ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2019-0077  HLC DATE: March 25, 2019
PC DATE: June 11, 2019

APPLICANT: Historic Landmark Commission

HISTORIC NAME: Gruber-Trevino House

WATERSHED: Lady Bird Lake

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 1603 Willow Street

ZONING FROM: SF-3-NP to SF-3-H-NP

SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION: While staff recognizes the architectural and historical significance of the house, staff cannot recommend the proposed zoning change based upon the condition of the house and the years of neglect and deterioration.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION: Architecture and community value in East Austin.

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION: March 25, 2019: Initiated historic zoning on an application for demolition. Vote: 7-0 (Reed, Papavasiliou, and Valenzuela absent). April 22, 2019: Recommended historic zoning. Vote: 6-2 (Featherston and Papavasiliou opposed; Hibbs, Jacob, and Myers absent).

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The house is listed in the East Austin Historic Resources Survey (1980), indicating its significance. The house is erroneously listed in the East Austin Historic Resources Survey (2016) as previously listed as a local landmark, but is still recommended as contributing to a local or National Register historic district, or individually eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.

The former owner of the house agreed to a restoration of the house and provided plans for restoration and an addition. No work was ever completed by the former owner and the house is currently boarded up and has deteriorated significantly since the last time the case was reviewed by the Commission. The current owner has provided a new structural report and photographs that document the condition of the house in support of his application for demolition.

CITY COUNCIL DATE: June 20, 2019

ACTION:

ORDINANCE READINGS: 1ST 2ND 3RD

ORDINANCE NUMBER:

CASE MANAGER: Steve Sadowsky

PHONE: 974-6454

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION: East Cesar Chavez Neighborhood Association
BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

Architecture:
One-story, wing-and-gable plan frame house with board-and-batten siding; partial-width shed-roofed independent porch with bracketed turned wood posts; single and paired 4′4″ fenestration.

Historical Associations:
The house appears to have been built around 1902. The first owners and occupants were Adolph and Mary Gruber, who moved here from a multi-family dwelling on South Congress Avenue. Adolph Gruber was born in New Orleans; his father was a Bavarian-born brewer. Adolph worked for the telephone company at the time that he and Mary bought this house. His job titles included switchboard man, electrician, and loose wire chief. Around 1911, he went to work as a laboratory assistant in the School of Physics at the University of Texas, a job he retained until his death in 1936.

After Adolph Gruber died, the house became a rental property. Ruell L. and Ethel Turner rented the house through the 1940s; he was a warehouseman for Central Freight Lines. Subsequent tenants included a driver for the Firestone Test Fleet, and two Air Force families. In themed-1960s, the house was rented by Santos and Eloisa Trevino, who lived here until the early 2000s. Santos Trevino was a beloved clockmaker and watch repairman in the neighborhood.

PARCEL NO.: 0202072302

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: UNT 1 1603 WILLOW CONDOMINIUMS PLUS 64.0 % INT IN COM AREA

ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT: $3,614 (owner-occupied); city portion: $1,078.

APPRaised VALUE: $346,977

PRESENT USE: Vacant residence

CONDITION: Poor

PRESENT OWNER:
BBTJ, LLC
920 E. Dean Keeton Street
Austin, Texas 78705

DATE BUILT: ca. 1902

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS: Addition to the rear

ORIGINAL OWNER(S): Adolph A. Gruber

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: None.
1603 Willow Street
ca. 1902

Photographs from 2015-16
OCCUPANCY HISTORY
1603 Willow Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center
By City Historic Preservation Office
August, 2014

1992  Santos and Elouisa Trevino, owners
Retired

1985-86  Santos and Elouisa Trevino, owners
Watch repairs (at the house)

1981  Santos and Elouisa Trevino, owners
Watch repairs (at the house)

1977  Santos and Louisa Trevino, owners
Watch repairs (at the house)

1973  Santos and Louisa Trevino, renters
Watch repairs

1968  Santos and Louisa Trevino, renters
Watch repairs

1962  Willard and Pearl Wortham, renters
No occupation listed

1959  Harold and Leona Reaves, renters
U.S. Air Force

1955  M.C. and Gennie V. Walker, renters
Driver, Firestone Test Fleet, research, 211 E. Riverside Drive.

1952  Jess W. and Geneva Noble, renters
U.S. Air Force

1949  Vel V. and Helen E. Ives, renters
No occupation listed

1947  Ruell L. Turner, renter
Checker, Central Freight Lines, 401 Colorado Street.

1944-45  Ruell L. and Ethel Turner, renters
Foreman, Central Freight Lines, 401 Colorado Street.

1941  Ruel L. and Ethel Turner, renters
Foreman, Central Freight Lines, 401 Colorado Street.

1939  Cecil Whitehead, renter
Laborer

1937  Adolph A. Gruber, owner
Chemist
1935    Adolph A. Gruber, owner
        Laboratory assistant, University of Texas

1932-33  Adolph A. Gruber, owner
        Laboratory assistant, University of Texas

1930-31  Adolph A. Gruber, owner
        Laboratory assistant, University of Texas

1929     Adolph A. Gruber, owner
        Laboratory assistant, University of Texas

1927     Adolph A. Gruber, owner
        Laboratory assistant in physics, University of Texas

1924     Adolph A. Gruber (not listed as owner)
        Laboratory assistant in physics, University of Texas

1922     Adolph A. Gruber, owner
        Laboratory assistant in physics, University of Texas

1920     Adolph A. Gruber, owner
        Laboratory assistant in physics, University of Texas

1918     Eva Gruber, owner
        Widow, Anton Gruber
        No occupation listed
        Also listed is Adolph A. Gruber, a laboratory assistant in physics at the University
        of Texas.

1916     Eva Gruber
        Widow, Anton Gruber
        No occupation listed
        Also listed is Adolph A. Gruber, a laboratory assistant in the School of Physics at
        the University of Texas.

1914     Eva Gruber
        Widow, Anton Gruber
        No occupation listed
        Also listed is Adolph A. Gruber, a laboratory assistant in the School of Physics at
        the University of Texas.

1912-13  Adolph A. Gruber
        Laboratory assistant, School of Physics, University of Texas.
        NOTE: Eva Gruber, the widow of Anton Gruber, is listed at 22307 Leon Street; she
        had no occupation shown.

1910-11  Adolph A. Gruber
        Switchboard repairman, Southwestern Bell Telephone Company

1909-10  Adolph A. Gruber
        Loose wire chief, Southwestern Telephone and Telegraph Company
1906-07  Adolph A. Gruber
Electrician, Southwestern Telephone and Telegraph Company

1905   Adolph A. Gruber
Electrician, Southwestern Telephone and Telegraph Company

1903-04   Adolph A. Gruber
Switchboard man, Southwestern Telephone Exchange

1900-01   Unknown
NOTE:  Adolph A. Gruber is listed at 1811 S. Congress Avenue; he was a
general inspector for the Southwestern Telephone and Telegraph Company.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES
Adolph A. Gruber (ca. 1902 – ca. 1936)
Adolph A. Gruber appears in the 1880 U.S. Census as the 12-year old son of Anton and Eva
Gruber, who lived in Mesquite Street in Austin.  He was born in Louisiana, and is listed as being
at school.  He was the oldest of the couple's three children.  Anton Gruber was 37, had been
born in Bavaria, was a brewer.  Eva Brewer was also 37, had been born in Bavaria, and was listed
as keeping house.

The 1900 U.S. Census shows A.A. and M.A. Gruber at 1811 South Congress Avenue, which also
had two other families listed.  A.A. Gruber was a 34-year old Louisiana-born electrician; M.A.
Gruber was 38, had been born in Illinois, and had no occupation listed.

The 1910 U.S. Census shows Adolph A. and Mary A. Gruber at this address.  Adolph A. Gruber
was 45, had been born in Louisiana, and was an electrician for the telephone company.  Mary A.
Gruber was 48, had been born in Illinois, and had no occupation listed.  They had a boarder,
Bessie Galbraith, 25, who had been born in Texas, and was an operator for the telephone
company.

The 1920 U.S. Census shows Adolph A. Gruber as the owner of this house.  He was a 52-year
old widower who had been born in Louisiana and was a laboratory assistant at the University of
Texas.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows Adolph A. Gruber as the owner of this house.  He was 62, and was
listed as a teacher at the University.  He had a roomer, Herbert H. Hamilton, 27, who had been
born in Texas, and was a welder for the street railway company.
Obituary of Adolph A. Gruber
Austin American, March 21, 1936

Ruell L. and Ethel Turner (ca. 1940 – ca. 1948)
Ruell L. and Ethel D. Turner appear in the 1940 U.S. Census as the renters of this house. Ruell L. Turner was 40, had been born in Georgia, and was a warehouseman for Central Freight Lines. Ethel D. Turner was 34, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 2 sons: Weldon L., 16; and Floyd O., 13. Both boys had been born in Texas, and neither had an occupation listed. With them lived Ethel Turner’s mother, Violet Bazemore, a 74-year old Illinois-born widow with no occupation listed.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows R.L. and Ethel Turner as the renters of the house at 1901 Riverview Street in Austin. R.L. Turner was a 30-year old Georgia-born milker in a dairy. Ethel Turner had no occupation listed. Their two boys were listed, as well as Ethel’s mother, Mrs. I.B. Bazemore, who had no occupation listed.
OBITUARY OF RUELL L. TURNER

Ruell L. Turner, 58, of 3710 Munsor, died in a local hospital Sunday. A life long resident of Austin, he was a retired state employee.

Survivors include two sons, Floyd Turner and Weldon Turner of Austin; seven brothers, O. D. (Jack) Turner of Round Rock, Buford Turner of Houston, Leonard Turner, L. D. Turner, E. A. Turner, Tom Turner and Jake Turner of Austin; three sisters, Mrs. Lola Carvell, Mrs. Adelle Atchison and Mrs. Avis McFarland of Austin; and six grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held at Hyltin-Manor Funeral Home at 2 p.m. Monday with H. L. Methaney of the Guavale Church of Christ officiating.

Obituary of Ruell L. Turner
Austin American, October 28, 1957

TREVINO, Eloisa, 73, of Austin died Friday. Prayer service 7 p.m. today, Mission Funeral Home. Services 2 p.m. Monday, Mission. Burial Assumption Cemetery.
Death notice for Eloisa Trevino
Austin American-Statesman, May 16, 2004

Death notice for Santos Trevino
Austin American-Statesman, September 9, 2013
The 1922 Sanborn map shows the house.
Oakman Building Company
6507 Jester Blvd. #510-E
Austin, TX 78750

March 20th, 2019

Mr. Reilert
1603 Willow St.
Austin, TX 78702

Dear Mr. Reilert:

Oakman Building Company has completed a Property Condition Report of the above referenced property. The subject property consists of one parcel of land totaling 0.1275 acre (TCAD). The parcel is improved with one single family residence totaling 1,250 SF. The residence has a small front porch totaling 112 SF. The home was constructed in 1910 & is wood stick frame construction. The roofing is metal. The foundation is wood beam construction on wood piers. There appears to be no central air conditioning or heating.

Based on the condition observed during the site visit, the subject property appears to be in very poor condition. The roofing system appears to be metal, in poor condition, the current roof is not salvageable and will need to be completely replaced. There appears to be multiple leaks that have caused damaged to the framing structure.

Most of the ceiling framing appears to be of 2x4 construction and not properly braced. The 2x4's are not up to the current IRC code. The ceiling joist and roof structure will need to be completely re-constructed to bring them up to current code as well as to be able to properly and safely carry the roof load.

The current state of the interior of the home is in poor condition. There is exposed electrical wiring where sheetrock or wall paneling has been removed. This entire electrical system will need to be replaced due to the wiring being out of compliance. All ceilings and walls will need to be repaired. The flooring throughout the house is in poor condition and will all need to be replaced. There are multiple rotten areas in the floor framing and extensive repair and replacement work will need to take place to bring the structure up to a livable condition.
The foundation appears to be wood piers with no concrete foundation or base. All wood piers will need to be replaced with concrete piers, engineered to support the structure of the house. The foundation work needed would be extensive.

Overall, the property would require significant repairs to bring the home up to code. It is the opinion of Oakman Building Company that the home should be demolished. The cost to remodel the home would far exceed the cost of demolishing the home and re-building.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Ryan Hay
Oakman Building Company
Hi Steve,

Thank you again for your communication regarding the demolition process.

I had previously submitted a thorough property condition report, and accompanying photographs, detailing the extremely distressed state of the 'structure' on the 1603 Willow St property.

I do not feel that it is justified having a hearing, and any associated fees, for a waiver to remove and rebuild a traditional home at this location.

I am happy to work with you and the city to ensure the traditions of Austin are maintained in my construction.

Best,
Geoff Reilert