

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
JUNE 22, 2015
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
HDP-2015-0401
1904 E. 17TH STREET**

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1920 house.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, rectangular-plan, pyramidal-roofed frame house with a partial-width inset porch; single 1:1 fenestration.

RESEARCH

The house was built around 1920; the first renters were Robert S. and Eula Whitley, who were white. They were originally from New Braunfels, and after living in this house for a few years, they moved back there. Whitley and several of his family members worked in cotton mills. After 1923, the house was occupied by a succession of African-American families, including a porter, the personal chauffeur for Andrew J. Zilker, who later went to work as a truck driver for a furniture company, and a laundress. Around 1942, the house was purchased by Ella Robinson, who, with her daughter, Edna, had rented the house in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Ella Robinson was a laundress. They lived here until around 1948. From then on, the house was occupied by a series of renters, including another laundress, a construction worker at the University of Texas, a highway laborer, and a yardman.

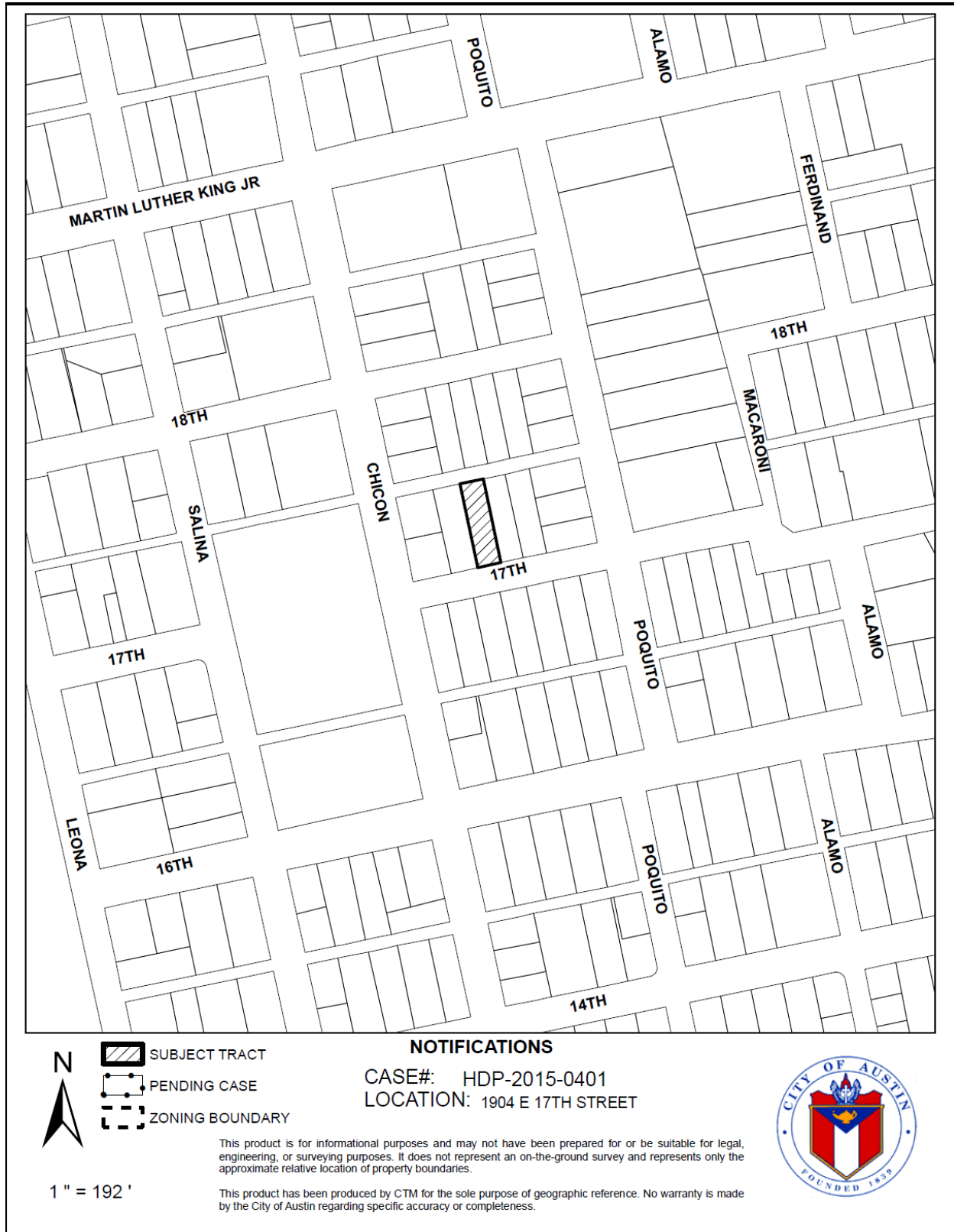
STAFF COMMENTS

The house is listed in the Chestnut Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey (2001) with a medium priority for preservation.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Postpone until the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission to fully evaluate alternatives to demolition and the possibilities for rehabilitation and adaptive re-use. This block of E. 17th Street is a prime candidate for a historic district, and the one house that has already been demolished has been replaced with a large house that is completely out of scale with the remaining historic houses on the block and in the immediate environs. If the Commission does not postpone the case, then staff recommends initiation of a historic zoning case, as the house has significance in the areas of architecture and as an example of vernacular housing in this primarily African-American neighborhood. In the event that the Commission does not postpone or initiate the historic zoning case, then staff recommends release of the permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package, consisting of photographs of all elevations, a dimensioned sketch plan, and a narrative history, for archiving at the Austin History Center.

LOCATION MAP



1904 E. 17th Street
ca. 1920



OCCUPANCY HISTORY 1904 E. 17th Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center
By City Historic Preservation Office
June, 2015

1992	Estrada and Maria Martinez, owners Construction worker
1985-86	Floyd and Margaret Blackmon, renters Carpenter NOTE: The directory indicates that Floyd and Margaret Blackmon were new residents at this address.
1981	George and Cliffie L. Arnold, renters Retired
1977	George and Cliffie L. Arnold, renters Yardman
1973	George and Cliffie L. Arnold, owners Yardman
1968	Melvin and L.A. Fowler, renters Laborer, State Highway Department

NOTE: George and Cliffie Arnold are listed at 2111 E. 17th Street; he was a janitor.

1962	David and Alma Price, renters Utility worker, University of Texas
1959	David and Alma Price, renters Construction worker, University of Texas
1955	David and Alma Price, renters Employed by the City of Austin
1952	Bertha Holman, renter Laundress
1949	Ella Roberson, owner No occupation listed
1947	Deward and Edna McNeil, owners No occupation listed
1944-45	Ella Robertson, owner Laundress
1941	Ella Robinson, renter No occupation listed
1939	Edna Robinson, renter No occupation listed
1937	Alvin and Monnie Dobbins, renters Truck driver, Swann-Schulle Furniture Company, 401-03 Congress Avenue. NOTE: There is an Ella Robinson listed at 1701 Dobson Street; she was a maid. There is no listing for an Edna Robinson.
1935	Alvin and Monnie Dobbins, renters Chauffeur, Andrew J. Zilker, 206 W. 33 rd Street.
1932-33	Theo and Roseline Byrd, owners Porter, Railroad Commission of Texas
1930-31	Frances Bremond (colored), renter Cook
1929	Sylvester and Dora Overton (colored), renters No occupation listed
1927	Sylvester and Dora Overton (colored), renters No occupation listed
1924	John Banks (colored), renter No occupation listed
1922	Robert S. and Eula Whitley (not shown as colored), renters

No occupation listed

1920 The address is not listed in the directory.
 NOTE: Robert S. and Eula Whitley are not listed in the directory.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

Robert S. and Eula Whitley (ca. 1920 – ca 1923)

Robert S. and Eula Whitley appear in the 1930 U.S. Census for New Braunfels, Texas. Robert S. Whitley was 65, had been born in Texas, and was a roving hauler for a cotton mill. Eula Whitley was 54, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 3 daughters, Eunice, 33, a ginner at a cotton mill; Mae, 21, a ginner at a cotton mill; and Avis, 17, who had no occupation listed. The family is listed as white. Robert S. Whitley died in New Braunfels in 1951. Eula Whitley died in New Braunfels in 1961.

Sylvester and Dora Overton (ca. 1926 – ca. 1929)

Sylvester and Dora Overton appear in the 1920 U.S. Census as the owners of a farm in Justice Precinct 6 of Travis County. Sylvester Overton was 40, had been born in Texas to Tennessee-born parents, and was a farmer. Dora Overton was 38, had been born in Texas, and was a laborer on the home farm. They had 3 children: Verdelle, 10; Almarr, 6; and Ambrose, 5. All the children had been born in Texas. Sylvester Overton died in Travis County in 1929.

Ella Robinson and Edna Robinson (ca. 1938 – ca. 1948)

Ella Robinson appears in the 1940 U.S. Census as the owner of this house, which was worth \$1,000. She was a 70-year old widow who had been born in Texas and had no occupation listed. With her lived her son, Eugene, 47, who was divorced, and worked as a yardman. They also had a lodger, Arthur Piper, 24, who had been born in Texas, and worked as a gas station attendant.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows Ella Robinson as the owner of the house at 2200 Colita Street, which was worth \$350. She was a laundress at the house. With her lived her son Eugene, 36, a truck driver for a wholesale grocery company, and her daughter, Edna, then 19, who had no occupation listed.

Ella Robinson died in 1952 in Houston. Edna Robinson died in 1984 in Travis County.