

Bertron, Cara

From: Elizabeth Baird <elizabeth@elizabeth-baird.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 11, 2018 11:52 AM
To: Bertron, Cara
Cc: Jessie Bloede; Forrest Bloede
Subject: Re: Notice of Historic Landmark Commission Review of 1714 W 34th Street

Hi Cara-

Can't believe it has almost been a month since the last HLC Meeting! I wanted to circle back with you re: our HLC case for 1714 W 34th Street and the corresponding agenda for next weeks meeting. It would be great to know more about how our case will be listed on the agenda/ presented in the upcoming meeting. Since I didn't get to talk at last month's meeting as I was prepared to I wanted to make sure you knew the following:

- We have had a congenial meeting with and been in regular follow up contact with members of the Brykerwoods neighborhood association and they have communicated that the BWNA will not be opposing either the demolition of the building or our new project. We also have several neighbor letters of support for our project that should be on file with your office.

- My clients property at 1714 W 34th Street is different than many of the properties in the Brykerwoods neighborhood as their direct neighbors to the north are commercial properties (a two story and one story apt building) facing 35th Street, a major and busy thoroughfare. With the rate of the development in Austin these properties will likely become even more densely developed in the near future. In addition my client's property is one of the largest lots in Brykerwoods. Due to these facts I believe it is unreasonable to expect a new home on this property to be a one story cottage like many of the others in Brykerwoods. In fact it would simply look out of scale. As you will see if you take a drive down W 34th Street in google maps (or in person) there are 7 two story homes that have already been built on W. 34th street, which is only a few blocks long. So again it seems unfair that we are being asked to downsize this already modest house given the size of the property and it's location relative to W 35th.

- Additionally to re-work the building to make it a more one story structure would require making big alterations to the current building's floor plan. We have already spent a lot of time on the plans and the clients are really happy with it and have no desire to redo all of this work we have already done. We plan to continue making the current building design look even better and are not planning to present a new one story design.

Lastly I just wanted to underscore that unlike developers with tons of cash flow, for a young family a project like this is a significant investment; one that with each delay is subject to higher interest rates and a larger strain on the project and the family. As such we hope we are hoping to move forward as quickly as possible with the remainder of this project. Please let me know if there is any other info I can provide to assist with the resolution of this case.

Thank you,
Elizabeth

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Elizabeth Baird, AIA
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On Mon, Nov 19, 2018 at 11:50 AM Bertron, Cara <Cara.Bertron@austintexas.gov> wrote:

Hi Elizabeth,

Thanks for your email, and sorry for my delayed response—I'm just back in the office after a weeklong conference.

Additional research could include more local context to determine if the house spurred similar development in the neighborhood or city, as well as more in-depth research on FHA's role in Austin at the time and the partnership between the FHA and Calcasieu Lumber. Basically, getting more answers to "why here, why now, and then what?" questions beyond the contemporary ads that initial research turned up.

The Commission is able to request that the applicant return to a future meeting, which the staff report states but does not firmly recommend (that's standard boilerplate language). No additional fees would be charged for future meetings.

The points in your last paragraph are fair, but we as staff are charged with evaluating proposed projects against the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, not against other projects. You can certainly make that case to the Historic Landmark Commission, which could be receptive.

Please let me know if you have further questions.

Cara

Cara Bertron

Senior Planner / Deputy Historic Preservation Officer

City of Austin Planning and Zoning Department

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From: Elizabeth Baird [mailto:elizabeth@elizabeth-baird.com]
Sent: Wednesday, November 14, 2018 11:45 AM
To: Bertron, Cara <Cara.Bertron@austintexas.gov>
Cc: Jessie Bloede [REDACTED]; Forrest Bloede [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Notice of Historic Landmark Commission Review of 1714 W 34th Street

Hi Cara-

Thank you for sending over this report.

We have a lot of information on the original home from the original owners that was passed down to the current owners, but there was nothing mentioned about it being an FHA home. I was curious to know what additional research would be conducted if there is a postponement? It seems like there has been quite a bit of research done already.

Also, it mentioned in the report that 'if the Commission votes to approve the demo application the staff recommends the applicant consider a more modest one-story design to better integrate with the historic character of the neighborhood' and 'request that the applicant return to a future hearing with revised plans'. My understanding after meeting in person with Andrew Rice about this process is that the commission can only provide comments on future building drawings in a national historic district and not approve or deny them. However, it sounds like a request for returning to a future hearing would essentially be a denial, and also would require my client to pay the \$1300 HLC review fee again at a future meeting (Not to mention paying me to re-design the building as a one story building when they specifically asked me to design a two-story house for them).

As you will see from a lot of my past architectural work I *fully* believe in and support the preservation of and adaptive reuse of the *architecturally significant* buildings of Austin's fabric, but as someone who talks to people daily about their needs and desires for their homes, I also believe that it is unreasonable to expect all new homes in Brykerwoods to be one-story structures. I also believe a modest 2700 SF custom home on a 12,000SF lot that is tastefully designed, well-crafted, well-detailed, and intended for the same family to live in for many years to come should be much preferred to a cheaply designed and quickly built spec house that max out every inch of the lot, or worse, two of those which could easily fit on this size lot, which unfortunately I have already seen happen in this same neighborhood. I sincerely hope the HLC will continue to focus their future efforts on hindering the fast and cheap (typically speculative) development going up in Austin neighborhoods instead of penalizing families who have undertaken the time and expense to hire an architect to try to design a nice (possibly two-story) custom home for their family.

Best Regards,

Elizabeth

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On Tue, Nov 13, 2018 at 12:18 PM Bertron, Cara <Cara.Bertron@austintexas.gov> wrote:

Hi Elizabeth,

In researching 1714 W. 34th Street, we found that the house was built as a Federal Housing Administration demonstration home. The FHA had recently created mortgage insurance and was trying to get more working-class people to buy modest homes; demonstration homes were built to show people what was possible. This is only one of two built in Austin that we know about.

Right now it doesn't look like the property meets the required two criteria for historic landmark designation, but we're going to recommend that the Historic Landmark Commission consider postponing a decision to allow more research - basically, to make 100% sure. The Commission can choose to make a decision on the application anyhow, and you and the property owners can advocate for that at Monday's meeting.

I'm attaching the draft of the staff report so you have the background we're working with. (You may notice two pages are missing - those are the map and photographs, which push the file over the attachment size limit.) I'm out of the office till the day of the meeting (11/19), but can answer any questions via email.

Cara

Cara Bertron

Senior Planner / Deputy Historic Preservation Officer

City of Austin Planning and Zoning Department

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