



# MOUNTAIN VIEW

OFFICERS' CLUB

# FORT HUACHUCA

ARIZONA

INTERPRETIVE CONCEPT DOCUMENT | PREPARED BY RALPH APPELBAUM ASSOCIATES





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**The historic significance of the building is incredible. I visualize what it was like and what it meant to the officers who served here from 1942 to 1945.**

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Charles Hancock, president, Southwest Association of Buffalo Soldiers

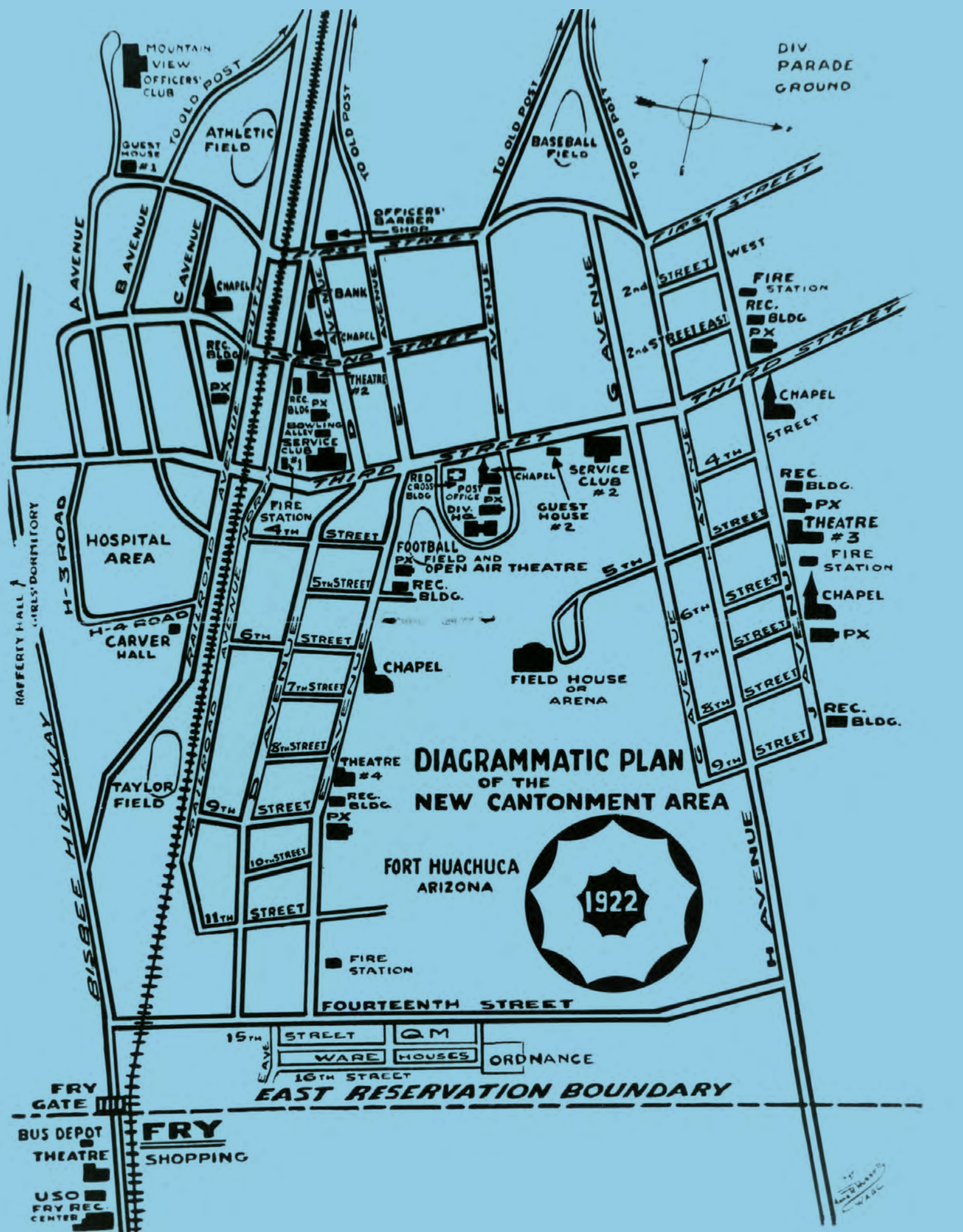




# Mountain View Officers' Club at Fort Huachuca

Interpretive Concept  
Document: June 2019

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## INTRODUCTION

The MVOC—and Fort Huachuca—holds a special place in the history of civil rights within the U.S. Army, and it is one of two remaining African-American officers' clubs on active military posts.

On Veteran's Day Weekend, 2017, the U.S. Army and the National Trust for Historic Preservation announced a partnership to restore the Mountain View Officers' Club (MVOC), giving new life to this historic building while paying tribute to the role of Fort Huachuca during WWII.

The MVOC—and Fort Huachuca—holds a special place in the history of civil rights within the U.S. Army, and it is one of two remaining African-American officers' clubs on active military posts. Recognizing the significance of the MVOC as a heritage site, the U.S. Department of Interior and the National Park

Service's African-American Civil Rights Grant Program in 2018 awarded the project a grant of \$500,000 to restore the exterior and parts of the central dance hall to their original 1942 appearance.

The proposed update to the MVOC building and grounds will include a restaurant, bar, flexible event space, outdoor sports fields and performance space. Once renovated, this rare, iconic building will once again be a vibrant social venue for its community, from Fort Huachuca to Sierra Vista and beyond.





## GUIDING THEMES

People like to get immersed in history, and the story behind the MVOC's creation is compelling and fascinating.

### CENTERED ON PEOPLE

There was a strong sense of community among the African-American soldiers, officers and nurses who lived at Fort Huachuca during WWII. The MVOC became a social destination, albeit after some initial resistance. The stories told here will echo the voices of those who came to escape the rigors of combat training and military order if even for a little while.

### DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE

The historic preservation of this building honors the African-American experience in the military, but especially at Fort Huachuca. The MVOC's diverse and inclusive stories span a variety of perspectives, including military officers, enlisted soldiers, nurses and local patrons.

### STORY-FOCUSED AND IMAGE-RICH

Authentic stories come from real people who served and visited here, and photographs create a visual way to express them. The MVOC will strategically display and interpret its large and varied collection of images, documents and artwork to tell stories of people and place.

### BALANCED MAIN "CHARACTERS"

The MVOC's historical photographs and artwork will visually describe the WWII era. While the historic photos mostly feature the men who served during WWII, women should have equal representation.

### A FRESH LOOK AT HISTORY

Today's MVOC will take visitors back in time to imagine what it was like to visit, train and live in Fort Huachuca. Over the decades, the MVOC evolved beyond its roots as an African-American social club to that of a broader community dance hall and meeting space. Today this building reflects the evolution of our country's societal trends—many of which challenged the civil rights of the African-American men and women who served in the WWII military. The site itself provides a powerful, immersive experience that reveals how life was different then, but also that some things haven't changed very much.





## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The ideas here reflect a dedication to preserving the legacy of this landmark as well as the understanding that this isn't a "museum," but rather a living piece of history.

The MVOC's fascinating history enriches the opportunities to create a modern facility that reflects the events during the WWII era while celebrating the evolution of this iconic building, which was listed in 2013 on the National Register of Historic Places.

Ralph Appelbaum Associates (RAA) was enlisted to create an interpretive plan to illustrate how the stories of the MVOC and Fort Huachuca during WWII can be told visually throughout the building. The ideas here reflect a dedication to preserving the legacy of this landmark as well as the understanding that this isn't a "museum," but rather a living piece of history.

This document suggests ideas for the placement of content throughout the indoor and outdoor dining and party spaces, which offer many opportunities for thematic development for social events of all types and sizes.





## MVOC INTERPRETATION AIMS TO:

**Transport visitors back in time, if only for a few moments during their activities.**

**Honor the African-American men and women who served in the military during WWII.**

**Reflect the vitality when this joint was jumping with music and dancing.**

**Reveal what is special about this historical venue and the surrounding Fort Huachuca.**

**Provide a platform for guests to experience and explore the history of “this place” and find their own exciting Ah-hah! moments.**

**Inspire a sense of curiosity about the *r’aison d’etre* of this building and the events that happened here during and after the war.**

**Raise awareness of segregation during the WWII era.**

**Empower visitors to value the way this site links us to the past.**

**Launch guests into...having fun!**







## OPPORTUNITIES

**Create a visitor experience that transports people back in time without being overly immersive**

**Weave in the founding story of this historical (registered) venue**

**Celebrate African-American experiences in the military**

**Provide a community venue for activities and events with a backdrop of heritage and cultural programming.**

**Reactivate this space in a way to respect its original function and continue to serve Fort Huachuca.**

**Infuse interpretation as a backdrop to social activities by using the building as a canvas to tell stories.**

**Consider digital media where appropriate**

## CHALLENGES

**Accommodate changing floor layouts for different types of events**

**Access to special collections**

**Adhere to specifications for an historic building**



AUDIENCE

- Fort Huachuca service members, employees and contractors
- The Sierra Vista community
- Patrons of the event venue
- Southwest Association of Buffalo Soldiers members
- Local military families
- Families of those stationed here during WWII
- Sports participants (if the fields are developed)
- Military history enthusiasts

MVOC ASSETS

A LOVE OF THIS PLACE



ART COLLECTION



ORAL HISTORIES



THE BUILDING



HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS



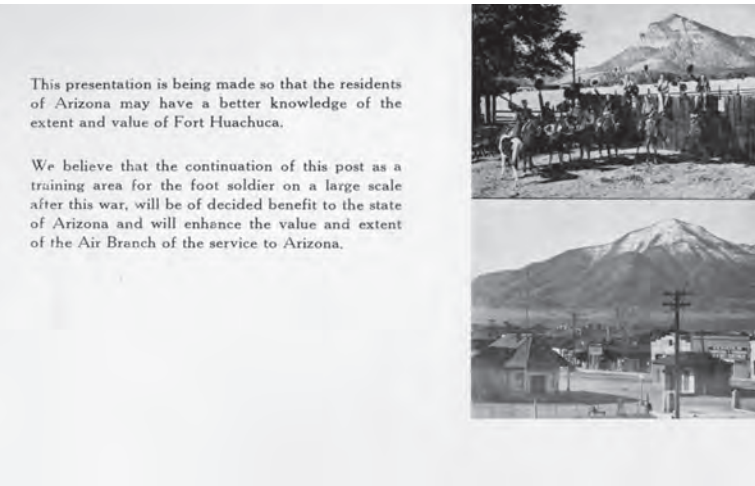
NEWS CLIPPINGS



THE VIEW AND LANDSCAPE



WRITTEN ACCOUNTS



LOCAL COMMUNITY





**EXTERIOR: SPORTS**

Exterior signs near ball fields,  
baseball, football/soccer, track

**SPORTS**

**VISITOR EXPERIENCE: CONTENT SECTIONS  
GROUND LEVEL**

**INTERIOR: WELCOME TO THE MVOC**

Friendly faces and historic places,  
change over time

**WELCOME TO THE MVOC**

**WARTIME FACES**

**FORT HUACHUCA**

Training, soldiers, service  
club/leisure time

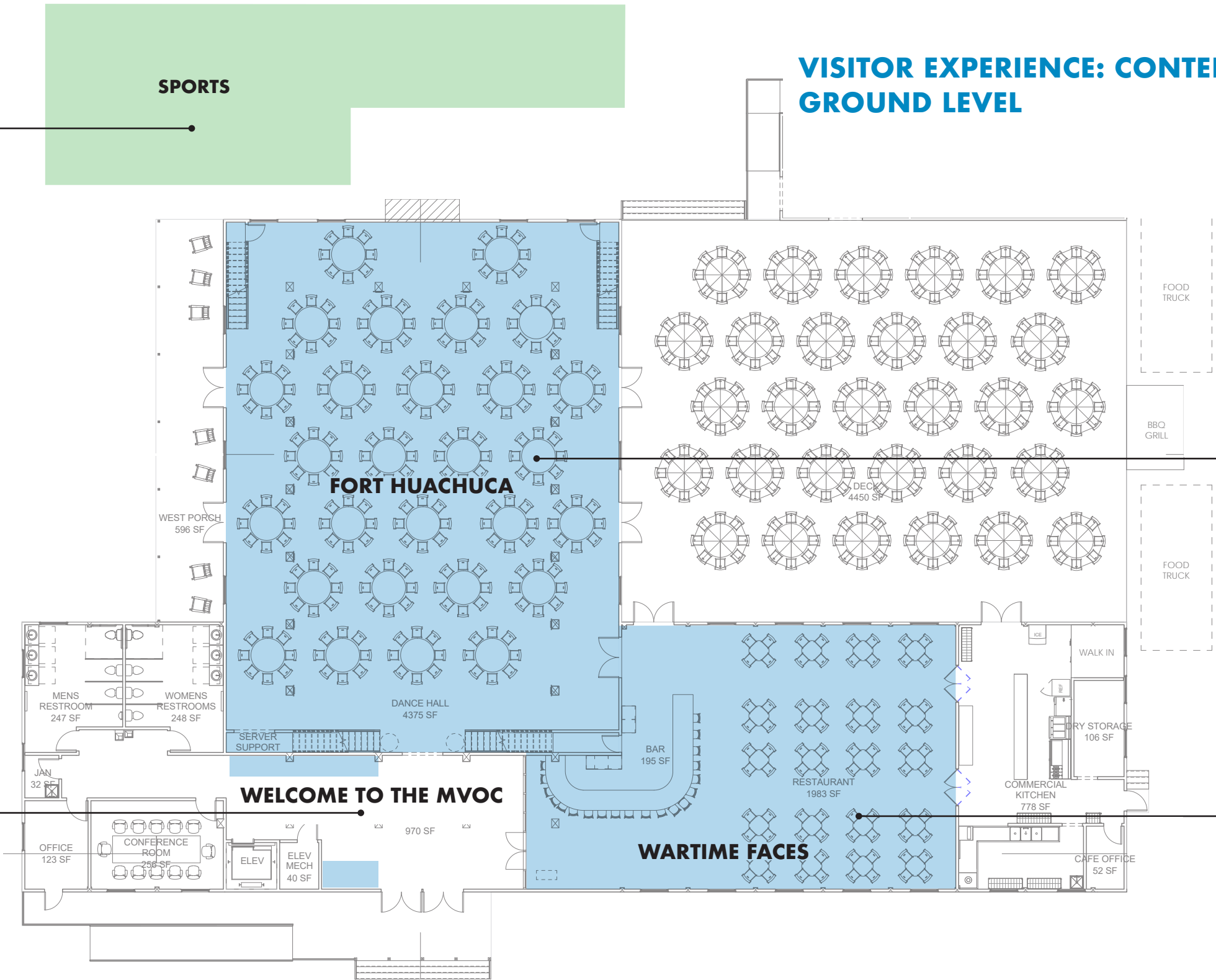
**WARTIME FACES**

The officers, WAAC/nurses,  
soldiers, socializing

**EXTERIOR: BACK IN TIME**

Building anticipation before visitors  
arrive, follow billboards to the past  
(and to the entrance)

**BACK IN TIME**



**VISITOR EXPERIENCE: CONTENT SECTIONS**  
**2ND LEVEL**

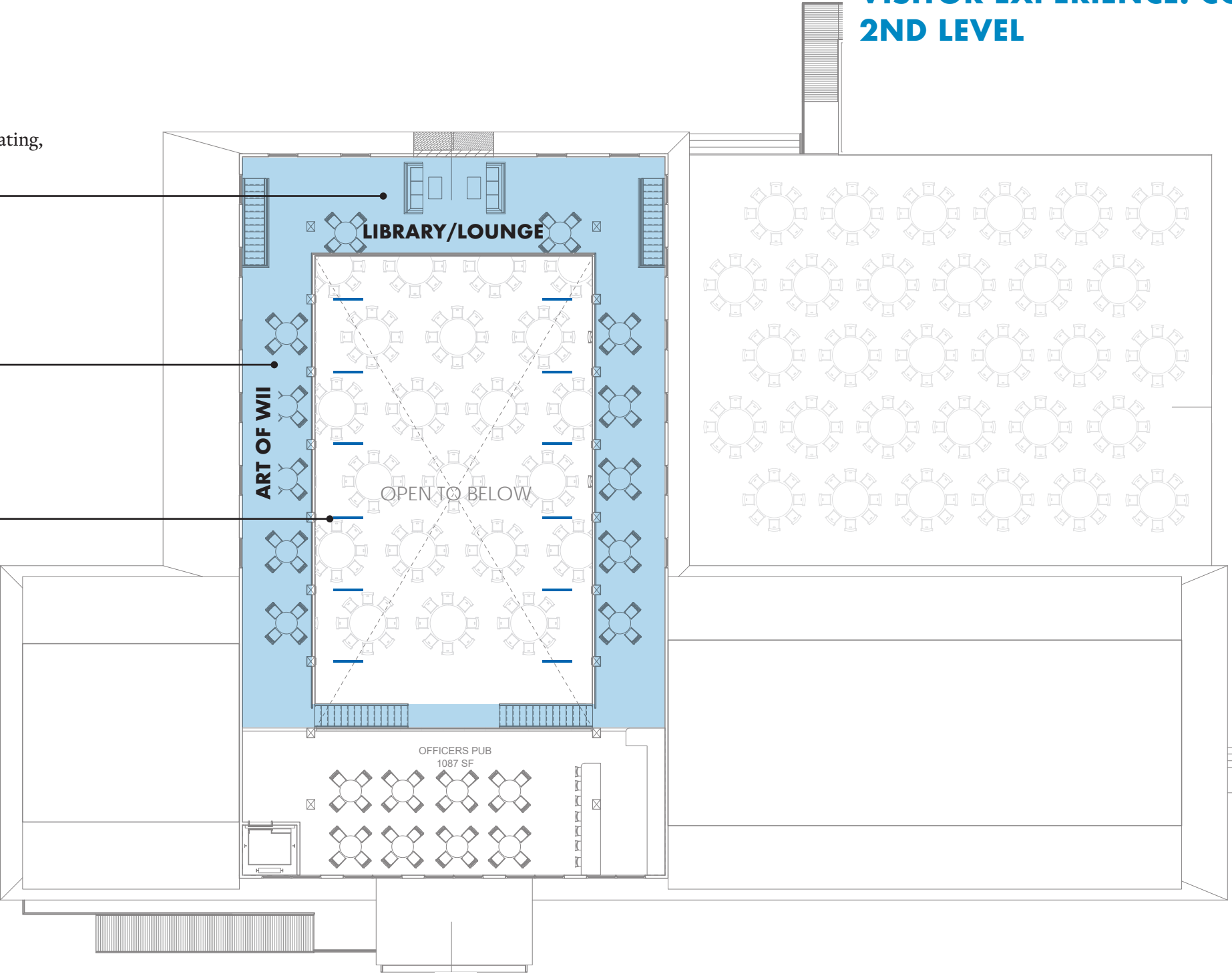
**LIBRARY/LOUNGE**

Fireplace, recliners and comfortable seating,  
reading materials, listening materials

**ART OF WWII**

Featured artwork: then and now

Banner placement





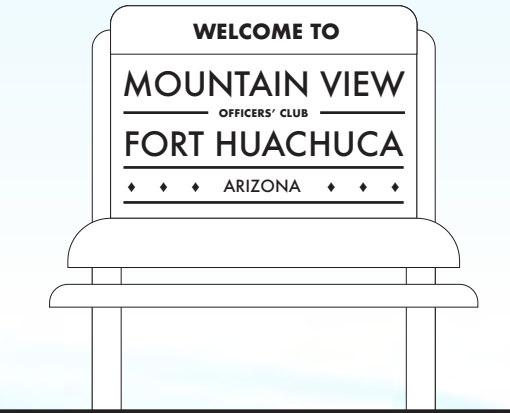
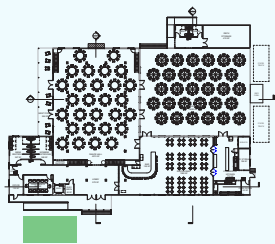
## EXTERIOR





# BACK IN TIME

The dramatic backdrop of the Huachuca, or “windy,” Mountains rises some 4,500 feet toward the sky as visitors drive toward the aptly named Mountain View Officers’ Club. The journey up the road leading to the MVOC acts a bit as a time portal. At the intersection, a sign invites travelers to the MVOC social club. One or two large signs, or billboards, seen en route harken back to 1940s and suggest a connection to the past.



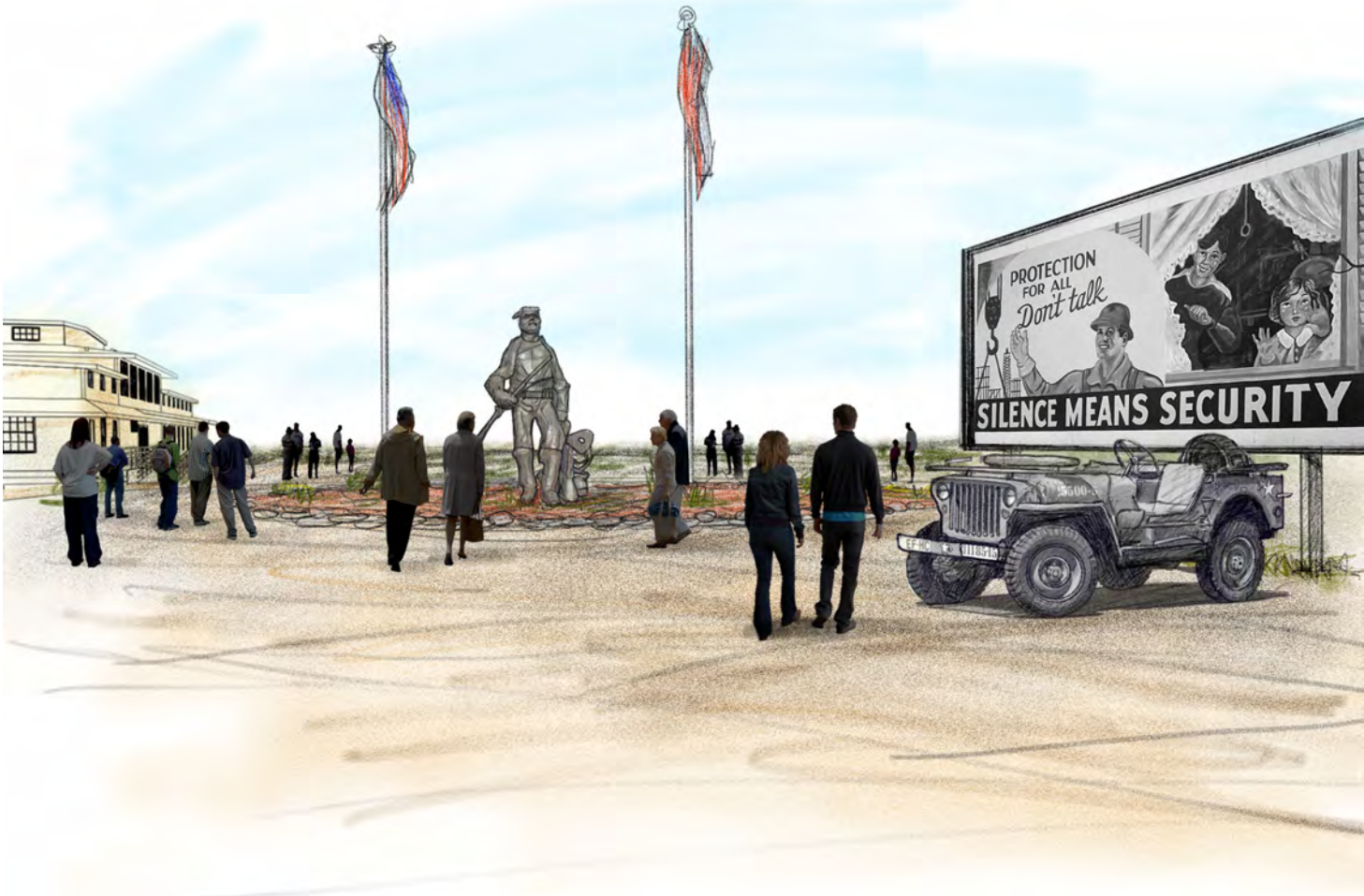
# OUTSIDE THE MVOC

The nostalgic experience begins even before visitors enter the historic MVOC building. Whether they are here to meet colleagues for lunch or for a celebration, visitors are about to engage with a piece of history.

A plaque near the entrance shows that the MVOC as a National Trust for Historic Preservation 2013: America’s Most Endangered Historic Places.

In the central roundabout of the parking lot, a bronze statue signifies and celebrates Buffalo Soldiers. This is the drop-off and pick-up area near the building’s entrance. The very visible statue stands against the mountain backdrop, and it will be drenched with orange hues during spectacular sunsets.

Another landmark in the parking lot is a restored historic Army Jeep. Visitors can pose for selfies or even take a ride down the road in this authentic vehicle. While their phones are out, visitors can also pull up an augmented-reality app that shows the landscape looked like in the 1940s as the cantonment rapidly grew to include some 1400 buildings. There are many AR opportunities like this throughout the site.







## SPORT FIELDS

Behind the building is a baseball field with lights. If patrons rent the building for corporate picnics or family reunions, this outdoor space is perfect for sports activities. Outdoor panels with advertisements for soda and gum reflect the 1940s, and historic photos of soldiers competing in sports shows how the field was used then.





## INTERIOR





WELCOME TO THE MVOC Change Over Time

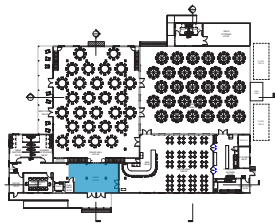
Stepping into the lobby is indeed stepping back in time. The décor, the soundscape and the images on the walls are welcoming and friendly. A stunning photograph of the Fort and the MVOC from the 1940s gives a visual “Welcome,” while a brief statement introduces visitors to the building and its significance.

Sample statement:

Welcome!  
History is all around you.

When the Mountainview View Officers’ Club opened its doors in 1942, the world was a very different place. World War II was in full swing, and Fort Huachuca had grown exponentially almost overnight. This historic club changed—along with the world—over many decades.

A timeline of Ft. Huachuca’s involvement in and contributions to WWII creates a context for the MVOC. At one point, more than 30,000 soldiers were stationed here to learn combat maneuvers before they shipped out to Europe or the Pacific Theater. Many were among the most decorated participants in the war. These stories are told on the timeline, through text and images.



Sample image and caption

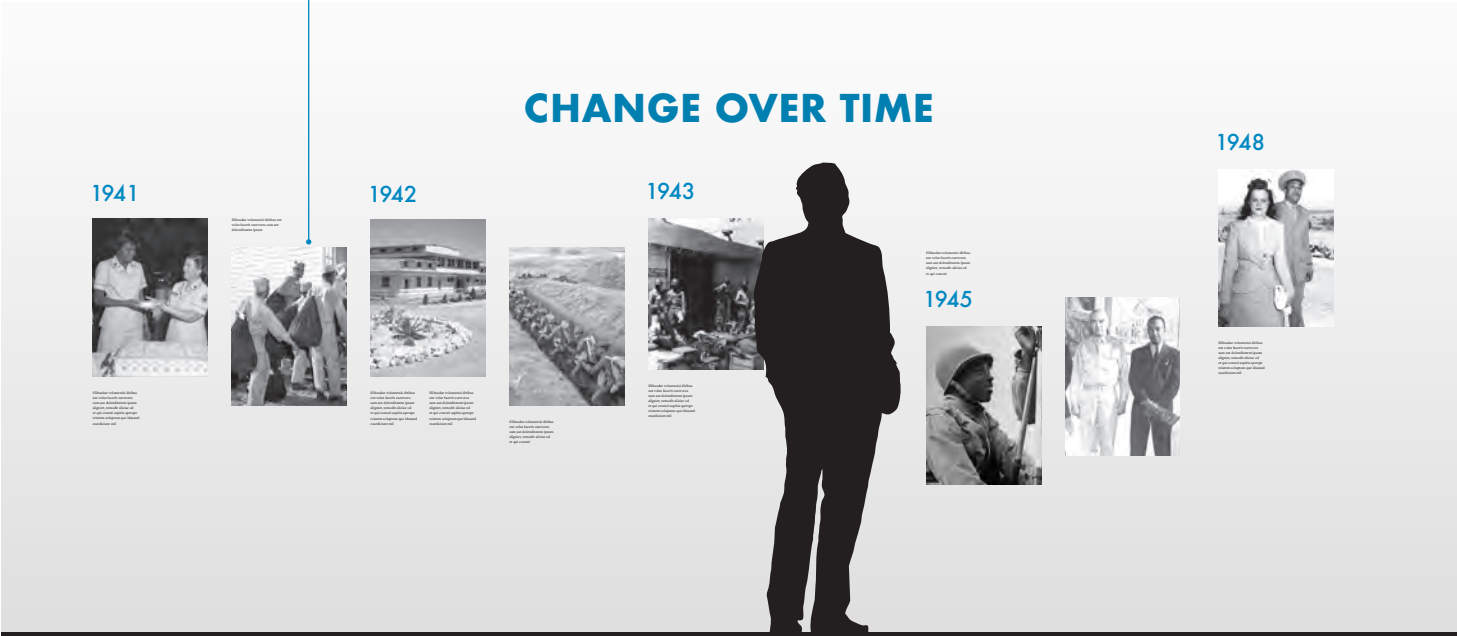
1942



Fort Huachuca builds the Mountain View Colored Officers’ Club, separate from the Lakeside Officers’ Club for white patrons.

EXAMPLES OF EVENTS INCLUDE:

- 1941 US enters World War II
- 1942 93rd African-American Infantry are stationed at Fort Huachuca.
- 1942 Ft. Huachuca builds the Mountain View Colored Officers’ Club, separate from the Lakeside Officers’ Club for white patrons.
- 1943 93rd Infantry ships out to Pacific Theater; 92nd African-American Infantry arrives at Fort Huachuca
- 1945 World War II officially ended on September 2nd
- 1948 President Harry S. Truman issues Executive Order 9981 to desegregate the armed forces.



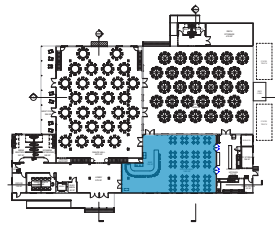


## CAFÉ Wartime Faces

To the right of the lobby, diners enter the Café for cocktails and meals. A soundscape of 1940s radio music plays in the background as visitors walk by a wall of photographs of the distinguished officers who made this place special. Short captions describe the person in each photo such as Col. Reuben L. Horner, III, who was one of the most-decorated African-Americans of World War II. He received 29 awards including a Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star with oak leaf cluster, Bronze Star with four clusters for valor and three Purple Hearts. Portraits as well as images of people dining and socializing will create a well-rounded vignette of activities in which the officers would participate.

The roster of photographs extends beyond just officers here at Fort Huachuca to give glimpses of people throughout the fort, not just MVOC members. Some other faces here will include celebrities that entertained the troops at different venues around the Fort, though not necessarily here at MVOC. Lena Horne, for example, played at the Servicemen's Club, but not at the Officers' Club. From nurses to other WAAC members, enlisted soldiers to officers, the cast of characters here at Ft. Huachuca during WWII spans a wide range.

Names and short captions tell a brief story about each featured person, but this wall also offers a prime opportunity for additional interpretation through augmented reality.





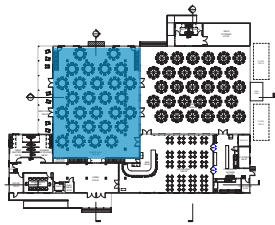
BALLROOM Fort Huachuca

With so many people living and training on Fort Huachuca, there was always activity. Some of these were captured in photographs. These proving grounds taught some of the bravest fighters in the armed forces how to survive.

Option A: Photography

Banners hanging from the ballroom ceiling and large-scale images will feature activities on the base. From training maneuvers to fitness, the soldiers here worked very hard to overcome the heat from the weather, but also heat from their colleagues who often did not treat African-Americans fairly. These images will capture the dedication and patriotism shown by these brave men and women. Other images include music, dancing and other leisure time activities that took place here.

Images here are not necessarily limited to WWII. Instead, they will spread across disciplines and decades. The changing role of this club—along with its décor—may be surprising to some. The MVOC evolved from and all-African-American club to a social setting for all.



Option B: Regiments

Another option for banners is to acknowledge the other African-American regiments across the country by displaying their emblems as banners or graphics. These could be in place of images of activities or interspersed with them from the ceiling.



Retractable Screen

A retractable movie screen or a portion of the wall is a projection surface for looping black-and-white movies of Lena Horne USO shows or dance contests, for example. This projector can also be used for events such as weddings or proms, and it could play videos for community movie nights.



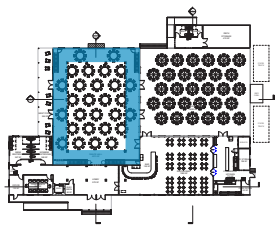






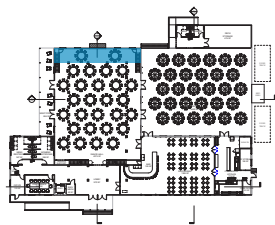
BALCONY Art of WWII

The MVOC hosted an African-American art show in 1943. Thirty-seven works went on display, many by artists that have received great acclaim since this art show. The original works are now archived at Howard University. The balcony surrounding the ballroom will feature reproductions of these works of art to be enjoyed by visitors who venture upstairs, away from the ballroom crowd.



Library and Lounge

The MVOC was one of two black officers' clubs constructed specifically for off-duty leisure, networking and socializing for African-American officers stationed here during the height of WWII. In this building, military rank was set aside, and friends could have a smoke, play cards and chat in a relaxed atmosphere. This second-floor lounge area re-creates an intimate space where small groups can relax, listen to music or read in front of a cozy fireplace.





# AUGMENTED REALITY APP

“If these walls could talk.”  
Actually... they can with augmented reality.

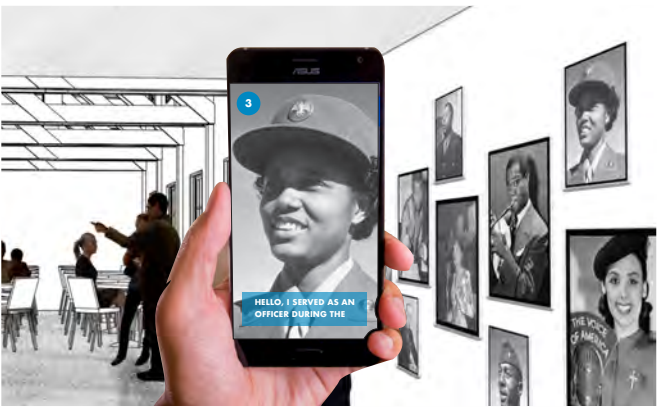
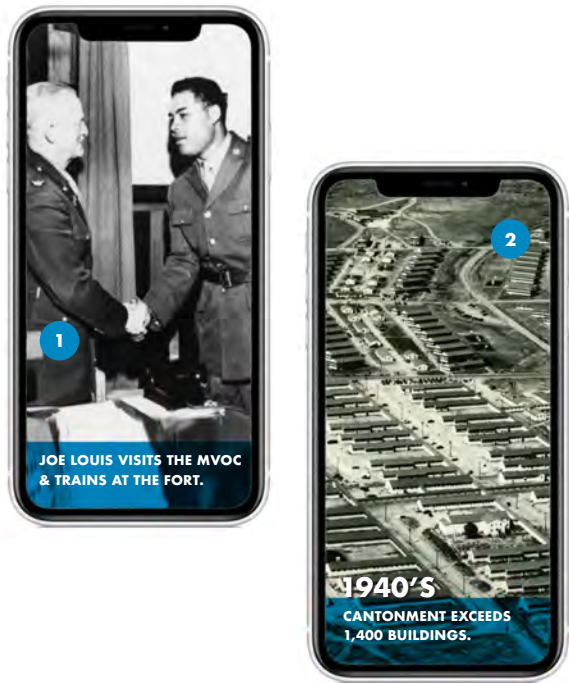
## OUTDOOR

AR visually re-creates the evolution of the Fort as the cantonment rapidly grew to 1,400 buildings, along with proving grounds and sports fields, during WWII. Digital images, interviews and background information about the events that happened here bring viewers back in time.

## INDOOR

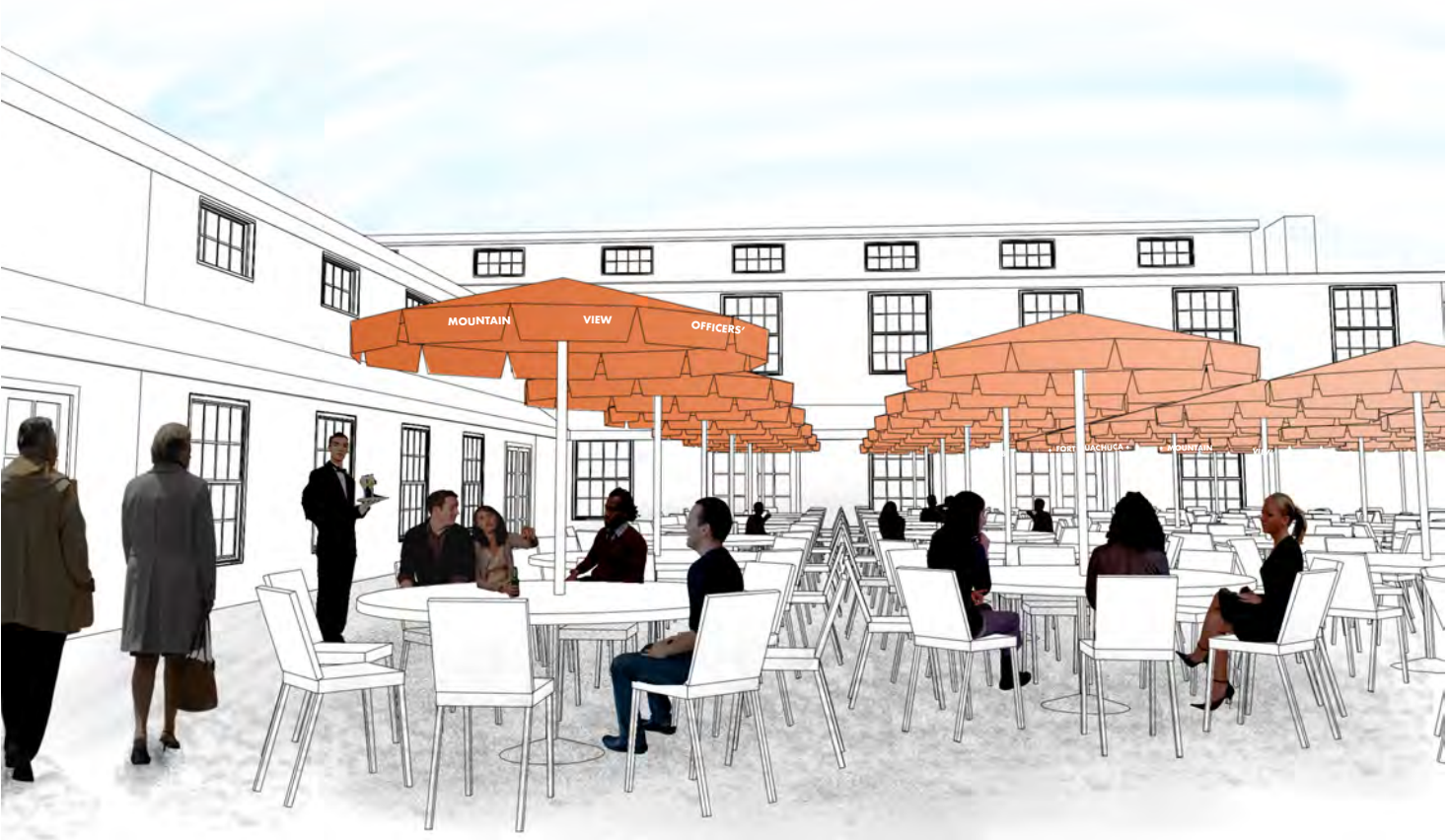
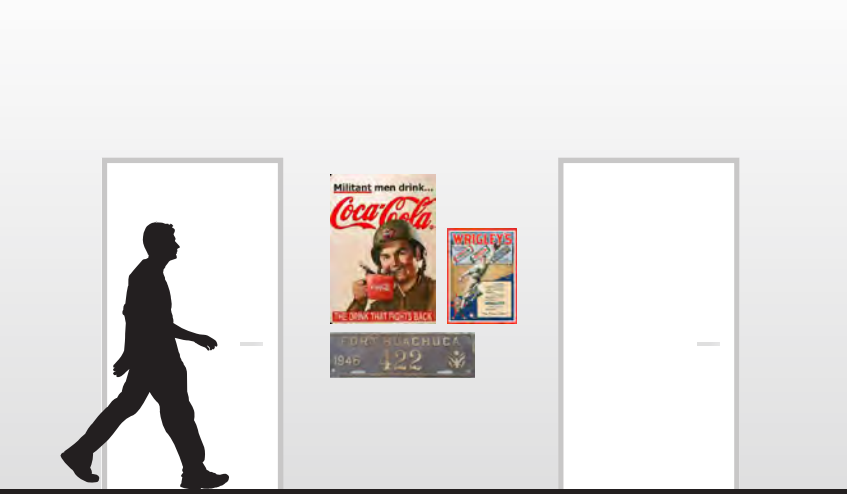
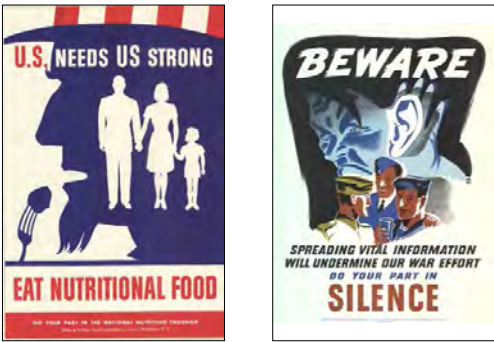
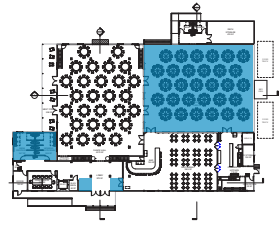
Portraits and timeline images trigger the AR app to play an interview with an officer’s family member reminiscing about today or historic celebrity visits, such as boxer Joe Louis.

On screen, viewers can see the ballroom and café during different eras, for example. Hold your device up to a room and choose a time period. Presto! The décor changes to match the year: the modern bar transforms into a tiki bar from the 1950s, and music from the era plays.

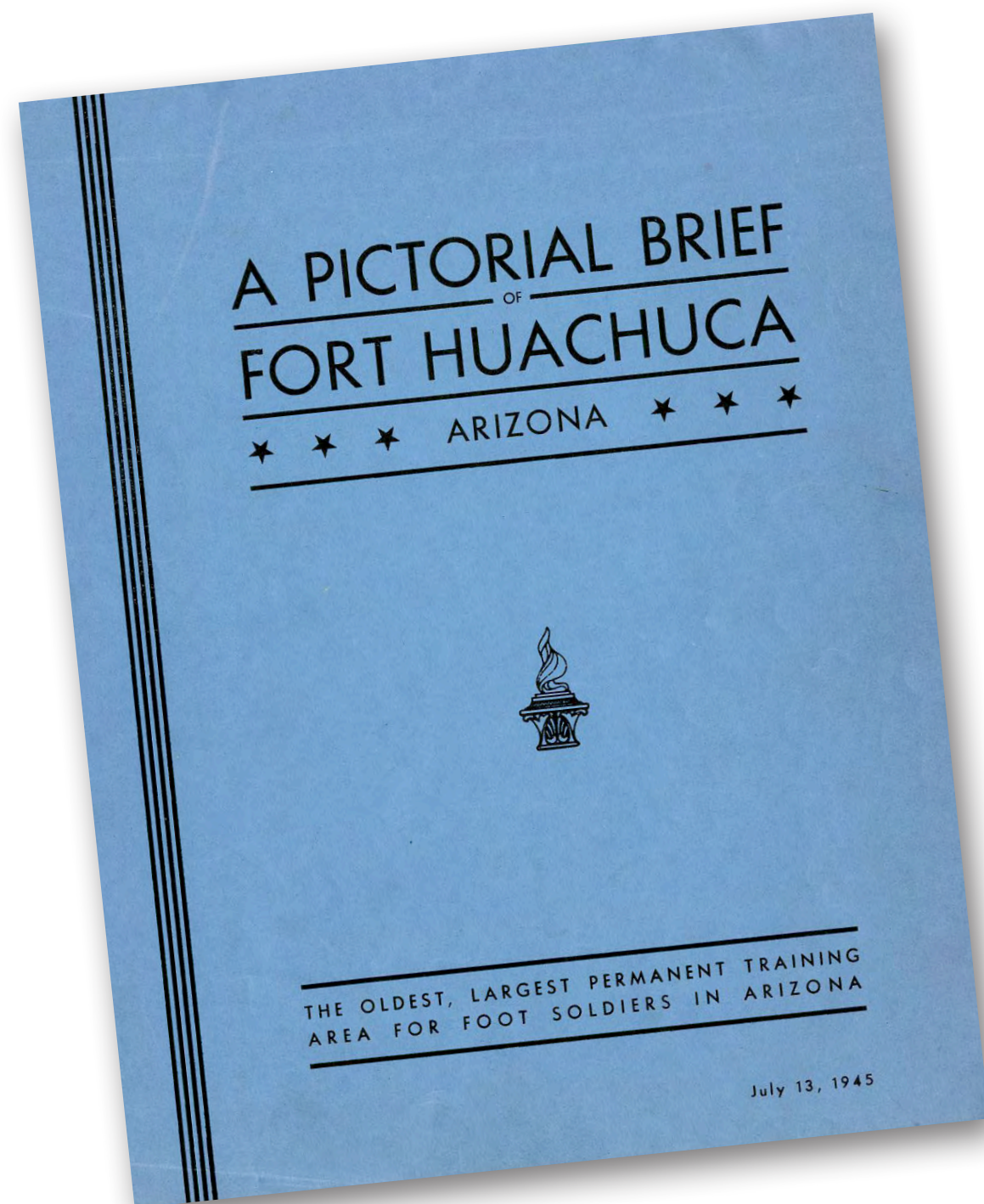


# OTHER NOOKS AND CRANNIES

Areas such as hallways and elevators are great places to display “signs of the times.” In other words, there are lots of public service posters about taking care of one’s gear, health alerts and the spread of secrets. In hindsight, these are amusing peeks back in time.







## CONTENT & DESIGN APPROACH

The storied past of the MVOC at Fort Huachuca will surround diners and dancers as they fill this historic building with new energy and life. While today’s patrons hail from the surrounding community as well as today’s Fort, the images and artwork on the walls reflect military life in the 1940s.

Using a range of displays, among them banners and projections, the design will feature photographs, prints of paintings and scenic “flashbacks” to create an overall picture of the past. The content will be mostly visual, but individual labels for photos will identify people and places while telling a vignette where possible.

## MOUNTAIN VIEW OFFICERS’ CLUB FORT HUACHUCA ARIZONA



### FUTURA BOLD

Freight Text Pro Medium



BRANDING OPPORTUNITIES

Napkins, coasters and matchbooks are branding opportunities throughout the café and food service areas. Umbrellas and tablecloths reflect the 1940s theme and can also carry branding graphics.



Matchbook



Napkin



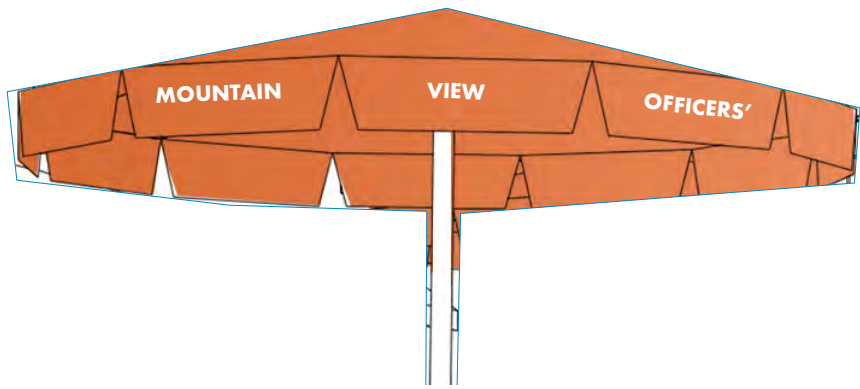
Coaster (front)



Coaster (back)

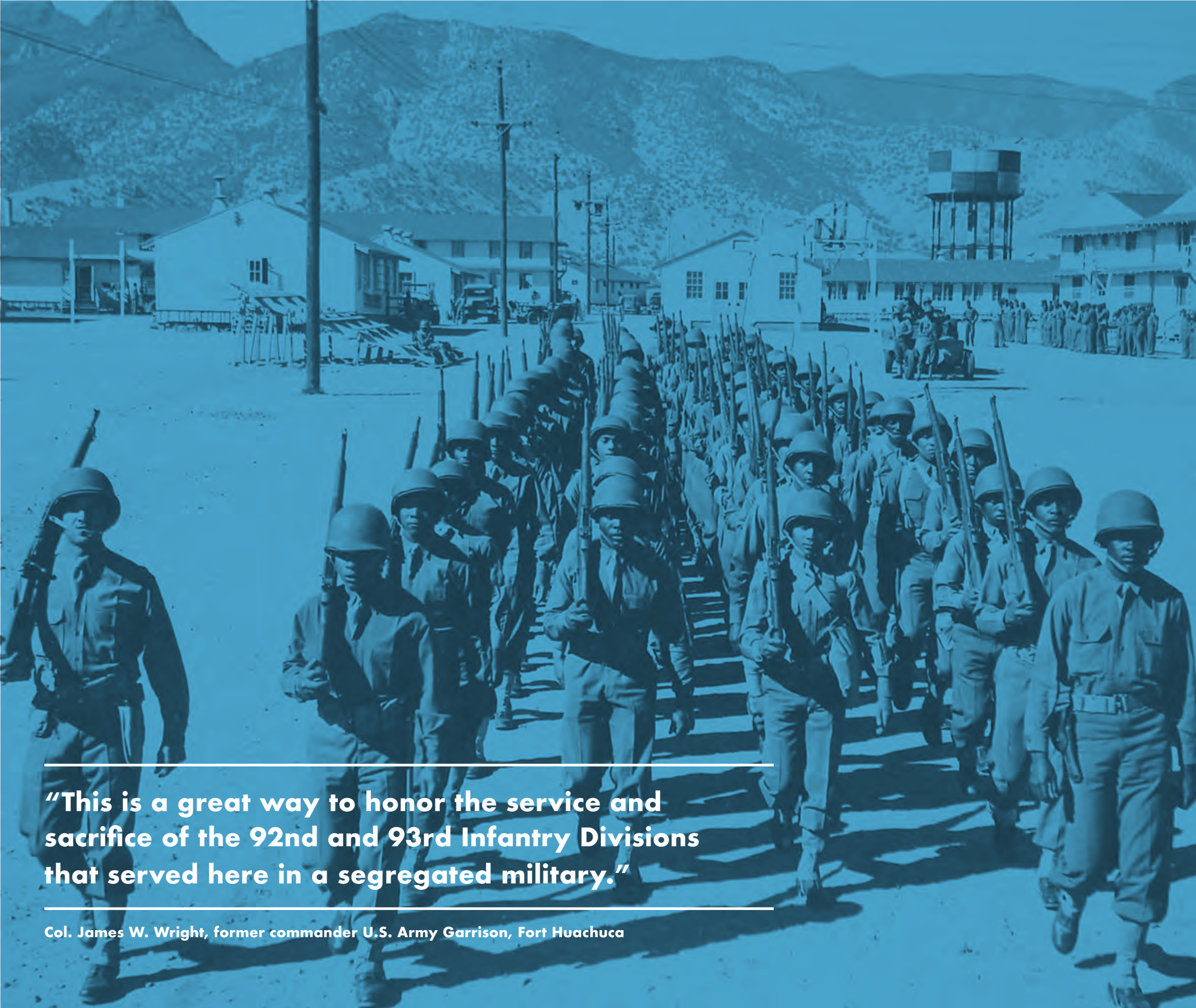


Neon Signs



Umbrella





**“This is a great way to honor the service and sacrifice of the 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions that served here in a segregated military.”**

**Col. James W. Wright, former commander U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Huachuca**

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## **MOUNTAIN VIEW OFFICERS' CLUB**

### **INTERPRETIVE CONCEPT DOCUMENT PREPARED BY RALPH APPELBAUM ASSOCIATES JUNE 2019**

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