

29<sup>th</sup> street impervious coverage variance.

**Introduction-** My name is Thomas Suehs. I am the owner/ occupant of 1800 west 29<sup>th</sup> street. My wife and I have been residents of Austin for over forty (40) years.

**Purpose and objective of variance:** To maintain the current impervious coverage that has existed on the property since the mid 1980's.

**Background:** We purchased the property in May of 2008 and spent the next year updating and structurally repairing the home. We moved in the house in May 2009. Our decision to purchase a home in Brykerwoods was so we could be close to a bus route helping our handicap daughter maintain her independence while attending Austin Community College. We were also interested in preserving an old house in central Austin - having previously done so in Hyde Park (1910 era.), and Castroville, Texas a (1877 era).

When we sought the first permit in 2008 we found out there was an existing open permit dating back to the 1980's. At no time was an impervious coverage issue raised by the city or indicated by any of the three (3) previous surveys filed with the city.

In 2013 we decided to undertake an additional remodeling with a massive, expensive landscape most of which was necessitated by excessive water run off from neighbors houses and natural springs in the back of the property. The landscape work included tapering the back yard and installing French drains within the multi tiered sections which would allow the water to seep into the ground and minimize runoff to the streets. The major renovation consisted of elevating the back patio and enclosing it. The elevation was necessary due to the massive pooling of water on the existing porch. The garage sides were removed and the garage was converted to a carport. Here again this was necessary to handle the water flow, which had splashed against, seeping into the garage causing rot.

An impervious coverage issue was not raised until our Architect prepared the plans for permitting by the city. This was the first time we were informed of needing an impervious coverage calculation and survey.

Since the time the house was built in 1939, no one that we know of raised or indicated that an impervious coverage issue existed until recently. Our Architect did not express a willingness to seek, or did she believe that the city would seriously consider a variance, therefore, designed a ribbon drive. After

many months of thought and study of the issue, we do not believe it was in our best interest nor our neighbors interest to tear up the existing drive and replace it with a ribbon drive that was not practical for our situation.

In retrospect it may have been more efficient and cost effective for us to demolish the 1939 cottage and garage and rebuild a “big box” house that maximizes the impervious coverage requirement.

**Why a problem?**

- 1) The existing impervious coverage on the property has been in place since the mid 1980's.
- 2) The existing driveway is very -narrow at some points less the 8 feet wide.
- 3) We require accessibility up the driveway for our daughter, who is handicapped. (Due to severe congenital bi-lateral club feet she has undergone five surgeries to allow her to walk. She can only walk for a limited number of hours a day and must avoid unstable ground. Straddling a ribbon drive or walking on gravel/sand is high risk for injury to a person with her medical condition)

**Other considerations;** It appears to us that if the city is serious about preserving older homes and neighborhoods that certain zoning requirements, such as impervious coverage, be flexible to accommodate individual needs for preservation and accessibility for the handicap.



**Before French Drains**





**Before #2**





**After**



**Before #3**





# New Drains



# NEW W/ Drainage !





NEW w/ Drainage 2





New w/ Drainage +