

69



TEXAS  
HISTORICAL  
COMMISSION

*The State Agency for Historic Preservation*

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F. LAWRENCE OAKS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

VIA FACSIMILE: 512-974-9104

March 3, 2005

Steve Sadowsky  
Historic Preservation Officer  
City of Austin  
P.O. Box 1088  
Austin, Texas 78767

Dear Mr. Sadowsky:

We understand that the Austin City Council is considering whether or not to approve historic zoning for the Brown-Ledel-Silverman House, 609 West Lynn. We feel that this property is an important historic resource in Austin and would like to express our support for its designation and preservation.

The Brown-Ledel-Silverman House is significant both for its architecture and for its associations with important people in Austin's history. The house is a fine example of the Queen Anne architectural style, exhibiting many of its defining characteristics – an asymmetrical form, steeply pitched roofs, irregular wall surfaces and substantial decorative detailing. Its style and age make it a relatively rare remaining example of the early phases of development in this part of Austin. The house has also been home to significant figures in Austin's history, most notably its first owners, Timothy and Mary Brown, both of whom made substantial contributions to education in Austin.

Although the building has been modified since it was first built, the original design, materials and workmanship remain clearly recognizable and largely intact. Based on its significance and integrity, the house was given the highest priority for preservation in the City's 1984 historic resources survey. It is a contributing member of a National Register Historic District to be presented for designation in May, and would also qualify for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

We recognize that the building has suffered from neglect in more recent years and that substantial rehabilitation is needed to correct its deteriorated condition. Because it is historic, however, if it were rehabilitated as an income-producing rental property, its owner would qualify for a Federal Income Tax Credit equal to 20% of rehabilitation expenditures – significantly offsetting construction costs.

We would be happy to offer guidance on using these tax credits, and could help identify other means for making the building's reuse economically viable. This is only possible, however, if the building is first protected from demolition with historic zoning, an action that is clearly warranted in this case.

Sincerely,



F. Lawrence Oaks, Executive Director

FLO/pk

**Sadowsky, Steve**

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**From:** Steve Colburn [stevec@texeleco.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 02, 2005 3:03 PM  
**To:** Wynn, Will; Goodman, Jackie; Alvarez, Raul; Dunkerley, Betty; McCracken, Brewster; Slusher, Daryl; Thomas, Danny  
**Cc:** Kinchion, Janice; Rusthoven, Jerry; Briseno, Veronica; Aguilera, Gloria; Bailey, Rich; Bui, Tina; Frazier, Sandra; Sadowsky, Steve  
**Subject:** OWANA motion of support for subdividing 609 West Lynn to save it.  
**Importance:** High

Dear City Council Member,

At last night's General Membership meeting, OWANA passed a motion that we hope will help 609 West Lynn survive demolition and get zoned Historic at tomorrow's City Council meeting. A number of qualified prospective buyers wish to purchase it, restore the building, and keep it Historic, but need additional revenue from the property "to make the \$ numbers work." The sense from the neighborhood at the meeting was that we would do virtually anything to save it. Consequently OWANA passed this motion:

**OWANA supports a proposal to allow the property located at 609 West Lynn to be subdivided into two lots with the property fronting on West Lynn to be designated historic.**

This would allow something to be built on the back part of this large 20,000 sq foot lot (with alley access) and sold to subsidize the restoration of 609.

Despite Hunter Goodwin's often repeated statement that he has no plans for the property (whether or not it is zoned historic), his representative Sarah Crocker insists that he will not sell it. Mr. Goodwin himself told me yesterday that he will "entertain offers" and has a price he will sell for, although he would not divulge it. I know of at least 1 and as many as 3 legitimate offers on the table today or tomorrow. These do not include the others who believe they need to see the inside of the property to generate a viable offer. We continue to hope that with persuasion from you the Council, Mr. Goodwin will see the virtue in selling it to someone with the means and desire to preserve this historic house. This would be a win - win situation for everyone involved.

Thanks,

Steve Colburn  
Chair  
OWANA Zoning Committee  
cel: 844-1483

## **Sadowsky, Steve**

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**From:** Riley, Chris  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 02, 2005 7:47 PM  
**To:** Wynn, Will; Goodman, Jackie; Alvarez, Raul; Dunkerley, Betty; McCracken, Brewster; Slusher, Daryl; Thomas, Danny  
**Cc:** Sadowsky, Steve  
**Subject:** 609 W.Lynn (Agenda Item 69)

Mayor and Council Members:

I hope there's still some possibility of a win-win outcome on the historic zoning case at 609 W.Lynn. This lot is zoned MF, it's almost a half-acre in size; and I'm told it has access to the alley in back. There ought to be room on the lot for both the old house and new multi-family development, especially if the neighborhood is willing to bend on compatibility requirements. If so, there may well be financially viable ways of saving the house, maintaining the character of the area, and also adding density on this important street.

I know this has been a drawn-out, difficult case -- but given that the main argument against historic zoning has been based on economic considerations, I hope all reasonable possibilities for development of the lot will be explored before a final decision is made.

Regards,

Chris Riley  
Planning Commission

## With Your Help 609 West Lynn Can Be Saved

March 1, 2005

Dear Councilmember Thomas:

On behalf of OWANA, I want to update you on our efforts to save 609 West Lynn, the Brown-Ledel-Silverman House (Case # C14H-04-0027), which comes up for your consideration at this Thursday's City Council Meeting. Earlier today I met with Hunter Goodwin and Sarah Crocker for over an hour (I have been trying since shortly after the last council meeting). My objective was threefold: to convince them that OWANA's goal is simply to save this historically valuable property; to allay their concerns that OWANA is against him personally; and foremost to encourage him to sell the property to one of the buyers who are ready, willing, and able to restore it.

I told them that we know of at least five parties willing and able to make legitimate offers to purchase the property from him. All these parties are knowledgeable (in different ways) about historic properties and what it might take to restore them and seem to have the necessary resources. They include architects, a remodeling/renovation contractor, a historic preservationist, and owners of multiple such properties in Austin. I personally have made them aware of the budget range that we **anticipate** would cover Mr. Goodwin's costs up to this point. But Hunter Goodwin has not been willing to confirm them.

At least one of these prospective buyers is willing to submit an offer site unseen. He is a historic preservationist willing to offer at least \$400,000 for the property as it stands. A remodeling/restoration contractor is also considering such an offer. However, the others believe that without seeing the property, they would be unable to make legitimate offers, not an unreasonable request under the circumstances. Mr. Goodwin and Sarah Crocker continue to refuse access to anyone, even with liability waivers. The only reason they would give me is because "We don't want to".

While initially saying he would not sell it to anyone, by the end of our meeting Mr. Goodwin was saying that he would "entertain formal offers". I hope this is a light at the end of the tunnel. Because he has no plans for the property, selling to someone who would restore the property would be a win-win situation for him, the city, the neighborhood, and the buyer.

So we need your help and that of the other councilmembers. Would you please contact Mr. Goodwin and/or his agent Sarah Crocker to persuade him to sell the house so that it can be restored?

I do not have access to Hunter Goodwin's phone number; Sarah Crocker's cell phone is 699-7571.

Please join us in this effort. Your help in particular could be the difference. Together we can save this house. I look forward to talking with you in person tomorrow afternoon at 1 PM.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,  
Steve Colburn  
Chair  
OWANA Zoning Committee  
Cel: 844-1483