

February 21, 2015

Mr. Alan Schumann, Chair
City of Austin Building & Fire Code Board of Appeals
301 West 2nd Street
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Sir:

The Board of Directors of the Highland Park West/Balcones Area Neighborhood Association joins with residents surrounding the property at 3100 Highland Terrace West in opposing the large prefabricated metal barn erected there.

HPWBANA realizes that this situation represents one of neighbor vs neighbors. That is always difficult, however the appearance of the Thompson structure in contrast to the rest of the neighborhood, in style, materials, size and placement, facilitates our taking the position we have, which is to oppose the pre-fabricated barn.

The barn violates the plat restrictions of Highland Park West which have been in place since 1946 by exceeding allowable square footage. It is our position that these plat restrictions represent an almost 70 year old commitment of all residents to each other to maintain consistent neighborhood character and appearance. Our neighborhood association supports and encourages all to conform to the plat restrictions for these reasons. We note that the City of Austin, in its Land Development Code, makes frequent reference to the same aim, that of especially preserving the character of older neighborhoods. Additionally, the barn structure appears to violate City of Austin ordinances.

Also noteworthy is the fact that construction of the barn was done with no City of Austin permits applied for or issued until more than four months after construction began which is not the proper process and denies surrounding residents their rightful opportunity to protest building plans they find objectionable; we also take note that when finally applied for, permits were issued in less than 48 hours despite the 20 day mandated wait period which gave interested parties no opportunity to voice their concerns. While a survey and architect's drawing were submitted as part of the permit process, important features were omitted from the survey and no foundation documentation has been supplied, although required. These omissions are part of the City of Austin ordinances which are designed to protect all residents. Without following its own procedures, the City of Austin becomes an enabler rather than enforcer of its own ordinances, not its proper role.

We ask this body to look holistically at the situation and support the residents in their ability to enjoy their neighborhood's appearance and sustain the values of their properties. The neighborhood association urges this building permit be rescinded.

Sincerely,

Donna P. Edgar
HPWBANA Neighborhood Preservation and Zoning Committee

Copies: Mr. Greg Guernsey, Director Planning & Development Review Board
Mr. Noel Stout, Attorney, Almanza Blackburn & Dickie LLP
Mr. Sam Haddad, Highland Terrace West Preservation Group