

ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2015-0008

HLC DATE:

December 18, 2017

February 26, 2018

PC DATE:

March 13, 2018

APPLICANT: Housing Authority of the City of Austin

HISTORIC NAME: Rosewood Courts

WATERSHED: Boggy Creek

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 2001 Rosewood Avenue

ZONING FROM: MF-4-NP to MF-4-HD-NP for a portion of the property; the remainder is proposed to remain unchanged.

SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from multi-family residence, neighborhood plan (MF-4-NP) combining district to multi-family residence, historic district, neighborhood plan (MF-4-HD-NP) combining district for a portion of the property, in accordance with the attached map reflecting the compromise reached over a long period of negotiations with city agencies, preservation groups, residents, and other stakeholders. The proposed historic zoning district includes 8 buildings, which the property owner plans to rehabilitate, as well as capture the physical layout of the complex that was so purposefully designed. The 8 buildings chosen for designation within the proposed district have a very prominent presence in the neighborhood and will showcase the history of the site as the first public housing project for African-Americans in the United States. Staff does not recommend designation of the entire site, as the current buildings do not reflect the architectural history of the site because of many modifications to their appearance over the years.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

Historical significance and community value.

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION: December 18, 2017: Initiate historic zoning on the entire site. Vote: 7-1 (Hudson opposed; Brown, Hibbs, and Papavasiliou absent).

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The East Austin Historic Survey (2016) recommends designation of the entirety of Rosewood Courts for historic district designation with the caveat that a future survey of individual resources is needed to determine contributing/non-contributing ratios.

CITY COUNCIL DATE: March 22, 2018

ACTION:

ORDINANCE READINGS: 1ST 2ND 3RD

ORDINANCE NUMBER:

CASE MANAGER: Steve Sadowsky

PHONE: 974-6454

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION: Organization of Central East Austin Neighborhoods

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

Historical Associations:

Rosewood Courts is the first and oldest public housing project for African-Americans in the United States. Its establishment and design is the result of many years of social philosophy to address the needs of low-income urban populations, and reflects 1930s goals of eradicating dangerous slum conditions, assimilating impoverished citizens into the greater society through training and socialization, and providing safe, clean, and modern housing as a means to assist the elevation of poor families to a semblance of the American ideals of home ownership, healthy families, and productive workers.

Attempts to incorporate poor people into the larger mainstream society to raise them out of their poverty began with the concept of a settlement house, made famous by Jane Addams in the slums of Chicago in the late 19th century. Addams and her partner established Hull House, which they opened in a low-income neighborhood to provide educational and social support to impoverished people. Hull House provided kindergartens, club meetings, a night school, a public kitchen, athletic facilities, art and music studios, and an employment bureau, all with the goal of elevating poor people out of their poverty and ignorance.

The social goals advanced by Jane Addams remained at the forefront of the American approach to addressing poverty throughout the early 20th century, and became especially acute during the Great Depression, which saw so many people, previously able to make a decent living, reduced to poverty, hunger, and deprivation. President Herbert Hoover signed the Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932 with the objective of providing low-cost housing, but the legislation accomplished little before the end of Hoover's term in office. Slum conditions grew worse throughout the country, as indicated by Congressman Lyndon Baines Johnson's 1933 notes about the slums in Austin, referencing filthy living conditions, little or no shelter from the elements, and the resulting rise of crime and disease. Johnson began his decade-long crusade to eradicate urban slums and improve the quality of life for his constituents.

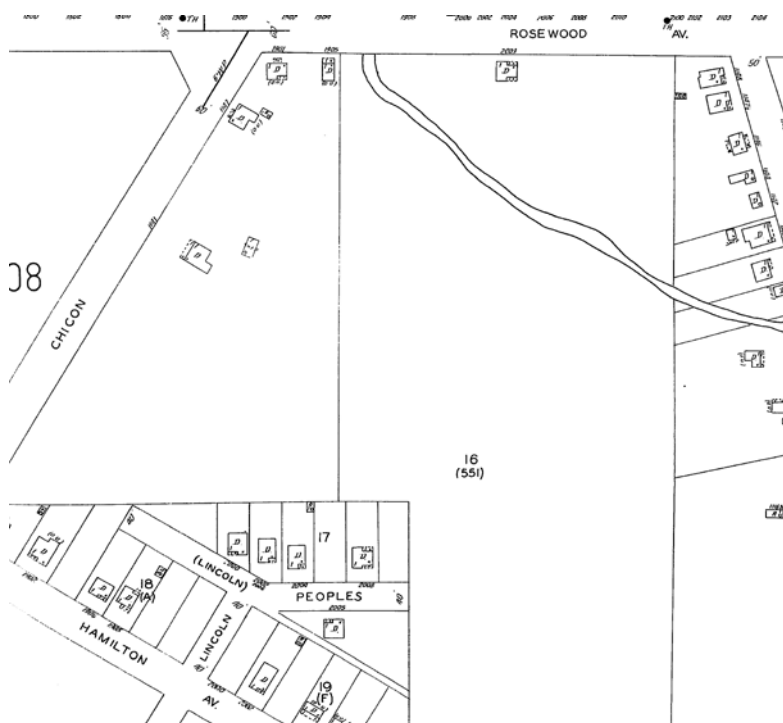
The central question became how to accomplish both the eradication of the slums and the elevation of slum-dwellers to participation in mainstream society. The philosophy of Jane Addams, and other followers, was that people will improve their own situations if provided with the means and exposure to do so. Tearing down sub-standard housing would do little to ameliorate the long-term problems of poverty, so there had to be a solution that encouraged self-help to rise from impoverished conditions. Public housing was a necessary step in this social experiment, but rather than simply replacing one type of slum with another, the goal had to be to provide an environment that would allow residents to improve themselves.

As part of his New Deal legislation, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt enacted the United States Housing Act of 1937 (also called the Wagner-Steagall Act). The Housing Act established the United States Housing Authority, which provided 90% of the construction funds for public housing projects administered at the local level. In Austin, the City Council established the Austin Housing Authority in two days before Christmas in 1937. Through the lobbying efforts of Lyndon Johnson, Austin was selected as the first city to receive federal funds to construct public housing projects. In accordance with the social norms of the time, Austin proposed three housing projects: one for Mexican-American residents (Santa Rita Courts), one for Anglo residents (Chalmers Courts), and one for African-American residents (Rosewood Courts).

Funding from the U.S. Housing Authority was earmarked to demolish substandard housing and construct new housing that would be safe, clean, and durable. The ideal for the new housing projects was to create an environment for families, including areas for outdoor recreation, a convivial atmosphere for social interactions, and opportunities for training in health, home economics, and parenting. This concept met with some resistance in Austin,

as some residents feared the displacement of slum dwellers, who would then concentrate in other parts of the city, as well as a disdain for providing housing for people of color. In conjunction with a radio address by Lyndon Johnson, E.H. Perry, the first chair of the Austin Housing Authority, was able to market public housing as a means towards the greater good of the city.

First, the city had to acquire the property to build the public housing units. In the case of Rosewood Courts, the city bought some land from Anglo property owners in the vicinity of Rosewood Avenue and Chicon Street, and obtained the remainder from African-American property owners in the neighborhood through eminent domain. The site for Rosewood Courts was on the east side of Austin, in what had developed as the primary African-American neighborhood after the 1928 Koch and Fowler city plan established the “Negro District” on the east side and the city relegated all services for African-American citizens to the east side. The site chosen was Emancipation Park, established by the city’s African-American population in 1907 as the place to celebrate Juneteenth, the emancipation from slavery in Texas. Several houses on the perimeter of the site were demolished to begin construction of Rosewood Courts.



The 1935 Sanborn map shows the scattered houses along the perimeter of what is now Rosewood Courts and the otherwise empty tract that was Emancipation Park.

Page and Southerland were chosen as the architects for Rosewood Courts, with Hugo Kuehne serving as the supervising architect. Vincent Falgo and Sons was chosen as the contractor. The design for Rosewood Courts reflected the ideals of the public housing movement, stressing a clean, modern design that would be conducive to inspiring residents to improve their conditions. The architects designed Rosewood Courts in the International Style, popular at the time of its 1939 construction, and distinguished by clean lines, symmetry and order in its composition, and the use of durable materials. The first buildings were one-story, constructed of brick, and had flat roofs and large multi-light steel casement windows. They were aligned on the site to provide sizeable front and back yards for each apartment. Three play areas were incorporated into the design for families with children, and Rosewood was noted for having clothes lines for residents and women who worked as maids or laundresses for private families. The original 14 buildings, comprising

60 apartments (10 buildings with 4 units each and 4 buildings with 5 units each), of Rosewood Courts opened September 1, 1939. The first buildings were constructed on what is now the southwest end of the site. The second wave of construction followed a year later with two-story buildings still following the International-style aesthetic of the original buildings, and aligned in the same manner as the originals, with front and back yards. Each unit featured a kitchen with a gas range, living room, bathroom, and bedrooms. Hot water heaters and gas heaters were also standard in each apartment.



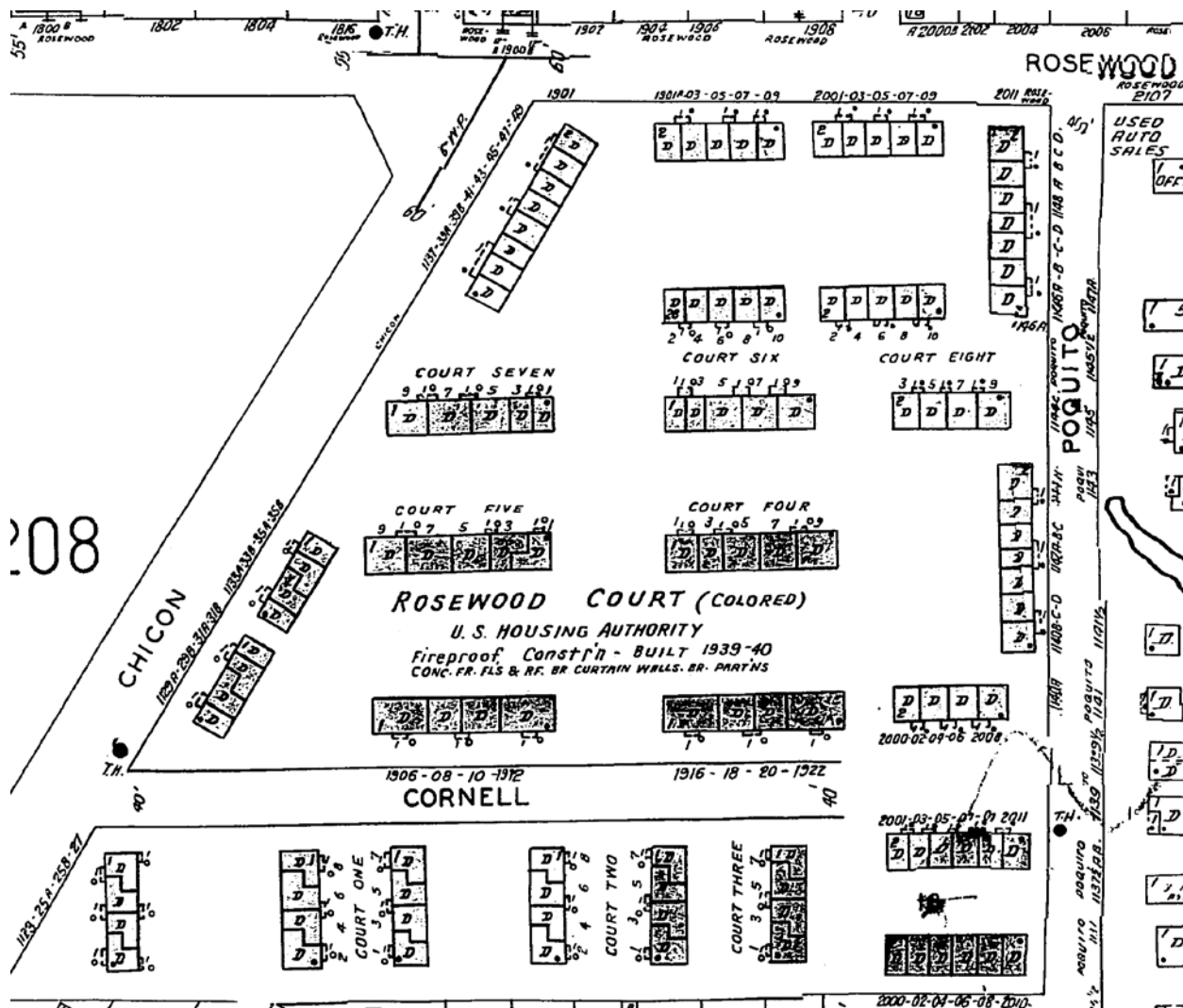
This ca. 1954 photograph shows an original one-story building with its flat roof and steel casement windows.



ca. 1943 photograph showing a Rosewood play area, and the two story units that were built during a second phase of construction in 1940-1941.

The Housing Authority also embarked on its social missions at Rosewood, teaching residents about health care for themselves and their children, providing organized recreational activities, social and hobby clubs, and basic home economics.

The buildings no longer retain their International-style presence. The original concrete slab roofs were overlaid with shingled wood gables in 1984, and the original steel casement windows have been replaced with double-hung windows. Deteriorating conditions at Rosewood continue to the present, with failing gas lines, failing water and wastewater lines, a lack of ducts for air conditioning, and other amenities that most people today would consider necessary to their well-being. The construction of these buildings with solid masonry walls has ensured their durability, but has plagued or prevented modern upgrades, such as the installation of central heat and air, and the inability to build a central furnace unit and air handler in smaller units.



The 1962 Sanborn map of Rosewood Courts

Community Value:

The historical and cultural significance of Rosewood Courts is clear. Rosewood was the first public housing project dedicated to African-American citizens in the country, and represents the social, cultural, and historical trends at work throughout the United States from the 1930s to the present.

PARCEL NO.'s: To be determined upon designation.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: To be determined upon designation.

ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT: N/A (Public ownership)

APPRAISED VALUE: N/A

PRESENT USE: Housing project.

CONDITION: Poor to fair.

PRESENT OWNERS: Housing Authority of the City of Austin

DATE BUILT: ca. 1939; ca. 1941.

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS: Numerous.

ORIGINAL OWNER(S): Housing Authority of the City of Austin.

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: Pending designation on the National Register of Historic Places.

Additional information:

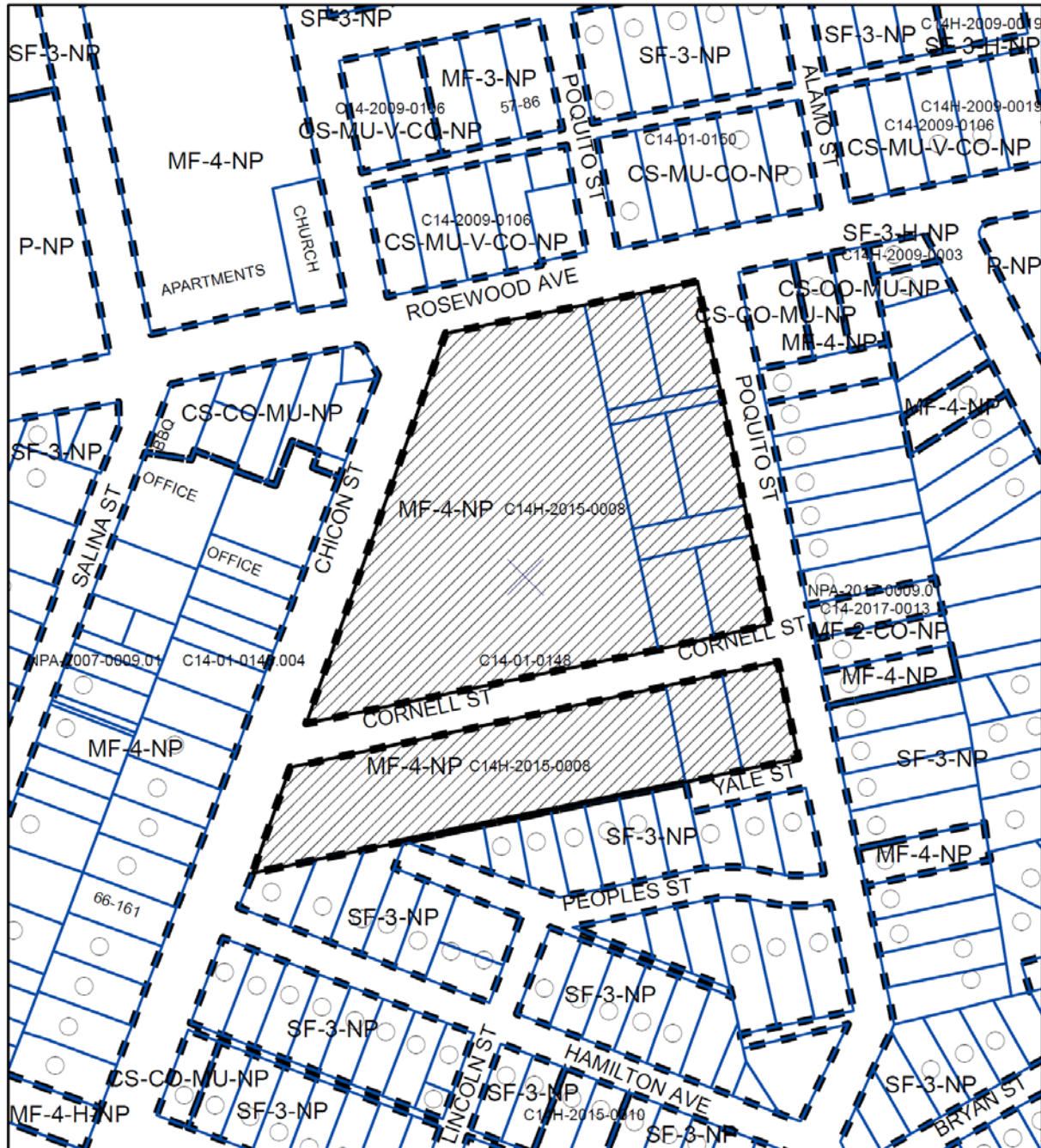
See Dr. Fred L. McGhee's National Register nomination of Rosewood Courts here:

www.preserverosewood.org/nomination.pdf

See Lindsay D. Waldenberg's master's thesis on the history of public housing in Austin and institutional racism here:

<https://digital.library.txstate.edu/bitstream/handle/10877/6765/WALDENBERG-THESIS-2017.pdf>

LOCATION MAP



1" = 167'

- SUBJECT TRACT
- PENDING CASE
- ZONING BOUNDARY

ZONING

Zoning Case: C14H-2015-0008

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

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 ORIGINAL PRESERVATION UNITS  PROPOSED PRESERVATION UNITS  LANDSCAPE / SITE CONTEXT



MEMORANDUM

To: Mrs. Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager
 Mayor Steve Adler
 Members of Council

From: Council Member Ora Houston, District 1

Date: September 29, 2017

Subject: Rosewood Courts Preservation Plan

On February 25th 2016 the City Council of Austin, Texas passed a resolution directing the City Manager to present options to the City Council for the historic zoning of Rosewood Courts. That timeline was subsequently amended twice by resolutions on June 9, 2016 and September 22, 2016 in order for any and all interests to come to a consensus on a preservation plan that satisfies the concerns of the community and of the property owner. The requirements of the entities included, without limitation, are individuals who call Rosewood Courts home, the Housing Authority of the City of Austin, neighborhood associations, Preservation Austin, Mid Tex Mod, other professionals in the field of architecture, and the Council District Office.

Over the past year, great strides have been made between the redevelopment and the historic preservation that was envisioned for Rosewood Courts. As a result of the collaboration and cooperation of the "Rosewood Reboot," a preservation plan has been agreed upon by all interested parties who were willing to engage in constructive dialogue and negotiate an outcome that looks different than anyone imagined. The preservation plan that is being proposed is one that seeks to maximize the benefit to the Housing Authority of the City of Austin and preserve and rehabilitate eight buildings which respect the original styles found in the vision for low-income housing for Americans of African Ancestry in 1939. The Preservation Plan will maintain elements of compatibility through design standards, because there is agreement that good design does not cost more than bad design. There is also agreement that the International Style of design is one that sought to achieve quality-of-life benchmarks that today the City of Austin strive to produce by means which are modest and thoughtful.

As per the Preservation Plan, the eight buildings which have been selected for preservation will not only preserve the architectural integrity of the built environment but also the landscape features which together form the content and tell the story of Rosewood Courts. The history before the Courts were built tell a broader story of an active political culture in our City government, in

the time of Jim Crow, that was arguably more progressive in some ways than we find today: the goal of the development was to satisfy the human need for shelter without regard to the color of one's skin or income, during the time of legal segregation. The construction of three public housing developments was an achievement of Congressman Lyndon Baines Johnson on behalf of the people of Austin in the early days of public housing in the United States.

Attached is the final draft of the preservation plan dated May 22, 2017 that was written by the facilitator who graciously donated her expertise, time and energy to this re-envisioning process, Ms. Laura Toups. The preservation plan was ratified by the members of the Rosewood Reboot Working Group at the end of August. This document will remain the foundational and guiding document for the redevelopment and preservation of Rosewood Courts. The brief was circulated to the parties involved in the conversations to ensure full transparency between the parties in the "Rosewood Reboot" group. This brief also represents a preservation plan which allows us to honor the history of the built environment, the many Negroes who helped build the foundation of the city we call home, and meet the City of Austin's need for an increase in the housing supply, rental and homeownership, in the heart of the fastest gentrified zip code in the City – 78702.

Through the proposed creation of the eight-building historic district, Rosewood Courts will continue to be an ever-present symbol of President Johnson's goal of income-accessible housing for individuals who make low or no wages. It is our expectation that the next iteration of Rosewood Courts will be one of lasting quality and utility for individuals who meet the income guidelines as it has been for Austinites over the last eighty years.

This re-envisioning process has the potential to be a model for the redevelopment of other public housing projects. It is my hope that the work of the "Rosewood Reboot" will be received, respected and moved forward through the appropriate process to implementation.

Rosewood Courts
22 MAY 2017

PRESERVATION PRINCIPLES

Given that:

1. The City Council of the City of Austin voted on February 25, 2016 to initiate historic zoning for Rosewood Courts in cooperation with the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA), Preservation Austin, and Mid Tex Mod. Council further resolved to support Rosewood Courts' inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. This resolution was presented by Council Member Ora Houston.
 2. The National Park Service has deemed Rosewood Courts eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for national significance under Criteria A, properties that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; and Criteria B, that are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past.
 3. H+UO Architects prepared *Rosewood Courts: Preservation Economic Feasibility Assessment*, commissioned by HACA and completed in March 2017. HACA, Preservation Austin, and Mid Tex Mod contributed to developing the firm's scope of work and gave feedback regarding the assessment's development and final report. The report developed renovation and treatment plans for three building types on the Rosewood Courts site. The preservation rehabilitation strategies are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and include cost estimates for each approach.
 4. Given that Rosewood Courts is both a historic site and an active public housing property, HACA needs to both honor and balance the requirements of the US Dept. of the Interior and the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development.
 5. HACA envisions, at a minimum, 124 public housing replacement units, 76 additional rental units consisting of market rate, 80% or below, and 60% affordable housing units, and up to 25 home ownership units on site as part of its redevelopment plan. This will include the demolition of seventeen of the 25 original buildings on the site.
 6. Recognizing that limited federal funding to effectively operate and maintain public housing has been on a continual decline, the project to redevelop Rosewood Courts will be contingent on HACA's ability to secure sufficient funding from various sources, both federal and non-federal. Based on:
 - a. the assumption that sufficient funding will be secured for the redevelopment of Rosewood Courts at the density and unit types indicated above, and
 - b. current pricing estimates from the H+UO feasibility assessment,
 HACA is committed to preserving eight of the site's original buildings.
 7. The preservation community desires to preserve as many historic structures, and as much of the historic landscape, as possible, with the understanding that preserved building exteriors will be rehabilitated in an appropriate manner and according to the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation. The preservation community understands that based on current cost estimates, eight buildings can be preserved.
 8. HACA, the City and the preservation community all agree upon the importance of the appropriate protection and recognition of this historic site, using all available and appropriate designations, including local historic designation zoning, county historic markers and possible listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
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The working group evaluated existing buildings' potential for preservation based on the following criteria:

1. Buildings should read as a cohesive group to provide a sense of site, time and place.
2. The relationship between buildings, including the green space and terraced landscape, are integral to the complex's original design and should be an important component of the final preservation plan.
3. Visibility of original buildings from either Chicon Street or Rosewood Avenue is a priority.

Going forward:

1. A grouping of eight buildings was selected by HACA, Preservation Austin, and Mid Tex Mod for preservation according to the above criteria. These buildings will be the foundation of the preservation plan developed as part of the redevelopment of Rosewood Courts.
 2. As stated on the National Park Service website "*The Secretary of the Interior's Standards are a series of concepts about maintaining, repairing, and replacing historic materials, as well as designing new additions or making alterations. The Guidelines offer general design and technical recommendations to assist in applying the Standards to a specific property. Together, they provide a framework and guidance for decision-making about work or changes to a historic property*". Exteriors of preserved buildings will be rehabilitated, to the greatest extent feasible, according to the H+UO interventions described and estimated in the final report using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to, the restoration of buildings' flat roofs, windows, exterior doors, and re-creation of steel porch details, all features of their design at the time of construction. Site features such as retaining walls and landscaping located between, and within the immediate vicinity of, the eight buildings will be included and rehabilitated as elements of the preservation. Site features will be maintained and improved in compliance with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Uniform Physical Condition Standards, required accessibility improvements and according to the Standards and Guidelines above.
 3. Preservation Austin and Mid Tex Mod will work with HACA and the City of Austin's Historic Preservation Office and Historic Landmark Commission to designate the selected grouping of eight buildings and associated green space as a local historic district. All parties will work to find various funding sources for the costs associated with the designations, including grants, waivers or community philanthropic contributions.
 4. HACA will work with the Texas Historical Commission to apply for historical markers for Emancipation Park and Rosewood Courts. Preservation Austin and Mid Tex Mod will provide assistance as needed and support HACA's efforts to seek necessary funding and/or waivers of state and local fees to apply for historical markers.
 5. Any historical markers or designations sought by HACA must not impede or restrict the redevelopment of the remainder of the site, including the creation of the minimum number of units indicated above by HACA.
 6. Council Member Houston's office, Preservation Austin, and Mid Tex Mod will work to encourage necessary changes to the pending National Register nomination, as required by the National Park Service, Secretary of Interior, to allow the site to be listed under Criteria A and/or B. HACA supports this listing under Criteria A and/or B.
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7. New construction, and the new site plan, on the Rosewood Courts site should complement the preserved buildings and setting which define the site's historic design.
 8. It is understood that the scale, proportion, detailing, features, materials that reference the original buildings will be complementary and compatible without mimicking. The Secretary of Interior Standards will be reviewed, as needed, for new construction. It is also acknowledged additional height will be needed for some buildings to achieve HACA's building program.
 9. All available tax credits, incentives and other sources of funding specific to historic preservation should be explored and, if eligible, utilized to the fullest extent possible.
 10. It is understood that the criteria and principles stipulated in this document are specific to Rosewood Courts and do not transfer to other HACA properties.
 11. Based on this set of agreed upon principles, Preservation Austin and Mid Tex Mod support and endorse this compromise to preserve the identified group of eight buildings and associated green space in the redevelopment of Rosewood Courts by HACA.
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From: Valenzuela, Sarah - BC

Sent: Monday, January 8, 2018 3:14:30 PM

To: Sadowsky, Steve; Bertron, Cara

Subject: Rosewood - Communication with Donna Carter

Good afternoon,

Please forward to my fellow HLC Commissioners -- I received a call this afternoon from Donna Carter regarding the HLC consideration of the landmark status for Rosewood Courts. Speaking on behalf of her client, the City of Austin Housing Authority, Ms. Carter encouraged our consideration of landmark status for the 8 units (and not the entire site) as outlined in her presentation at the December HLC meeting.

Ms. Carter provided background information on the Rosewood Courts case, including a summary of the current NRHP status for the housing development. The NRHP Nomination was forwarded to the Secretary of Interior with no recommendation for listing by the Texas NRHP State Board of Review. The board felt they could not support the nomination as written for listing under NRHP Criterion A for historical associations and Criterion C for architectural merit (but would have supported a revised nomination for listing under Criterion A alone). The nomination is currently pending National Park Service approval based on similar comments they provided going unrevised.

Ms. Carter and I discussed the position of the City of Austin Housing Authority and federal requirements to have 124 housing units on the site. If the entire site was preserved and the original buildings rehabilitated, they would be able to provide 80 housing units. We discussed other mitigative efforts the Housing Authority might consider to mitigate the impacts of the redevelopment of the site. She noted that she could recommend the Housing Authority consider a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Austin (HLC) to open a dialogue on mitigation for the site. Some options we discussed were HABS documentation, large-format photography, and/or possibly a competing NRHP nomination that would be developed to meet NRHP standards for the significance of the site (she would prefer not to go this route).

I encouraged Ms. Carter to attend today's COA meeting to discuss with the committee these ideas and others to help formulate a path forward prior to the January HLC meeting.

Kind regards,

-Beth

Sarah Valenzuela
Boards and Commissions