

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
AUGUST 3RD, 2022
PR-2022-077197; GF-2022-084933
1601 CEDAR AVENUE

PROPOSAL

Repair siding and details, replace roof shingles, and replace windows on a ca. 1914 single-story house.

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

- 1) Replace existing windows with 6:6 divided-light windows.
- 2) Repair siding and trim, replacing elements where needed.
- 3) Repair steps and railings, replacing elements where needed.
- 4) Replace existing shingle roof with new shingles.
- 5) Add raised decks at rear secondary egress points at north and south elevations.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, rectangular-plan, hipped roof, frame transitional-style house with a partial-width inset porch with a segmental-arched bargeboard, raised rail, paired battered timber posts, and boxed panel spandrels; replacement single 6:6 fenestration; central, hipped roof frame attic vent dormer.

RESEARCH

Mack and Gertrude Parker Blocker bought 1601 Cedar Avenue in September of 1914. The lot was across the street from his wife's father's property. According to his 1917 draft registration card, Mack Blocker was born in LaGrange, Texas in 1893. He and his wife, the former Gertrude Parker, lived here until their deaths. Mack Blocker worked a variety of jobs, typical of African American men in the first part of the 20th century: laborer, porter, truck driver, and janitor. He died in 1927, and his widow, Gertrude, continued to live in this house for decades to come. Gertrude Blocker apparently never remarried, and supported herself with work as a maid and cook for a private family. Her nephew, Charles Conley, lived with her and worked as a waiter at the Austin Hotel.

DESIGN STANDARDS

The City of Austin's [Historic Design Standards](#) (March 2021) are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and are used to evaluate projects at potential historic landmarks. The following standards apply to the proposed project:

Residential repair and alterations

1. General Standards

The proposed project repairs most of the historic fabric, replacing in-kind where deteriorated beyond repair.

3. Roofs

The proposed replacement material is appropriate.

4. Exterior Walls and Trim

The proposed project repairs, rather than replacing, historic material, unless it is deteriorated beyond repair.

5. Windows, Doors, and Screens

The proposed windows appear appropriate and do not modify existing window openings.

6. Porches

The proposed project repairs historic porch decking, piers, columns, railings, and trim, replacing in-kind where too deteriorated. It maintains the porch dimensions and preserves the historic railing style.

PROPERTY EVALUATION

The 2016 East Austin survey recommends the property as contributing to potential local and National Register historic districts. The Commission initiated historic zoning in 2021; the staff report has been updated to reflect the previous Commission and staff findings.

Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark

- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.

- 2) The building appears to retain medium to high integrity. The wood siding was installed during the historic period.
- 3) Properties must meet two criteria for landmark designation (LDC §25-2-352). Staff has evaluated the property and determined that it may meet two criteria:
 - a. **Architecture.** The building is a good example of transitional Craftsman architecture from a period representing a bridge between the Victorian styles known for their architectural ornamentation and the more reserved and smaller-scale bungalow styles of the 1920s. Transitional houses were generally taller than the later bungalows, but began to exhibit a lower form than the Victorians of the past; a slow move from verticality to horizontality. Although the windows have been replaced, the house reflects a high degree of integrity for its age, and is also unusual for its continuous ownership by a Black family in an era where a house like this would have likely started off with white owners. The house appears to have architectural significance.
 - b. **Historical association.** The property was owned and occupied by Mack Blocker and his widow, Gertrude Blocker, during the entire historic period. Both Mack and Gertrude Blocker worked in professions typifying Black life in Austin in the early 20th century: janitor, porter, laborer, cook, and maid. After Mack Blocker's early death in the late 1920s, Gertrude Blocker continued to maintain ownership of this house until her own death many decades later. The house may have significance as a portrayal of the means of Black residents in East Austin in the early 20th century.
 - c. **Archaeology.** The property was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
 - d. **Community value.** The property does not possess a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, the neighborhood, or a particular demographic group.
 - e. **Landscape feature.** The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

Provide documentation of deterioration. Do not implement incompatible modifications to porch, roof, and window openings.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approve the application. The applicant has amended the plans to rehabilitate, rather than replace, most of the building's historic fabric.

LOCATION MAP



-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 292'

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: PR 21-139064
 LOCATION: 1601 CEDAR AVENUE



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.

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PROPERTY INFORMATION

Photos



Google Street View, 2020

Occupancy History

City Directory Research, February 2022

1959	Gertrude Blocker, owner
1957	Gertrude Blocker, owner (widow of Mack)
1955	Gertrude Blocker, owner (widow of Mack) Maid
1952	Gertrude Blocker, owner Maid
1949	Gertrude Blocker, owner Domestic laborer
1947	Gertrude Blocker, owner (widow of Mack) Cook, public school
1944	Gertrude Blocker, owner Maid
1941	Gertrude Blocker, owner Cook
1939	Gertrude Blocker, owner Cook
1937	Gertrude Blocker, owner

- Cook, 2801 Rio Grande
- 1935 Gertrude Blocker, owner
Cook, 2801 Rio Grande
- 1932 Gertrude Blocker, owner
- 1929 Gertrude Blocker, owner
- 1927 Mack and Gertrude Blocker, owners
Janitor, University YMCA
- 1924 Mack and Gertrude Blocker, owners
Janitor
- 1920 Mack and Gertrude Blocker, owners
Laborer
- 1916 Mack Blocker
Porter, State Comptroller's Department
Shelly Blocker
Cleaner, State Department of Public Buildings and Grounds
- 1914 The address is not listed in the directory.
NOTE: Mack Blocker, a laborer, is listed at 2108 E. 14th Street. Richard Parker, Gertrude Blocker's father, is listed at 1600 Cedar Avenue.

Permits

Accessory Structure demolition m.u. 5-11-75 1-4-79

OWNER Mrs. Gertrude Blocker ADDRESS 1601 Cedar Ave.

PLAT 38 LOT 7 BLK 9

SUBDIVISION Glenwood Addn

OCCUPANCY res

BLD PERMIT #149490 DATE 5-17-75 OWNERS ESTIMATE \$91.50

CONTRACTOR same NO. OF FIXTURES none

WATER TAP REC # SEWER TAP REC #

remodel existing res

Building permit, 1975

OWNER Gertrude Blocker ADDRESS 1601 Cedar Ave

PLAT 38 LOT 7 BLK 9

SUBDIVISION Glenwood addn

OCCUPANCY Garage

BLDG. PERMIT # 178922 DATE 1-22-79 OWNERS ESTIMATE 1500

CONTRACTOR Edward Thompaon NO. OF FIXTURES

WATER TAP REC# SEWER TAP REC#

Demolish exist garage.

Demolition permit, 1979