8,525 sq. miles, and once was one of Arizona's four original Counties.

The climate is mild and semi-arid with distinct seasons. As stated in the *WPA Guide to 1930s Arizona*, "Prescott . . . , in the mountainous section of west-central Arizona, is hemmed in on three sides by ranges rising to Granite Peak, Spruce Mountain and Mount Tritle. The rocky outline of a great lion that dominates the western skyline is Thumb Butte. Granite Creek meanders through the dense pine forests of serried mountains encircling Prescott and, after seasonal rains, flows through the town . . ." Granite Creek is a dominant feature of the central city, and most of the early settlement occurred in this area (today's downtown Prescott) because of the availability of water.

This Midwest-flavored town was laid out in the traditional grid pattern in 1864 with the Courthouse Plaza as the centerpiece in the surrounding commercial town square with an adjoining 100-foot right of way and 80-foot wide streets. The 600-feet by 300-feet, 4.1 acre Plaza was designed as a park in 1864; and, it not only remains a park in 2008, but also a community jewel which is noted throughout the State. Yavapai County is the responsible jurisdiction for the Plaza.

Many communities have finer courthouses of greater architectural significance and grandeur displays of colorful planting beds; but, not all such plazas are so appreciated, carefully maintained, so heavily used, and have such a symbiotic relationship with an equally vibrant downtown central business district.



1. Winter Scene: Looking northeast to San Francisco Peaks (c1940)

The fully-functioning downtown County Courthouse within the 4.1 acre Plaza is surrounded by numerous other businesses including retail stores, an atrium mall, a bank, restaurants, other government and professional offices and numerous scheduled events, which create action and a place of work and play--not just something to look at. These important economic factors survive and thrive in a community that also offers recreation, cultural tourism, and a cooler climate to all, including the many weekenders from the Phoenix area's Valley of the Sun.



2. View to the NW shows Downtown Courthouse Plaza (lower center)—the Jewel of Arizona-- and tree-lined Granite Creek runs parallel to the west of the Plaza

The Courthouse Plaza is often referred to as the “jewel” of downtown Prescott, just as Prescott is often referred to as the “Jewel of Arizona”. A favorite place for residents and visitors alike, the Courthouse Plaza is an inviting and friendly green space in a downtown core commercial district.

Montezuma Street is also known as “Historic Whiskey Row” (nicknamed since the 1860s for its many bars) and adjoins the western side of the Courthouse Plaza. Today, along with the Hotel St. Michael, retail stores, art galleries, restaurants, and bars occupy the street floors, with offices, residential units and bars located in the second stories.



3. “Whiskey Row” at mid-block crosswalk looking west showing bars and second floor apartments of the Hotel Highland

Along Gurley Street are located the downtown’s major retail buildings including the Bashford Courts Atrium Mall with a restaurant and numerous shops on three floors. It is an adaptive reuse of the former Bashford-Burmister Mercantile Store (later occupied by J. C. Penney’s). With only several offices fronting the Plaza, the hubbub of retail, entertainment, and restaurants creates activities which occur beyond the 5 PM office closing time.



4. Gurley Street looking east from the Plaza

1.2 How well maintained is the neighborhood, street, or public space? For example, if there are vacant lots, are they kept clean and well groomed?

Downtown Prescott is well maintained thanks to property owners, tenants and the efforts of the City of Prescott's Zoning Code inspectors who work with tenants and property owners to keep properties clean, painted and aesthetically pleasing. Extra trash pickup is scheduled by the City of Prescott on busy festival and special-event weekends. One vacant building and one vacant lot face the Plaza. Both are monitored by the City of Prescott, and property owners are required to keep the properties both weed and trash free. Graffiti is rare. Homeowners in the nearby National Register historic districts typically show pride of place in maintaining their homes and neighborhoods. The City of Prescott endeavors to keep streets clean and in good repair.

A local businessman has developed a free-standing ashtray which has been adopted for use by other downtown businesses.

The County maintenance of the Plaza is "first class". All four clocks at the top of each face of the Courthouse are in good working condition, always denote the correct time, and are internally lighted at night. All exterior lighting and water fountains are operational. The bandstand is finely painted and maintained. Doggie-doo and other trash is quickly taken care of. Trash containers are regularly spaced and appropriately placed for convenient trash disposal by pedestrians.

Yavapai County's First-Class Maintenance



5. Cleaning pavers on Plaza's NW corner.
(View North – 2007)



6. Replacing 'only' 3 pavers because of root lifting from nearby tree (2008)



7. A summer morning weekly irrigation check
(NE corner of courthouse building to SE)



8. Lawn Coring (2006)
View of SW towards two of the "Whiskey Row" Bars



9. Note the fine and regularly maintained painting on the bandstand (view S on the Plaza)

1.3 Describe the natural and man-made amenities of the neighborhood, street, or public space, such as public art, street furniture, recreational facilities, special landscaping, views, and so forth.

Most travelers arrive in Prescott from the east, and as soon as the traveler approaches downtown, Prescott's signature Thumb Butte landmark at the west end of Gurley Street dominates the view.



10. Entering Downtown on Gurley Street (looking west)



11. The Plaza comes closer into view

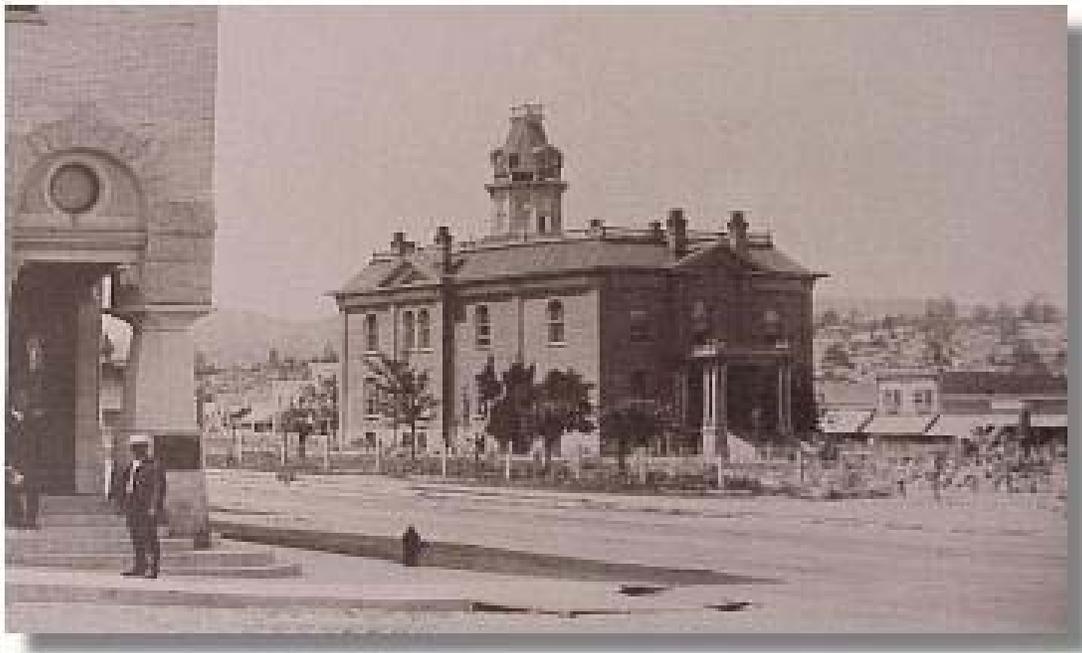
Also, the Yavapai County Courthouse Plaza with its 4-story granite Classical Revival Courthouse anchoring the center of the Plaza, magnificent Rough Rider Memorial Statue, bandstand and fountain also catch the first-time visitor's view in historic downtown Prescott. The fondest memories, however, are probably the green grass and the gothic cathedral-like, vase-shaped forms of American Elms—a man-made urban forest of 173 trees amidst a thriving downtown.



12. The Yavapai County Courthouse (north side)



13. Winter allows one's eyes to see most of the Courthouse without leaves blocking the view (looking southwest from Gurley Street as one enters downtown)



14. Former Courthouse from the same corner as the above photo (c1900s)
(note the corner building still stands today)



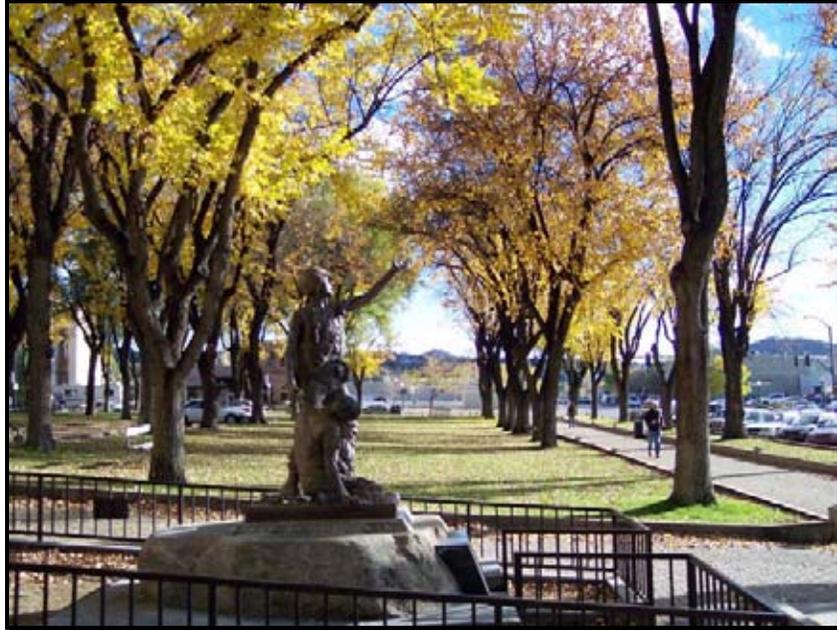
15. The fountain, Rough Rider Statue, the bandstand, and lawn amidst the trees (view to the west)



16. Courthouse north entrance during a Special Event Weekend

Art pieces on the Plaza include three bronze sculptures: 1) The 1907 Rough Rider Memorial Statue by Solon Borglum, said to be the finest equestrian statue in the United States; 2) the Memorial to Veterans of All Wars by Neil Logan, installed in 1989; and 3) the Cowboy At Rest, a modern, larger-than-life interpretation of a smaller statue, also by

Solon Borglum, which was installed in 1990. A third memorial lists the names of all Yavapai County veterans killed in action on brass plaques (the Yavapai County Honor Roll). A 4th statue honoring the Prescott rodeo is located at City Hall on the southeast corner of the Plaza block. All of these features of the Courthouse Plaza, along with the surrounding downtown historic buildings, shops, restaurants, hotels, offices and residences, help Prescott live up to the name given to it by Merrill Windsor, then editor of the *Arizona Highways* magazine of "Everybody's Hometown".



17. Veterans of All Wars Memorial Statue
(west Courthouse entrance looking south)



18. Veterans of All Wars Memorial Statue and an Arts and Crafts weekend
(west Courthouse steps looking west to "Whiskey Row" and Thumb Butte)

Landscape Accoutrements & Details



19. Kiosk, planter bed, period bench, trash container & crosswalk details (view NE)



20. Period water fountains.



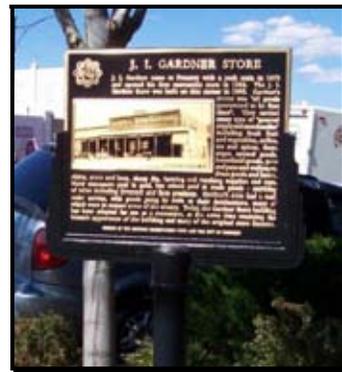
21. One of two types of Christmas banners



22. Paver borders, clean sidewalks, bike racks, banners, lighting (view east along Gurley north of Plaza)



23. Wheelchair accessible sidewalks and facilities



24. High-quality historic bronze markers



25. The 11-foot wide grass lawn provides a buffer between parked vehicles and pedestrians on three sides of the Plaza

2.0 Notable, memorable, and defining characteristics.

2.1 Has this neighborhood, street, or public space been a trend-setter for the community, city, region, or state? If so, please describe and include specific examples.

Prescott residents have actively supported the retention of the traditional Courthouse Plaza, its surrounding government buildings, downtown, and downtown area historic buildings.

Many communities have seen these “open spaces” as “developable land”, which has resulted in the loss of many squares and parks in historic downtowns to large construction projects such as high-rise office buildings, or parking garages or surface parking. Many “ideas” for the use of this space have been proposed over the years, including removal of most of the landscaping for surface parking and the building of six to ten new buildings around the Courthouse. Lobbying from the Prescott community, including residents, visitors, downtown property owners, shop keepers and downtown workers, has successfully squelched most of these ideas. For instance, in 2007 a major lobbying effort and rally on the Courthouse steps helped to dissuade the County from considering a plan to move the courtrooms out of the Courthouse to another location away from the downtown.



26. The Plaza's south lawn, today, is a manicured urban-forest – not a parking lot.
(view to the west)

2.2 Have there been any notable "firsts" to take place in the neighborhood, on the street, or in the public space? If yes, please include a short description.

1. Prescott was designated as the first Territorial Capital of Arizona in 1863.
2. The first school opened just a block away from the Plaza in 1864.
3. The first Frontier Days (4th of July) parade took place around the Plaza in 1888.
4. The Bank of Arizona, the first national bank in the Territory, was founded in Prescott and built on the southeast corner of Cortez and Gurley Streets in 1877.
5. On May 4, 1898, the First United States Volunteer Cavalry of Roosevelt's Rough Riders met at the Plaza to say goodbye to friends and family and then walked to the Santa Fe, Prescott and Phoenix Railroad Depot to depart for San Antonio, Texas.
6. The Elks Opera House, just one block east of the Plaza, was the "finest opera house west of the Mississippi River" when it opened in 1905 and still remains open today.
7. The Arizona Pioneers' Home, one of only of two state run homes of its type in the United States, was founded in 1913 and looks down on the Plaza just a few blocks away.
8. In 1964, Barry Goldwater first announced his candidacy for the United States presidency from the steps of the Yavapai County Courthouse.

2.3 Provide two or three personal stories or anecdotes that illustrate what sets the suggested neighborhood, street, or public space apart from other places, whether in the same city, region, or state as the candidate area. Include newspaper articles if applicable.

A 1980 publication about Prescott, published by Manzanita Press for the Prescott Board of Realtors states, in part: "[w]hat is there about Prescott? What is there that makes a third generation descendant of a pioneer who came into the territory with a mule and a pack, walk other streets in other lands with his own backpack, then come home to stay? Why does a one-time visitor who couldn't escape the recollection of the Courthouse Plaza - all grass and trees and shadows and playing children by the gazebo and the Buckey O'Neill statue - return for another look . . . and then remain? Why does a family pass through or pause in Prescott year after year after year . . . then pull up stakes and move here? The answer seems to be something both commonplace and elusive, something that everyone knows but can't quite define, something called 'the Prescott way of life' ".



27 & 28. Boxer John L. Sullivan, movie star Tom Mix, and President Teddy Roosevelt are among the notables who stayed at the St. Michael's Hotel (built 1901) which still anchors the north end of "Whiskey Row" – note Thumb Butte in background

In the *WPA Guide to 1930s Arizona* (republished 1989 by the University of Arizona Press) the writer described Prescott as follows: "[t]he broad business streets, running north and south and east and west, wind into the bordering hills, and the Plaza, a shaded park two blocks long and one block wide, with the massive classical courthouse in its center, is surrounded by commercial buildings. The Spanish-Mexican influence common to much Arizona Architecture is absent here; since timbers and granite boulders are available in abundance there are no adobe structures as in the southern desert valleys." The writer goes on to identify some of the more famous Prescottonians: "Prescott has been the home of many well-known personages: Fiorello LaGuardia (b. 1882), mayor of New York, who spent his boyhood here while his father was bandmaster

at Fort Whipple; Captain William (Buckey) O'Neill, organizer of the Arizona Unit of Roosevelt's Rough Riders; Ottmar Mergenthaler (1854-99), inventor of the Mergenthaler Linotype; and, Earle Sande, jockey who received his first training in Prescott's Frontier Days”

2.4 Describe the elements that help make the neighborhood, street, or public space attractive to people. For example, do the buildings along the street have ground-level retail shops, restaurants and other storefronts that provide visual interest to pedestrians?

ELEMENTS:

1. Symbolism of Hometown America: Sense of Place, Values, Safety, and Most Importantly . . . People

A number of people who move to Prescott comment that they appreciate these qualities. Local residents have rallied a number of times over the past many years to both improve and preserve this “Sense of Place” because of their affinity for their hometown. It takes people and commitment to make the Plaza a place—a Great Place.

2. Traditional Commercial Core and Neighborhood Context.

Most all the great plazas of Europe have adjoining historic buildings to border and define a plaza, and the Courthouse Plaza is no different. The traditional downtown grid layout has been kept intact since 1864 and is a key element in the historic integrity of the downtown with business, church, and government uses on the four sides of the plaza. The grid provides the important vitality, action, and people in the daily business, social, and recreational activities for the Plaza along with the traditional courthouse functions. The layout encourages activity beyond the 5 PM closing hour. On the Plaza's west side is “Whiskey Row” (named since the 1900s for its many bars). There are only a limited number of ground-floor offices fronting the Plaza. Residential dwellings, a middle school (which was formerly the Prescott High School), Elks Opera House, Sharlot Hall Museum and the City Library are all located within one or two blocks.

Human-scale buildings surrounding the Plaza were mostly built by 1920. The Historic District limits building heights to 50 feet, and many existing buildings are approximately 20-feet tall. This allows plenty of sunlight on the Plaza with no shade from the adjoining buildings. The four surrounding, wide streets provide ample parking with easy access to the plaza.

3. Design.

The design of the Plaza evolved in the 1900s from native grass lawn grazed by sheep, to casual rock gardens with cacti, to its present form. The American elms were planted in 1919, and concrete curbs were installed in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The simple, yet elegant, cohesive design of the Plaza has large expanses of curbed grassed lawn, an extensive tree canopy, movable benches, historic well, medium-grey interlocking pavers, and the traditional internal and external axial sightlines, as well as bronze sculptures, gazebo, fountain, and the courthouse - all of which are lighted at night.

Practical features are also offered: electrical outlets in curbs, period water fountains on each corner, movable benches and picnic tables, and information kiosks. Pedestrians are provided an 11-foot wide curbed lawn as a visual and physical buffer from the hubbub of the street and parked vehicles. Internal parking is held to a minimum and makes use of the traditional walkway pattern; additionally, internal parking is located on concrete driveways which can handle the increased loads.

The surrounding four blocks of the fronting business district have period landscape amenities which complement the Plaza (see below).

4. Maintenance.

The County maintenance of the Plaza is first class, and the employees take pride in their work. This top-notch maintenance cannot be underestimated in its importance. The predominately perennial ryegrass lawn is professionally maintained to present its cultured appearance all year. Mowing occurs once a week. Worn areas are seeded as needed during the year—not just in the off-season. Coring and fertilizing is done twice a year. Irrigation in the semi-arid climate occurs from 11 PM onward in cycles around the Plaza. The mild winter climate allows the perennial ryegrass and bluegrass to remain nearly completely green throughout the winter months.

The popular sidewalk depicting Yavapai County Historic Timeline is painted about every two years. The pavers are routinely cleaned and repaired. Trees are pruned regularly, old ones removed and new disease-resistant ‘Liberty’ American elms planted. Security guards are always present. One always feels safe. No bicycles or skateboards are permitted on the Plaza. Public restrooms under the western steps are clean, regularly maintained and open until 11 PM. There is no graffiti.



29. “Whiskey” Row (c1910) (courtesy of Sharlot Hall Museum)



30. Historic "Whiskey Row" / Montezuma Street looking south from the Montezuma / Gurley Street intersection



31. Looking across Gurley Street to the Plaza



32. "Whiskey Row" from the south



33. Looking NW across from the Plaza to the Wilson Block-- luxury apartments are located on the upper floor



34. View of Gurley Street major retail buildings and the Plaza's north side (2005) at the intersection of Gurley and Cortez Streets



35. Gurley Street building looking NW (c1940s) at the intersection of Gurley and Cortez Streets



36. Gurley Street (c1880s) from about the same position as the previous two photos (note the white picket fence on the Plaza)



37. The SE corner of Cortez and Gurley from where the two above photos were taken. The historic Elks Opera House is to the far left. (note the Elk Statue -- nicknamed 'Bill'-- on top of the Elks Opera House)



38. View east from the Plaza to Cortez Street illustrates mixed land uses



39. View NE along Cortez Street



40. The historic railroad depot terminates Cortez Street three blocks from the Plaza
The three-story building on the right is the Downtown Prescott Inn
(formerly the Head Hotel) offering apartments and overnight lodging



41. Yavapai County Courthouse and Thumb Butte looking west along Union Street



42. Goodwin Street shows government offices predominate
Prescott City Hall is located on the SE corner of Cortez and Goodwin Streets



43. The U.S. Post Office Building with the U.S. District Court upstairs
looking west on Goodwin Street at Cortez Street



43. U.S. Post Office and District Court Building
looking SW at Goodwin and Cortez Street intersection (Winter 2008)



44. An early summer morning shows park users with the historic City Jail and Firehouse Building in the background (now the Chamber of Commerce), looking south to Goodwin Street



45. Goodwin Street (looking east)

5. Special Events are the 5th Element.

2.41 How is the public space connected to and used by the community (for commerce, recreation, entertainment, cultural or special events, etc.)? What draws people there and encourages social interaction? Is it used by diverse groups of people?

More than 130 scheduled Plaza activities take place annually including eight major events lasting 2-3 days, (i.e., art and crafts fairs, the Jazz Festival, the Bluegrass Festival, etc.) and host up to 174 retail booths located on the grass and surrounding walkways. From June 1, and lasting through August from Monday through Friday, evening events are scheduled by the City Parks and Recreation Department. Events begin at 7 PM and are attended by as few as 50 to over 600 people. Bands, orchestras, poetry, political and religious presentations, dancing, movies on the lawn and other performances are scheduled on the Plaza to entertain area residents in the twilight with the colorful, lighted signs of the downtown providing the backdrop.

The Plaza has people jogging, playing catch (baseball, football, Frisbee, etc.), laptop computing, eating, reading, mothers with baby strollers, timeline reading, preaching, sitting, walking laps (3 laps = 1 mile) or their pets, talking, and sightseeing at almost all hours and runners even at 4:30 AM.

And of course there are the Special Events with either one or more of the surrounding streets closed: the over two-hour-long World's Oldest Rodeo® Fourth of July Parade with street dancing, nighttime Christmas Light Parade, the daytime Christmas Parade, the Western "Shoot Out on Whiskey Row", the Acker Music Festival (which encourages people to walk to *all* downtown businesses sponsoring free Christmas musical performances), antique and other car shows, street fairs, motorcycle rallies, the "Whiskey Row Marathon", foot-races, etc.

There is not one vacant storefront. Various Plaza fronting businesses include the former historic Bashford-Burmister Building (former JC Penney store) remodeled into an indoor atrium mall, offer retail shopping and dining.

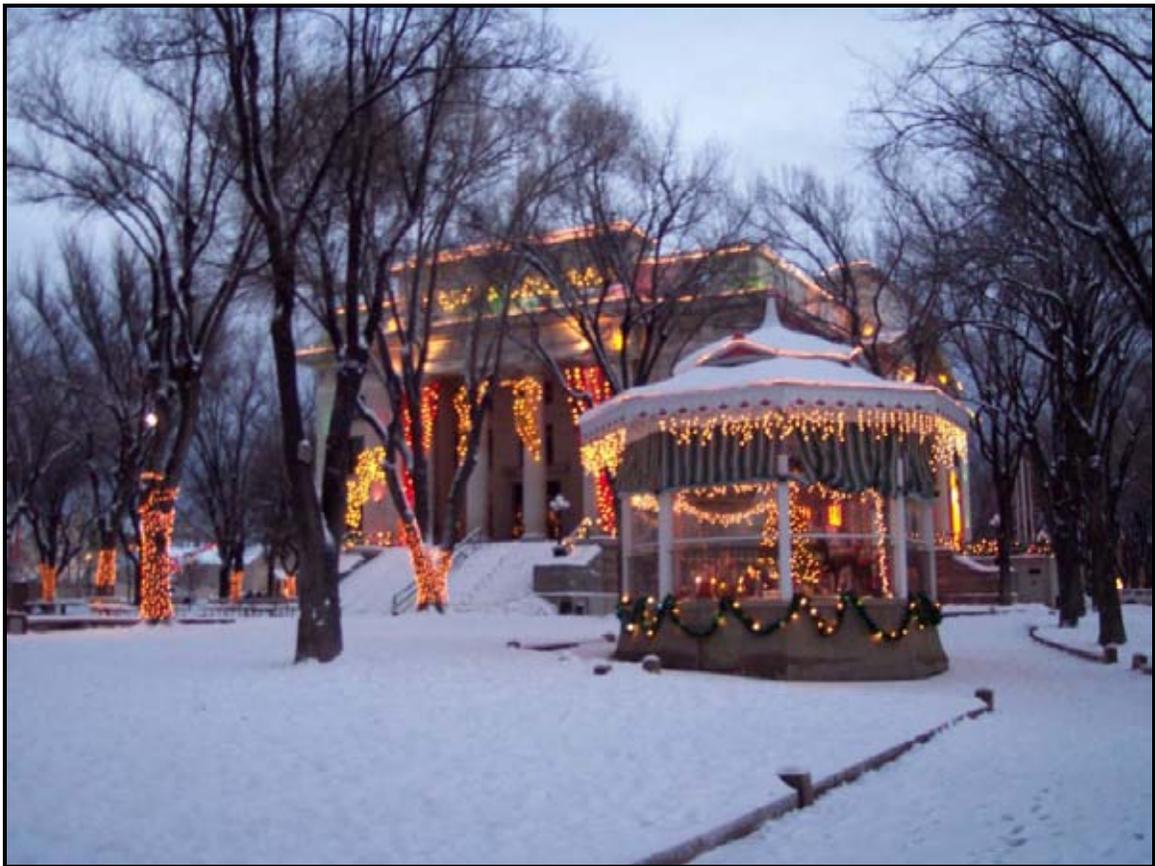
Special Events



46. Pony Express stops traffic during the Rodeo.
(View North along Goodwin at Cortez Street)



47. Annual Christmas Parade



48. Decking the Plaza in Arizona's Christmas City



49. Decking the Plaza in the Christmas City has to look good in the daylight, too!



50. Annual Halloween Parade by School Children around the Courthouse.
SE corner of Goodwin Street and Cortez Street looking west



51. Arts and Crafts Weekends fill the Plaza with booths



52. A free summer concert at 7 PM brings out a good-sized crowd with the downtown historic buildings providing the backdrop. (view north with the Rough Rider Statue)



53. View to the east at the same concert



54. View to the northwest at the same concert



55. Another summer evening brings yet another free performance



56. Walkin' dog during a lunchtime concert on the plaza

Everyday Activities



57. Do your homework



58. Spread the blanket for lunch on the plaza



59. Let's practice our tricks!



60. Laptop computing with cell phone in hand



61. Frisbee flying (looking SE on Plaza)



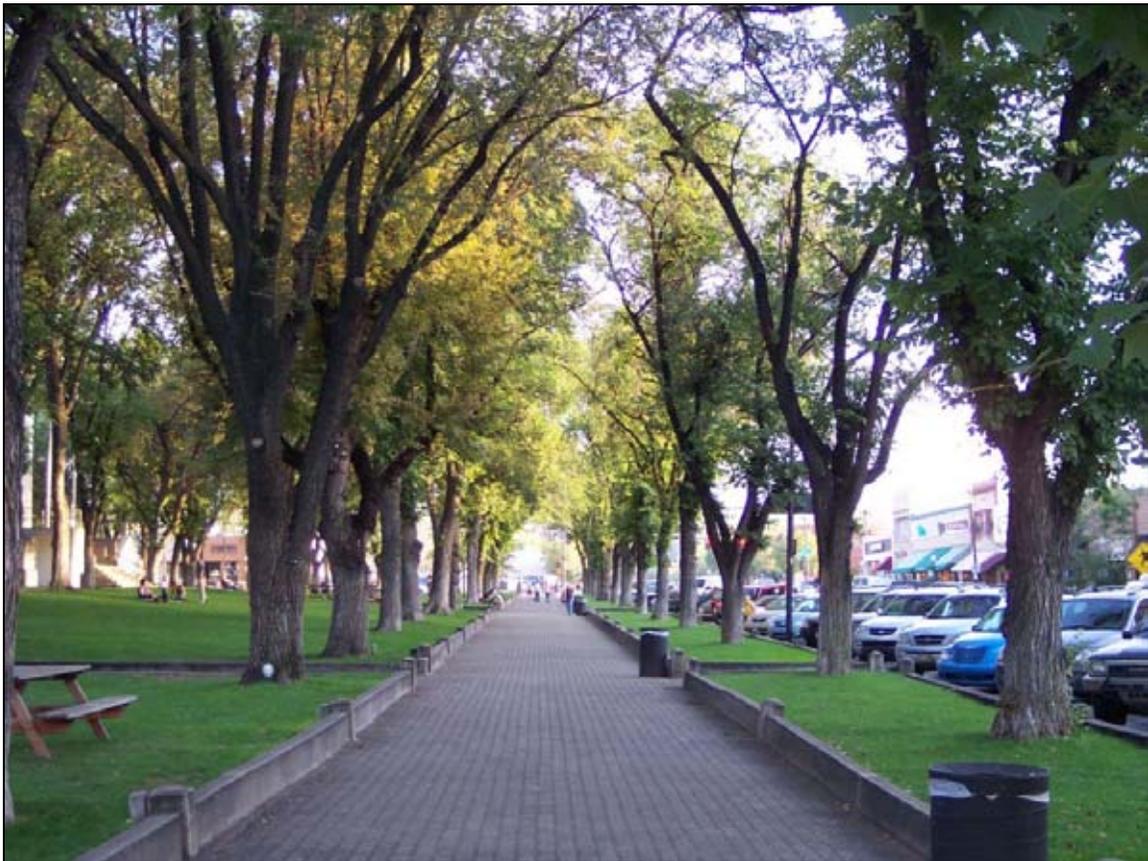
62. Bikers visit Prescott regularly. This historic hotel is located one block south of the Plaza on Cortez Street



63. Remember Kickball?
1st tree is first base – and each tree for a base!



64. Doggies, babies, seniors -- and everyone enjoys the walks!
(view north along Cortez Street)



65. Late afternoon looking south along "Whiskey Row"



66. People watching Plaza strollers from the upstairs bar from the Palace Building on "Whiskey Row"

2.5 List three specific and definable characteristics that distinguish the neighborhood, street or public space from other neighborhoods, streets, or places in the community. What makes your suggested place different from someplace else? What is memorable about it and makes it stand out from similar places?

1. A vibrant, synergistic commercial core amidst a park heavily used by residents.
2. An intact, in use, and vibrant downtown which serves both visitors and residents.
3. A walkable downtown with a park featuring many events.

2.6 How is the neighborhood, street, or public space a reflection of local culture or flavor?

Prescott was founded by people from the eastern and mid-western United States. It has, therefore, a "look" which is uncommon in the western United States. Many compare it to Santa Fe, New Mexico -- same climate, same elevation, same setting, surrounded by mountains. But Prescott has a completely different cultural heritage, and it shows in the layout and design of the community.

Several bars are still open along "Whiskey Row" to continue its 140-year tradition.

3.0 Important leaders and community engagement.

3.1 Who were the most influential persons in shaping the suggested neighborhood, street or public space? Please list and provide a short description of what they did, and the impact, changes, or outcomes that were a result of their efforts. Consider persons (distinguished or lesser known) such as elected officials, architects, designers, planners, developers, business people, community leaders, and citizen activists. Include newspaper articles if applicable.

“Prescott was a *planned* community. When the gubernatorial party arrived in December 1863, it was not only with the intention of forming a territorial government. . . but with the necessity of selecting the seat of that government. “It is astonishing” how well prepared they were “for their job of organizing the government, building a City, and transferring cultural patterns” in such a land with deprivations such as Arizona in the 1860s. “The party brought with them not only a “government on wheels” but a newspaper – press and all, a library, and a few other of their former conveniences from back east”. (Parker, Charles, and Parker, Kitty Jo. 1973, January. Prescott: Where Mellowed Tradition & Modern Living Blend: *Arizona Highways*. p.15+).

The 1864 Original Townsite plat for Prescott included two “squares” set aside for government use: the Courthouse Plaza and the Capitol Block. Since the Capital was moved to Tucson in 1867, the Capitol Block was broken up and sold. However, the Courthouse Plaza remained an open space in the center of downtown until the first Courthouse was completed. By 1876, the local newspaper’s editorial was demanding that the government either do something with the Plaza or split it up for commercial lots. A few years later the town had its courthouse on the Plaza—a small, but elaborate, Victorian-era pink brick building. The Original Townsite with its Plaza has been the anchor for the community for over 140 years.

Since its inception, Prescott, as in other older communities, has seen its share of fires. The devastating fire of July 1900 destroyed eight blocks of downtown Prescott, including “Whiskey Row” -- the core downtown City block noted for its bars and gambling halls. The Plaza itself served as a refuge for retailers and bar owners who set up house in temporary quarters on the Plaza until the town could be rebuilt. It was these merchants and business owners, many of whom were not insured and who lost \$1.5 million dollars in assets, who committed themselves, and sometimes their life savings, to rebuilding a better downtown Prescott. And rebuild they did! They chose to stay, open new businesses and continue to contribute to the community rather than throw in the towel and go elsewhere. Almost every building in downtown Prescott which burned in 1900 had been replaced with a new brick or masonry structure within two years of the fire -- a remarkable accomplishment considering the devastation and the isolation of Prescott in the early 20th Century. These buildings provide the historic ambience and context for the Plaza. That downtown is, for the most part, intact today; and, one of those business owners, if he or she were to walk downtown today, would probably be able to walk right into the buildings where he or she did business 100 years ago.

Currently, there are 11 buildings facing the Plaza listed in the National Register, with several more to be added in 2008. The Yavapai County Courthouse, built in 1916, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 and anchors the Plaza. The

modest Neo-Classical Revival style Courthouse measures 90' wide by 150' long -- 50' high and is the second building to anchor the Plaza. A 100-foot wide right of way with 80' wide streets surrounds the 300' wide by 600' long rectilinear Plaza. The tree planting plan includes 173 trees of which 127 are American elms that still remain in good health today.

The City of Prescott has also played an important role in preserving and enhancing Prescott's historic downtown (see Question 4.0). Downtown property owners finally agreed to the designation of a Historic Preservation Overlay District for the downtown in 2000 after 20 years of efforts by the City.

3.2 What past or present neighborhood, business, civic or other groups have had a prominent or leading role within the suggested neighborhood, street or public space? How have these groups been involved in shaping development and change affecting the neighborhood, street, or public space? Is there civic pride among residents? Please include specific examples.

The Courthouse Plaza and the surrounding fronting business district have enjoyed the protection, consistent improvement, support and involvement of the citizens of Prescott and County and City government for over 140 years.

Even as early as the 1880s, the citizens of Prescott lobbied for protection of the Plaza requesting that the grounds be fenced to keep out roving livestock, particularly sheep, who left behind a messy souvenir for those who traversed the sidewalks of the new pink brick Courthouse. As a result, a rail-and-picket fence was constructed around the Plaza.

In the 19th Century, County Sheriff W. O. "Buckey" O'Neill of Rough Rider fame, had County workers dig up native deciduous trees along the creek to transplant on the Plaza.

In 1907, the community celebrated its Rough Rider heroes of the Spanish-American War with the erection of a prominent statue designed by Solon Borglum (brother of Gutzon Borglum of Mt. Rushmore fame) on a local granite rock base. The statue is considered one of the nation's foremost equestrian sculptural works.

In 1912, a contest was held to choose a new Courthouse design with citizens participation.

In the 1920s, The Monday Club, a ladies group which still exists today, raised money for the bandstand.

In 1960, the Boy Scouts replaced the deceased statehood tree with another tree that includes a commemorative plaque; and, Mike, the official guardian and goodwill ambassador community dog, had his memorial plaque placed on the Plaza.

In the 1970s, public bathrooms were added underneath the western steps.

In 1976 in honor of the centennial, the community bought a new bell system for the Courthouse which still chimes the hours of the day, and Fran and Tommie Wildman added the Yavapai County Historic Timeline on the Plaza's north sidewalk.

Volunteer Involvement – Yavapai County Timeline



67. Fran and Tommie Wildman are honored by County Supervisor Carol Springer



68. Mr. Wildman cuts ribbon opening the repainted Timeline (2006)



69. Volunteers repaint the Yavapai County Historic Timeline (2006)

In 1986, the Prescott Kiwanis Club donated a new fountain centerpiece. Prescottian and former Arizona Congressman Sam Steiger, 57 years old, was arrested for painting a much needed mid-block sidewalk on “Whiskey Row”. The spot later became an official city crosswalk. Sam was elected Mayor of Prescott in 1999.

In 1989, the Governor proclaimed Prescott “Arizona’s Christmas City” because of the many seasonal activities and decorations on the Plaza and in the Downtown, and the “All the Veterans Memorial” sculpture was added adjacent to the western steps of the Plaza.

In 1990, a citizen-led effort succeeded in keeping the Post Office open and operating adjoining the Plaza; and the “Cowboy At Rest” sculpture was added to the south side of the Plaza.

In 1997, area residents Allen Tope and Sonja Russell conducted research for 18 months to reconstruct the 1500 names and then spearheaded the volunteer effort to replace the Armed Forces Honor Roll. Donations were given by scores of residents as well as community and county organizations.

In 2001, an historic well was restored on the southwest corner of the Plaza by the County.

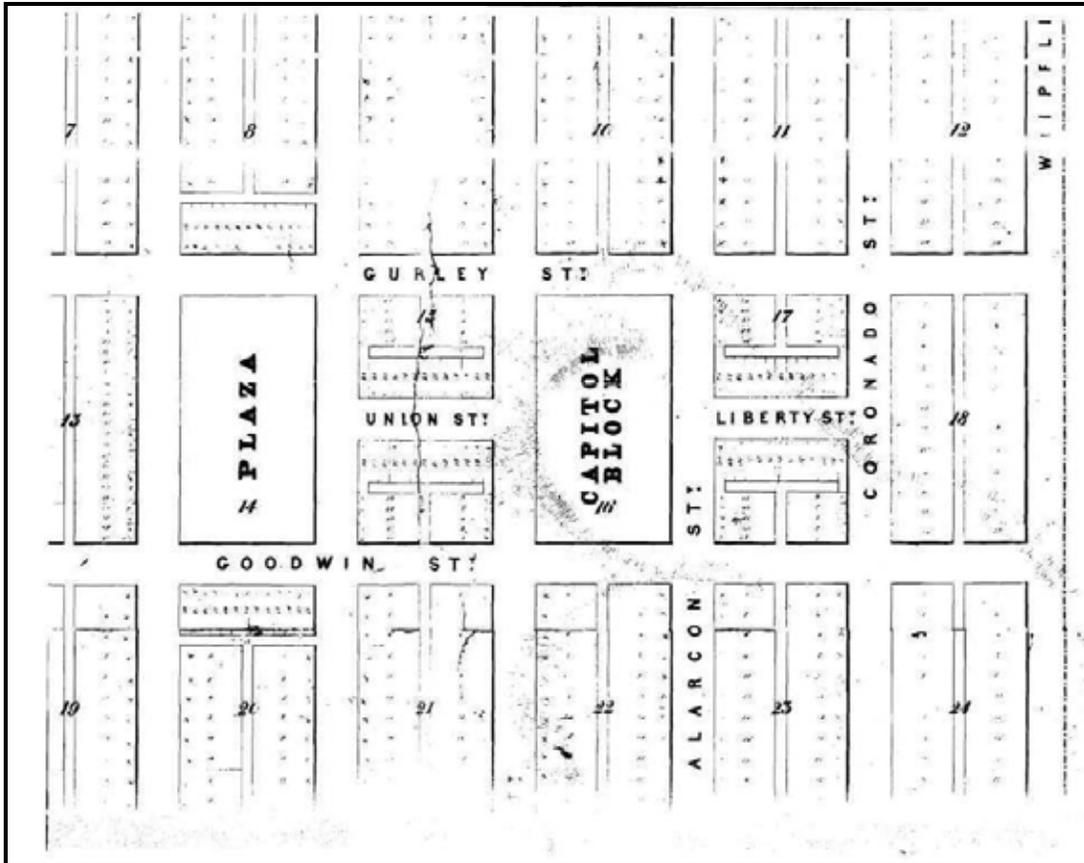
In 2004 a successful protest, coupled with legal action by local residents, assisted in preventing the construction of an 80-foot high contemporary office building located just two blocks from the Plaza. Although allowed by City Codes, residents strongly protested the intrusion of "Phoenix-type" development into their historic downtown with a lawsuit.

In 2007, a successful protest by many residents kept the Courthouse open and functioning as it always has.

4.0 Role of planning and planners (past and present).

4.1 Provide the date and principal author or planner of the earliest available plan that addresses or encompasses the suggested neighborhood, street, or public space. Describe any subsequent plans or planning-related initiatives affecting the suggested location. Please include a short description explaining why the mentioned dates or events are significant. In addition, include any important or interesting details about the early planning history.

Prescott was surveyed by and laid out by a miner and a squatter -- Robert Groom and Van Smith, respectively -- in 1864. Groom was from Indiana. He had instructions from the Governor to lay out the town in a north-south, east-west grid with wide streets so that a freight team could turn around. The Original Townsite Plat, recorded in 1864, reflects those instructions along with Groom's experience and influence of living in as well as working in the American mid-west. The story is that the townsite was laid out using a frying pan and a string, with most of the "work" done from "Whiskey Row". Although Groom and Smith didn't quite get the north-south/east-west axis right, they did get the grid right. A review of a map of Prescott, along with an understanding of how the town grew, reveals that this grid pattern extended far beyond the Original Townsite and was still being used on the east side of town for new plats into the 1930s. On the west side of town, however, where the terrain is much more difficult, the "City Beautiful" movement along with the impracticality of the grid pattern influenced the layout of the subdivisions and streets starting in the 1890s. A contemporary Prescott map clearly shows the change in the philosophy and the terrain by the street patterns.



70. Robert Groom Survey of Prescott Townsite-1864

4.2 What role have the local planning department or city officials played in the development of the suggested neighborhood, street, or public space? What specific planning decisions can be identified as defining this area as a great place (please include important dates)? How have citizens been included and engaged in these efforts either through planning or any major initiatives, campaigns, or programs?

The Zoning Code adopted in 1951 is a pyramidal type code which allows less intensive uses in a number of higher intensive zoning districts. This provision allows residential uses in the business zoned areas such as the downtown business district. This has allowed the continuation and expansion of ground and second-story apartments, a significant apartment building, and current expansion towards 2nd and 3rd level condos in the downtown area.

Per City Codes, there are no hot-dog, ice cream, or coffee mobile carts allowed. Only on selected summer weekends are these and other food vendors allowed on the Plaza. Restaurants adjoining the Plaza pay higher rents, and City and County fathers recognize that trade-offs have to be made for the economic vitality of adjoining businesses.

In 1997, through the efforts of the Community Development Department, the City successfully obtained an "ISTEA" Federal Grant. Through this grant and other grants coupled with City matching funds, period benches, trash cans, bike racks, vintage street

lamps of the type used in the 1920s and 1930s, period water fountains, landscape planters with period plants, bricked crosswalks, reconstruction of new curbs and sidewalks with brick borders, were provided by the City in the downtown historic district in 1998. Numerous high-quality, freestanding and building-mounted bronze historic markers have been added since that time.

Designed as a very “pedestrian-friendly” downtown, the amenities and the Plaza’s excellent maintenance further enhance downtown Prescott’s appeal to stroll, shop, sit and visit and enjoy the public spaces of the Courthouse Plaza and the surrounding business district. Further, this same public space and the historic downtown were some of the featured elements of Prescott’s designation in 2005 as a “Preserve America Community”—through the efforts of the Community Development Department.



71. Prior County Courthouse and Rough Rider Statue –early 1900s

- 4.3 Describe what current changes are underway in the neighborhood, along the street, or affecting the public space, and what effects these changes are having on the suggested place. Describe any major obstacles that have been addressed or are currently being addressed by the community. Be specific, include examples, and discuss the role and contributions of local planners to addressing these issues.

Two new, historically-appropriate buildings are proposed on the south side of the Plaza: one on a vacant lot and another on a lot now with a vacant building as a result of the proposed construction. Both proposals have been reviewed and approved by the Prescott Preservation Commission and have involved participation and recommendations by the Community Development Department on proposed building massing, colors, entry features, and parking -- all of which were accepted by the architects as furthering their designs. Both buildings will be three- to four-story mixed-use buildings featuring ground floor retail and upper floor condominiums with enclosed parking on either the ground or basement levels. These two buildings will provide the needed remaining building enclosure to the entire Plaza.



72. This mixed-use, historically-appropriate building will be built on the below SE Corner of Goodwin and Montezuma directly south of the Plaza



73. This vacant lot was the former location of a gasoline station and was recently cleaned up to remove subsurface contamination -- it is now suitable for construction



74. This mixed-use, historically-appropriate building will be built on the corner lot shown below where a previous business recently closed



75. Closed business (white building) where the above building will be constructed at the SW corner of Goodwin and Montezuma ("Whiskey Row") Streets

The 2005 *Land Development Code* requires parking within the entire Downtown Business District for any non-tourist related commercial uses. This requirement

effectively stops office spaces from replacing retail spaces because most downtown businesses do not have off-street parking available.

The City built its first public parking garage in 2006 one block from the Plaza. Currently under consideration is a proposed “in-lieu-of” fee for parking. If adopted, it will allow condominiums and offices to pay a determined fee to the City instead of providing the required parking spaces. The fee will be banked for the construction of an additional future public parking garage.

4.4 Is the suggested neighborhood, street, or public space within or does it contain a business improvement district, a special zoning area, an overlay zone, or other special designation? If yes, please describe including the date first enacted, any major amendments or changes, as well as a description of the benefits and outcomes of the special zoning or district status.

The Downtown Historic Preservation District (an overlay district) was enacted in 2000 and encompasses the Courthouse Plaza on all four sides. This overlay district preserves the architectural heritage of Prescott’s downtown. Any building modification, signage, or new construction requiring a building permit must be reviewed and approved by the Prescott Preservation Commission.

A new zoning district was adopted in 2005 for the downtown – the Downtown Business District. The main feature of this new district establishes the new parking requirements for certain businesses located within this new district. (see the preceding section).

5.0 History, early development, highlights from the past.

5.1 List any local, state, national, historical, or other special designations or awards and the respective dates given in honor of the suggested neighborhood, street, or public space.

The City of Prescott has received many awards for its preservation and other efforts, locally, statewide and nationally. Yavapai County has also been an award recipient.

Examples:

- Designated a “Preserve American Community” in 2004 by First Lady Laura Bush. Prescott is one of the first ten communities in the nation to be honored with this award. One of the features of the nomination included the Courthouse Plaza and the surrounding historic districts.
- Bestowed in 2006 as one of a “Dozen Distinctive Destinations” by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Again, one of the features of the nomination for the “Dozen Distinctive Destinations” designation was the Courthouse Plaza and the surrounding historic districts.

Both of these above honors, on a national level, demonstrate in part that Prescott is a historic, unique, exciting, vibrant, economically sound, diverse community and that the Courthouse Plaza is the center of the community, both geographically and spiritually.



76. View NW from the Plaza showing the bandstand and the Hotel St. Michael (c1920s)



77. WPA stamps dated 1936 are found on the plaza curbs

Historic neighborhoods surround the downtown and provide an easy one- to three-block walk to the Courthouse Plaza. Today, many of Prescott's residential streets are lined with tall trees and pitched-roof frame houses, including turreted Victorians. Unlike the adobe and Spanish colonial architecture of its many southwestern desert neighbors, Prescott is a Midwest-styled mountain town with clapboard-sided and brick and masonry homes and commercial buildings. Its green lawns and spreading trees reflect the Midwestern and New England background of Prescott's early pioneers, thus coining the phrase, "Everybody's Hometown." With more than 700 buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places, including the Yavapai County Courthouse and several of the buildings surrounding the Plaza, the City of Prescott continues to document and honor its cultural resources.

Located one block from the Plaza are carefully maintained historic buildings and homes



78. Goodwin Street looking west
Note Thumb Butte in background



79. South Cortez boasts this fine Victorian

- ❑ Designated as Arizona's "perennial" Christmas City in 1989 by the State Governor.
- ❑ Best Small Places for Businesses and Careers—*Forbes* (2007).
- ❑ A Top True Western Town—by *True West Magazine* (March 2006).
- ❑ One of the "7 Great Places to Live"—by *Bottom Line Retirement* (2006).
- ❑ One of the Top 5 Places to Retire—by *Money Magazine* (August 2006).
- ❑ Top "Green" Arizona City—by *Sperling's Best Places* (2007 -- #42 out of 100 nationwide).
- ❑ One of the 100 Best Art Towns in the U.S. (2005 by *Countryman Press*, 4th ed).
- ❑ An Emerging Art Town – by *Southwest Magazine* (2007).
- ❑ 3rd in the Nation (for all markets) for job growth and economic vitality—by *Inc. Magazine* (2007).
- ❑ Best Smaller Metro for Job Creation—by *Milken Institute's 2005 Best Performing Small Cities* (#3 out of 179, Feb 2006).

- ❑ Best Smaller Metro for Job Creation—by *Milken Institute’s 2007 Best Performing Small Cities (#7 out of 179, 2007)*.
- ❑ One of the Ten Most Popular Retirement Towns—by www.toptenretirements.com (#7 – August 15, 2007).
- ❑ One of Best Places to Retire—by *U.S. News & World Report Sept. 30, 2007*.
- ❑ One of 100 Best Communities for Young People (for all of Yavapai County)—by *AmericasPromise.org*.
- ❑ Top 100 “crème de la crème” or “Golden Eagles” of small towns in America—by *Boomtown USA: The 7 Keys to Big Success in Small Towns (2004)*.

5.2 List and describe any current or upcoming anniversaries or annual events for the suggested place including dates and sponsors of such anniversaries or celebrations.

Although plans are just getting underway with the appointment of a Centennial Committee by the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors, Prescott will be celebrating the Centennial of Arizona's Statehood in 2012.

6.0 How does the suggested Great Place exemplify best practices?

6.1 Provide a description of any design guidelines, special zoning, mixed-use development, smart building codes, LEED building standards, or other special requirements of the neighborhood, street, or public space and the results these requirements have had in helping shape how the area has developed, changed, or evolved. Include specific examples of changes that have occurred.

As mentioned previously, the Downtown Historic Preservation District is an Overlay District designed to preserve the architectural heritage of downtown Prescott.

The County Courthouse is a historic building; therefore, it has not been subjected to the Energy Star Certification criteria in order to obtain LEED classification.

Mixed uses which allow residential in the downtown core have been a hallmark of development since the Zoning Code was adopted in 1951. The allowance of mixed uses enabled the construction of McCormick Place in 2004 – a mixed use building located two blocks west of the Plaza. The building has parking on the ground floor, offices on the second floor, and condominiums on the third floor. The same provisions allow the infill of the two proposed buildings south of the Plaza.

6.2 Describe what efforts are underway to make the street, neighborhood, or public space more environmentally sustainable, including having a smaller carbon footprint. Please include specific examples of practices or steps being proposed and taken.

The County is responsible for maintenance and is in the process of changing the irrigation system to employ more water-conserving hardware.

6.3 What 'Smart Growth' principles and practices are occurring in the neighborhood, street, or public space, whether to increase density; reduce use of private cars and expand use of transit or non-motorized travel options; reuse existing buildings; encourage mixed-use development; or other measures? Please include a short description including specific examples.

The downtown has always allowed residential uses as part of its fabric. New Prescott residents, business owners, and retirees are attracted to the Courthouse Plaza as the symbolic and real "City Center". The owners wish to live and operate their businesses next to, or as close as possible, to the Plaza.

A local private transit company operates locally with a limited schedule. A regional public transit system for the Quad Cities area (Prescott, Prescott Valley, Chino Valley, Dewey-Humbolt) is now under discussion.

6.4 Is there affordable housing located within the borders of the suggested neighborhood or adjoining the suggested street? If yes, please describe type and amount of affordable housing, and the plans, programs, regulations, ordinances, or other initiatives undertaken to bring about the affordable housing.

There are two establishments which offer the more affordable rental units near the Plaza. The first is the Hotel Highland. Situated on the second floor above retail space on "Whiskey Row", the hotel has 10 one-bedroom apartments which rent at \$530 per month.

Located along North Cortez Street is the Downtown Prescott Inn (formerly the Head Hotel). This three-story residential building has 56 apartments with commercial space located on the ground floor with rents from \$450 to \$650 per month. Several business owners have private residences above their retail stores. This is primarily evident along North Cortez Street – one or two blocks north of the Plaza where the block is advertised as 'Antique Shop Row'.

At the northwest corner of the Plaza, the Wilson Block Building (listed in the National Register of Historic Places) includes two modern, luxury apartments upstairs and office and retail space on the ground floor.

7.0 Additional information, sources, and web links.

7.1 Please provide any additional web links, electronic files, references, photographs, or other documentation that supplements answers to any of the above questions and that was not included with your original nomination. Please provide information that only directly relates to the suggested neighborhood, street, or public space.

The Submission Application also included the following on a CD:

1. Video Introduction to the Follow-Up Questionnaire (Application)
2. Application Submission in PDF format
3. Map: Colorized Rendering of the Site and Planting Plan
4. Map: Courthouse Plaza Historic District
5. Map and Photo Display of Courthouse Plaza Historic District
6. Map: Traditional Townsite and Downtown Land Use Map
7. Map: Traditional Townsite and Downtown Zoning
8. Map: Traditional Townsite Zoning of Area Surrounding the Downtown
9. Prescott Chamber of Commerce Calendar of Events: Jan – March 2008