

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 24, 2014
NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
NRD-2014-0007
Congress Avenue
619 Congress Avenue**

PROPOSAL

Demolish a nineteenth-century building that was reconstructed in 1986.

RESEARCH

The building has its origins in the 19th century, and was built at least by 1877, when it first appears in a photograph of Congress Avenue. The building is believed to have been constructed by Bernard Melasky, who built a three-part building (now 615, 617, and 619 Congress Avenue), and operated a dry goods and clothing store in the middle section (617), while renting out space in what is now 619 Congress Avenue. Occupants of the 619 Congress Avenue space have included a wine, liquor, and cigar merchant, a collateral broker (forerunner to today's pawn shops), a five-and-dime store, several jewelry stores (including Zales and Mission Jewelry), and restaurants, including, Wendy's Hamburgers, the Pita Pit, and presently, Wholly Cow.

The building was severely damaged by a fire that destroyed the neighboring 3-story building (at 621-23 Congress Avenue), that was home to the Tally-Ho, a famous downtown restaurant, in 1974. Wendy's Hamburgers opened in the building in 1986, and at that time, the storefront was reconstructed into its current configuration, with a brick veneer over a concrete wall, replacement windows and window openings, and a modified storefront.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Despite its appearance, this building is a 1986 reconstruction, and is notable chiefly for its compatibility with the rest of the block and the Congress Avenue historic district in terms of its size, scale, materials, and fenestration pattern. However, the physical evidence indicates that it is not a historic building, but rather a remarkably well-done re-creation. Staff recommends release of the permit upon the completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package and upon Commission review of the plans for the new building for the site, and staff strongly encourages the applicant to take into serious consideration the extraordinary compatibility of the current building in their design for new construction on the site.