

Mosaics bring back 'the good old days' at Sunset Villa

By Carmen Duarte
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Jessie Pallanes is full of stories that paint a picture of what the Sunset Villa Neighborhood was like 50 years ago.

"Those were the good old days, when neighbors really knew each other and were friends. Our neighborhood was well-integrated with Mexican, black, Chinese and Anglo families. All the families spoke Spanish, and we all got along," Pallanes says. "I wish the kids of today could experience that time."

Those stories have been transformed into colorful mosaics done by artist Gail Roberts on four monument walls that encompass Pueblo Magnet High School at 3500 S. 12th Ave.

The walls are part of a \$646,610 revitalization project that began in 2007, funded by federal transportation funds, voter-approved bonds and Tucson Unified School District funds.

The project included sidewalks and streetlights west of the high school on West 41st and 43rd streets, and a portion of South Sunset Villa Avenue. The improvements also included curbs, gutters and landscaping.

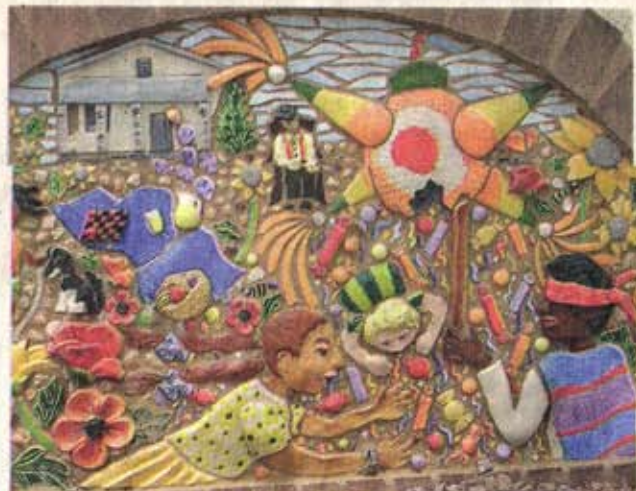
Another \$3.8 million in transportation bonds and highway-user revenue fees completed the county's South 12th Avenue revitalization project two years ago that included sidewalks on South 12th Avenue, north of West Ajo Way; public art within a garden at 12th and West 44th Street; and the realignment of 10th and 12th avenues.

"When I was a little girl, I remember a man who would come into our barrio in a pickup selling fresh fruits and vegetables," said Pallanes, 58, who now is passing on the stories to other neighborhood children and to her granddaughter Jeanette Mills, 11. She plans to tell granddaughter Alyssa Pallanes, 1, when she is older.

"Families would go and buy fruits and vegetables and then would gather in our yard and share with neighbors. We would have an instant picnic, because people would sit, tell stories, laugh and eat watermelons, cantaloupe and peaches," Pallanes



Jessie Pallanes and her granddaughters Alyssa Pallanes, 1, and Jeanette Mills, 11, at a Sunset Villa Neighborhood Association monument.



COURTESY OF SUPERVISOR RICHARD ELÍAS

One of the colorful mosaics done by artist Gail Roberts.



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The mosaics adorn four monument walls at Pueblo Magnet High School.

MONUMENT WALLS

The Sunset Villa Neighborhood underwent \$646,610 in street, sidewalk and lighting improvements in a revitalization project. The work includes four monument walls at entry points into the neighborhood. The colorful mosaic art about everyday life that is featured on the walls is based on stories shared by barrio residents.

The walls are at:

- South 16th Avenue and West Ajo Way — the mosaic depicts a fruit and vegetable vendor.
- South 12th Avenue and West Calle Juliet — the mosaic depicts storytellers.
- South 12th Avenue and West 44th Street — the mosaic depicts a fiesta with children breaking a piñata.
- South 10th Avenue and West 41st Street — the mosaic depicts serenading mariachis.



COURTESY OF SUPERVISOR RICHARD ELÍAS
The walls are part of a \$646,610 revitalization project.

growth on the periphery, the older neighborhoods suffer, and these projects are the county's way of starting to put a stop to that."

Sunset Villa Neighborhood is bounded by 40th Street to the north, Ajo Way to the south, 10th and 12th avenues to the east, and Interstate 19 to the west.

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said. "Us kids would play games and baseball on the dirt street in front of our house. At night, the adults would tell us scary stories."

Two weeks ago, neighbors gathered at St. John's Community Park, 602 W. Ajo Way, to celebrate the culmination of the improvements with a breakfast

of burritos and refreshments, and the children broke a piñata.

"It is important for the county to help rebuild the infrastructures in these neighborhoods

that have been around for years because it gets worn out," said Richard Elías, chairman of the Pima County Board of Supervisors. "While we subsidize