

Whistling Dixie?

The Civil War found its way to Arizona in 1862 in a brief, haphazard skirmish dubbed the war's "westernmost battle." A century and a half later, the battle has been reignited – this time over the state's six monuments to its Confederate roots and whether removing them will put us on the right side of history.

By **Lauren Loftus**

Illustration by **Hal Mayforth**

Just after noon on April 15, 1862, 13 mounted Union cavalry scouts roamed the dusty shrub wilderness surrounding saddle-like Picacho Peak about 50 miles north of Tucson, looking for Confederate rangers known to patrol the area. The officer leading the expedition – Lieutenant James Barrett of the 1st California Cavalry – was undermanned. Hundreds of Union volunteers from California were marching east to reinforce the U.S. garrison and take back Tucson from Confederate control. But the reinforcements were late and Barrett had made the ill-fated decision to push forward into the open desert.

"Then he saw them: Rebel rangers, no uniforms – just broad-brimmed hats and the practical garb of the frontier – but armed to the teeth with revolvers, rifles or shotguns, and Bowie knives," writes Andrew Masich in his 2006 book *The Civil War in Arizona: The Story of the California Volunteers, 1861-1865*. Gunfire from the hidden rebel rangers was immediate, wounding three Union soldiers and killing two others. While at-

tempting to tie up a captured rebel ranger, Barrett was felled when "a ball smashed through the back of [his] neck – he was dead before his body hit the ground." Barrett's soldiers retreated north to Pima Indian villages while the Confederates went back to Tucson, which remained in rebel hands a month longer.

Barrett's body was buried not far from where he fell, and it's purportedly still there today, in an unmarked grave near the train tracks that carry cargo along the I-10. Close by, a humble monument – a column of stones with a plaque naming the deceased "in [the] only battle of the Civil War fought in Arizona Territory" – was erected by the Arizona Pioneers Historical Society (now the Arizona Historical Society) and Southern Pacific Railroad near the base of the peak on the battle's 66th anniversary in 1928.

Fifty-six years later, another plaque was placed directly below the original monument. Commissioned by the Children of the Confederacy, United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Arizona Historical Society, it's dedicated "to those Confederate frontiersmen who occupied Arizona Territory, C.S.A. [Confederate States of America], created by President Jefferson Davis..."

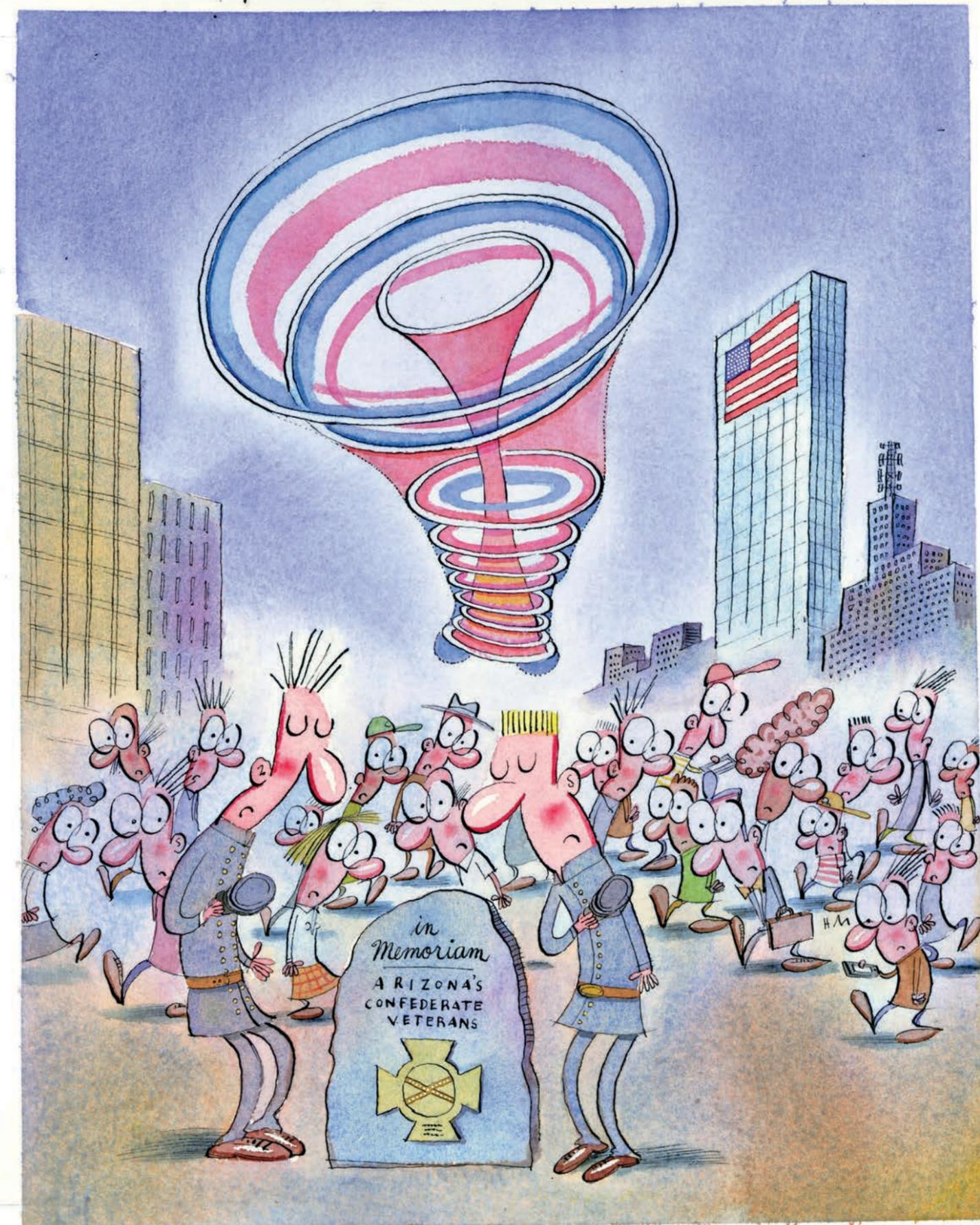
Hidden from passing traffic and requiring a \$7 access pass from the ranger station at Picacho Peak State Park, the monument is easy to miss.

Just outside the park is an adult sex shop and the sad bones of a long-defunct truck stop – not exactly roadside attraction material. There is no Confederate flag whipping above it in the warm desert wind, and a large wooden marker bearing a painted Dixie flag dedicated to the Confederate Arizona Rangers in the "War Between the States" has been gone for more than 10 years, according to a park spokesperson.

But the inconspicuousness of the monument doesn't matter.

To people like State Representative Reginald Bolding, its very existence on state-funded and maintained land is inappropriate, insensitive and yet another reminder – 152 years after the end of the Civil War – that some continue to glamorize a way of life that relied heavily on the slavery of his ancestors.

Others argue it honors history – scant history to be sure, but protected, just like the other five monuments in Arizona dedicated to a cause and a war that barely touched its soil.



“It’s personal,”

Bolding says. “In that I don’t believe citizens should be forced to honor those individuals that didn’t believe they should be citizens.”

Inside the Laveen Democrat’s office on the third floor of the Arizona House of Representatives are a pair of stately, well-worn leather chairs first brought to the Capitol by Art Hamilton, who served 26 consecutive years in the House and was the first African-American to be elected president of the National Conference of State Legislatures. On his first day in office in 1973, Hamilton told the *Phoenix New Times* that the House speaker whistled “Dixie” over the sound system. Hamilton, Bolding says, wanted these chairs passed down to other black legislators who came after him. Bolding, being the only black legislator currently serving in either chamber, has both.

Just north of his office is Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza, which contains a large collection of memorial statues and sculptures honoring prominent figures and veterans in Arizona history, including one dedicated to Confederate soldiers erected in the early 1960s, when the Civil Rights Movement was gaining traction across the country. Made of turquoise-inflected rocks in the shape of our state, the plaque reads simply “Memorial to Arizona Confederate Troops/1861-1865/ United Daughters of the Confederacy/1961.” Below it: “A Nation That Forgets Its Past Has No Future.”

Bolding wants it removed – specifically, banished to a museum. “I don’t believe Confederate memorabilia should be destroyed,” he says. “I believe it serves a purpose for many people, if they’re talking about [preserving] history or maybe ancestry. The question is whether taxpayer dollars should



State Representative Reginald Bolding, D-Laveen, in his office at the State Capitol

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be used to fund the upkeep and maintenance... I think it’s appalling that my tax dollars have to be used to pay for a monument to people who didn’t believe... that I should be seen as human.”

Bolding points to the pre-Civil War Three-Fifths Compromise – which allowed Southern states to count a slave as three-fifths of a person for representation purposes in the federal government – as one of the many items of evidence that the Confederacy regarded African-Americans as subhuman.

There are six Confederate monuments sprinkled throughout the state. Two years ago, Bolding publicly floated the idea of removing them, starting with the one outside the Capitol and another in Apache Junction off the side of US-60 which christens a portion of the road the Jefferson Davis Memorial Highway in honor of the Confederacy’s president. He also wouldn’t mind doing away with the tribute to Confederate soldiers at Southern Arizona Veterans’ Cemetery in Sierra Vista from 2010, another at the Greenwood/Memory Lawn Cemetery

PHOTO BY LAUREN LOFTUS

in Phoenix from 1999 and a hard-to-access monument at the graves of four Confederate soldiers killed in a fight with the Apache in Dragoon Springs, commissioned in 1999. And, of course, the Picacho Peak marker.

Governor Doug Ducey was initially receptive to his concerns, Bolding says, but “two years went by and I haven’t heard anything about any progress.”

In June, Bolding and several other leaders of the Valley’s black community – including the Maricopa NAACP, Black Lives Matter and the African-American-owned *Arizona Informant* newspaper – held a press conference lobbying the governor to re-examine the matter. A Ducey spokesperson at the time said the joint statement was directed at the wrong individual, since the Bolin Plaza memorial is overseen by the Legislative Governmental Mall Commission and the Jefferson Davis Highway falls under the jurisdiction of the State Board on Geographic and Historic Names.

However, the chair of the latter organization, Dr. Dennis Preisler, says “the board has no jurisdiction over the monuments.” Moreover, he isn’t sure whether there was ever an official proclamation designating that part of US-60 the “Jefferson Davis Memorial Highway.” In which case, the marker erected in 1943 by the Daughters of the Confederacy is just that – an unremarkable elevated plaque on a dusty freeway turnout most motorists pass without thought. Preisler says authority over the marker would therefore fall to the Arizona Department of Transportation or the Arizona State Transportation Board.

Meanwhile, Mike Philipsen, communications director of the Arizona State Senate, says the memorial outside the Capitol was built well before the establishment of the Legislative Governmental Mall Commission in 1985, and his research shows there was no piece of legislation authorizing its creation. “It appears the commission does not have the authority to remove the monument,” he says, while alteration or modification of a memorial is at the request of its proponent, in this case the Daughters of the Confederacy. However, according to Arizona Revised Statutes 41-1363, the department of administration may relocate monuments from the mall on review and approval by the commission, but Philipsen says “it does not say anything about removal.”

Clearly, state officials view the matter as politically toxic, and no one wants to get too close. (See sidebar.) Bolding, though, sees it as a simple choice for Arizona’s chief executive. “I think the governor needs to say whether he agrees with those Confederate monuments being placed there or doesn’t agree,” he says. “And if it’s the latter, then the African-American community would like him to be a part of [the movement to move them] going forward.” The governor’s office did not respond to requests for comment on this article.

Cloves Campbell Jr., executive director of the Arizona Commission of African-American Affairs and publisher of the *Informant*, puts it this way: “In my opinion, it’s an issue about what do we celebrate, what do we hold up as a monument and what are things that we learn from, things that should be in a museum?”

Campbell says he doesn’t understand the arguments of the monuments’ proponents that they’re intended to celebrate heritage and history, not racism. “If that’s the case, should we put up a monument celebrating the KKK because people’s families were part of that? I don’t think so.”

Besides, he says, “Arizona didn’t have much to do with the Confederate fight, it’s kind of strange [we have these monuments in the first place].”

It's true: Arizona was briefly part of the Confederacy. There are volumes upon volumes of books documenting the West's involvement in the Civil War, but Arizona's official state historian Marshall Trimble helps sum up the state's position in the conflict:

When the war began in 1861, Union troops were called back East from posts across the New Mexico Territory, which included Arizona. White settlers – mainly hardened miners and adventurous pioneers who ventured west from Texas and other Southern states – felt abandoned and vulnerable to raids from Native American tribes. In essence, they were co-currently fighting another civil war – the Indian Wars.

“There wasn't a slavery issue out here,” Trimble says. “The big problem was Apache raiders.”

The Confederacy saw an opportunity in Arizona and annexed its Southern half – everything south of the Gila River. Colonel John Baylor of Texas was named military governor of Arizona by Jefferson Davis in early 1862 and Tucson, then the largest town in the territory, was officially occupied. “The Confederates pulled [settlers and militia members who had been fighting the Apache] into service. That's how the military worked – they said, ‘You're Confederates now,’” Trimble says. “Of course, Tucsonans were glad to have ‘em – anyone that was military to protect against Apache raiders.”

Meanwhile, the Union established a brigade of volunteers called the California Column to push the Confederates out of Arizona and New Mexico. (It should be noted that many of these volunteers joined not because they cared passionately about the outcome of the Civil War or the battle over slavery, but because they craved compensation and three square meals a day, according to *The Civil War in Arizona*.) The Union's loss at the Battle at Picacho Pass in April 1862 delayed the Column from retaking Tucson for more than a month, giving the Confederates enough time to retreat and abandon the post.

“America has always been open with its history – warts and all,” says Trimble, who maintains that neither side in the Civil War was purely heroic, and believes the Confederate monuments should stay put as historical mementos – even those commissioned after the late 20th century. “We aren't a perfect people. I think it's unfair for any group to condemn any people from 150 years ago because they're using standards of their own time.”

Robert Wilbanks IV, a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists and inactive member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, echoes that sentiment: “We apply our 21st century mentality to how people acted in the 19th century.”

The Civil War is a “huge, very sad” topic, he says, in which brother fought against brother, friend against friend, based on where they happened to call home. “You weren't ‘American’ before the Civil War – you were Kentuckyan or Tennessean,” Wilbanks says, repeating the familiar Confederate rationale that splitting the Union was about protecting one's state, and therefore country, and not necessarily about maintaining slavery. “Most Southerners didn't own slaves; many never saw a black person,” he adds.

After the war, Wilbanks says former members of both the Union and the Confederacy worked together to “build Arizona... and build up Phoenix.” He points to Emil Ganz, a German Jewish immigrant who settled in Georgia and joined the Confederate Army despite not owning slaves, before moving to Arizona and becoming a three-time mayor of Phoenix.

“Nobody should be denied of their heritage... every person should take pride in their ancestry,” Wilbanks says. “Are they [those calling for the monuments' removal] saying because my ancestor was Confederate, I can't honor them?”

Crowds gathered for the Arizona Pioneers Historical Society's dedication of the monument to Union soldiers at the site of the Battle of Picacho Pass on the 66th anniversary of the skirmish on April 15, 1928.



PHOTO COURTESY ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bookard Dooley says it's always been a dream of his to open a Confederate museum and library. He fulfilled that dream two years ago when he opened the Confederate Museum in a 1950s bungalow he inherited from a since-deceased friend in Florence, Arizona, less than a mile from the state prison.

The gregarious Vietnam War veteran cuts an intimidating figure, bald with a thin, curled mustache, clad in camouflage pants and boots, walking through his impressive collection of memorabilia, including old bullets found on battlefields, paintings and photographs, stacks of books, even Confederate flag-embellished coasters for the meeting table. "We tell both sides of every story," he says, pausing at a case dedicated to Union history books.

His great-grandfather, Dooley says, was a member of the Union Army before joining the Confederates in Texas at the start of the war, which he characterizes as "an economic war," rather than a war over slavery. A member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, SCV, Camp 1708 serving the East Valley, Dooley says "the Yankees" were just

as guilty of wartime atrocities, including rape and pillaging in captured Southern towns. But that truth has been swept under the rug: "America, like all countries, over-glorifies its history."

The SCV camp's public affairs officer, Keith Roberts, takes a softer line than his comrade. "I guess it's important to know who your ancestors were to know who you are," he says, explaining his fond memories of learning about his family's Confederate roots from his beloved grandfather while exploring the backwoods of his Alabama home. A self-described "old hippie" with long hair, cowboy boots and a thick drawl, Roberts only gets visibly agitated when acknowledging how Confederate symbols – mainly, the Confederate flag – have been reinterpreted as symbols of hate and used by pro-segregation and racist groups to intimidate people of color.

"The KKK and the Aryan Nation[s] have done us more harm than anyone else," Roberts says.

In a June 2015 *Washington Post* article following the murder of nine parishioners at a historic black church in Charleston, South

Clockwise from below: Bookard Dooley in his Confederate Museum and library in Florence; the Confederate Monument in Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza outside the Arizona Capitol; Jefferson Davis Highway marker off the US-60 in Apache Junction



PHOTOS BY MIRELLE INGFIELD. THIS PHOTO, LAUREN LOFTUS, TOP

Carolina, by avowed racist Dylan Roof, whose social media accounts documented his use of Confederate flag memorabilia, including on his license plate, Brown University professor of Africana and American studies Matthew Guterl says it's impossible to argue the flag is a neutral symbol. "There is no way to separate the fact that it is on all those flagpoles and on those license plates... precisely because it was resurrected in the 1940s and 1950s as part of a massive resistance campaign against the Civil Rights Movement," he says. "It wouldn't exist in our national popular culture without this moment, when African-Americans fought for their equality, and the battle flag was recovered and redeployed as a symbol of opposition to it."

After the Civil War, family members of fallen Confederate soldiers "used that flag to honor the dead," Roberts says. "They'd turn over in their graves to see how it's used today."

Still, "this is America and it's a free country... about all we can do is tell them to quit," he says. Ultimately, Roberts thinks the monuments to his ancestors should stay put and is in the beginning stages of drafting legislation that would protect such memorials from being removed, as they have recently in other places like New Orleans.

"They are where they are for a reason," he says. "History is history and it can't be changed, but it should be remembered."

Roberts says he would welcome a sit-down meeting with the NAACP and Bolding to discuss the history of the monuments in a non-confrontational way, though no formal invitations have been issued.

But Bolding has said it's impossible to divorce the history of the Confederate flag from its modern usage, however benign the intentions. Sure, a sizable portion of the flag's and monuments' defenders are more history nerds than bigots, and Bolding says those individuals are free to honor history and their ancestors on their private property. "I don't think [everyone] who has Confederate memorabilia [has] views that are in line with how many of the Confederate leaders from history have viewed people of color," he says. "But we should all take a step back and think about what kind of pain or anguish we're inflicting on someone else by our actions."

"We are here to learn from the mistakes of our ancestors, not repeat them," Bolding continues. "Over time, as Arizonans and Americans, we gain more knowledge and wisdom... If there were shortcomings that our ancestors may have had, I don't think we should be obligated to amplify those shortcomings just because they happened in the past."

It seems, then, that each side remains at an impasse. Between them sit six monuments to Confederate troops and leaders, in a state that wasn't even a state when the rest of the country went to war with itself. And though the war ended long ago, its westernmost battle rages on.

PM

Defame Game?

"When you have a street named after someone, that's an honor," State Representative Reginald Bolding says. "When you have a statue of someone, it's because we respected those individuals and the contributions they made to a state or city – so when we say we're going to name a street... after someone or a cause that represented hate and segregation, that means we are honoring and celebrating that."

The Phoenix City Council and Mayor Greg Stanton employed a similar rationale in late June by passing a measure that would allow them to change two street names some find offensive, despite significant resistance from residents and local businesses. The council voted 6-3 to amend its renaming policy so they can change controversial street names without the support of at least 75 percent of homeowners. The streets up for a name change:

Squaw Peak Drive, off Lincoln Drive in North Phoenix. "Squaw" has long been considered a derogatory term for Native American women. An unofficial petition to the city showed 16 out of about 20 homeowners oppose renaming the street at the base of Piastewa Peak, which itself was renamed from Squaw Peak in 2003 for Lori Piastewa, a Hopi soldier killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Robert E. Lee Street, near Bell Road and Tatum Boulevard in North Phoenix. Lee resigned his U.S. Army commission to fight for the Confederacy, eventually becoming its general-in-chief. The street contains about 85 homes, two apartment complexes and Milestones Charter School.