

Dear HLC Members,

Below is one of the documents that my husband and I presented several members of the Swede Hill Neighborhood Association on our second meeting with them on April 4<sup>th</sup>. It addresses them but may give you some insight on our current situation. When we met, they offered us no research contrary to our own findings. They, in fact, appeared not to have done any research at all, since the postponement.

Today I assume they (SHNA) will present their vote against our request for relocation along with a request for “tools”, as in, policies that they can use to prevent relocation or demolition of homes that do not qualify as “Landmark” properties. I am empathetic for their cause and would like to propose action myself.

My suggested action is different than theirs however. I feel that just *proposing* vague policy for change takes away real tangible power to the people. There are simple steps we all can take towards preservation.

If you have a leaky roof or your home is in need of a repaint or your *neighbor* needs help, get your hands dirty and spend a weekend on a ladder. So many of the homes on Eastside are in decay as a result of deferred maintenance, which ultimately leads to a loss in utility and a premature end of life.

It feels great to go to bed tired knowing you’ve done something *today*, that is tangible, that affects lives and works towards the responsible stewardship of homes. I can get behind that and would offer my acquired home improvement skills to make that happen. That is something. It is common ground.

On another note, I apologize I became unraveled at the last HLC meeting. I keep rethinking how I could have handled that differently. I’m truly sorry that I projected at the Member Panel. It won’t happen again. I’m still growing.

Deb Roberts (owner of subject property at 1003 e 14<sup>th</sup>.)

**Dear SHNA,**

**Re: 1003 e14th 78702**

### **Timeline, Recap of Pertinent Events and Response:**

**March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017:** As a courtesy, we attended the Swede Hill Neighborhood Association’s (SHNA’s) regular monthly meeting to present our 10 page “Intent and Design” document which outlined our plans for a rebuild a new home on our property at 1003 e14th, 78702.

(We have since the March 20<sup>th</sup> meeting found a willing party to take the existing structure (FOR THIS WE ARE SO GRATEFUL) and have submitted a new application for the *relocation*, for which the SNHA is aware.)

### **Response of Members:**

**Paula Reckson:** No response to our presentation. Insinuated that language in easements cannot reasonably protect from liability.

**Tracy Witte:** No response to our presentation. Asked only if we were aware of the East Austin Survey prior to the purchase of our property.

**Steve Macon:** No response to our presentation. Cited his political and social leanings, suggested our property may have been built by the Blomquists of the landmarked home on 1000 e14th for their daughter and

discussed his convictions that any structure can be rebuilt. Further stated he rebuilt a house that had two feet of dirt on its floor (this house is not his residence.)

**Arthur Anton:** Said our presentation was the best has ever seen and that no neighbor, appealing to the SHNA, had, in his experience, ever gone to such length.

**During the week following the SHNA meeting and leading up to March 27<sup>th</sup> Historical Landmark Commission Meeting:**

**Email Correspondence:** Several emails exchanged between us and the SHNA . The SHNA had interest in setting up a meeting outside their official monthly meeting to discuss alternatives to removal or demolition of subject property.

We initially opened ourselves up to this, but reconsidered due to the following factors.

1. Our first meeting and proposal on March 20<sup>th</sup> was coldly received. The Member panel present did not appear to fair and balanced and representative of the Swede Hill neighborhood as a whole.
2. "Off the record" discussions outside the official monthly meeting may be unfairly represented in future SHNA minutes.
3. We were traveling and our schedules would not allow.
4. We provided further supporting justification for our plans including, cost (economic feasibility considerations,) present utility and encumbrances attached to subject property and block distinction in which the property is located. We also outlined compromises/concessions we had already made in appealing to their support.
5. Any engagement with SHNA is a courtesy, not an obligation.
6. We had already presented a lengthy, thoughtfully written "Intent & Design" document.

**March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017:** In response to an inquiry, Steve Sadowsky, Historic Preservation Officer, sent us an email informing us that we (1003 e14th) were on the Historic Landmark Commission's March 27<sup>th</sup> "consent agenda."

**March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017:** Historical Landmark Commission Meeting: When our property (D.4) came up and no HLC Members pull it for discussion, one or more SHNA Members, representing themselves as the "applicant/owner," requested postponement. This action lead to a series of events that moved us into hearing to discuss the merits of postponement.

**SHNA Members claimed they needed more time to:**

- a.) to again, meet with us, despite our intent to the contrary, which they were fully aware
- b.) to further research surveys
- c.) to further research the property's connection to the landmarked Blomquist Property
- d.) to research a connection to a "stone cutter in a marble yard"

**Concerning c.)** Through very diligent research, we were able to adequately prove there is no known connection between our Subject Property (1003 e14th) and the Blomquist Home (1000 e14th), see "Pearson/Blomquist Chart." This supplement has been available to view on the HLC site since March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

**Concerning d.)** The “stone cutter in a marble yard”, Andrew Collin, is father to a Harry Collin. Harry Collin was a renter at our subject property from 1953-1968 and whom grew up in a house across the way. Andrew Collin never lived at the subject residence. Our subject property, having been rented for a time to a man whose father had been “a stone cutter in a marble yard” is not provenance enough to reasonably meet the historical association standards necessary to landmark a property.

**Concerning b.)** The subject property is on several East Austin surveys. The most recent, updated and relevant Survey was completed 2016.

Chart as follows.

**Here is the breakdown of the 6,600 properties surveyed:**

CITY OF AUSTIN HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY – VOLUME I

Table I-1. Eligibility Counts. Number of resources per each eligibility recommendation category, according to City of Austin criteria versus National Register criteria.

Eligibility Recommendation	City of Austin	National Register
Individually eligible	99	136
Both individually eligible and contributing to an eligible historic district	199	201
Contributing to an eligible historic district	1,435	1,403
Non-contributing to an eligible historic district	977	977
Not eligible	3,864	3,863
Previous designation (no recommendation)	26	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,600</b>	<b>6,600</b>

*Note that a City of Austin recommendation and a National Register recommendation was assigned for each identified resource.*

Of the 6,600 properties surveyed, our Subject Property was *recommended* as one of **1,435** City of Austin and **1,403** National Register properties in East Austin that are “contributing to an eligible historic district.” The survey notes that the house is contributing to a National Register Historic District, but it is, in fact, outside the Swedish Hill National Register Historic District, as confirmed by Steve Sadowski and a representative for the NRHP.

Per the same survey, our subject property is **not recommend** “Eligible Local Landmarks or NRHP Landmark.” It does not meet the qualifying standards.

This is further supported Steve Sadowsky’s official findings that our subject property “**lacks requisite, architectural and historical significance to warrant designation as a historic landmark.**” See Mr. Sadowsky’s report, HDP-2017-0108/1003 E. 14<sup>th</sup> STREET

It simply doesn’t have the legs to get it there.

However, roughly 200 properties in East Austin *do*.

We quite purposefully, **did not buy any one of those properties.**

It should be known that our subject property was the house no one wanted. It’s the house of many problems. We, in buy it, inherited the problems. We had wished it a better end. But all the wishing in the world doesn’t change its present condition. Not every home can be reasonably preserved. We cannot see ourselves out of this other than to rebuild and repurpose the existing structure outside of city limits to where it can be:

- 1.) occupied without being in violation of the City of Austin’s many housing codes,

- 2.) where it can regain its utility and again house people (people who might not otherwise have the opportunity to enjoy homeownership, and likely the very people, that we collectively have pushed out.)

We have now fulfilled, by being here today your a.) reason for postponement, and in this report with its additional supplementary documents, nullified any concerning factors leading to further postponement by reason of b.), c.) and d.) above.

LASTLY, ON A PERSONAL NOTE:

We believe, due to some SHNA members' predispositions to our perceived "type," that our true nature has been misunderstood. We proudly defy stereotype.

We are not reckless people.

We have had a hand in the *preservation* of many homes over our lifetime. Our very first home, a "Main St." house, which we purchased at an age of 22 and 23 years, was a home, like the subject property, built in 1930. *It was different however, than the subject home*, in that it had been adequately cared for (mechanically anyway) over the years and had not, nor has it to this day, or likely for many years to come, ***outlived its utility.***

We learned through that experience and sweat equity that despite:

- Effort in restoration, i.e., care in heritage paint selections, retention of original characteristics, etc.,
- The fact that it was identified on MANY a survey,
- That it was built by Greeks in a predominately Greek district,
- And that it is closely neighbored the Nationally Historic Registered "Landlord Fowler Tavern" whose front door is on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and was the rumored destination of choice for George Washington in his many passing throughs,

***it too, not unlike Steve Sadowsky's findings on our current subject property "lacked the requisite, architectural and historical significance to warrant designation as a historic landmark."*** No golden seal would be issued based on our convictions or efforts alone, the bar, in fact, was quite high and rather exclusive. (We really could have used the tax credit to maintain that old home and the others we renovated.)

This experience, combined with our historical research on the subject property prior to its purchase, gave us reasonable confidence that if, after exploring all options, we could rebuild, should we decide to.

***We decided to.***

And here we are.

We hope, going forward, the referenced SHNA members would, in consideration of all things pertinent to our case, and the actions made by all, would no longer impede our ability forward with our plans and welcome us to the neighborhood.

Thank you,

The Roberts Family

"Do not judge others. Be your own judge and you will be truly happy. If you try to judge others, you are likely to burn your fingers." - Mahatma Gandhi