

## Rice, Andrew

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**From:** Sadowsky, Steve  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2017 11:45 AM  
**To:** Paula Marks; Rice, Andrew  
**Subject:** Re: Tobin House

Thank you. Andrew will add it to the file.

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**From:** Paula Marks [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2017 11:04:15 AM  
**To:** Sadowsky, Steve  
**Subject:** Tobin House

Mr. Sadowsky and Members of the Commission:

I am writing in support of the letter below from Dr. Gregg Cantrell. As he notes, the Tobin house has clear historical significance reflected in the rich historical scholarship of the past 40 years, and it has great potential as a public history gem for Austin and the state, whether as a mixed-use facility or simply as a worthy preservation project.

Sincerely,

Paula Marks, Ph.D.  
Professor Emerita, St. Edward's University  
President, Texas State Historical Association

Dear Mr. Sadowsky and Members of the Commission:

I am writing to strongly support the effort to have the Ida Marr Tobin house at 405 W. 14th designated as a historic landmark for zoning purposes, with the goal of preventing the demolition of the house. I base this support on my professional opinion as a historian and former president of the Texas State Historical Association.

The documentation which Cynthia O'Keefe has laid before the Commission does an admirable job of summarizing the historical importance of the house, and I see no need for me to repeat what has been said there. I would, however, like to add a few of my own observations:

There was a time when a house being "historically significant" meant that someone famous—usually some white male political or military figure or captain of industry—had lived there, or some conventionally noteworthy event involving such a person had transpired there. I'm sure that there are many people who still feel that way. That line of reasoning, though, is at least forty years out-of-date. Beginning in the 1970s, professional historians like myself began to realize that history is made by people other than the proverbial "great white men on horseback." The works that sprang from that realization became known as "social history," and it revolutionized the historical profession. A major part of this movement involved the rise of Women's History as an important field of inquiry, and this, I believe, is where the Tobin House really becomes significant. Ida Marr Tobin built this house in 1910 when she was a sixty-three-year-old widow, and she lived an active and fascinating life in it with her large family until her death in 1921. During those years the house became a center of Austin society, as the rich photographic and documentary evidence provided by Ms. O'Keefe amply demonstrates. Ida Tobin's years in the house offer an object-lesson in what a determined single woman could do, and they also open a window onto what life was like for people of her particular socioeconomic class a century ago. The story of the Tobin family and this house needs to be highlighted, not destroyed, so that passers-by on 14th Street in the future can see the house, learn its story, and feel a closer connection to the Austin that with each passing year fades a little more from view. One more

parking lot or office building or condo will simply be one more parking lot or office building or condo, and Austin will let just a little more of its historical heritage needlessly slip away.

As a political historian, I could also make a solid case for the House's historical significance based solely on the fact that it was Bob Bullock's campaign headquarters in his first race for lieutenant governor. But I would not make that case if I thought it would in any way detract from the argument I've made about concerning Ida Marr Tobin and the house's importance as a unique vehicle for conveying the social history of Austin in the 1910s. This alone is reason enough for its preservation.

Please let me know if I may be of any further assistance in helping the Commission reach its decision. I would be happy to come to Austin to testify, if necessary.

Sincerely,

Gregg Cantrell, PhD

Erma and Ralph Lowe Chair in History

Texas Christian University

Former President, Texas State Historical Association

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