



June 16, 2020

City of Austin Historic Landmark Commission  
P.O. Box 1088  
Austin, TX 78767

Re: 2502 Park View Drive, Austin, Texas

Dear Historic Landmark Commissioners,

Mid Tex Mod, the leading voice for the preservation of mid-century modern architecture in our region, submits this letter of opposition to the proposed demolition of the house at 2502 Park View Drive. As the Central Texas chapter of Docomomo US, Mid Tex Mod's mission is to raise awareness of buildings, sites, neighborhoods, and landscapes of the modern movement and to advocate for their preservation, documentation, and sustained use. Mid Tex Mod strongly opposes the release of a demolition permit for 2502 Park View Drive. Our organization fully supports any efforts to preserve this architecturally and historically significant residence and contributing resource to the potential Austin Air-Conditioned Village Historic District.

The residence at 2502 Park View Drive represents one of twenty-two original test houses constructed in 1954 as part of the Austin Air-Conditioned Village. This community of modest ranch and contemporary-style homes in the Edgewood Subdivision of Austin served as an experimental research project conducted by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and research partners including the University of Texas at Austin to assess the integration of central air conditioning in mid-priced suburban residences. Twenty-two houses, constructed by eighteen local homebuilders, incorporated different air-conditioning systems with a variety of building plans, orientations, and cladding materials to monitor the effectiveness and affordability of central air conditioning for the middle class. Monitoring of occupants for a period of one year, under the direction of the National Warm Air Heating and Air Conditioning Association's Mobile Laboratory, documented residents' experiences and daily habits with air-conditioned living. Ultimately, the testing results at the Austin Air-Conditioned Village demonstrated that the installation and operation of residential air conditioning could be achieved in modest houses at a reasonable cost, thereby influencing residential building and lending practices in the ensuing decades.

2502 Park View Drive, known as "The Air Temp" house, originally incorporated a Chrysler AirTemp air-conditioning system. Designed by local architect Fred Winfield Day and constructed by local builder Wayne A. Burns (developer of the Edgewood Subdivision), the contemporary-style house features low sloping roof lines; wide overhanging eaves; fixed, horizontal-sliding sash, and clerestory windows; a variety of cladding materials including asbestos, wood siding, and brick; a large carport; and patterned brick screening walls. The addition of a small utility room on the northwest side elevation below the carport roof reflects a single minor exterior alteration.

The house retains a remarkably high degree of integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as the most distinctive and intact original residence within the Austin Air-Conditioned Village development. As such, 2502 Park View Drive is considered a contributing resource to the potential Austin Air-Conditioned Village Historic District. A draft National Register Nomination for the Austin Air-Conditioned Village (currently in preparation) identifies seventeen contributing houses within a potential district boundary along Park View Drive, Twin Oaks Drive, Nasco Drive, and Daugherty Street. This number



includes fourteen of the original test houses, the Austin Home Builders Association office (that was affiliated with the experiment but was not a test house), and two houses that were not part of the development but that represent similar styles and periods of construction. As a potential historic district, the Austin Air-Conditioned Village is significant at the national level under National Register Criterion A in the area of Engineering for its collaboration between leading air-conditioning manufacturers and the mid-twentieth-century homebuilding industry. The potential district is also significant at the local level under National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an early example of modest tract houses by prominent Austin-area builders incorporating air-conditioning technology.

Mid Tex Mod has worked with the Allandale Neighborhood Association over the last two years to reevaluate the remaining original Austin Air-Conditioned Village residences and to support an interest in potential designation of the area as a National Register Historic District. As this is a contributing resource to the potential district, Mid Tex Mod strongly opposes the demolition of the architecturally distinctive residence at 2502 Park View Drive.

Mid Tex Mod finds that the house at 2502 Park View Drive meets the following criteria for local historic landmark designation:

#### **Architecture**

- High degree of architectural integrity as a distinctive example of a mid-twentieth-century contemporary-style ranch house
- The most intact original residence remaining from the 1954 Austin Air-Conditioned Village development

#### **Historical Associations**

- National historical associations with burgeoning mid-twentieth-century residential air-conditioning technology
- Local historical associations with modest, regional, mid-century residential design by local architects and home builders.

Our organization urges Austin's Historic Preservation Office to fully survey this significant mid-century neighborhood for potential historic district designation and to pursue individual historic landmark designation to ensure the continued preservation and sustainability of this significant resource.

Thank you for your time on this matter and for your service on this important commission. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at [midtexasmod@gmail.com](mailto:midtexasmod@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth Porterfield".

Elizabeth Porterfield, President  
Mid Tex Mod