



**GreenEarth Engineering, Inc.**

Consulting Structural Engineers

2500 W. William Cannon Dr, Suite 201

Austin, TX 78745

Ph: 512.289.8086

Fax: 512.383.8339

www.ge-eng.com

*Let's leave for our children -  
An earth clean and green*

July 7, 2017

William Hodge  
Architect

Re: Structural Observation  
1401 East 3<sup>rd</sup> St  
Austin, Texas

Dear Mr. Hodge,

On July 7, 2017, I performed on-site structural observation of the above referenced property. The purpose of our observation was to assess the general condition of the structural system. The followings are our findings and recommendations:

1. The foundation is pier-beam system. The piers are on two different levels. The piers in the back portion of the building are sitting in a basement. Some piers are built of brick and unreinforced which doesn't meet today's code. Some piers are wood with tiny pads at bottom. The beams are very old, small and dangerously weak by first look.
2. There is a crack of about 1" at the back wall. This indicates severe foundation movement.

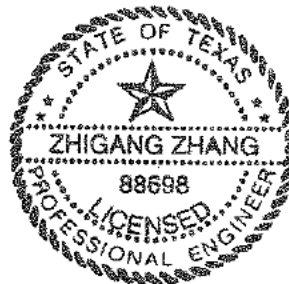
In my opinion, it's unreliable to attempt to salvage or strengthen the foundation. Replacing the piers and beams would require the temporary lifting of the entire structure and this would likely crack the exterior and interior finish material. More importantly, because the piers are on two different levels, there is risk of further foundation movement even if the entire foundation system is rebuilt. To prevent potential foundation movement, piers would have to be drilled deep into ground. However, with the floor and roof structure in place, it's not practical to drill piers.

Overall, this structure is in extremely poor condition. It's in danger of structural failure and it's NOT practical to try to keep this house or any portion of it.

Please feel free to call me at [REDACTED] should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Tim (Zhigang) Zhang, PE



Tim Zhang  
07/07/2017

# OCHONA

Development + Architecture

10 July 2017

RE: 1401 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Austin, Texas 78702

My name is William Hodge and I have been working with Jeff Blatt on designs and permits for a project at 1401 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. I am the applicant for the demolition-permit application currently under consideration by the City of Austin and I am the architect of the new project with which Mr. Blatt intends to replace the existing home on the property.

I have worked on over 300 residential projects in Austin since 2006. Of these projects, approximately one-third involved some level of renovation. Whenever a client approaches me about a property containing an existing structure – my ethical and professional duty as an architect is to evaluate the structure and advise the client as to its potential reuse. I have on several occasions "saved" houses from the wrecking ball by convincing my clients to retain them. Among these houses are 2504 Willow Street, 2006 Pennsylvania Avenue, 2920 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, 1409 Holly Street, and 2712 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street – all in the 78702 zip code.

But from the very first time I visited the property at 1401 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street – I knew that the house was in extremely sad shape. Due to foundation issues, the exterior doors barely locked. (And, just in the last six months, the foundation has moved such that the doors no longer even close.) Due to rot and mold, an intense and abominable odor permeated the house and still does. And the presence of a City-owned transmission line above the structure precluded and precludes any repairs of the roof or roof structure due to the risk of electrocution. Mr. Blatt has asked two structural engineers and at least two contractors to provide evaluations of the house and the feasibility of renovation and reuse. None have given an answer anywhere approaching an affirmative.

Furthermore, the house as it is currently situated violates three of the four City-mandated setbacks which affect this property.

The house is only 10' from the front property line – whereas 25' is required and the average of the setbacks of the four houses to the east is indeed 25'.

The house is only 3' from the street-side property line – and 15' is required. Street-side setbacks are intended to allow for safe sightlines for automobile and pedestrian traffic. It is my understanding that neighbors have asked for a four-way stop at Navasota and East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street due to sightline issues. This house, one block north, poses an even more immediate danger to cars and pedestrians.

And the house is a mere 2' from the interior-side property line – 5' is required. In my opinion, it is the house's position relative to its next-door neighbor which is the most alarming and dangerous. Interior-side setbacks are designed to protect properties from fire damage caused by adjacent properties. Time and experience have shown that 5' interior-side setbacks are a prudent means of fire prevention when houses are constructed of combustible materials such as wood studs and siding. In the case of 1401 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street – its eastern neighbor is less than 5' away and this is less than half the City's required 10' separation between neighboring houses. So the current house at 1401 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street is not only a danger to itself and its own occupants – it presents a risk to neighboring properties as well. Were it to catch on fire, it would likely damage the house less than five feet to its east. Were it to collapse due to structural failure, it could very well collapse in the direction of the house less than five feet to its east.

I appreciate that the house has stonework which is significant for its association with the house's first owner, a noted stonemason named Juan Castillo. Mr. Blatt and I agreed from the start that this stone should be reused to the maximum extent possible and we have proposed ways to do this. I also appreciate that the immediate vicinity was the historic home of a cluster of predominantly Hispanic/Mexican-American masons who contributed the fruits of their skills and handiwork to the architectural fabric of Austin. Mr. Blatt and I agree that proper commemoration through a plaque or monument is a dignified and effective way to educate future citizens about this rich history and we have proposed to do this. I furthermore appreciate that houses of this age are undergoing the demolition process at a rapid pace due to the market pressures bearing down upon East Austin. Mr. Blatt and I are currently working on two renovation+addition projects in the same area (1004 Spence Street, 2506 Canterbury Street) which will result in the survival of those existing houses for years to come.

**Ochona Development + Architecture LLC**  
1106 Clayton Lane #216E • Austin, Texas 78723 • [REDACTED]

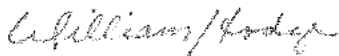
# OCHONA

Development + Architecture

Mr. Blatt and I, however, also agree that the house at 1401 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street is severely compromised and is unsafe for current habitation. Without the expense of an inordinately large sum of money and time – the house is unfit for future habitation as well. Mr. Blatt has solicited estimates for repair and renovation which start at almost \$300 per square foot. This is not economically feasible or practical.

Lastly, I appreciate that significant social and economic changes have been occurring in East Austin for several years and that they continue apace and that, in the eyes of long-time residents, the demolition of 1401 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street represents the loss of yet another thread in the fabric of old East Austin. However, I have seen that there is indeed a market for authentic vintage houses in East Austin. It is telling that 1401 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street sat on the market for almost a year with few if any takers – it is, I think, a testament to the unfortunate inability of this house to be saved at practically any price.

Sincerely,



William Hodge AIA  
Architect





Jeff Blatt &lt;[REDACTED]&gt;

**Budget bid for 1401 E. 3rd.**

6 messages

James Roppolo &lt;[REDACTED]&gt;

Mon, Jul 3, 2017 at 3:37 PM

To: Jeff Blatt &lt;[REDACTED]&gt;

I hope this will help.

Materials, labor, equipment, workman's comp., liability and auto insurance to restore the house at 1401 E. 3rd Street. We have no plans furnished us for review, and have not reviewed any design drawings by an Architect and or Engineer. This is totally based on our experience of 40 plus years in the restoration business. This bid is to restore and make structurally sound the existing floor plan, walls, roof, exterior stone veneer. The basement will remain the same, we did not include to make basement to City of Austin Code. Total Bid Amount: \$245,000.00

If stone veneer becomes compromised and will need to be dismantled and replaced matching the existing, the additional cost will be: \$45,000.00. We will photograph and document all stone walls prior to commencement.

Thanks,

James Roppolo, VP  
ATC Contractors Inc.  
PO Box 932  
Georgetown TX 78627

Jeff Blatt &lt;[REDACTED]&gt;

Mon, Jul 3, 2017 at 3:45 PM

To: Travis Bertram &lt;[REDACTED]&gt;

[Quoted text hidden]

Jeff Blatt &lt;[REDACTED]&gt;

Mon, Jul 3, 2017 at 3:54 PM

To: James Roppolo &lt;[REDACTED]&gt;

Cc: Justin Roppolo &lt;[REDACTED]&gt;

James

Thank you for this information. I am certain short of detailed plans this is probably the best you can do. As such if I understand what you are saying the wall if it had to come down and repointed would add another \$45,000 to the job and the basement would have to remain as this is more financially efficient than to fill the basement and redo the structure. Clearly I am going to have a structural engineer review what needs to be done if it can be practically done and see what he says about the existing condition etc.

You have gone way out of your way to help and I do appreciate that.

Truly,

Jeff Blatt

[Quoted text hidden]

Jeff Blatt &lt;[REDACTED]&gt;

Mon, Jul 3, 2017 at 4:13 PM

To: William Hodge [REDACTED], Travis Bertram [REDACTED]

I walked the property located at 1401 E 3rd St with Mr. Roppolo who indicated that it might be possible to keep wall in place while construction is commenced but that would be a structural engineer question. We did in fact find someone living in the place is that not wonderful..... He said all he could really do is a very rudimentary bid as there is so much more that goes into this than just picking a number. He really insisited that a structural engineer look at this and he did tell me that Oliver has a good reputation and he knows what he is doing. That said Amy Thompson is pushing him to say the house is in great shape and he told her he would be working with me as the homeowner.

Jeff

----- Forwarded message -----

From: James Roppolo [REDACTED]  
Date: Mon, Jul 3, 2017 at 3:37 PM  
Subject: Budget bid for 1401 E. 3rd.  
To: Jeff Blatt [REDACTED] Justin Roppolo [REDACTED]

[Quoted text hidden]

---

James Roppolo [REDACTED]

Mon, Jul 3, 2017 at 4:19 PM

To: Jeff Blatt [REDACTED]

No problem.  
Happy to help.  
Get me the structural engineers report, if you like, we can look at it again if you are interested.

JR

James Roppolo, VP  
ATC Contractors Inc.  
PO Box 932  
Georgetown, TX. 78627  
[REDACTED]

[Quoted text hidden]

---

Jeff Blatt [REDACTED]  
To: James Roppolo [REDACTED]

Mon, Jul 3, 2017 at 4:23 PM

Thanks again.

Jeff

[Quoted text hidden]