

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
JULY 23, 2018
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
HDP-2018-0343, -0344, AND -0345
301, 303, AND 305 W. 5TH STREET

PROPOSAL

Demolish a row of ca. 1928 – ca. 1929 commercial buildings.

ARCHITECTURE

These three buildings read separately, although 301 and 303 W. 5th Street share a common history. All three buildings are one-story, rectangular-plan, brick commercial buildings. The building at 301 W. 5th Street originally had a stepped parapet that has been replaced with a flat parapet and infill storefront containing brick and glass. Intervening modifications to this building included the application of the stucco façade and the obliteration of the original showroom fenestration pattern in favor of arched window openings. The building at 303 W. 5th Street has stucco over its original masonry, and a more recent treatment over the stucco, giving it an appearance of painted stone blocks. The original wood storefront, intact until the mid-2000s, has been covered by this more recent treatment as well. The front of the interior of the building has been removed to provide an enclosed courtyard. The building at 305 W. 5th Street also has had the front of the interior removed to provide a courtyard. While its original brick façade remains, there is wood infill in the vault of the façade. The building at 305 W. 5th Street retains some of its decorative brickwork in the form of tablet forms in the parapet and side piers.

RESEARCH

It appears that these buildings were constructed separately, but the buildings at 301 and 303 W. 5th Street shared a common tenant from the time of their construction in 1928 through the late 1950s. The buildings at 301 and 303 W. 5th Street first housed A. Bryan Spires' tire dealership. Spires was an independent tire retailer for the first year or two that he had these buildings; his business then became the Firestone franchise store in Austin. Firestone expanded the business to include a service station at 301 W. 5th Street in the 1930s; the Firestone dealership also encompassed the building at 303 W. 5th Street. After World War II, both 301 and 303 W. 5th Street became C.B. Smith Motors, the local Dodge and Plymouth automobile dealership. C.B. Smith Motors was in business in these buildings until the mid-1950s; they retained their used car business here for a short time in the late 1950s, but then each building came to have a separate use. The building at 301 W. 5th Street was the home of the Austin Civic Theater in the early 1960s, and later became a plate glass business. The building at 303 W. 5th Street became a photo engraving business in the early 1960s, and a transmission shop in the 1970s.

The building at 305 W. 5th Street shares its history with the building immediately to the west, at 307 W. 5th Street; that building is not part of this application for demolition. The building at 305 W. 5th Street was constructed in 1929, a year after the buildings at 301 and 303 W. 5th Street. It first housed Johns Brothers Motor Company, the local Willys-Knight, Auburn, and Graham automobile dealership; they were in business here until the mid-1930s. The building then housed the International Harvester dealership, selling agricultural implements. In the mid-

1940s, the Firestone Test Fleet, a tire testing laboratory, was headquartered here. In the late 1940s, this building was part of C.B. Smith's Dodge and Plymouth dealership, connecting it with the buildings at 301 and 303 W. 5th Street. C.B. Smith Motors moved further west, to the 800 block of W. 5th Street, at the end of the 1950s, and this building became the home of Andy's Auto Electric through the end of the 1960s.

STAFF COMMENTS

These buildings were listed in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey (1984). Because it still maintained its historic appearance at that time, the building at 301 W. 5th Street was a Priority 2 for research; the other buildings had no priority number.

Staff has evaluated all three of these buildings for designation as historic landmarks and has determined that none meet the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code due to significant loss of historic fabric and severely compromised integrity of materials, design, and feeling.

- a. **Architecture.** All three buildings are one-story brick commercial buildings; the only building of the three that retains any modicum of its historic architectural character is the building at 305 W. 5th Street, and the storefront of that building was removed. None of these buildings had much in the way of architectural distinction at the time of their construction, and have all been extensively modified.
- b. **Historical association.** All three buildings housed automobile-related businesses, specifically a tire business in the two buildings to the east, and a car dealership in the building to the west. All three were used as a car dealership in the late 1940s through the late 1950s, but there do not appear to be significant historical associations with any of the businesses located in these buildings.
- c. **Archaeology.** The buildings were not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
- d. **Community value.** The buildings do 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.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Release the permits for all, but only upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package for the building at 305 W. 5th Street, which retains a higher level of integrity than the others. The documentation package includes photographs of all elevations, a dimensioned sketch plan, and a narrative history, for archiving at the Austin History Center. None of these buildings qualify under the criteria for designation as a historic landmark.

LOCATION MAP



-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 167'

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HDP-2018-0343
HDP-2018-0344
301 & 303 W 5TH STREET

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.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.





-  N
-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

NOTIFICATIONS
CASE#: HDP-2018-0345
305 W. 5TH STREET



1" = 167'

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