

ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2018-0010

HLC DATE:

December 11, 2017

February 26, 2018

PC DATE:

APPLICANT: Historic Landmark Commission

HISTORIC NAME: Robert Mueller Airport Control Tower

WATERSHED: Harper's Branch

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 3952 Berkman Drive

ZONING FROM: PUD to PUD-H

SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from planned unit development (PUD) district to planned unit development – Historic Landmark (PUD-H) combining district zoning.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

Architecture, historical associations, and community value.

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION: December 11, 2017: Initiated historic zoning. Vote: 9-0.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The control tower is beyond the bounds of any City survey to date.

CITY COUNCIL DATE:

ACTION:

ORDINANCE READINGS: 1ST 2ND 3RD

ORDINANCE NUMBER:

CASE MANAGER: Steve Sadowsky

PHONE: 974-6454

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION: Mueller

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

Architecture:

The tower has a concrete frame, with aluminum and glass panels on the exterior. The original structure had alternating light blue and dark blue porcelain panels set in vertical bands; much of this was covered by glass in a renovation, but restored to its original materials and configuration today. The control tower is 18 feet by 18 feet at its base, and 9 stories tall, rising 83 feet, 10 inches to the top of the roof. It begins to flare at the 3rd floor, eventually to a space that is 30 feet, 7 inches square at the control room on the 9th floor of the structure.

Historical Associations:

Austin's municipal airport dates back to 1928, when local voters authorized bonds to purchase property on the northeastern edge of the city. The airport opened in October, 1930, and was named for Robert Mueller, a city commissioner who died unexpectedly in 1927. The first facilities at the airport were very basic – small wooden buildings and gravel runways. The

airport improved its facilities in the 1930s with the introduction of commercial air travel to Austin in 1936, paving runways and constructing facilities for passengers. By the mid-1950s, the airport had expanded considerably with additional runways to handle the increasing air traffic; propeller planes offered service to most other cities in Texas and beyond. However, Austin's airport was wholly inadequate to handle the jet traffic that began to dominate the skies in the late 1950s. In an effort to maintain the city's status as a progressive, modern place, new bonds were passed in the late 1950s to construct a new airport terminal and control tower, and expand the runways necessary for jet aircraft to serve Austin.

Local architects Fehr and Granger were chosen to design the new airport facilities, which won a runner-up award from Progressive Architect in 1959. Fehr and Granger were noted for their mid-century Modern designs throughout the city, and proposed a very modern design for the new airport terminal and control tower. The new facilities embodied the aesthetics of mid-century Modern style in its long, low profile and horizontal configuration, with ample glass at the entries and a series of continuous extruded lozenge-shaped motifs along the cornice of the entry promenade. Rising from the terminal building was the airport control tower, which was designed to have a dramatic and modern presence, pleasing to the eye whether in the air or on the ground. It had a flared top and observation deck, and was covered with alternating bands of vertical light and dark blue porcelain panels. The new terminal and control tower opened in late May, 1961; Vice-President Lyndon Baines Johnson as well as Austin mayor Lester Palmer attended the celebrations.

The airport continued to be expanded over the next few decades as air traffic in Austin continued to increase. However, the city also grew up around the airport, with many residents of new subdivisions complaining of the noise from the nearby airport. In 1999, the city decided to close Robert Mueller Municipal Airport in favor of the current facilities at the old Bergstrom Air Force Base, southeast of the city. The airport terminal was demolished in 2002, leaving the distinctive control tower as the iconic symbol of the airport's past.

PARCEL NO.: See attached field notes for the 1,024-square foot tract for historic zoning.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: See attached field notes for the portion of Lot 1, Block 94B, Mueller Sec VII-C Subd Amended proposed for historic zoning.

ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT: N/A (public property).

APPRAISED VALUE: N/A

PRESENT USE: Vacant

CONDITION: Good

PRESENT OWNERS: City of Austin

DATE BUILT: ca. 1961

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS: The control tower remains as an artifact on the site; the rest of the airport terminal building was demolished in 2002.

ORIGINAL OWNER(S): City of Austin

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: None.

LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 250'

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: C14H-2018-0010

LOCATION: 3952 BERKMAN DR

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