

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION**  
**SEPTEMBER 25, 2017**  
**DEMOLITION, RELOCATION, AND BUILDING PERMITS**  
**HDP-2017-0500 / NRD-2017-0067**  
**201 W. 7<sup>TH</sup> STREET AND 200 W. 6<sup>TH</sup> STREET**

## **PROPOSAL AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Demolish the ca. 1974 Ashbel Smith office building, relocate a public plaza, modifications to Claudia Taylor Johnson Hall, a historic-age building, and construct a new high-rise office building.

The applicant proposes the demolition of a ca. 1974 office building and parking garage.

The small plaza (“Regents’ Plaza”) at the northwest corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Streets is proposed for relocation to the southeast corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Lavaca Streets. Available research indicates that work on this plaza was part of a Bicentennial project in 1976. The plaza is paved with stone and brick, and contains a series of steps and terraces, with a circular basin, formed concrete walls and planters, and various plantings. New Great Streets benches are located on the east side of the plaza. The proposed new plaza will have both paved and grassy areas, trees, and a glass-block paving system in the walkways around the adjacent buildings.

The applicant proposes minor modifications to Claudia Taylor Johnson Hall of the University of Texas, formerly the main post office for Austin; it was constructed in 1912 and remains largely intact. The applicant proposes cleaning and repairing the stone exterior as required, restoration of the south and west elevations of the building to their original appearance, including the removal of non-original windows and doors on the west elevation. Steel windows on the north elevation will be removed and replaced with new steel doors and windows matching the historic window profile, and new steel tri-fold doors will be installed in the north elevation; new doors in existing openings will be installed to open onto the new plaza to the north. Infill masonry, windows, and doors on the east elevation will be removed; the east elevation will be restored, and exposed inside the adjacent two-story glass lobby of the proposed office tower. New windows will be installed along the second story of the east elevation; these windows will match the original windows for the building.

The new high-rise office building proposed for this site will have glazed aluminum curtain walls and glass spandrel panels in a contemporary design. It will be connected to Claudia Taylor Johnson Hall via a 2-story glass vestibule.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

The Ashbel Smith office building, proposed for demolition, is a nine-story, rectangular-plan, concrete office building with minimal Brutalist architectural design and polished stone veneer at the entry.

## **RESEARCH**

The ca. 1974 Ashbel Smith office building was constructed by the University of Texas as administrative offices at its facility downtown adjacent to Claudia Taylor Johnson Hall (the old Austin Post Office). The building has been consistently used by the University of Texas as administrative offices, including the Business Affairs office, the Controller’s Office, the Finance Office, the office of the General Counsel, the University Police offices, and the Board of Regents offices and meeting room. It was designed by Jessen Associates, a

prominent local architectural firm, which was known for its large commercial designs, including the Palmer Auditorium, Austin Central Public Library, the Texas Supreme Court Building, as well as St. Martin's Evangelical Lutheran and St. Ignatius Catholic churches.

#### **STAFF COMMENTS**

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The ca. 1974 Ashbel Smith building is not listed in any city survey. It is not yet 50 years old, so any nomination of the building as a historic landmark would have to reference National Register Bulletin 22 for determination of extraordinary significance for a building less than 50 years old.

The building does not meet the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code:

- a. **Architecture.** The building is a concrete mid-rise office building with minimal Brutalist details. The building does not appear to possess architectural distinction.
- b. **Historical association.** The building was constructed as an administrative office building by the University of Texas. There do not appear to be significant historical associations.
- c. **Archaeology.** The building was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
- d. **Community value.** The building does not possess a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, the neighborhood, or a particular demographic group.
- e. **Landscape feature.** The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

The applicant met with the Certificate of Appropriateness Review Committee, which recommended the project overall, and gave further recommendations that the columns on the new building should stand out more from the historic facades, and to use the glass block paving in the sidewalks so long as it does not give a false sense of history.




#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Release all the requested permits upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package for Claudia Taylor Johnson Hall, consisting of photographs of all elevations, a dimensioned sketch plan, and a narrative history, for archiving at the Austin History Center. The ca. 1974 Ashbel Smith building lacks the architectural and historical significance necessary for designation as a historic landmark.

LOCATION MAP



-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 195'

**NOTIFICATIONS**

CASE#: HDP-2017-0500  
LOCATION: 201 W 7th Street

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SEVENTH AERIAL VIEW



NORTH-EAST AERIAL VIEW

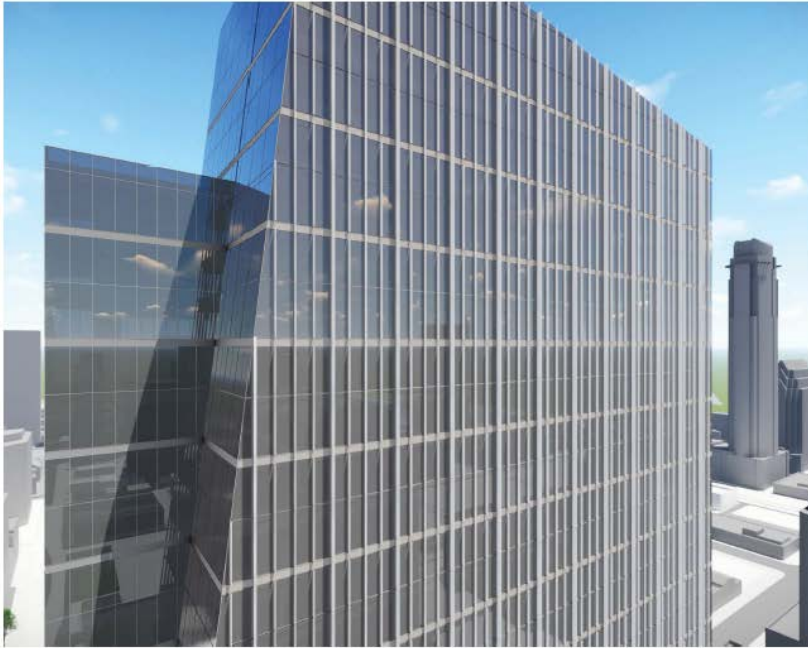




NORTHWEST AERIAL VIEW



SOUTHWEST VIEW AT COLORADO STREET



ENLARGED NORTHWEST VIEW



8TH STREET VIEW OF CL



8TH STREET VIEW



LOBBY INTERIOR VIEW