

TESTIMONIALS

Looking Behind the Doors by John Dunham

An Austin resident since the age of 5, I purchased my first neighborhood home back in 2001. I've admired this property from the curb during morning runs and evening walks with my family. The McKown Home, and 3 other residences at this intersection, are quick conversation starters from friends and family driving through the neighborhood. 1501 Richcreek has always stood out amongst the crowd of post war / bungalow style homes that line our streets.

With the large gabled front porch, all brick exterior (no asbestos tiles or vinyl siding), towering trees, detached garage and hidden cabana next to the pool, many neighbors have stated their obsession just from the curb.

As a local real estate professional, I recently had the opportunity to finally look behind the doors of the McKown Home. Just like the exterior, it needs some work; however, I can speak with little reservation that all the ingredients are in place for the right family looking to create a beautiful homestead. The original wood floors are pristine, and custom solid core pocket doors with glass inlay were used in the dining / living room. The main hallway is a grand entrance and probably as wide as some bedrooms in Crestview. It's also one of the few with a fireplace that seems to have been part of the original construction. Having toured hundreds of area homes, the McKown residence was and is a positive deviation from the norm in Crestview.

Recently, we've all watched some of these original homes hauled off to fill our local waste site. It is fair to say a few needed to go and were beyond the point of repair. Others just disappeared without much fuss or discussion and neighbors, accepting of the change, wait to see what the future will bring.

The McKown Home is worth preservation, and is a landmark for the neighborhood. Our family joins the others in hope of protecting this property from demolition and that it will remain a staple in our neighborhood.

The Once and Future Home by Kelly Chappell

As I am certain you will receive many stories addressing the historical significance of the McKown House, I would like to relay the story of the home's once possible future and potential.

I am a fourth generation Austinite. I have lived in Crestview for the past thirteen years. Having grown up in and around Tarrytown, Clarksville and Deep Eddy I've found Crestview to "feel" most like those neighborhoods did forty years ago.

After several years of living internationally and domestically, I chose Austin as my home for my career. As my businesses succeeded I realized I could live anywhere in or around our city. My wife and I have decided to remain in Crestview. We love the schools, the neighbors and the neighborhood.

After many years of admiring The McKown House my wife and I began attempts to acquire the home during two different cycles of foreclosure. Both times we faced "shady" bank deals during which standard bank procedures were not followed. We were excited to learn that this third foreclosure would end in an open market sale. We bid \$206,000 over the asking price. We lost to a lower Cash Bid presented by a woman in California. Within a week our friend, a professional home re-locator, was approached by her contractor to remove the home. Our friend declared the home impossible to move. The builder announced his client's plans to split the lot in order to build three duplexes. He also relayed her plan of purchasing land in three or six lot packages for efficiency. I believe she purchased a large portion of San Antonio Street as well.

The home itself is by far the most amazing home in our area. My wife and I had planned to restore it to its original state with only a few modern updates.

The home contains a fully self-sufficient Mother-in-Law suite, which we planned to use for that purpose. The pool house would double as my wife's massage therapy office. The extra bedroom is perfect for our many out of town guests that love to spend the weekend in Austin. Low water landscaping and new trees were a priority for us.

When we lost the bidding war we turned our focus to adding on to our current home. In order to remain in this neighborhood, I have to spend one year planning my remodel and another year out of my home in a rental during the construction phase. My point is this: There are not many homes in this area that can support a large family. That is why developers have targeted this neighborhood. We have the only Fine Arts School track in the city. This is why so many families are flocking to the area. There will be another family with the finances and vision to restore this home.

As a businessman, I embrace growth and progress. I have seen many cities grow and prosper within the framework of a well-guided plan. I fear for Austin. If we do not continue to address the qualifications for Historical Landmark designation, we will continue to lose the "middle ground". Whether a home was built in the 1920's, 1950's or 2000's, it is a marker in time for our city. The progress and process is as important as the beginning and end.

A Craftman's Home by Nancy Harris

In 1980 when my husband and I were looking for a home to buy, we were attracted to Crestview because the houses were the type of post WWII homes that our parents and grandparents might have lived in. For many, myself included, the jewel of Crestview was the corner of Woodrow and Richcreek. While we could never have afforded to buy the McKown house or its companion homes across the street including the one built by one of the founders of the neighborhood, Ray Yates, we were able to walk by on our evening strolls or drive by on our way to work or run errands. This corner gave many in the neighborhood a sense of pride in our community even if we did not have actual ownership.

Robert Jackson McKown who built the home at 1501 Richcreek, was a “pioneer” of sorts in his time. He may not have blazed the first trails to Austin, but he did come along at a time when Austin and surrounding areas of Central Texas needed airstrips during WWII. And later when Crestview and other parts of Austin needed bridges, overpasses, roads, and streets to accommodate the growing post war community, he was an important part of that era, too.

While Mr. McKown started out as a house builder in North-East Texas, this home is the **ONLY** example of a home he built in Austin. Compared with palatial Georgian homes in West Austin or Victorian mansions downtown, it may not look like much to some. But taken in the **CONTEXT** of the neighborhood that it exists in, it is a unique example of a quickly vanishing breed, a fine- well, built example of a mid-20th century modern home, built by a craftsman. It is representative of a solid, substantial structure built after the war when returning veterans and their families were looking for a place to settle, a symbol of the things a person could have if they were industrious, innovative, and hard working.

I do not know at what point exactly that things become “historically significant”, but when things are old enough to start changing as much as this neighborhood is, they are old enough that it is time to start preserving the best examples of that time and place. Crestview may not be a Hyde Park or Tarrytown, but it has its own “history” whether it is the Crestview Shopping Center with its family owned pharmacy and grocery store, the Top Notch Drive-In where young people congregated in the 60's and still do now that they are seniors, or the McKown House that neighbors look on with pride. We should honor this house in the way it deserves, not destroy it.

Embodiment of a Dream by Anne-Charlotte Patterson

I get the sense that much of the neighbors' affection for the McKown home has been misread by some as simply a desire to slow or stop development in Austin. If this were the case, there would be monthly protests in our rapidly changing neighborhood. Instead, there's an understanding that growth and change are inevitable in vibrant, thriving Crestview, a community which respects its history while embracing what's to come. So the desire to preserve the McKown house truly springs from a love and reverence for this particular structure and the historical, architectural, and emotional significance it holds for our neighborhood.

Everyone in the neighborhood knows "that big house on the corner." Large and stately, but not ostentatious, it reflects the postwar values with which it was built. A walk inside the vintage ranch-style home reveals a grand front room, a fireplace, and hardwood floors. With beautiful glass-inlaid interior doors, original windows, and built-in kitchen pantries, one quickly gets a feel for the quality craftsmanship and materials employed by the builders. A visitor can also sense, poignantly, the original owner's desire to build a solid, quietly impressive family home -- the very best house in this modest neighborhood. It was the house that everyone aspired to, an embodiment of the 1950's American Dream. Crestview has changed tremendously, and the little postwar frame houses are being replaced with cheerful modern two-story homes built to the latest green-building standards. Our neighborhood supports these changes. Nevertheless, so many of my neighbors have told me they've always wished they could live in the McKown house. The anchor of our lovely neighborhood, this house still represents aspiration in a neighborhood that values its history and roots. The loss of the home would be a tremendous loss to the character and identity of Crestview.

A Planner's Perspective by Sarah Patterson

My husband and I purchased our Crestview home just over two years ago, and are very glad to be here. Before moving here, we tried to purchase two separate homes that were corner lots on Woodrow, but lost out on both of them. Now, our home is one of the few that is solid brick and on a large lot, but our home is located far from Woodrow. Our house is just a shadow of what the McKown home majestically embodies.

We love the McKown house, and view it to be the most historically significant home in Crestview, and only second in historic value to the Crestview IGA Minimax, Pharmacy and related retail. The McKown house is a rare bird in Crestview for sure - its large lot, the well designed all-brick structure, and perhaps its most precious quality - its placement at the heart of Crestview. If such a grand house were located mid-block somewhere in Crestview, it would still be a nice house, but as it is located at Richcreek and Woodrow, the house is known by every person who lives or has lived in Crestview. Our community loves this home, and we want it to be preserved.

Although I am currently a stay-at-home mom, my profession before my child was as an Urban Planner. In my professional opinion, the McKown house meets at least three of the City Historic Landmark Criteria when considering the option to historically zone a structure or property:

- Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City, State or United States
- A building or structure that, because of location, has become of value to a neighborhood, community area, or the city
- Value as an aspect of community sentiment or public pride

I truly hope that the Historic Landmark Commission will hear our sincere request for historic zoning and recommend historic (H) zoning be added to 1501 Richcreek Road to Planning Commission and Council.

Cadillac Supreme-O by John C. Acker

I am a 13-year Pasadena resident writing on behalf of both myself and my neighbor, Gretna Anderson, an original 1950s settler. As the 21st Century brings new life into our beloved Crestview, we need to think very hard about preserving the things that make it great in the first place.

The McKown House is such a place. Just ten short years ago, it was hands-down the finest property in our neighborhood, and the fact that it subsequently suffered through negligent ownership is no fault of its own.

While I bear no ill-will toward its current owner, to junk a 1952 Cadillac Supreme-O in favor of a brand-new minivan, however shiny, is the height of historical shortsightedness. The McKown House was, and can be again, a standard-bearer for a proud neighborhood. Let us fight for her, and fight hard.

I Feel Fortunate by Suzanne McCurley

I have lived on the corner of Pasadena and Woodrow for almost 13 years now and always felt so fortunate to live in the part of the neighborhood where this house and the one across the street stand. Just four years ago, this house had a gorgeous yard until the drought killed the beautiful bushes and trees. Thank goodness the structure is still in such good shape. I would support keeping the house here and would greatly miss seeing it as I drive down Woodrow if it were to be developed. It is a very large property for our neighborhood!!

The Cultural Significance of McKown House by Chip Harris

It would be unfair to judge the McKown House in a vacuum, based solely on its architecture or its history. It's part of a larger picture; the foundation of the Crestview neighborhood and a critical part of its fabric. This house is more than the sum of its parts, more than just its architectural style, more than just the contributions of its original inhabitants, the McKowns. It's also about the impact this house has had on Crestview, something not so easily quantified but nonetheless just as historic. This house is one of three outsized and distinctive houses that populate the intersection of Woodrow Avenue and Richcreek Road; the other two houses being the Yates House and the Boemer House. Together, these three houses with their heritage trees and impeccable landscaping are the corner stone of Crestview. This intersection and the houses that were built there stood out in this post WWII neighborhood as a promise of what life could be, what the future could hold; and no doubt attracted hundreds of residents, making Crestview one of the most sought after neighborhoods in the city and one of the major factors in its success and prominence. This house is part of the fabric of the neighborhood and there will be a lasting detrimental effect if it is removed.

Removing the McKown House is like tampering with a foundation. There are dozens of other houses that could be razed in Crestview that would be missed but few would have the same effect as demolishing this centerpiece, an essential part of the stabilizing element of our community, part of our foundation. Just a couple of blocks south on Woodrow Avenue you will find the Wall of Welcome, an incredible tile work created by artist Jean Graham a few years ago that welcomes people to the neighborhood. But before that Crestview was known for its 'corner of welcome' and the McKown house was at the center of it.

I remember when my wife and I were looking for our first home back in 1979. Our real estate agent kept dragging us out 183 to look at this house and that house but something kept tugging at our hearts and pulling us back to Crestview: it was the McKown House. Just driving by we knew we had found our place, that this was the neighborhood we were destined to live in, feeling much the same, I'm sure, as many of the residents that came before us and most that came afterwards.

There's not a single resident in Crestview, and most of north central Austin, that isn't familiar with the McKown house. Again, it's part of Crestview's fabric, just like the iconic Wall of Welcome, just like the small neighborhood shopping center with its Mom & Pop grocery store and pharmacy. For these and so many other unstated reasons, the McKown house deserves to be preserved.

My Hope by Melanie Barr

I was so disturbed to find out what these developers were planning on doing to the McKown House! It would be a tragedy for such a beautiful landmark to be demolished.

When we were looking for homes 15 years ago, every time we would drive past the McKown House, I would say how much I loved it and how I would like to live there.

We ended up buying a home in Wooten Park, but every time I drove down Woodrow, I found it somehow comforting to see this house standing there with its majestic trees surrounding it. It was sad to watch the old trees gradually die around the house, and I still wished that I could buy it and give it some love and help restore it to the house that made me smile. I never knew the background of the house, but it was kind of like that elderly person that you always knew would be there to wave when you drove past. My hope was that someone would buy it and plant new trees and bring back life to the house.

I hope that you can help make this happen and not allow McKown House to be demolished by some California developer who has no attachments at all to the house or the neighborhood.

Thanks for all of your hard work and for fighting to preserve a piece of Austin's history.

The "New Breed" by Jeff and Kelli Knight

My wife and I moved to the neighborhood last October. The "originals" (aka my neighbors that have been in the neighborhood since the beginning or darn near it!) like to call us the "new breed" of Crestview. As part of the "new breed", I think I speak for most when I say that we moved to Crestview over [insert new suburban neighborhood in Cedar Park, Round Rock, etc. here] because of houses like the McKown House - because of the feel, the atmosphere and the back-in-the-golden-age this house and many like it in the neighborhood create. The McKown house embodies Crestview, and why we love it.

Although we are only in our late 20's and part of the "new breed", I hope that we are not remembered as the generation that killed the atomic ranch, mid-century modern, whatever-feel that the neighborhood has. Instead, I hope we can be part of the generation that preserves this 1950's-slice-of-life. Because someday, when my daughter is our age (she's now 2-months) and if she lives in Austin, I want my daughter to move to Crestview as part of the "NEW new breed" for the exact same reasons we did. I want her to experience the Minimax, the neighborhood pizza joint, the park (maybe two by then?) the same way we did. But above all, I want her to experience the houses the same way we did and suffice it to say, the McKown House is an integral part of that.

Christmas Memories by Kerry Owens

I bought my home on Pasadena Drive 22 years ago. My five-year-old daughter grew up in that house, and now she is 27. My memories of the McKown House and what it meant to me and my daughter - Christmas.

We always loved driving around the neighborhood looking at the lights, and I remember that the McKown House always had the most beautiful, manicured yard with rows of lights along the curbs and walkway. We always thought it was so beautifully done, and when we saw the lights up we always knew that Christmas was right around the corner. We lived in a much smaller, much more modest home, and once in a while my daughter would wonder what it would be like to live in a veritable "mansion". I still live in that modest little house, and if anyone even thought for a moment of tearing it down, it would break both of our hearts.

For myself, when I was driving home, I always knew when I saw that house that I was almost home. Just a few more blocks. Living in Crestview is a gift.

The McKown Home is a mid-century, modern home. If you were to go to, say, Palm Springs, California, you would find that the mid-century modern homes are designated as historical and protected. Why? They are part of a time that will never come again: a hopeful, iconic way of looking at the world. They are not being torn down for any amount of money.

This house was built by an individual who had vision, who made tremendous contributions to the city of Austin, and who was integral in the building of IH-35. Lyndon Johnson wanted IH-35 built. I wonder what Lady Bird would have thought about razing such a simple, beautiful home. I imagine that she would be signing the petition. No, she would be starting her own petition. Some things are just Texan.

With the loss of so many of our lovely, historic homes to the megastructures that have no yards, neither front or back, we can't afford to let this situation go forward without doing everything we can to stop it. I encourage everyone to submit their thoughts and memories. I know that we are all busy, but it only takes a few minutes to put your thoughts down on paper. Let's do it. **KEEP THE MCKOWN HOUSE FROM BEING TORN DOWN.**

That Little Flitter of Magic by Nancy Butlin

My sister moved into Crestview in 1978. I was still growing up in Dayton Ohio. But I began a long practice of visiting Austin as often as I could and even moved here myself in 1987. This neighborhood was what I knew most about Austin – I loved the mid-century houses, the nostalgia, the Minimax, the old barbershop, and I fell completely in love with the McKown house. I didn't know anything about it, but it looked like a palace to me, and I loved the circle of Elm trees that guarded it so beautifully. When I finally had a chance to buy a house in the neighborhood in 2001, I wished that one was for sale, but it wasn't, and I figured it was way out of my price range anyway.

I have watched it over the years and always felt that little flitter of magic when I drove by and admired it. I wondered who lived there – I never saw anyone. I hoped they appreciated it as much as I would have.

In the last few years, during the drought, I watched it fall a bit from its pedestal as the arching Elm trees started to die one-by-one. I wanted someone to water them – and the bushes that died facing Woodrow also. I wanted someone to prune the bushes, plant flowers, put Christmas lights on it, or play in the front yard, something to show they loved it like I did. It was sad. My daughter knows how sad I have felt during that time as I watched it being neglected. She's only 9, but she too admires that house, and she asks about it every time we pass by. "Who's going to buy it this time Mom? Why is there a sign out front to demolish it?" Ugh. I had hoped the new owners would cherish it and bring it back to its glory.

I am enjoying reading about the history of this house here, as it's always been a bit of a mystery to me, even through my many years of admiring it. I desperately want it to be preserved – for all of the reasons that others have expressed, and many more. It's such a wonderful specimen of post-WWII architecture; it has such strong historical roots; and it serves as a gateway and an image of high hopes in our adorable neighborhood. I hate to see old houses torn down, but I understand the need at times – especially when one is not well built or cannot adequately or safely house a family. THIS one is worth preserving. Let the developers tear down another house that has less value, admiration, or just can't fulfill its job to house people comfortably and safely. There are plenty of those.

Thanks to the Landmark Commission for giving people the chance to view their opinions and share their stories and emotions. And, thanks to Chip and the organizers who are pulling all of these stories together. I wanted to speak out, but didn't know how to, until now.

Please do not let us lose this treasure in our neighborhood. There are plenty of families who would adore and appreciate living there as it is, and would be willing to help it get back to being a pillar of strength and beauty as it should be.

A Special Place for Me by John Spillyards

Like all who have lived in or around the Crestview or Brentwood neighborhoods, the McKown house has been a special place for me. My personal background includes having studied architecture though I have spent the last 22 years of my professional career in construction. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that I have felt such a personal connection to this landmark.

I first moved to Crestview in 1999 and began becoming familiar with my neighborhood and its colorful history. Quickly, my favorite home in our neighborhood and one of my favorites in Austin, became 1501 Richcreek Road. As I learned more of R.J. McKown and his connection to the foundation of not only my neighborhood but also Austin, through the building of IH35, our airport runways and much more, my love of his home became more cherished. I truly used to drive by and admire this lovely home hoping that one day I could own a home like this one.

I became saddened as the home grew into a state of disrepair and even attempted to buy it at one point from the bank but their excessive price point (at the time, over \$600,000) drove me away from the purchase knowing that it needed some updating and repairs. I know that the California developer seeking to buy this property and demolish it may have the best of intentions and their previous work is not horribly offensive, as some developers have done in this and other neighborhoods. However, this home is one to be restored and brought back to its original grandeur not demolished and forgotten. There are numerous homes in this and other neighborhoods that are “cookie cutter” homes from the 50’s that have fallen into such a state of abuse that they NEED to be demolished and have a development like this developer is seeking...this is NOT the case with this home. Please help preserve the rich history of Austin and Crestview by not allowing a demolition permit of this truly Historic Austin landmark.

The Crown Jewel of Crestview by Lucile Boemer and Steven Boemer

My family has lived at 1500 Richcreek Road, directly across the street from the McKown House since 1959 when my parents were newlyweds. We do remember Mrs. McKown and her son Dale who lived there until after her death at home in the late 1960's.

When Dale McKown sold the house the John McBride family owned it very briefly but there was a dispute involving an alleged termite infestation and the company Terminix. They ultimately sold the house to Don and Cookie James in 1974. The James' invested a huge amount of work, time and money into restoring the house to its original beauty, including the original backyard gazebo and side porch. They took impeccable care of the entire lawn and trees as well, and it truly developed into the crown jewel of Crestview. The James' also enclosed the original garage into an efficiency apartment for her parents, built a new detached garage, and later added a beautiful Gary pool and pool house.

Anyone and everyone who knows anything about Crestview knows about this house and the yard and pool. Mr. and Mrs. James created a true show place at 1501 Richcreek for some 30 years.

It was only in very recent years that the subsequent owner allowed the house to fall into disrepair and the yard to burn up and trees to die in the summer heat and drought, a true shame and huge disappointment to all neighbors and passers by.

We believe that 1501 Richcreek should be preserved in a tasteful and most appropriate way, considering its prominence in the heart of the Crestview neighborhood. To demolish and redevelop a classic old residence such as this into a "McMansion" or multiple homes would harm property values and detract from the character and charm of this classic old Austin property.

A Legacy for My Daughters by Alica Gostylo

As a native Austinite, I have always appreciated the beautiful historic homes of this wonderful city. Unfortunately, I have witnessed some beloved and historic homes destroyed and turned into McMansions, concrete blocks, or the newest fad. On the very street I was raised in Central Austin, a wealthy individual bought out 3 consecutive homes and literally turned half the street into an amusement park with nude statues, freaky clowns, and garish colors. “Keep Austin Weird” was taken a bit far and the development was inappropriate for children at a nearby elementary school and devalued the real estate and the aesthetics of the neighborhood.

Although I do not think this will happen on Richcreek, I am afraid that overall we have lost our respect for the history of this city and its original developers. We certainly do need to designate more homes as historic landmarks so that we can assure that Austin has a variety of home styles. We are friendly to outsiders moving to our great city, but let’s not let them dictate the feel, style, and history of our city.

As I walk the neighborhood with my girls, I want to tell them about the history of Crestview and the people that helped create this vibrant community. Ideally, I would be able to show them historical homes such as the McKown House and tell them the significance of the homes and their original owners.

Deep Roots by Elizabeth Neill

I was touched by the testimonials of those who remember McKown house from their childhoods. Growing up in the small town of Blanco, there are houses that hold that same nostalgia for me, and I would be heartbroken to see one of them demolished. This is why I love Crestview – it’s a small town with deep roots in the middle of this rapidly growing city. Crestview dearly cherishes the past and nurtures a sense of community. Places like the McKown house are essential to preserving this neighborhood’s appeal. The house is on my walking route, and I have always been intrigued by it, even before knowing the history. Now that I understand the house’s importance to the neighborhood, and the place it holds in Crestview history, it has even more interest for me. We cannot lose such an important piece of our neighborhood’s past.

A Notable House by Barbara Williams

I moved onto Richcreek in 1963 at the age of 8 and distinctly remember the McKown house. Our house was obviously newer, but that house appeared to me to be the jewel of the street and of this community. I always wondered what it was like inside and why those people got to have such large lots while all the other houses were built on smaller ones.

My dad told me it was because those men were responsible for building this community. That satisfied my young mind that the men responsible would get to have a little more, a little better.

As I grew up and began driving, I would frequently go out of my way to drive by that corner to admire the homes. Little did I know that almost all the roads I drove on as I wandered the streets of Austin had been built by the man who also built the "big house" on Richcreek. We didn't have a name attached to the house; we just called it the "big house". We still do.

My family is old Austin, we've been here a long time, and when I have mentioned what is happening to this house to my family, whether it is my 101 year old aunt whose father-in-law lived on Aggie Lane or my younger cousin who lives in far south Austin, every one of them is dumbfounded that someone would purchase this wonderfully built home to just tear it down. To all of them it is a landmark of this community, but more than just this community, it is a landmark of the town we have lived in and loved.

A Ride Past by Elizabeth Gregory

My grandmother owned her home in the Crestview neighborhood for over 50 years. My mother used to ride her bike by this house almost everyday to admire the tall beautiful trees that surrounded the grand house. Then, 30 years later, I was riding my bike to that house as often as I could. My cousins and I used to pretend we were the kids that lived in that home.

There are multiple ways to drive into the Crestview neighborhood and towards to my grandmother's house, but I still choose to drive past this house each time. It reminds me of my childhood and great memories with my cousins and friends. It would break my heart to see it torn down. It is a landmark in the Crestview neighborhood right along with Minimax and the Crestview Pharmacy.

Breathing Space by Hilary Sheard

I have admired the McKown House ever since I first looked at the possibility of living in the Crestview neighborhood and bought my own home here.

Leaving aside its connection to the creator of I-35 and other critical parts of the Austin we know (and we may not love I-35, but where would we be without it?), the house is a gracious reminder of an era when people did not feel a need to fill every inch of a lot with built-out space. Crestview is increasingly cluttered with taller, larger buildings, and the McKown house provides a lovely feature that many people in the neighborhood would like to see preserved - a sort of psychological breathing space, and glimpse of a less frenetic era.. I often walk in the neighborhood and enjoy what it has to offer; I would bitterly regret the loss of this important building.

Given that there are other lots in Crestview and nearby that could be developed, it is astonishing that this outside developer decided to buy such a pleasant neighborhood landmark only to destroy it. Established Austin residents like myself would greatly appreciate the commission recognizing our little bit of local heritage and saving it from destruction.

What It's All About by Elizabeth de Leon

I moved to Crestview because I loved the 1950's character of the neighborhood. It reminded me of my grandmother's neighborhood from my childhood. It seemed so much more welcoming than other neighborhoods in the suburbs. One of the reasons it seemed welcoming was houses like the McKown house. If I wanted to live in a neighborhood where all the houses lacked character I would have moved to another neighborhood. Houses like the McKown house are what Crestview is all about.

Every Morning by Sophie Lyn Petri

I spent many years living on Richcreek Road, and every morning when I would walk to school or the bus stop I would pass the McKown house. I always loved the architecture of the house and would tell everyone it was my "dream home". The McKown house has always made me proud of my neighborhood as it, and the other houses on the Woodrow and Richcreek corner, seemed to wear the Crown of the Violet Crown neighborhood. I cried upon hearing it was bought out, and I would be terribly saddened to see it destroyed by yet another developer in for a profit (why buy a lovely home if you plan on destroying? especially one so old and grand?). Although living so close, the McKown house was always full of mystery to my family and me; we didn't know the history, but we were always curious and intrigued. Instead of destroying the home, why not take the opportunity to share the history and give our neighborhood more to be proud of? If we can't save the McKown House's integrity, then how shall we maintain the integrity of our neighborhood in the years to come?

A Vision by Mary Bourland

After listening to the September 9th meeting of the Historic Landmark Commission, the one thing I kept thinking was "even though it doesn't or didn't look like many of the homes that made up a lot of the Crestview Neighborhood, that IS the very reason for how unique it is". To think how over 50 years ago there was this man who had a VISION of a house that was different than the others. His vision is what is unique, and the only thing left is this house that represents that vision. I know that R. J. McKown contributed to the city in all kinds of ways, but this house was his own. That to me is what makes it so special! It was his own piece of art for himself. He reminds me so much of my own Dad.

The Big House by George Frimpter

I have lived a large part of my adult life in the Crestview Neighborhood in the City of Austin, Texas. In 1974 my ex-wife and I moved into a shack on Cullen Avenue. Our house was typical of the houses thrown up in the late forties and early fifties for the GI's returning from World War II returning to the civilian world. All of these houses were about the same except for 1501 Richcreek Road. Only 1501 wasn't known by that name. To us in the neighborhood it was known as "The Big House". The Big House was called such because it was clearly and uniquely the largest, most beautiful house and property in the neighborhood. Driving on Woodrow Avenue, we would pass by The Big House and say "There's the big house". Just passing by it and looking at it was enough to cheer one up on a busy day as it was just nice to look at a property in the neighborhood nicer than the shack we were living in. Yes, Crestview was different in the seventies than now.

Fast forward to 1995. I bought a house on Richcreek Road. I could have never imagined as a younger person that I would have owned the house two doors down from the prestigious Big House. I have been retired since 2007 thus allowing me time to walk five miles a day and the route I walk is past the Big House. Sadly, The Big House reminds me of lines from Joyce Kilmer's *The House With Nobody In It*. To make The Big House disappear and replace it with duplexes or accursed condominiums would further the destruction of the character of Crestview. There has to be some tradition and history preserved in Austin so we don't become a soulless city of condominiums with the droids living in them keeping everything weird.

A Glimpse Back by Candace Kiene

When I moved to Crestview in the early 1990s, one of my neighbors, an original resident, shared some neighborhood history. One story he told was that when the first Crestview families moved in, our street and others were unpaved dirt roads.

He said Mr. McKown, who was in construction and owned the big brick house over on Richcreek, had paved a lot of Crestview's streets. More than forty years after moving to Crestview, my neighbor still seemed relieved that our streets are now nice, clean pavement.

When I drive into Crestview from Anderson Lane, I feel lucky to be so graciously welcomed by the McKown house and neighboring homes, just where Woodrow starts to curve. If you include Richcreek in your walks, the McKown house is a landmark and a glimpse back into 1950s Crestview; and its cool, shady landscape has been like dessert after finishing an evening walk in the summer. (The house has seemed especially fascinating since I realized it had a pool and pool house.)

Demolishing the McKown House would waste a reminder of a Crestview family's storied contributions and goodwill. It would obliterate a key mid-century house in our mid-century neighborhood. Please save this house.

Not on that Lot! by Theresa Wylie and Brian Carlson

My husband and I have always loved the old Austin neighborhood "feel" of Crestview. One of the main things that keeps Crestview feeling like home is the unique and wonderful architecture and history of the houses. It would be a shame to let such a beautiful and iconic piece of Austin history and Crestview spirit be torn down in the name of "progress." There is plenty of room for progress to happen, but not on that lot! It's important for a growing city to preserve its culture and values otherwise we run the risk of becoming a city that has no culture or values. When that happens, you end up with a place where people reside but not any place where people want to live.

Austin and Crestview are places where people want to live. Let's keep it that way!

The Most Well-Known Landmark by Mike Lavigne

For as long as I can remember- before I moved to Crestview in '02, before the Wall of Welcome existed, before Domino the pig ran away...there was the "big house at the corner of Richcreek and Woodrow". It was and is the most well-known landmark in our neighborhood.

The Little Deli may be famous, but it's relatively new in comparison. You can't give directions to a house in the hood without mentioning it or Threadgill's as markers.

If 1501 Richcreek isn't a historical landmark, then there aren't any in our neighborhood. It was unfathomable until just now that anyone would ever tear that house down. We wouldn't have ever been such a desirable neighborhood if not for the people who built that house.

Make your voice heard today and let the city know this house shouldn't be torn down. With a little bit of love it could be restored to its former glory of only a few years ago!

A Cloud of Dust by Bob Andrews

In the mid-1950's, frequently looking from South Congress Avenue and other high points of south Austin, there would be a cloud of dust hanging over the area bounded by Koenig Lane, Lamar Boulevard, Burnet Road, and Anderson Lane. The streets in this area were not paved and were the primary cause of the bad dust problems. McKown & Sons contacted the city and were awarded contracts to pave many of the streets in this area.

We Love the History by Rachel

My husband and I are new and proud homeowners on Richcreek Road. We love this neighborhood for its history, and we especially love the McKown house - it's a defining characteristic of our street and a favorite landmark to pass on our way home. Crestview is such a special place to live, and it's part of what makes Austin unique. Please help keep Crestview's integrity by making the McKown house a historic landmark!

Crestview Originals by Miguel Pavon

If you ask people who have lived in Austin a long time if they know where Downtown, Allandale, Brentwood or Crestview are, you would get mostly positive responses, and if you ask them if they know the Crestview Minimax or the big yellow brick house a few blocks north on Woodrow, most older residents are familiar with them, also. Those two structures are Crestview originals from 1952; people have had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with those icons for 60 years. They are the anchors of the community.

My wife and I are not original Crestview homeowners or old time Austin residents. We have called Austin home since 1996, and are Crestview residents since 2000. The reason we bought the house in 1312 Richcreek was because of the beautiful three houses that were on the other 3 corners; the McKown House is catty-corner from us. Even then for us new residents, we saw the beauty and value of it. It was the nicest house around. We were not able to afford it, but we bought the “ugly” house on the opposite corner with hopes that with time and elbow grease we would be able to bring it up to par.

The Wall of Welcome on Woodrow Avenue as you cross Justin going north celebrates those who created the Brentwood and Crestview neighborhood and those who continue to form it now. The Wall of Welcome is important enough to have pictures posted on the internet, YouTube videos and articles in the newspaper about it (search on goggle for the pictures or videos and go to the *Austin Chronicle* to learn more about it <http://www.austinchronicle.com/arts/2008-04-04/608411> or the *Austin American Statesman* <http://www.statesman.com/news/lifestyles/food-cooking/mixing-old-austin-new-another-generation-families-/nSC49/>). In 2003, local artist Jean Graham received a cultural contract from the City of Austin to create a community art project that would bring together the older and younger residents of her neighborhood. Using photographs from longtime residents, the open fields in the mosaic reflect how the neighborhood first looked in the 1950s. There are images of Crestview residents, some of the first houses and the Brentwood Elementary School which can be seen in the wall. Nice narratives tell the story. Every neighborhood should be so lucky.

The McKown House at 1501 Richcreek is just a few blocks north of the Wall of Welcome, but shares some of the same characteristics. It brings us back in

time to 1952 when it was originally built. It is a one-story, irregular plan, hipped roof, brick veneered frame house with a central, partial width front gabled, independent porch on square and brick piers. The central, front door has a paneled surround. There are ornamental gables that make it look very elegant. The triangular gables resemble the same features depicted in the Wall of Welcome as seen in the first group of pictures.

Figure 1. Triangular features in the Wall of welcome are also seen today in the McKown House.

Additionally the brick portrayed for the neighborhood elementary school seems very similar to the actual veneer brick in the house.

Figure 2. Brick details at the Wall of Welcome and the McKown House.

Robert Jackson (R. J.) McKown built his home at 1501 Richcreek himself. Although he had started as a builder of residential homes and commercial buildings, this is the only house he built in Austin. McKown started building roads when bricks were popular; it was a material with which he was familiar. Later on, roads were made of asphalt. He helped build the landing strips for airports, including Bergstrom. As related by some of the more established residents, he received the three lots where the house was erected as part of the transaction for paving the roads in Brentwood and Crestview.

I feel like the McKown House has historic significance because it has long been a part of the cultural identity of the Crestview neighborhood; it is recognized by all or most of the Crestview residents; and it was the reason we bought our house in Crestview more than a decade ago. Living in a mid-century Austin neighborhood has given my wife and me the opportunity to get to know people who established the neighborhood more than 60 years ago. There are plenty of opportunities for walking and chatting; we are not car-dependent. We are a great community, and we would like to keep it that way. We see each other often on the evening walks, buying groceries at the Minimax, eating at the Little Deli, admiring once again the Wall of Welcome or discussing the future of the McKown House. I see this house every day when I open the windows in the morning, when taking the kids to school, coming home for lunch and going for a walk with Sally, our German Shepherd, at night. Before going to bed, when I close the draperies, I can only hope that it will be there the next day. I whisper a goodnight to my community hoping it will be there every morning.

This is my little grain of sand to help the community express their need to preserve and save one of its anchors, the McKown House.