

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION  
SEPTEMBER 28, 2015  
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS  
HDP-2014-1083  
1611 WALNUT AVENUE**

---

**PROPOSAL**

---

Demolish a ca. 1925 house.

---

**ARCHITECTURE**

---

One-story, rectangular-plan, pyramidal-roofed frame Cumberland-style house with a full-width inset porch on ornamental metal supports; double front doors; single 1:1 fenestration.

---

**RESEARCH**

---

The house appears to have been built in 1925 by an African-American couple, Lonnie C. and Senia Coleman. Lonnie C. Coleman grew up in Austin and was involved in the concrete paving business for his entire working life. He was a cement finisher or a concrete worker for the City Street and Bridge Department for many years. After his death in 1948, his widow, Senia, continued to live in this house until her death in 1983. Senia Coleman was a cook for a private family in the late 1920s, and in her later years, she was a maid and domestic worker. According to neighborhood sources, "Aunt Senie" was a grandmotherly type who opened her house and yard to the children of the neighborhood, providing them with a safe place to play after school until their parents got home from work.

---

**STAFF COMMENTS**

---

The house is listed as a medium priority for preservation in the Chestnut Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey (2001) with the notation that the priority could be upgraded with additional historical information about the house.

---

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

---

Staff recommends the initiation of the historic zoning case on this property. This house, while having deteriorated during its vacancy, remains an excellent example of 1920s vernacular housing in East Austin, and has significant historical associations with a woman and her family who were the "anchor" of the neighborhood for many years. Staff strongly hopes that there is a way to preserve this house and still allow the owner to develop additional housing or an addition to this house if necessary. It is very important to take every possible reasonable step to preserve the history and heritage of our East Austin neighborhoods to the greatest extent possible, and to work with what each site offers, especially if the site has a house with architectural and historical significance to the traditional neighborhood community.

## LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 200'

CASE#: HDP-2014-1083  
Address: 1611 WALNUT AVENUE

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.



1611 Walnut Avenue  
ca. 1925



## OCCUPANCY HISTORY

### 1611 Walnut Avenue

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

1992	Bertha M. Thomas, renter No occupation listed NOTE: The directory indicates that Bertha M. Thomas was a new resident at this address.
1985-86	L.J. Queen, renter No occupation listed NOTE: The directory indicates that L.J. Queen was a new resident at this address.
1981	Senia M. Coleman, owner Retired
1977	Senia M. Coleman, owner Widow, L.C. Coleman Retired
1973	Senia M. Coleman, owner Widow, L.C. Coleman Retired
1968	Senia M. Coleman, owner Widow, L.C. Coleman No occupation listed
1962	Senia M. Coleman, owner Widow, L.C. Coleman No occupation listed
1959	Senia M. Coleman, owner Widow, L.C. Coleman No occupation listed
1955	Senia M. Coleman (not listed as the owner) No occupation listed
1952	Senia M. Coleman, owner Maid
1949	Senia M Coleman, owner Domestic worker
1947	Lonnie C. and Senia Coleman, owners Cement finisher
1944-45	Lonnie C. and Senia Coleman, owners No occupation listed

1941	Lonnie C. and Senia Coleman, owners Concrete finisher, City Street and Bridge Department
1939	Lonnie C. and Senia Coleman, owners Cement worker
1937	Lonnie C. and Senia Coleman, owners Cement worker
1935	Lonnie C. and Senia Coleman, owners Concrete worker, City Street and Bridge Department
1932-33	Lonnie C. and Senia Coleman, owners Laborer, City Street and Bridge Department
1930-31	Lonnie C. and Senia Coleman (colored), owners Concrete worker
1929	Lonnie C. and Senia Coleman (colored), owners Lonnie: Cement finisher Senia: Cook, Mrs. Jennie R. Granberry, 910 W. 6 <sup>th</sup> Street. NOTE: Mrs. Granberry was a stenographer for the State Fire Insurance Department.
1927	Lonnie C. and Senia Coleman (colored), owners No occupation listed
1924	The address is not listed in the directory. Lonnie and Senia Coleman are listed at 1811 San Jacinto Boulevard; he had no occupation listed.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:**

#### **Lonnie and Senia Coleman (ca. 1925 – ca. 1983)**

Lonnie Coleman appears in the 1900 U.S. Census for Austin as the 14-year old son of Joe and Bettie Coleman who lived at 1238 Alamo Street. Lonnie was listed as being in school and could read and write. His father had been born in Virginia, and was a day laborer who could read but could not write. His mother had been born in Arkansas, and was a washerwoman. She could not read nor write. The 1910 U.S. Census shows Lonnie and a woman named Emma Coleman living at 1608 Washington Avenue in Austin. He was 24; she was 23. He was a laborer in a paving business. She had no occupation listed.

Lonnie Coleman's World War I draft registration card shows that he was born January 6, 1886, and was living at 1615 Hackberry Street with his mother, Lizzie Coleman. He was a laborer.

Lonnie and Senia Coleman appear as the owners of this house (which is listed as 1609 Walnut Avenue) in the 1930 U.S. Census. The house was worth \$800, and thus more than any of the surrounding houses. Lonnie Coleman was 42, had been born in Texas, and was a cement finisher in building construction. Senia Coleman was 37, had been born in Texas, and was a cook for a private family. They had a son, James, 12, who had been born in Texas and had no occupation listed.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows Lonnie and Senia Coleman as the owners of this house, which is now listed as 1611 Walnut Avenue. The house was worth \$1,800, again more than any of the



surrounding houses. Lonnie Coleman is listed as a laborer for the city; Senia Coleman had no occupation listed. James Coleman is not listed with them.

Lonnie C. Coleman died July 20, 1948 in Austin. There was no obituary in the Austin newspapers.

**COLEMAN, Senia Mae,  
97, of Austin, died Thurs-  
day. Services 2 p.m. Mon-  
day at Grant Chapel A.M.E.  
Church. Burial, Evergreen  
Cemetery. (King-Tears)**

Obituary of Senia Coleman  
Austin American-Statesman, March 6, 1983

	Lonnie Coleman	1611 Walnut Ave.
38	32	4 1 -

frame addn. to rear of res.

19844 - 6-24-40

3

Building permit to Lonnie Coleman for a frame addition to the rear of the house (1940)



September 28, 2015

Steve Sadowsky  
Historic Landmark Commission  
City Of Austin  
505 Barton Springs Rd  
Austin, TX 78704

Dear Mr. Sadowsky,

I, the owner at 1611 Walnut Avenue, Austin, Texas 78702, do hereby petition against the historic zoning proposal to the property at 1611 Walnut Avenue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sal Martinez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Sal Martinez, for  
1611 Walnut Joint Venture

HDP-2014-1083  
1611 Walnut Avenue  
October 21, 1915

Historic Landmark Commission:

Two of the main goals of the Chestnut Neighborhood Plan are to “Reinforce the historic and cultural character of Chestnut by identifying and designating landmarks” and to “Promote the rehabilitation of existing housing and new infill housing compatible with the old style of the Chestnut neighborhood.”

In the pursuit of these goals and after reviewing the documentation of this case The Chestnut NPCT believes the residential biographies and architecture of this home are sufficiently significant to be considered for historic zoning and recommends that the HLC initiate an historic zoning case.

Our diverse NPCT of over 75 neighborhood stakeholders voted overwhelmingly to support initiating historic zoning for this home to preserve its architectural and biographical contributions to our neighborhood’s history.

The Chestnut NPCT has a long track record of finding ways to uphold our neighborhood plan while working with developers and home owners to find creative and productive solutions that enhance the fabric of our neighborhood while preserving its character.

This case, concerning MX3 Homes’ application to demolish a circa 1925 house, has drawn immense attention from the community since the beginning of the year — to the extent that describing the evolution of the case is best handled in this supplementary document:

[MX3 Homes Request to Demolish 1925 Home at 1611 Walnut](#) (online resource links; PDF attached)

We agree strongly with the initial Historic Preservation Staff Recommendation, issued in January 2015:

“This house is very typical of vernacular housing in the neighborhood and has a 60-year history with the family who built the house – the head of the household was a concrete worker for the City Street and Bridge Department and his wife did domestic work – both typical occupations for African-American families in the early 20th century. The house has architectural and historical value and should be preserved and rehabilitated, if feasible.”

After exhaustive efforts to find alternate solutions, we have ultimately decided that an official historic zoning designation is the best option for this property and the Chestnut neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Amenity Applewhite  
Secretary, Chestnut NPCT



## MX3 Homes Requests to Demolish 1925 Home at 1611 Walnut

### Overview of case



*1611 Walnut, Fall 2014; To the south (right) of the house lay a side yard with chairs set up for neighbors and friends to gather.*

When this case was initially heard by the HLC on January 26, 2015, [staff recommended to postpone the case or initiate a historic zoning case](#):

*Either postpone to February 23, 2015 or initiate a historic zoning case to enable the applicant to consider alternatives to demolition. This house is very typical of vernacular housing in the neighborhood and has a 60-year history with the family who built the house – the head of the household was a concrete worker for the City Street and Bridge Department and his wife did domestic work – both typical occupations for African-American families in the early 20th century. The house has architectural and historical value and should be preserved and rehabilitated, if feasible.*

The [demolition permit was posted on NextDoor.com](#), and attendance at the subsequent [January NPCT set a record high](#). After voting at that meeting, the Chestnut NPCT also requested postponement, since MX3 representatives had neglected to respond to requests for information. The case was postponed.

Subsequently, in early February, the subcommittee was able to inspect the condition of the house. It had been unoccupied for several months, boarded up, and still contained many of the personal items belonging to the elderly resident who had occupied the home since 1992.



*Chestnut NPCT members, supervised by an MX3 liaison,  
use a crowbar to open the boarded up residence for inspection.*

Since the windows were boarded, it was difficult to photograph the interior. It was clear, however, that much of the original architecture remained, was in good shape, and would be worth preserving to maintain the historic character of the neighborhood and respect the history of the house and its former residents. The MX3 representative agreed, so multiple neighborhood meetings were held for discussion and, via several email exchanges, a compromise was arrived at and approved it by unanimous vote at the Chestnut NPCT meeting on March 8, 2015 [\[minutes\]](#):

- Builder has provided plans to our subcommittee for feedback
- See plans packet: [1611 Walnut Avenue Neighborhood Presentation 030615.pdf](#)
- Plan is to completely rehabilitate; and build new matching home (with additional 550sqft variance) in back; the second (now empty) adjacent lot will have normal MX3 homes
- Going through HLC will delay MX3 up to 4 months; Annette proposes to skip and make agreement in earnest
- Sean adds that onerous precedent of official HLC designation will discourage developer cooperation
- Concerns raised about ensuring that rehabilitation is done fully in the case of sale, unanticipated expenses, etc.
- Deed restriction in combination with variance and building permit notes could be way to make compromise legally binding outside official HLC designation

**Motion: Support variance on larger square footage on back property in exchange for MX3 rehabilitating original house according to HLC standards, even if HLC official designation process is averted at 3/9 HLC meeting.**

**Vote: 18 for; 0 against**

None of this was legally recorded at this point in the process, however the NPCT executive team was frequent contact with the MX3 representative who was forthcoming and cooperative. When both parties informed the HLC of the compromise, it was considered a "win-win" situation for all involved. In the minutes from the March 23rd HLC meeting, Staff Recommendation is recorded thusly:

*Staff Recommendation: The applicant proposes to withdraw the application in favor of an application for partial demolition to enable the rehabilitation of the house and the construction of an addition. Upon confirmation that the applicant has substituted the application for total demolition with one for partial demolition, release the permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package.*

In July, the subcommittee received the [final building plans](#) for the back house, and the NPCT was asked to vote on whether the NPCT would write a letter to the Board of Adjustments:

*The total square footage of the original house and proposed back house are still below 40% of the lot size, but we would be supporting them having a larger back house that is 1393 SF instead of one that is limited to 850 SF by our secondary apartment development tool. FAR calculations are in the plans if you'd like to see the numbers.*

*The 1611 Walnut subcommittee did review these plans and gave feedback to the developer that we'd like the backhouse to be as compatible as possible with the front house in materials and detailing. We also said that since the back house fronts 17th Street, we would recommend some sort of porch similar to what the front house has. Annette said she would feed that back to the design team but since the plans were already in review she couldn't make any guarantees on those items being incorporated.*

NPCT members [voted in favor of the letter](#) of support, but soon on July 16th received an unexpected message from our liaison with MX3:



*We have an issue that has come up on this project. Apparently the existing house is over the existing lot line and the city is making us move the house. We are very concerned if we move the house it will damage the home beyond repair. Is there any chance the neighborhood would allow us to demo the home and rebuild the exact same house?*

*Otherwise we may have to go to the BOA to request a variance to leave the house where it is, so not to disrupt the home.*

The ensuing string of emails between the Chestnut NPCT executive team and Sal Martinez, the owner of MX3 Homes, has been [compiled into this lengthy PDF](#) so that it could be shared with the rest of the team. At this time, the property looked like this:



*1925 house that MX3 agreed to preserve to the left;  
new MX3 homes on the newly subdivided half of the original lot to the right.*

Per Mr. Martinez' request, the NPCT held another vote on September 24, 2015 with two options:

- *Support the initiation of a historic zoning case for 1611 Walnut.*
- *Support demolition of the home and work with MX3 designers on a new home for the site.*

The team voted overwhelmingly, 26 to 6, in favor of the former option. A [letter was submitted to the HLC](#) supporting the initiation of a historic zoning case and representatives of the Chestnut NPCT attended the HLC meeting. Following staff recommendation and consent of the property owner, the case was tabled until the October 26th HLC meeting.



**Genesis 1 Engineering Company**  
(T.B.P.E. Registered Firm # F-2565)  
**George A. Gonzalez, Jr., PE**  
**Consulting Engineer**  
**6104 South First Street, Suite 105**  
**Austin, Texas 78745-4052**  
**(512) 899-2246 (Office), (512) 899-2203 Fax**  
**E-mail: engineer1@genesis1engineering.com**

**ENGINEER'S REPORT**

October 16, 2015

MX3 Homes, LLC  
C/O Mr. Henry Juarez  
1703 W. Koenig  
Austin, Texas 78756  
(512) 576-4399 Phone

**Subject: Evaluation of Wooden Structural Framing of Residential Structure @**  
**1611 N. Walnut Avenue, Austin, Texas 78702**  
**Legal Description: Lots 1-2, Block 4, OLT 31, DIV. B, H Unit**  
**Subdivision, Second Addition**  
**Historical Commission Case # HDP-2014-1083**

**Existing Residential Wood Frame Structure Evaluation:**

I visited the jobsite on October 15, 2015 at the request of Mr. Henry Juarez, Project Manager. After arriving at the site I reconnoitered the area of the single story structure, and here are my observations:

1. The single story wood frame structure was built circa 1925, and it has approximate footprint area of 800 square feet
2. All exterior walls are constructed of wooden gip-lap walls/siding and the structure was build decades ago
3. The residential structure is built on cedar post, wooden post, and Concrete Masonry Unit (CMU) block piers and it appears that the structural foundation needs to be leveled
4. The interior of the structure is built of typical light wood framing construction
5. The roof construction is made of typical composition asphalt shingles material and it is in need of repair or replacement
6. The plumbing in the crawl space of the pier and beam has a construction of cast-iron piping, galvanized steel, and modern PVC piping
7. The structure has a front covered porch on a slab-on-grade concrete foundation and supported by decorative wrought-iron columns
5. I did not evaluate other areas of the property or structure



Existing Residential Structural Framing Evaluation  
October 16, 2015  
Page 2 of 2

**Analysis of Front Wall Structure Relocation:**

In older wood framed construction, it was the practice to construct exterior load-bearing walls using horizontal gip-lap wooden members connected to wooden nominal 2" x 4" vertical studs, typically spaced at 48" on centers. Combined gip-lap member and liberally spaced wooden studs comprised the assembly that transmitted the dead and live loads from the roof truss assembly through the walls and onto the wooden pier and beam foundation below


Modern construction calls for wooden nominal 2 x 4 studs, spaced at no less than sixteen inches on center, to act as the transmitters of the dead and live loads from the roof onto the foundation below in a direct fashion, without the use of veneer (gip-lap) components on the transmittal of structural loads

By separating the front wall assembly from its supporting constituents during the relocation of this front exterior wall, the gip-lap-sparse wooden stud construction would be debilitated beyond its capacity to carry the proposed superimposed structural loads (per the International Residential Code-IRC 2012 Edition), and it would be acting only as a front façade veneer wall, rather than a structural wall. In addition, the attempt of relocating the entire structure within this site or elsewhere would be detrimental to the integrity of the dilapidated structure.

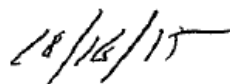
**Conclusion:**

1. Based on the existing construction condition of the front exterior wall of the existing residence and the proposed disassembling of this wall, be lifted up as one unit and then relocated to a location northward of its current location, I would not recommend the reutilization of this front portion of the structure to be the new front load-bearing wall for the proposed modern-construction residence.

This report was prepared by:

  
George A. Gonzalez Jr., PE  
Tx. Registration No. 78329  
Genesis 1 Engineering  
Austin, Texas



  
10/16/15