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October 25, 2020

Terri Myers, Chair
City of Austin
Historic Landmark Commission

Re: 2505 and 2507 Park View Drive

Dear Chair,

Preservation Austin has been our city's leading nonprofit voice for historic preservation since 1953. We write today to express our dismay at the proposed demolition of 2505 and 2507 Park View Drive in the Air-Conditioned Village. We ask the Historic Landmark Commission to support historic zoning for these significant properties in the areas of Architecture, Historical Associations, and Community Value.

The Air-Conditioned Village was built in 1954 to assess the cost-effectiveness and profitability of central air in middle-class housing. Twenty-three houses, each featuring air-conditioning systems from a different manufacturer, were sold to families who agreed to allow their homes and habits to be studied by University of Texas scientists. Austinite Ned Cole, an architect and head of the air-conditioning subcommittee of the National Association of Homes Builders, spearheaded the project, which was the first multi-home experiment of its kind worldwide. Local architects and builders designed each unique home with energy-saving design elements to test their effectiveness.

2505 Park View Drive, known as the "Frigidaire House," retains integrity and clearly conveys its historical significance. Preservation Austin believes the property meets the following criteria for historic zoning:

Architecture:

- The house embodies several of the hallmarks of the Ranch style, including the long, low configuration, deep eaves, and prominent low front porch. Although the house has been somewhat modified, its original form and contextual appearance remains intact.
- The house was specifically designed as a modest house to test the ability to provide central air conditioning in homes for the middle class.

Historical Associations:

- The Air-Conditioned Village was an internationally renowned experiment in building innovation and social science. Its success impacted the architecture and economics of air-conditioning for homebuilders and their middle-class audience.
- The house was designed by Ned Cole, who was instrumental in bringing the experiment of central air conditioning to Austin and who was noted for his innovative architectural designs using prefabricated elements

Community Value:

- The Air-Conditioned Village is embedded in Austin's identity. Cole convinced organizers to locate the project here because of Austin's hot temperatures, booming Sun Belt economy, and proximity to the University of Texas, a prominent research institution. This beloved historic resource is part of Allandale's cultural fabric and an irreplaceable hallmark of Austin's significant postwar heritage.

2507 Park View Drive retains integrity and clearly conveys its historical significance. Preservation Austin believes the property meets the following criteria for historic zoning:

Architecture:

- The house is an excellent example of a modest Ranch style house with few alterations over the years. The Ranch style is typified by a long, low presence, side-gabled, with deep eaves, all of which are present on this house.
- Its design reflects its adaptation for central air conditioning at a price point attractive to middle-class homebuyers.

Historical Association:

- The Air-Conditioned Village was an internationally renowned experiment in building innovation and social science. Its success impacted the architecture and economics of air-conditioning for homebuilders and their middle-class audience.
- The house was designed by local architect H.D. Powers in conjunction with the Carrier Corporation, a pioneer in air conditioning systems for commercial and residential uses. Prior to these commissions, Powers worked for the Federal Housing Administration.

Community Value:

- As one of the more intact houses in the Air-Conditioned Village, this house represents a unique chapter in Austin's history, as the focus of a nationwide study that paved the way for the further development of residential air conditioning for every class of building, not just the expensive houses.

The Air-Conditioned Village has seen too many demolitions, at a rapidly increased rate, over the past several years. Today only fifteen of the original twenty-three homes retain integrity. However, a draft National Register nomination is underway with the support of advocates, neighbors, and our colleagues at Mid Tex Mod. Every loss brings us closer to losing any chance for a historic district to honor and protect these buildings. We urge the Historic Landmark Commission to take action on this issue and offer our support to help protect this irreplaceable piece of Austin's history.

Sincerely,



Clayton Bullock
President
Preservation Austin

Gaudette, Angela

From: Carolyn Croom <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, October 24, 2020 10:05 PM
To: PAZ Preservation
Subject: Hearing on 2507 Park View Drive (HDP-2020-0352)

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

To the members of the Historic Landmark Commission:

I favor the preservation of the house at 2507 Park View Drive, which would contribute to the potential historic district of the Air-Conditioned Village, the nation's first and largest air-conditioning test village. An important outcome of this experiment was its influence in easing loan restrictions on FHA and VA loans to allow air-conditioned homes to be affordable to the middle-class, not just the wealthy. The University of Texas at Austin played a role in monitoring usage for the first two years. Nomination of the Air-Conditioned Village has just been submitted for a National Register Historic District designation. It is important to preserve every house possible, so that the nomination continues to be viable.

This test house, a wonderful, intact example of a Ranch-style house in the Air-Conditioned Village project is a part of Austin's history and culture. It has historical significance as a house designed by local architect, H.D. Powers, and the Carrier Corporation. The residence has important historical and community associations and should be preserved.

Please vote for the preservation of 2507 Park View Drive.

I am also concerned that few people know about the demolition request. The sign on the property was up for only a short time.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Croom
2502 Albata Avenue
Austin, Texas 78757

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Gaudette, Angela

From: Gaudette, Angela
Sent: Monday, October 26, 2020 9:00 AM
To: Gaudette, Angela
Subject: FW: Monday's Meeting

From: Kevin Smith <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, October 25, 2020 9:58 PM
To: Gaudette, Angela <Angela.Gaudette@austintexas.gov>
Subject: Re: Monday's Meeting

Angela,

I appreciate your response, and I hope that you are able to relax this weekend.

In regards to my original email, my preference would be to abstain from both agenda items D4 (proposed demolition permit of 2505 Park View Dr) and agenda item D5 (proposed demolition permit of 2507 Park View Dr).

If a binary in favour/opposition position is required, and we are basing our decisions on the architecture (and subsequent external modifications of the homes); I am in favour of the proposed demolition permit for agenda item D4 (proposed demolition permit of 2505 Park View Dr). The exterior of the home has been significantly modified since it's original early 1950's construction and has potentially lost the spirit of the original construction.

For, agenda item D5 (proposed demolition permit of 2507 Park View Dr), I oppose the proposed demolition permit. With the exception of converting the carport into a garage, the minor updates to the exterior of the home remain true to the original construction. In addition, upon reviewing material available the City of Austin's Historic Landmark Commission website; there is potential historic significance based upon a past resident. (I apologize for the lack of resident specificity. As I compose this message, EDIMS is unavailable for me to provide resident specific information). However, I would ask the Commission to follow the guidance provided in the Historic LandMark Commission's by-laws and take more than architecture into account. For me, the true impact of the Allandale's Air Conditioned Village lies not in its architecture. It lies in the unique layout of each individual home's air conditioner infrastructure and energy consumption data. This energy consumption data helped set federal government (FHA, VA) policies that allowed working class families to qualify for loans on homes that contained air conditioning. Previous to this Village's experiment, most federally backed mortgages for homes with air conditioning were reserved for higher income families.

Thank you for your time

Kevin Smith

Gaudette, Angela

From: John A Tate [REDACTED] >
Sent: Saturday, October 24, 2020 11:19 PM
To: PAZ Preservation
Subject: Opposing demolition of 2507 Park View Drive (HDP-2020-0352)

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I live a few blocks north of the houses in the Austin Air Conditioned Village. I attended the tour of the Village organized by Mid Tex Mod a couple of years ago, and I enjoy seeing them on our walks around the neighborhood. These houses gain their historical significance for me from several factors. First, they represent an early demonstration of the effectiveness of air conditioning and energy-efficient design in houses intended for ordinary middle-class homeowners. Second, several of the houses were designed by architects who are well-known and highly regarded in and around Austin for multiple notable projects. Third, they are attractive examples of houses from the early 1950s, of a type which are being rapidly destroyed all around town.

While I understand that there are reasons why developers and investors want to replace them rather than preserve them, I think these should be preserved. They meet several of the criteria for historic preservation, as documented in the staff analysis, and I understand that they are the subject of an application for a National Historic District. We should not preclude their designation by allowing more of them to be demolished.

Thank you for your kind attention.

John Tate
2502 Albata Avenue
Austin, Texas 78757

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