
PROPOSAL

Install tree wells and plant Mountain Laurels in the sidewalk along Trinity Street (right-of-way next to the Cotton Exchange building, C14H-1978-0008)

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

Mountain Laurels in rectangular limestone tree wells. The specification used to build the wells was a standard City of Austin specification.

STAFF COMMENTS

This project started as at the suggestion of the Right-of-Way Unit in Public Works, who executed a release of the right-of-way which was formerly parking spaces to the property owner. A condition of the agreement was the installation of street trees.

The reason the applicant chose Mountain Laurels (which is a city approved option) was because the heights can be controlled, as opposed to the Cedar elms or oaks, which would have interfered with the new balcony already in place. A staff member in another section of this Department (Planning and Development Review) recommended this particular species of tree to meet the goals of shade and street beautification. The Mountain Laurels required installation of a planter, therefore the applicant worked with this staff member to get the approved city specification for the construction of the wells.

This application was reviewed by the City's Historic Preservation Office (CHPO) on two occasions; however, the tree wells were not a part of the design reviewed and approved by CHPO staff. The Historic Preservation Officer visited the site to make recommendations and approve work being completed on the utilities and in the sidewalk following the initial sign-off.

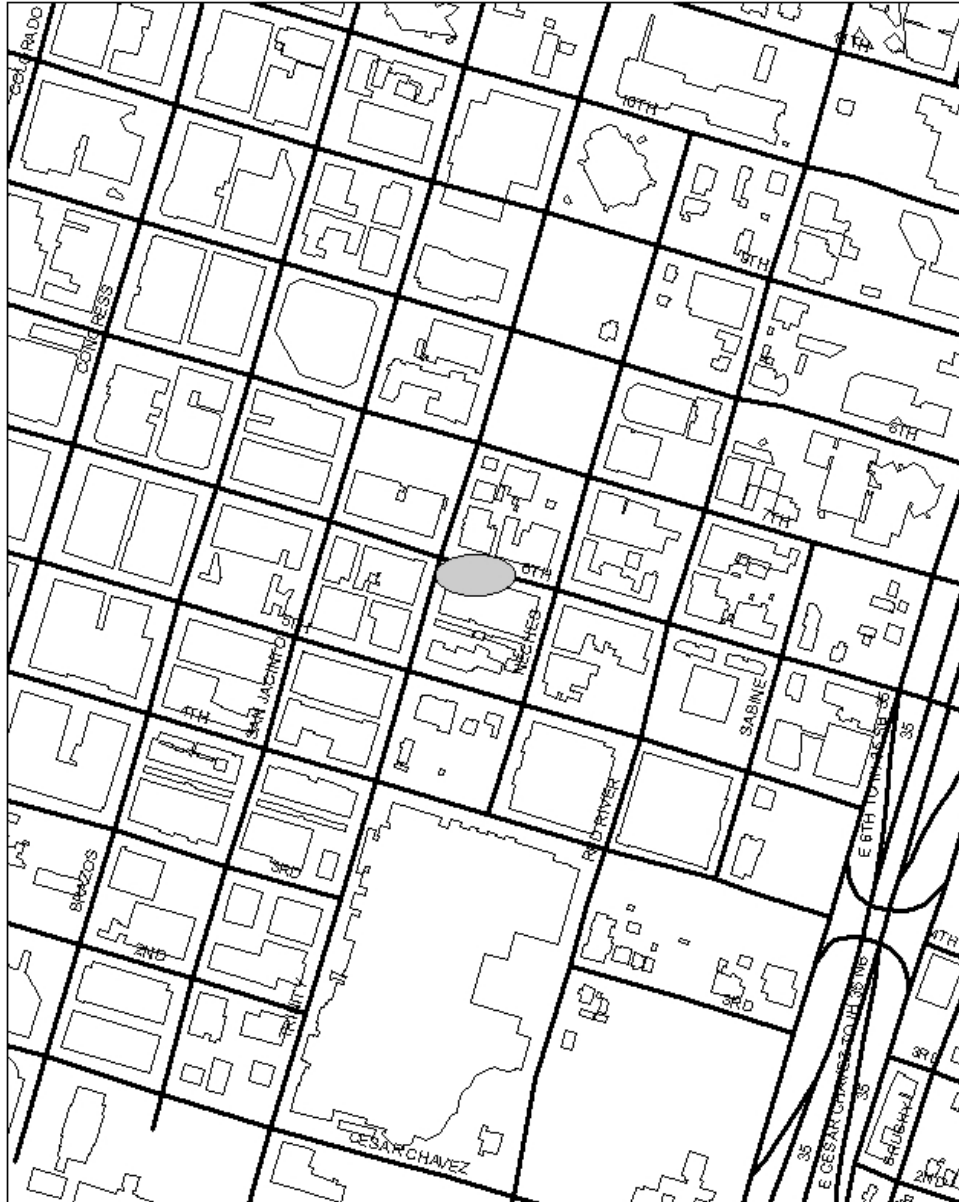
Before the project was released, but after the CHPO sign-off, the decision was made to chose Mountain Laurels, necessitating the tree well planters. In order to complete the project so that construction would not impede visitors to the South by Southwest Festival, the applicant started work after finishing several City reviews but without obtaining an additional sign-off from the CHPO after the re-design introduced the tree wells.

Staff appreciates the difficulty in obtaining approval for projects with multiple review entities in unusual situations where project parameters are changing and there are potentially conflicting goals; however, the obligation remains with the applicant to obtain all necessary sign-offs before beginning construction. The applicant maintains their team worked closely with the city on all aspects of this project and had no intention of disrespecting the city's processes in any way.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Given the fact that the tree wells are built with limestone, in a manner complementary to the limestone Cotton Exchange Landmark building, and in recognition that another unit of the city recommended the tree wells, staff recommends approval as submitted.

LOCATION MAP



City of Austin
Historic Landmark Commission
NRD-2010-0041 401 East 6th St.

PHOTOGRAPHS









