

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION  
DECEMBER 16, 2019  
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS  
HDP-2019-0544  
1208 E. HOWARD LANE**

**PROPOSAL**

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Demolish a 19<sup>th</sup> century house that includes a stuccoed stone blockhouse believed to date from the 1850s and the establishment of fortifications around the German community of Dessau.

**ARCHITECTURE**

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One-story, rectangular -plan, partially-stuccoed stone and frame house with a hipped shingled roof. The original part of the house appears to be the stone section, which has been stuccoed over and now constitutes the southern section of the current house. Fenestration in this original section of the house consists of two 4:4 wood-frame windows on the west elevation; both windows in segmental-arched openings, and 6:6 Colonial Revival-styled windows on the east elevation. The east elevation of the house is a combination of the original stuccoed stone building and a frame addition, all of which has been stuccoed, some over the original stone, and some over lathe that is visible in areas where the stucco has deteriorated. The east elevation has a full-width independent porch on plain round columns, and a central, Neo-Classical entryway consisting of a single-leaf door with oval glazing, with sidelights and a three-part transom, all of which have a “Union Jack” configuration. The Neo-Classical entry and the addition across the east elevation of the house, including the porch, appear to date from the 1910s. The frame section of the west elevation may date from earlier than the estimated 1910s construction date of the east elevation; it has a single-leaf paneled door, no sidelights or transom, and 2:2 fenestration. The west door appears to be directly across from the east Neo-Classical entry, making for a central hall configuration of the house. Smaller frame additions appear to have been built across the north elevation of the building, these later than the east and west additions to the original stone building. The west elevation of the north addition contains a single 8:8 Colonial Revival window. The house appears to be in fair condition, with peeling paint, some rotted wood, and deteriorated stucco over the stone. There are several outbuildings on the site, including a cistern; none appear to have any historic or architectural significance.

**RESEARCH**

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Staff was not able to speak personally with the property owner and resident prior to the preparation of this report, but a representative from the Travis County Historical Commission did visit the site and met with the elderly property owner, who related that the stone section of the house was a blockhouse for the Dessau community, and dates back to the 1850s; the house was added onto in the 1870s, 1910s, and later, and that the current owner’s grandfather bought the property in the 1860s. This evidence of the history of the property dovetails with the physical evidence of the house, with its stone construction and frame additions. The current owner is a descendant of the Yager family of pioneers of the Dessau area northeast of Austin.

This area was not within the city limits of Austin until relatively recently. There is no extant documentary evidence of the history of this house and property.

**STAFF COMMENTS**

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The house is beyond the bounds of any City or Travis County survey to date.

Staff has evaluated this house for designation as a historic landmark and has determined that the house may meet the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code:

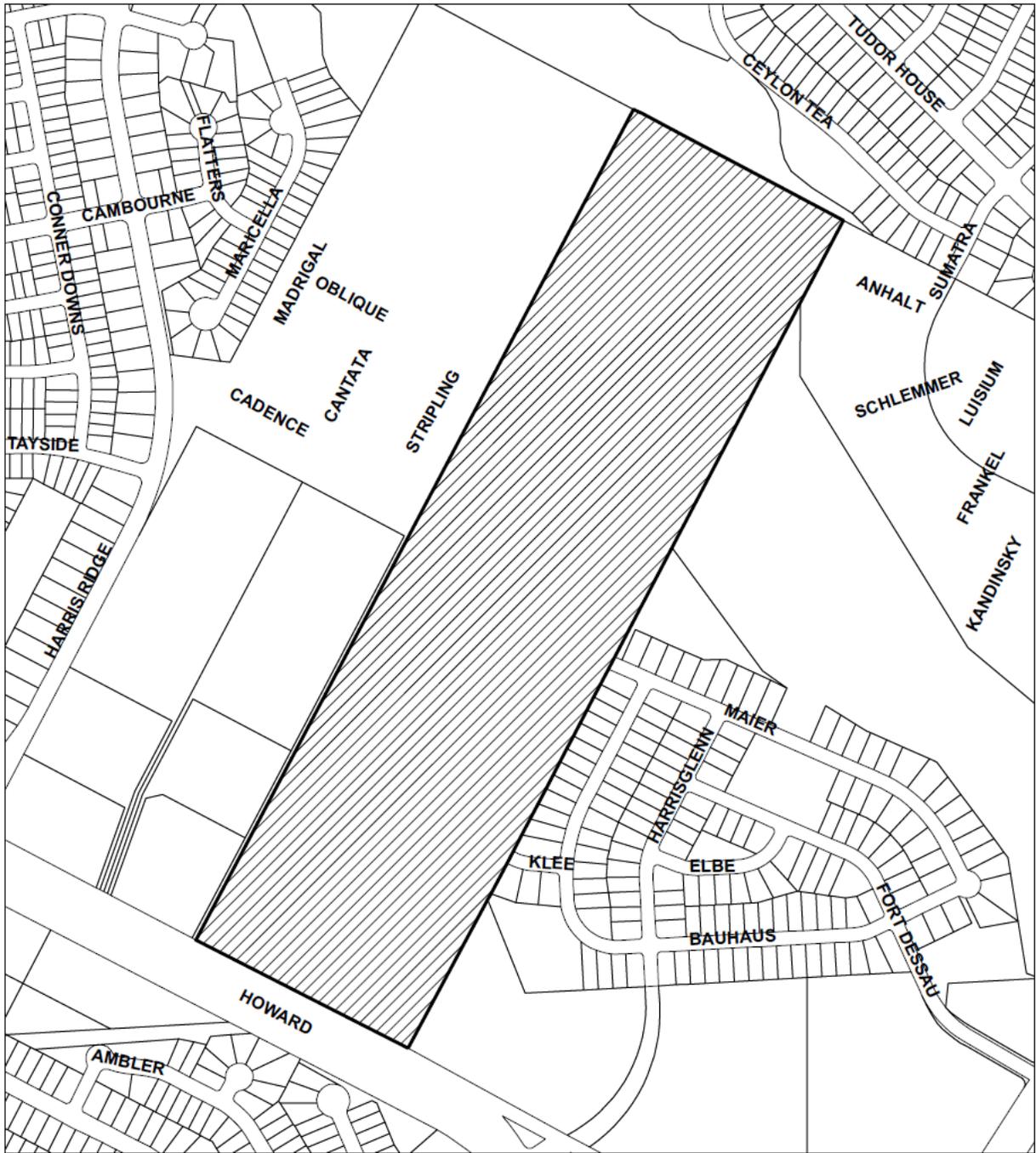
- a. **Architecture.** The oldest portions of this house consist of a stuccoed stone former blockhouse for the Dessau community, and a frame addition with a Neo-Classical entry that indicates a ca. 1910s construction date. Nineteenth-century rural homes such as this are a rarity in the Austin area, and there are few houses dating from the period of settlement and prosperity in the Dessau section of the county. The 19<sup>th</sup> century stone work and Neo-Classical entry and front porch are significant architectural features that warrant designation as a historic landmark under the criterion for architecture.
- b. **Historical association.** The house has been in the same family since the 1860s, and most likely has significant historical associations with German pioneer families in the Dessau section of the county. Further research into the history of the family and their contributions to Austin and Travis County history will be necessary to make an objective evaluation of the historical significance of the property.
- c. **Archaeology.** The house was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
- d. **Community value.** The house may have significance for its unique location if it was indeed originally built as a blockhouse for Fort Dessau or part of the Dessau community of Travis County. The house may contribute to the character, image, or cultural identity of the old Dessau community, now included within the city.
- e. **Landscape feature.** The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Staff has met with the applicant for the demolition permit, who will amend the permit application to reflect only a partial demolition of the structure, keeping the stuccoed stone blockhouse as an artifact of the history of the property and site. Staff, the applicant, and the representative of the Travis County Historical Commission have met to work out the details of the preservation of the oldest section of the structure, and its continued maintenance. If the Commission is comfortable with the preliminaries of the preservation plan for the structure, then staff would recommend against landmark designation in favor of the private agreement or covenant to preserve it. Either way, staff recommends full documentation of the existing structure before any demolition occurs, and the completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package, consisting of photographs of all elevations, a dimensioned sketch plan, and a narrative history to the extent known, for archiving in the Travis County Collection at the Austin History Center.

LOCATION MAP



-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

**NOTIFICATIONS**

CASE#: HDP-2019-0544  
1208 E HOWARD LANE



1" = 458'

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.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.



West elevation of the house showing the stuccoed stone section and the frame additions.



Frame additions on the west elevation of the house showing a what appears to be a 1910s addition (with the door) and a later addition to the left.



West elevation of the house showing the stuccoed stone section and the frame addition.



Close-up view of the segmental-arched window opening in the stuccoed stone section of the house.



View showing what is believed to be the 1910s addition (right) and a later addition containing the 8:8 window.



View of a window in the stuccoed stone section showing the building materials.



Full-width porch along the east side of the house. The porch is believed to date from the 1910s.



East elevation of the house.



Neo-Classical-styled entry on the east elevation of the house – believed to have been constructed in the 1910s.



Photo showing the stone section (left) and the lathe section of the 1910s addition under the stucco on the east elevation of the house.



Stuccoed stone section on the east elevation of the house.



Neo-Classical-styled porch across the east elevation of the house.



Neo-Classical entry and porch across the east elevation of the house.



Cistern of undetermined age to the west of the house.

