

# Local Historic District Application to the Historic Landmark Commission City of Austin

July 17, 2014

## Old Judges Hill Historic Neighborhood

Historic Treasures Lost . . .



### Old Judges Hill

A Proposed Local Historic District

**The Homes  
Pictured Above  
Are No Longer Standing**

[www.judgeshillhistoricdistrict.org](http://www.judgeshillhistoricdistrict.org)

. . . and Found



### Old Judges Hill

A Proposed Local Historic District

**Help  
Preserve  
Austin's Heritage**

[www.judgeshillhistoricdistrict.org](http://www.judgeshillhistoricdistrict.org)



Submitted by applicant Bob Swaffar

## **Old Judges Hill Historic District Working Group**

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### **With thanks for support provided by:**

Judges Hill Neighborhood Association (Financial)

Phoebe Allen, Historian

Preservation Austin (formerly known as the Heritage Society of Austin)

Landmark Commission & Staff, City of Austin

Harthan Historic District

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July 3, 2013

Chair Laurie Limbacher and Commission Members  
Historic Landmarks Commission  
City of Austin  
Post Office Box 1088  
Austin, TX 78767-8865  
Sent via e-mail

Dear Chair Limbacher and Commission Members,

Preservation Austin respectfully requests your support for the designation of the Judges Hill Local Historic District. In establishing the Local Historic District program, then later revising the nomination criteria to be more feasible, Austin's City Council has endorsed the Local Historic Districts mechanism to preserve the unique character of Austin's historic neighborhoods, and to create an alternative to the ad hoc designation of individual landmark structures. Preservation Austin believes that the establishment of Local Historic Districts is the best means to preserve the treasured and unique heritage of our City.

We are impressed with all the years of work that led to the Judges Hill Local Historic District nomination. As the applicant has demonstrated, there has been extensive research, outreach and public education about the benefits and responsibilities of a Local Historic District. They have responded to concerns and incorporated feedback into their proposed Design Standards. The City's Local Historic District program has been unequivocally established, the nomination criteria are clearly stated, and the proposed district on all counts meets the criteria for acceptance.

For 60 years, Preservation Austin has been the leading protector of Austin's diverse cultural heritage through the preservation of historic treasures and places. As such, we believe that learning from and celebrating our past while planning for and creating the future enhances livability and a sense of identity for our city. Judges Hill takes great pride in its historic character and has actively worked to educate the public about its history by scheduling tour of its historic properties for the public and school children.

Instituting Local Historic Districts is a goal of our City, and we hope you will seize the opportunity to recommend Council approval of this strong application. Thank you for your many hours of hard work to preserve what is best about Austin for future generations.

Sincerely,

Tere O'Connell  
President

## Introduction

51.7% of Property Owners within the District are supportive of the LHD. 54.5% of Property Owners including qualifying City of Austin property are supportive of the LHD. 66% of the proposed LHD are contributing properties and 33% of the proposed LHD are City of Austin Landmark properties.

In 2008, the Judges Hill Neighborhood Association engaged local historian, Phoebe Allen, to complete a survey of contributing and non-contributing homes in the Judges Hill area for several purposes including the submission of a local historic district application. Since that time, four Landmarks have been newly designated by the City of Austin in our area, bringing to nineteen (19) the number of landmarks in the boundaries of the Judges Hill area.

In 2010 and 2011, the City of Austin adopted several changes to the Landmark program in response to citizens' communications. And, subsequently, a working group of property owners in the Judges Hill area comprised of both contributing and non-contributing properties, worked to create this application for consideration by the City of Austin to designate those properties included in this application as the Judges Hill Historic District within the City of Austin Local Historic District program.

***Affidavits supporting this application have been included as 'Attachment B'.***

### Timeline

As a potential applicant, we anticipated the need to have fully inclusive property owner participation and adhered to the following timetable and milestones in the preparation of this application. As you can note, this has not been a hurried process, has been inclusive of diverse opinions, and is an attempt to balance the interests of local property owners, the City of Austin and historic preservation of this final remaining residential area within the downtown area:

- Fall 2008 – Completion of contributing and non contributing surveys
- Summer 2008 – Tour of potential district with State and City Preservation Officers

- Spring 2009 – Individual submission of landmark status applications (four homes)
- Summer 2011 – Canvassing of property owners to determine interest in LHD
- 10/1/11 – Newly created website: [www.judgeshillhistoricdistrict.org](http://www.judgeshillhistoricdistrict.org)
  - List of Landmark Properties Published
  - Summary of intent to apply for Local Historic District Published
  - Notice of public meetings included
  - Room included to publish draft design guidelines and application
- 10/2/11 – US Postal Service Mailer (Postcard) Announcing Public Meeting
- 10/16/11 – Public Meeting on LHD with all area property owners
  - FAQs published on website and hard copies distributed at meeting
  - Held at the home of Bill and Pat Monroe 3P-4P
- 11/1/11 – US Postal Service Mailer (Postcard) Announcing Public Meeting
  - Draft Design Guidelines published on website
- 11/16/11 – Public Meeting featuring Q&A from the COA (Alyson McGee)
  - Hard copies of Draft Design Guidelines available at public meeting
  - Held at St. Martin’s Lutheran Church 7P-9P
- 12/1/11 – US Postal Service Postcard Announcing Draft Application
  - Draft Application published on website for review
- 12/15/11 – Public Meeting to receive input on Draft Application
  - Hard copies of Draft Application available at public meeting
  - Held at St. Martin’s Lutheran Church 7P-9P
- 1/15/12 – Revisions incorporated and final LHD application
- 6/15/13 - Final application published on website
- 8/2013 – City of Austin Public Meeting Held by Landmark Commission Staff to Answer Questions about proposed Local Historic District
- 9/2013 – Landmark Commission Recommended City of Austin Approval of LHD
- 10/2013 – LHD Application Withdrawn to revise Design Standards
- 3/23/14 – New Design Standards Published on Website
- 7/17/14 – Application Re-Submitted with updated Affidavits and New Design Standards

All public meetings were announced two weeks prior using Travis County Appraisal District addresses listed for each property within the Judges Hill area to ensure that all property owners were included in this application process.

The City of Austin posted signage as well as notified all TCAD Property Owners prior to the Landmark Commission Staff Meeting held to answer Questions about the proposed LHD during the summer of 2013.

As a result of the re-submitted application all TCAD Property Owners will again be notified through direct mail and posted signage have an opportunity to ask questions and provide input into the LHD process.

The below document is the announcement sent for the October 16<sup>th</sup> public meeting:

**Judges Hill Historic District**  
A Proposed Austin Local Historic District



Dear Resident/Property Owner:

Please join the Judges Hill Historic District Committee to learn more about plans to apply for a City of Austin local historic district in our area.

Date: Sunday, 10/16/2011  
Time: 3-4 PM  
Place: 1606 Pearl (Home of Bill & Pat Monroe)

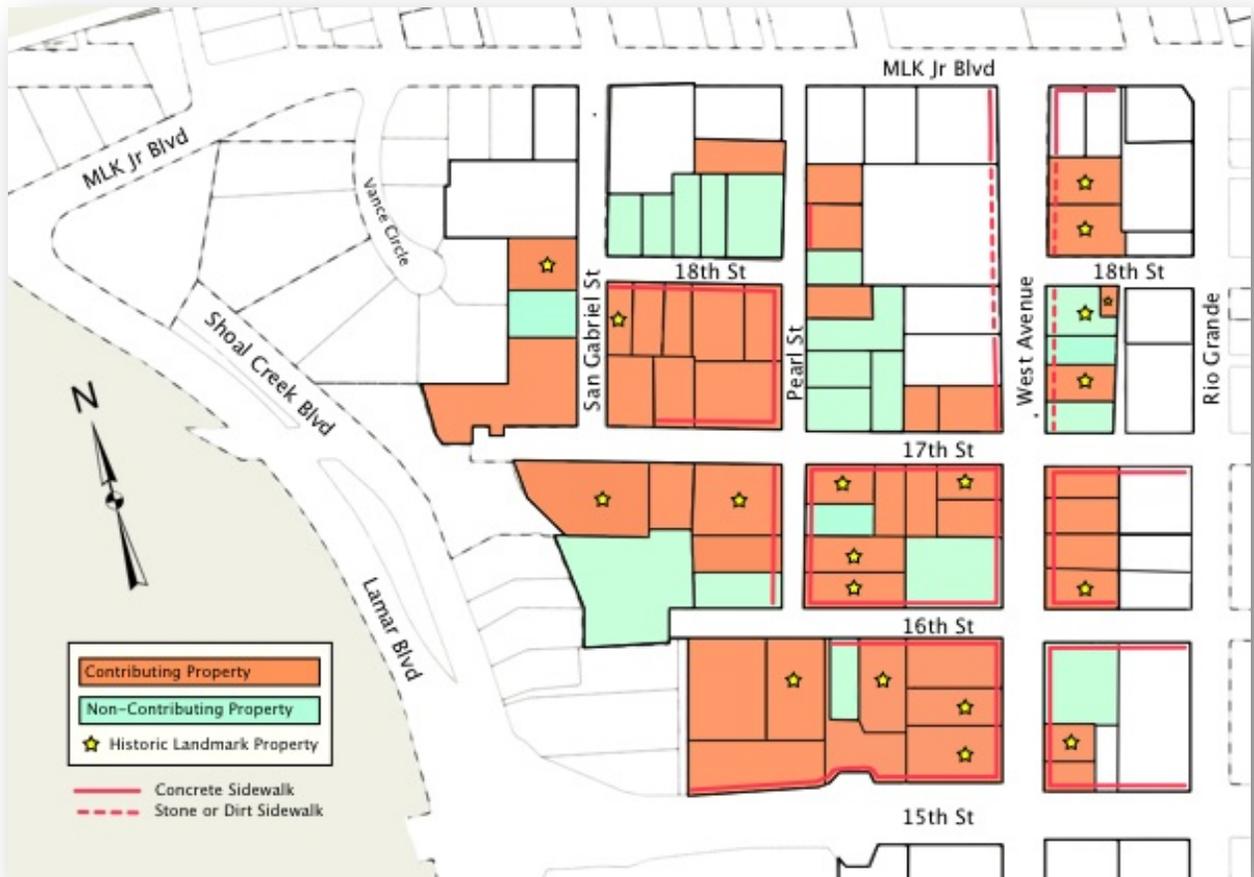
To learn more visit our new website at:

[www.judgeshillhistoricdistrict.org](http://www.judgeshillhistoricdistrict.org)



## District Boundaries and Map

The proposed district boundaries are designed to encompass historic properties that represent the original land settlement in 1851 of Elijah Sterling Clark Robertson who built the first Judges Hill home near the corner of 18<sup>th</sup> and San Gabriel. Below is a map of the area included in the application to be considered for the Judges Hill Historic District. See application for description of boundaries and accompanying DATA SPREADSHEET.



**The Design Standard Document for the Judges Hill Historic District is included with this application as 'Tab B'.**

## Surveys of Contributing Properties

*(see all surveys at "TAB D")*

Surveys have been completed for the following properties between the years of 1851 and 1955 (three phases of construction) as contributing to the Historic Fabric of the Judges Hill Neighborhood. Contributing properties have been defined as current designated Landmarks with the National, State or City Landmark offices as well as additional architecturally and historically significant properties encompassed within the district.

- **Nineteen COA Landmarks** (19) of the contributing properties within the proposed local historic district are currently designated as City of Austin Historic Landmark Properties.
- **Seven State Historic Landmarks** (7) of the contributing properties are also designated as Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks.
- **Two National Register Landmarks** (2) of the contributing properties are also designated as National Register Properties.

**A complete set of the contributing surveys for the Judges Hill Historic District is included with this application as 'Tab D'.**

## Non-Contributing Properties

Surveys have been completed for the area. Non-contributing properties do not contribute architecturally or historically to the period of time defined as relevant.

## Judges Hill Area History

*(for complete history see "TAB E")*



Established in 1851 as Austin's original city neighborhood, the Judges Hill Neighborhood contributes significantly to the historical appreciation of Austin. Judges Hill is still the setting for many handsome single-family homes built more than 75 years ago, with many residents who have occupied the dwellings for more than 50 years. The Neighborhood is located north of the central business district of downtown Austin on the eastern bluff overlooking Pease Park, bordered by West Avenue, 15th Street, Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd and Lamar.

In 1839, the Congress of the Republic of Texas condemned land surrounding the village of Waterloo (now known as the City of Austin), offering the grant holders land elsewhere in Texas as compensation. The City of Austin was founded when sovereignty and initial ownerships were established. Many of the homes in the Judge's Hill Neighborhood are part of the Republic of Texas Outlots 10 and 11, Division E, later approved for sale as City of Austin Lots in 1850 by the State of Texas Legislature and by Governor Bell in 1852.

In 1851, Judge Elijah Sterling Clark Robertson built the Original City Neighborhood's first home near the corner of 18th and San Gabriel. The house was subsequently demolished in 1966. Judge Robertson was the first among neighborhood resident judges and attorneys who earned the neighborhood the name of Judges Hill. From its

inception, Judges Hill was home to many prominent Austin citizens including but not limited to:

- Colonel E. M. House, close advisor to President Woodrow Wilson;
- Josh Wesley Robertson, Mayor of Austin;
- James P. Alexander, Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court;
- Few Brewster, Associate Judge of Texas Supreme Court;
- Ireland Grave, Judge of the 26th Judicial District;
- Judge St. John Garwood;
- Judge Alexander S. Walker; and,
- Judge Edward R. Kone.

***A complete history of the neighborhood, prepared by Historian Phoebe Allen, has been attached to this submission as 'Tab E'.***