



December 18, 2023

Dr. Robert C. Robbins, President
University of Arizona
Old Main, Room 222
1200 East University Boulevard
P.O. Box 210021
Tucson, Arizona 85721-0021
Via email: president@arizona.edu

Dear Dr. Robbins:

On December 13, 2023, the Tucson Pima County Historical Commission (TPCHC) voted unanimously to advocate for the preservation of the Paolo Soleri–designed University of Arizona Cancer Center Chapel and request that the City of Tucson Mayor and County and Pima County Board of Supervisors do everything in their power to protect this important architectural resource. The preservation of the chapel and its spatial integrity is critical to the heritage of our region and the United States.

The TPCHC was established to advise the Mayor and Council, the Board of Supervisors, and applicable city and county officials on issues concerning historic sites, historic structures, and new construction and demolition within the City of Tucson and Pima County. The December 13 action on the part of the TPCHC reflects the Commission's dedication to safeguarding the historical and architectural resources that contribute to the rich heritage of the community and region.

This historic space, designed by world-renowned architect Paolo Soleri in response to the death of his wife from cancer, cannot be ignored. The embracing architectural design, the light, and the acoustics that provide the context for the decorative art elements are equal in importance to the selective collection that is proposed for an out-of-context display at the Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine.

The Soleri Chapel is significant under National Register Criterion C as the work of a master and under Criteria Consideration G as the work of exceptional importance, achieving its significance within the past fifty years.

The minimal outreach to and consultation with the Advisory Community on Public Art was unacceptable for a resource of such major importance. The planners for the new

center failed to contact the School of Architecture or the University Office of Historic Preservation before proceeding with their design. The University failed to follow the legal imperative of Arizona Revised Statute 41-864, which emphasizes the responsibility of State entities such as the University of Arizona to give primary consideration to preservation measures during the alteration or relocation of historic resources.

University of Arizona responsibilities are also outlined in University Policy F – Stewardship of Campus Historic Resources:

- Policy 1 – The University will continue to comply with the provisions of the State Historic Preservation Act of 1982 and the Arizona Antiquities Act of 1960, as amended.
- Policy 2 – The University will document historic or potentially historic resources consistent with the 1982 act in a professionally competent and reasonable manner and in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).
- Policy 3 – The University will consider adaptive use or reuse of historic resources (e.g., buildings and sites) under ownership and control of the University in the planning and implementation of projects.
- Policy 4 – The University will encourage public appreciation of historic values through educational programs and through the study and interpretation of archaeological, architectural, and historic resources throughout Arizona.

The Commission strongly urges the University, as an educational institution, to demonstrate its support for the stewardship of historic resources by reevaluating its course of action with regard to the Chapel and to undertake an open dialog with stakeholders, following the principles outlined in Arizona Revised Statute 41-864.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Teresita Majewski, Ph.D., RPA, FSA
Chair, Tucson–Pima County Historical Commission

cc: Hon. Deb Haaland, U.S. Secretary of the Interior; Hon. Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs; Ms. Regina Romero, City of Tucson (COT) Mayor; City of Tucson Councilmembers; Ms. Adelita Grijalva, Pima County Board of Supervisors Chair; Christine Willett, the Weil Foundation; Mr. Kyle Normandin, ICOMOS, International Scientific Committee of Twentieth Century Heritage; Ms. Kathryn Leonard, Arizona

State Historic Preservation Officer; Mr. Jim McPherson, President, Arizona Preservation Foundation; Mr. Demion Clinco, CEO, Tucson Historic Preservation Foundation; Arizona Board of Regents: Mr. Fred DuVal, Chair; Mr. John Arnold, Executive Director; Ms. Cecilia Mata, Regent; Ms. Lyndel Manson, Regent; Mr. Robert J. Herbold, Regent; Mr. Larry Edward Penley, Regent; Ms. Jessica Pacheco, Regent; Mr. Doug Goodyear, Regent; Mr. Gregg Brewster, Regent; Ms. Lisa Rulney, CFO, University of Arizona; Mr. Steve Voeller, University of Arizona, Government and Community Relations; Ms. Maura Ross, UAHS Planning and Facilities; Ms. Jodie Brown, COT Historic Preservation Officer; Ms. Linda Mayro, Director, Pima County Sustainability – Conservation – Historic Preservation; TPCHC Commissioners