

Evaluation and Documentation of 1806 W 6th Street, Austin Texas
For
Eligibility as a Historic Landmark

Syllabus Partners LLC owns the real property located at 1806 W 6th Street, Austin, Texas, 78703, and has applied to the City of Austin for a demolition permit to remove the improvements in preparation for re-development of the site. The property is located in the West Line National Register Historic District.

Legal Lot

The legal lot includes three buildings: a Single Family Residence with the address of 1808 W 6th Street, an Accessory Use Building as part of the improvements at 1808 W 6th Street, with this ADU sometimes referred to as 1808 ½ W 6th Street, and another Single Family Residence with the address of 1806 W 6th Street.

The City of Austin Planning and Zoning Department staff broke the request into two separate components and referred the Application for Demolition Permit to the Historic Landmark Commission at its December 17, 2018 meeting with the following recommendations:

- For the improvements at 1806 W 6th Street, the Historic Preservation Office recommended approval of the demolition permit subject to completion of City of Austin Documentation Package and Historical Commission review of plans for new construction for the site, and the Commission voted to approve the recommendation as part of a Consent Agenda motion.
- For the improvements at 1808 W 6th Street, the Historic Preservation Office recommended postponement until January 28, 2019 to fully evaluate alternatives to demolition.

Historical Landmark Issues According to City Code

According to City Code Section 25-2-352:

“(A). The council may designate a structure or site as a historic landmark (H) combining district if:

(1). the property is at least 50 years old and represents a period of significance of at least 50 years ago, unless the property is of exceptional importance as defined by National Register Bulletin 22, National Park Service (1996);

The 1806 W 6th legal lot includes improvements that partially meet these criteria. However even though the improvements are more than 50 years old they do not represent a period of significance.

(2). the property retains a high degree of integrity, as defined by the National Register of Historic Places, that clearly conveys its historical significance and does not include an addition or alteration which has significantly compromised its integrity;

The 1806 W 6th legal lot includes improvements that fail to meet this criterion because the improvements lack a high degree of integrity and includes additions and alterations that disqualify it from consideration as a Historic Landmark

(3). the property:

(a). is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places; or is designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Archeological Landmark, or National Historic Landmark;

The 1806 W 6th Street legal lot includes improvements that are listed in the West Line National Register of Historic Places at two addresses, including 1808 W 6th Street. This is an honorific designation, not a historic landmark designation.

or (b). demonstrates significance in at least two of the following categories:

(i) Architecture. The property embodies the distinguishing characteristics of a recognized architectural style, type, or method of construction;

The 1806 W 6th Street legal lot includes improvements that embody only a few, but not all of the distinguishing characteristics of true Craftsman styling,

- exemplifies technological innovation in design or construction;
- displays high artistic value in representing ethnic or folk art, architecture, or construction;
- represents a rare example of an architectural style in the city;
- serves as an outstanding example of the work of an architect, builder, or artisan who significantly contributed to the development of the city, state, or nation;
- possesses cultural, historical, or architectural value as a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian or vernacular structure; or represents an architectural curiosity or one-of-a-kind building.

The 1806 W 6th Street legal lot includes improvements that do not meet any of these criterion.

(ii) Historical Associations. The property has long-standing significant associations with persons, groups, institutions, businesses, or events of historic importance which contributed significantly to the history of the city, state, or nation; or represents a significant portrayal of the cultural practices or the way of life of a definable group of people in a historic time.

The persons associated with this 1806 W 6th Street legal lot do not meet this criterion.

II B. According to National Register Bulletin VI. How to Identify the Type of Significance of a Property

“the key to determining whether the characteristics or associations of a particular property are significant is to consider the property within its historic context.”

In its evaluation of the 1808 W 6th Street component of the 1806 W 6th street legal lot, City Staff has not defined the “historic context” of the property

“After identifying the relevant historic context(s) with which the property is associated, the four Criteria are applied to the property.

Within the scope of the historic context, the National Register Criteria define the kind of significance that the properties represent: Criterion A; Event, Criterion B; Person, Criterion C; Design/Construction, and Criterion D; Information Potential.

The National Register Criteria recognize different types of values embodied in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects.

These values fall into the following categories:

- Associative value (Criteria A and B), Properties significant for their association or linkage to events or persons important in the past.
- Design or Construction value (Criterion C), Properties significant as representatives of the manmade expression of culture or technology.
- Information value (Criterion D), Properties significant for their ability to yield important information about prehistory or history.”

1806 W 6th Street Address Improvements

According to City Staff, the improvements at 1806 W 6th Street do not meet the criteria for individual designation as a Historic Landmark, and consequently recommended Consent Agenda Approval of this component of the request to the Historical Commission.

Therefore, the following will discuss the improvements made to the property that carry the 1808 W 6th Street address only, as Syllabus agrees with Staff and Commission on this element of the total improvements to the legal lot.

1808 W 6th Street Address Improvements

According to City Staff, the 1808 W 6th Street improvements (that are part of the 1806 w 6th legal lot Application for Demolition Permit) may meet the criteria for Historic Landmark Designation in two categories, i.e., Architecture and Historical Association.

Syllabus disputes both of these possibilities for the following reasons:

1. *Lack of Distinction through Association*

According to Criterion B of the National Register Bulletin, Association with a Person of Significance, the person associated with the property must be “individually significant within a historic context.”

The National Register Bulletin further states that

“A property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group. It must be shown that the person gained importance within his or her profession or group.

Eligible

- The residence of a doctor, a mayor, or a merchant is eligible under Criterion B if the person was significant in the field of medicine, politics, or commerce, respectively.

Not Eligible

- A property is not eligible under Criterion B if it is associated with an individual about whom no scholarly judgement can be made because either research has not revealed specific information about the person’s activities and their impact, or there is insufficient perspective to determine whether those activities or contributions were historically important.”

Isabelle Sutor, the original owner of the 1806 W 6th Street property, was a person whose merchant activities did not rise to the level of historical importance:

- *She was not a native born Austinite or Texan*
- *She was 40 years old when she came to Texas and married the 50-year old W. J. Sutor in 1903*
- *She did not build or own the building at 304-306 Congress Avenue in which she and her husband, Mr. W. J. Sutor, began the management of a hotel business, in 1903, in a wood-framed house built and owned by her mother-in-law, Mrs. E. H. Sutor.*
- *Following the death of her husband in 1913, after only 10 years of marriage, Isabelle Sutor continued to operate the hotel business in the leased premises until 1924 when she sold the business to her neighbors who operated a drug store in the same wood-framed house on Congress Avenue.*
- *In 1917, few years after the death of her son, the very elderly and infirm Mrs. E. H. Sutor, died and her estate sold the 306 Congress Avenue house to the Robertson family, who later sold the house that was demolished to make way for new improvements.*

- *Following the death of her mother-in-law in 1917, Isabelle Sutor acquired the 1806 W 6th subject property on the outer fringe of Austin's City Limits and built the house at 1808 W 6th Street.*
- *She lived here for less than seven years while operating the hotel on Congress Avenue, a period of time amounting to less than 10% of the 1806/1808 W 6th Street property's history to date.*
- *Her husband, W. J. Sutor lived at 3050 Guadalupe Street in a house that was demolished years ago to make way for new improvements.*
- *The 1808 W 6th improvements to the 1806 W 6th Street legal lot are not known as the "Sutor House" or any other such title of distinction.*
- *Although City Staff references her as winning "recognition for her business skill and style in Austin newspapers", only one such article appearing in one newspaper has been produced from a search of records at the Austin History Center, leaving open the scholarly question of Isabelle Sutor's historical significance, importance to the hotel industry or to Austin's history.*
- *No other information was found at the AHC to substantiate the one newspaper article's claim, on October 6, 1903 that Mr. Sutor was "recognized as one of the best, and is beyond a doubt one of the most popular hotel men in Texas"*
- *Even if it could be proven that he was of that level of importance, William J. Sutor never lived in the house Isabelle Sutor built at 1806/1808 W 6th Street.*
- *No other articles on either Isabelle Sutor or the Sutor Hotel were found after an exhaustive search of the internet, City of Austin History Center records, or other City records.*

Conclusion: Lack of Distinction Through Association With A Person of Significance

Therefore, the historical significance of this property according to Criterion B Association fails to be proven because no scholarly judgement can be made because "either research has not revealed specific information about the person's activities and their impact, or there is insufficient perspective to determine whether those activities or contributions were historically important".

2. According to Criterion C of the National Register Bulletin, Design/Construction, Distinctive Characteristics of Type, Period, and Method of Construction, "this is the portion of Criterion C under which most properties are eligible for historical consideration, for it encompasses all architectural styles and construction practices."

However, to be eligible under this Criterion C, a property must clearly illustrate, through "distinctive characteristics", the following:

- The pattern of features common to a particular class of resources,
- The individuality or variation of features that occurs within the class,
- The evolution of that class, or
- The transition between classes of resources.

According to the National Register Bulletin, “Distinctive Characteristics are the physical features or traits that commonly recur in individual types, periods, or methods of construction.”

To be eligible for Historical Landmark consideration, a property “must clearly contain enough of those characteristics to be considered a true representative of a particular type, period, or method of construction. Characteristics can be expressed in terms such as form, proportion, structure, plan, style, or materials.”

Continuing, the National Register Bulletin states that “high artistic values may be expressed in many ways, including areas as diverse as community design or planning, engineering or sculpture.

Eligible

- A property is eligible for its high artistic values if it so fully articulates a particular concept of design that expresses an aesthetic ideal.
- A building that is a classic expression of the design theories of the Craftsman Style, such as carefully detailed handwork, is eligible.

Not Eligible

- A property is not eligible, however, if it does not express aesthetic ideals or design concepts more fully than other properties of its type.
- A building that is a modest example (within its historic context) of the Craftsman Style of architecture ..., would not qualify for high artistic value.”

The improvements made to the 1806 W 6th Street legal lot, including the SFR and ADU built in 1917 at 1808 W 6th Street as well as the SFR built in 1924 at 1806 W 6th Street do not meet these requirements because none of the improvements meet the standard for outstanding quality or specimen representation of Craftsman styling because all such improvements are mediocre examples that were not carefully planned or executed.

According to the National Register, the categories that define Historic Properties are Building, Structure, Object, Site and District.

Site

- *The original property bought by Mrs. Sutor in 1917 was substantially larger than the current remainder property.*
- *This original property was never properly platted or recognized as a legal lot by the City*
- *Parcels of the original property were sold over time until the remaining property consisted of 0.467-acres that appeared for years under a single Travis County taxpayer identification number until the property was split into two pieces following foreclosure of the 1808 piece in 2015.*

- *Syllabus Partners acquired the two pieces and submitted the property in August 2018, for Land Status Determination as a legal lot, and received such, backdated to June 28, 2013, for reasons, according to Michelle Casillas, City Planner, having to do with the prior application and payment of fees by another party who abandoned the process before completing the work*
- *TCAD records have not been updated to show a single taxpayer ID number for the 1806 W 6th Street legal lot.*

Setting

- *At the time it was built in 1917, the 1808 W 6th house was considered to be on the outskirts of Austin's city limits, with the West Line Trolley service stopping at Lamar Blvd.*
- *The SFR house built at 1808 W 6th Street was designed to face the alley off Patterson Avenue towards the rear of the property, and therefore does not respect either W 6th Street or Theresa Avenue as frontage streets.*
- *The improvements sit on the far rear portion of the property, leaving most of the lot undeveloped towards the front and west side*

Building

- *The 1808 "W 6th Street SFR has been modified many times over the years to include closing in the front and rear porches with materials dis-similar to the original.*
 - *Windows and window glass added or repaired over time do not match original,*
 - *Wood siding added over time does not match original*
 - *Lack of adequate thermal insulation,*
 - *Plumbing modifications and additions do not meet Code,*
 - *Electrical modifications and additions do not meet Code,*
 - *Foundation is built of cedar posts sitting on shallow unreinforced concrete pads and shows signs of extreme settlement and structural deformation*
 - *Mismatched interior wood floors show signs of prior termite infestations*
 - *Relatively new wooden deck facing W 6th does not match Craftsman styling*
 - *Presence of asbestos in drywall and texture added during prior remodeling*
 - *Presence of lead-based paint on all wooden surfaces*
 - *Original wood shingles replaced with asphalt shingles*
- *The 1808 W 6th Street SFR also includes antique embellishments that are out of character with Craftsman styling, added by prior antique dealer owners, including*
 - *Double antique doors with carved medallions (with one panel missing) from the enclosed front porch to the newly constructed wooden deck facing W 6th Street,*
 - *Front door carved wooden header,*
 - *Interior round Doric wooden columns,*
 - *Interior carved wood mirror frames, and*
 - *Hodge podge light fixtures inside and out*
 - *Mis-matched door and cabinet hardware.*
- *The ADU was apparently modified from original construction as a carriage house or garage but has parasite utility services common to 1808 W 6th Street in violation of City Code along with numerous other violations that render this element of the improvements unworthy of discussion for eligibility as a Historic Landmark.*

- *The 1806 W 6th Street SFR property was cheaply constructed as a rental property in 1924 and has been modified several times to include a series of hodge-podge improvements that do not rise to the level of argument for qualification as a Historic Landmark.*