

Dear Members of the Historic Landmark Commission,

For 33 years, we have resided at 3209 Oakmont Blvd in the Bryker Woods neighborhood of Central Austin. We raised our daughter here, have known most of our neighbors well, and have enjoyed living in one of the traditional older neighborhoods that make Austin distinctive and livable.

We are writing to share our concerns about the construction that Kim and Eric Zipfel are proposing at 3211 Oakmont Blvd. Our primary concern is that the construction plans include a third story, which violates the deed restriction that single family homes in area BW "E" not exceed 2 stories.

We understand that the plans technically meet the City of Austin McMansion ordinance, which (inexplicably to us) does not consider a "habitable attic" to be a third story. Yet, the Zipfel's building plans include a staircase leading from the second to the third floor and plans for a sectional sofa and TV wall on the third floor that constitutes more than half the third-floor space. Third-floor storage appears to be confined to dormer areas. It seems disingenuous to claim that this does not constitute a third story living arrangement.

The plan also includes, of course, a roof line that will be three stories. This is not consonant with the neighborhood. In the three blocks of Oakmont Blvd covered by the Bryker Woods "E" section (from 32nd St to 35th St.), there are 30 homes. Many have been renovated and enlarged, but only 6 even have a second story. The proposed house at 3211 would be the only house in Bryker Woods "E" with a third-story roof line. This is not the historic character of this street and neighborhood.

It is our hope that the Commission will not approve these plans. We do not fault the Zipfel's for proposing to build a house that maximizes their individual needs; it's not their responsibility to enforce building restrictions associated with historic districts. If we understand it, it is the responsibility of the Historic Landmark Commission to determine if building plans are appropriate to a Historic District. To us, the Zipfel's proposed plan is an example of what the deed restrictions and the Historic District designation were trying to prevent—the acceleration of very large single-family homes within historic neighborhoods of principally 1 and 2-story homes. Even with the current deed restrictions, construction of a large and comfortable home that fits the historic district is clearly possible. If the Commission allows this 3-story house, we see no reason why similar future homes will not remove the characteristics of homes in this neighborhood that led to the historic district designation in the first place.

We do not approve these plans.

Respectfully,

Mary Ellen Isaacs and Ted Dix