

FORT NECESSITY HISTORIC DISTRICT A PRESCOTT HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISTRICT

6.1 DISTRICT OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

6.1.1 Overview



*Fort Necessity ("Indian Hill") -
View from Base of the Hill Near
the Entry Road*

The Fort Necessity Historic District, Prescott's first archaeological district, is located on a butte in west Prescott commonly referred to as "Indian Hill." The property is owned by the City of Prescott and has commanding views of the entire area. A narrow dirt road curves to the top of the hill, which is topped by two city water tanks and two small utility buildings.

As the result of a Class I archaeological survey conducted in 1995, the property was determined to be potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Future Class II testing is required to determine full eligibility for nomination. Nevertheless, the site "appears to have considerable potential for further scientific research and interpretation to the general public" (Lundin, 1995).

Geologically, the bulk of the site can be characterized by a series of Precambrian granitic-granodiorite intrusives that are cut by numerous quartz-carbonate veins containing base and precious metal-bearing sulfides. These vertically dipping units are capped by relatively thin, flat-lying Tertiary volcanic flows of basaltic to andesitic composition. It is these flat basalt flows at and near the top of the hill that provide excellent vistas of the area. Vegetation in the district consists of grasses, oak, pinion and juniper pine, cacti, and various hackberry bushes that grow on the ridges.

The Fort Necessity Historic District represents the type of archaeological resource that is quickly disappearing in Prescott. Although there have been many such "forts" and other prehistoric resources in the area, many have been lost over the years to increased development. The district presents a unique opportunity for the City to not only preserve this resource, but to enhance its use as a passive view and interpretive archaeological park.

6.1.2 Location

The Fort Necessity Historic District is located approximately 1-1/4 mile west-southwest of the Courthouse Square. Country Club Drive completely encircles the site (except for the west edge, which is bordered by Fairway View Drive), and the rear lot lines of 25 homes forms the district boundary. Rising to an elevation of 5,710 feet, the hill is an average of 150 feet above Country Club Drive and 400 feet higher than downtown Prescott. Butte Creek to the north of the hill and Aspen Creek to the south were likely intermittent sources of water during prehistoric times (pre-1864). The boundary of the district is shown on Figure 5-1.

6.1.3 History of the District

Fort Necessity was likely first noted by early residents of the area as early as the 1860s. Portions of the property have been identified as the possible location of placer gold mining claims in the 1860s, but these claims were abandoned by the end of the century.

The first known description of the site was by J.W. Fewkes in 1912, who documented "a fort similar in construction to the forts overlooking Walnut Creek - the walls are extensive and in places well preserved, but a considerable section has fallen." No pottery fragments were found in this early investigation.

The site was described again in 1926 by Mr. Jack Ogg. In his notes he characterized the top of the hill as "completely encircled by the remains of a wall approximately two feet thick and still standing to a height of three feet in a few spots - there were a few pottery sherds and flint chippings on top but the area showed no indication of extensive habitation." The lack of evidence of human habitation, in addition to the still-visible ramparts, is likely the reason why the site was described by early residents as a "fort."

Due to its height above the surrounding area, the property has been used by the City of Prescott as a water storage facility since the 1940s (the site may have been part of the Murphy holdings prior to the 1940s). The construction of two permanent water tanks in 1955 and 1971 obliterated various portions of the "fort."

A field investigation of Fort Necessity was conducted in July, 1995. Reported features at the site were confirmed to exist and were relatively undisturbed. Although there was some evidence of use by hikers, limited pot-hunting, and some destruction of the remaining rock wall features, these activities have not yet seriously affected the site.

6.1.4 Formation of the Historic District

In June 1994 the Prescott City Council decided not to sell the "Indian Hill Water Tanks." The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was then contacted regarding the site's eligibility for listing in the Arizona and National Register of Historic Places. A new survey was required by SHPO, which was conducted in 1995. SHPO then declared the site "potentially eligible" for inclusion in the Register, pending the outcome of a Class II Archaeological Survey. The Fort Necessity Historic District is considered eligible for the National Register under criterion "D" for its potential to yield information important in prehistory.

Since the statement "potentially eligible" is sufficient to request the creation of a historic preservation district, the Prescott Preservation Commission proceeded with this request. The City Council approved the ordinance forming the Fort Necessity Historic District in November, 1995.



Prehistoric Ruin at Fort Necessity



View to the Northwest from Fort Necessity, Toward Thumb Butte

6.1.5 Prescott Preservation District Responsibilities

The Prescott Preservation Commission has review responsibilities for any proposed project within the boundaries of the district. The review process is required for any project requiring a building permit. Since the City owns the property, coordination between city staff and the Commission will be required. The installation of benches and interpretive signage would not normally require a permit, but coordination is nevertheless encouraged. Any structures or significant road improvements would require review and should be considered as part of an overall plan for the site.

Properties bordering the district are not subject to project review, although coordination with the Commission is encouraged to ensure compatible design.

6.2 DISTRICT QUALITIES AND DESIGN ELEMENTS

6.2.1 Overview

The Fort Necessity Historic District is bounded on all sides by single-family residential development. None of homes are accessible from the district, as they are all accessed by Country Club or Fairway View Drive. None of the homes qualifies for inclusion in the district. The only approach to the site is via a narrow dirt road near the northern edge of the property, which passes behind two residential lots.

With the obvious and notable exceptions of the road and water tanks, the remainder of the site is relatively undisturbed. The slopes are rocky and steep in places, with a thick underbrush that discourages casual hiking anywhere other than the dirt road. As a result, the remaining archaeological sites are in good condition.

The site has been mentioned as a location for a passive use view park, as the district affords 360 degree views of Prescott. Such a use of the property should be compatible with the archaeological use of the site (or in conjunction with it as part of an interpretive center), provided that the proper investigations are undertaken to ensure that all remaining prehistoric resources are identified, documented, and protected.

6.2.2 Landscape/Streetscape

The district provides valuable open space within an area of Prescott that has been nearly completely developed over the years. Any improvements to the site should include such elements as native rock walls, meandering trails, and generous use of native vegetation to allow any future park use to blend in with the natural landscape.

The current entrance to the property is narrow and difficult to find. So long as Fort Necessity remains undeveloped, this will be sufficient and helps to protect the site. However, if increased use is desired, then a better and more functional entry feature will be necessary. Any improvements to the entrance must minimize impacts to neighboring homes.

6.2.3 Integrity

Despite some obvious resource degradation, the Fort Necessity Historic District appears to have considerable potential for further scientific research and interpretation.

On the basis of the Class I research efforts and the field inspections, there is likely significant remaining research and interpretive potential for the site that would make it eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.



View from Fort Necessity Toward the West - Toward Hassayampa Country Club

6.3 DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS

6.3.1 Elements Worthy of Preservation

Since the area immediately surrounding the district is completely developed, and since no commercial pressures appear to currently exist, the context in which the district sits will be residential for the foreseeable future. The land use pattern and streetscape for the area remain essentially unaltered from the time when it was first developed. The exception to this is the Hassayampa Country Club, a luxury golf course development to the west of Fort Necessity. This may cause increased traffic on Country Club, but is not expected to negatively impact the district. The Fort Necessity Historic District offers a useful tool for understanding and studying the prehistory of Prescott and for appreciating vistas of the historic city.

Siting of the Building(s)

It is not anticipated, nor is it recommended, that any significant facility construction take place within the district. However, minor facilities may be desirable to enhance the use of the area as a passive use park. These could include benches, low walls, signage, shade structures, viewing shelter(s), and restrooms. Any proposed structures should be small, unobtrusive, and compatible with the landscape. Likewise, materials should be durable, low-maintenance, and in a color palette compatible with the surrounding terrain.

Streetscape/Landscape

Any lighting installed in the future must be compatible with the surrounding homes, including minimized heights, low cutoff angles, and appropriate lamp selection.



Existing Road Leading to the Top of the Hill

Chainlink fence is the most common material used at the back of the adjacent homes. To enhance the character of any future park, as well as to minimize impact to the houses, improvements to these walls (such as earth-tone split-face block) should be encouraged. Likewise, the chainlink fence around the city water tanks should be improved.

6.3.2 Threats to District Integrity

The impact of the water tanks has already been noted. Although the water tanks have destroyed much of the prehistoric resources in the district, their presence within the city-owned parcel have likely prevented the area from complete development. No additional Public Works related construction or modifications have been identified for the near future. Thus, the district should remain in a stable condition until any additional improvements are contemplated.

To minimize impacts to the district and to the neighborhood, improvements to the existing road for automobile access is not recommended. This would require widening, parking, and turnarounds that need relatively large plots of land. It is recommended that the existing road be improved for use as a trail (and for occasional Public Works access to the water tanks). Pedestrian access should be encouraged, with limited parking at the base of the hill.

The City, in particular the Public Works Department, and the Prescott Preservation Commission should work together to ensure that any future projects are compatible with the nature of the district and the surrounding neighborhood.

The Fort Necessity Historic District and all of the area immediately surrounding it is zoned Residential A-9 (RA-9). RA-9 zoning is a basic residential classification that is used primarily for single-family homes on lots of 9,000 square feet or less. It has many more restrictions than the RB designations and should be maintained for this area. The presence of this zoning classification will help alleviate commercial pressures in the area.

The use of the district as a passive park is consistent with the RA-9 zoning, which includes "public playgrounds and public parks but not including any sport, athletic, recreational or amusement enterprise operated as a business or for commercial purposes." Additional aspects of RA-9 zoning are outlined below:

Table 6-1
District Zoning Classifications

<i>Item</i>	<i>Residence A-9</i>
Building Height Limitation	2-1/2 Stories, 35 Feet Max.
Building Site Area	50 Feet Wide, Min. 40 Percent of Lot, Max.
Yards, Front	25 Feet, Min.
Yards, Side	5 Feet, Min.*
Yards, Rear	25 Feet, Min.
Accessory Buildings	15 Percent of Lot, Max.*
Screening	Back and Sides: 6 Foot Max. Front: 4 Foot Max.

* Additional stipulations attached to this requirement. See Zoning Code.

Source: City of Prescott Zoning Code, 47th Edition, December 1995.



View to the East from Fort Necessity - Toward Downtown Prescott and Hills Beyond

The 35 foot height allowance is much taller than the homes of the area and would be incompatible with the district. Any accessory buildings in the district should not be more than one story in height. Only those structures stipulated in Section 6.3.1 and Table 6.3 of this report should be permitted.

Overall, current zoning within the Fort Necessity Historic District is compatible with the residential nature of the neighborhood and provides an established defense against incompatible development.

6.3.3 Opportunities Within the District

Given the history and importance of the Fort Necessity Historic District, protection and preservation of the prehistoric resources is of primary concern. However, the opportunity to increase public knowledge of the site, as well as of the greater Prescott area, should be considered for the future. The location of the district (on a prominent hill in west Prescott) offers an additional opportunity to appreciate the scenic beauty of the area.

At a minimum, consideration should be given to the following efforts: 1) proceed with archaeological investigation of the area through a Class II study; and 2) once this work is complete, provide improved (even if limited) public access to the site.

If any cultural resource materials are encountered in the course of any ground-disturbing activities within the district, all operations should immedi-

ately cease and notification be made to the SHPO and any other appropriate local or state agency or museum. The Class II study should not be undertaken until a plan for the entire site is developed. This will allow the investigation to better concentrate on those areas that may be proposed for increased development.

6.3.4 Specific District Recommendations

Summary of Recommendations

The following represents a brief summary of the recommendations discussed above.

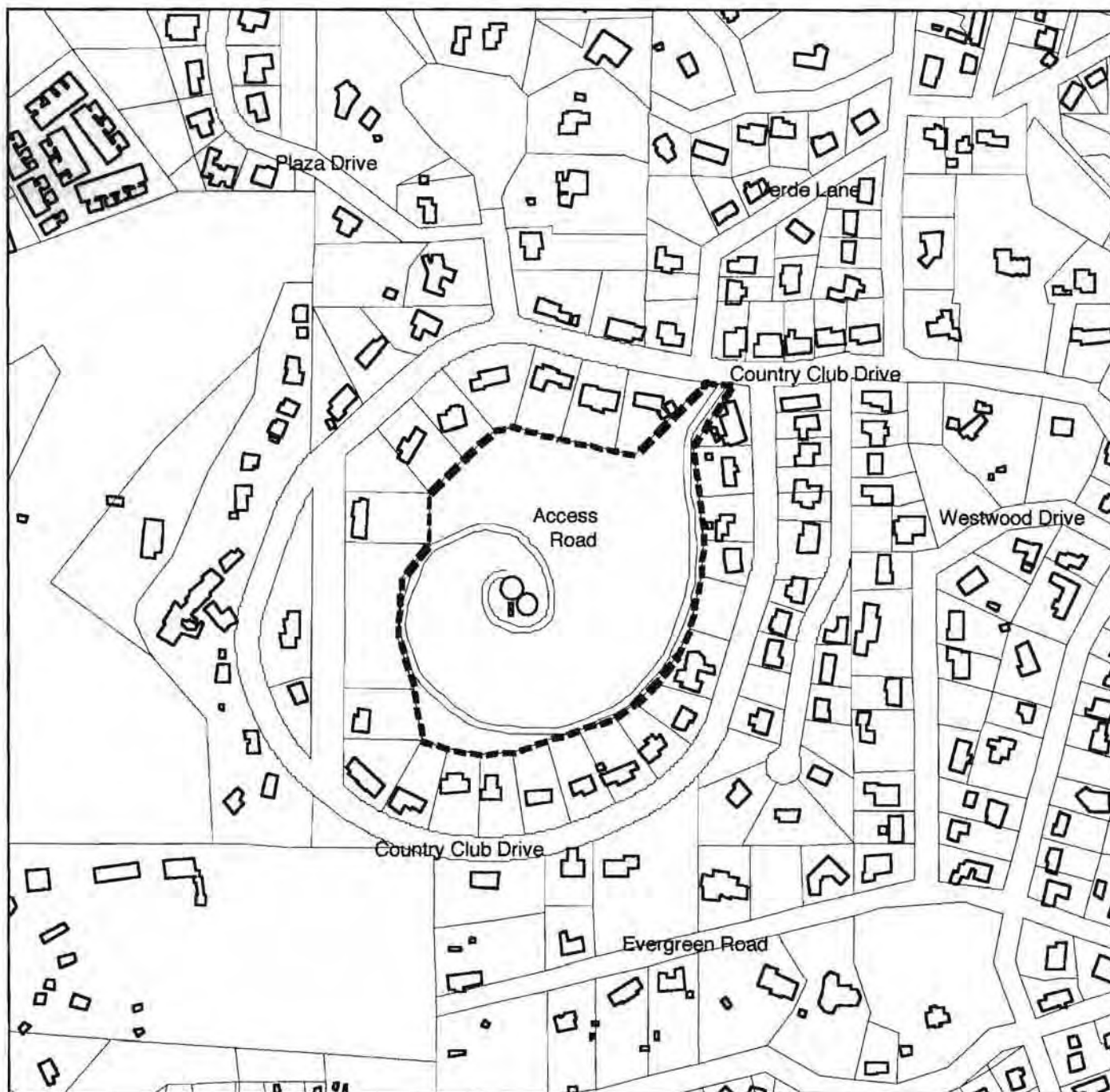
Table 6-2
Summary of Recommendations - Fort Necessity Historic District

<i>Item</i>	<i>Observation/Recommendation</i>
Siting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not allow significant new construction within the district • Encourage low-impact structures associated with a passive use park, such as benches, signage, shelters, restrooms, etc. • Encourage small, unobtrusive structures constructed of durable, low-maintenance materials that are compatible with the district • Consider an improved entry to the district
Streetscape/Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the use of native materials in any improvements (native rock walls, etc.) • Do not allow tall light poles; use low cutoff angles and appropriate lamp selection • Consider improving perimeter and water tank fencing
Future Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve and protect the prehistoric resources of the district as the first priority • Maintain and enhance the native vegetation of the district • Allow only pedestrian use of the existing road; improve the existing dirt road for use as a trail • Allow only limited parking at the base of the hill to avoid impacting the residential neighborhood • Allow only low, one-story structures in the district (current zoning allows 2-1/2 stories and a 35 foot height allowance) • Allow only those facilities stipulated in Section 6.3.1 and Table 6.3 of this report.

District Opportunities

- Develop an overall plan for the Fort Necessity Historic District
- Proceed with a Class II archaeological investigation, concentrating on those areas proposed for improvements in the plan
- Consider improved (even if limited) public access to the site as an archaeological interpretive center and passive view park

HISTORIC PRESERVATION MASTER PLAN



----- National District Boundary

Figure

6-1

Fort Necessity
Prescott Historic District
District Boundary

Not to Scale