

Kim & Matt Schocket  
4201 Greystone Dr.  
Austin, TX 78731

Steve Sadowsky  
COA Historic Landmark Officer

Dear Steve,

I am writing in reference to the house we have purchased located at 4305 Farhills Drive, which will be coming before the council on February 26<sup>th</sup>. Before I discuss the house, I would like to tell you a little about our family and our history in the neighborhood.

Kim, my wife, is a native Texan and UT-Austin graduate. We met when I was a resident and she was a graduate student in Dallas at UT-Southwestern Medical School. After briefly leaving Texas for my fellowship, we moved to Austin in late 2006 and I started my medical practice in early 2007. Our first house was on Cat Mountain, a 3 bedroom, 2 bathroom house that had a wonderful view from the living room out over the hills. It was fairly small house, and with our 2 babies 17 months apart, the dining room was repurposed as their playroom. Truth be told, we couldn't really afford a dining room table back then anyway.

As our kids got a little older, we decided we needed more living space, and we moved to our current home on Greystone Drive, not very far from the Farhills house. We actually moved in the weekend of Emily's 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday. About a year and a half later, Jack started kindergarten at Doss followed the next year by Emily.

At the same time, my practice, Capitol Pain Institute, which at that time was located on Far West Blvd, less than a mile from Doss, was picking up. We were able to start sponsoring Doss at the highest levels, even winning the Partners-in-Education sponsor of the year on 2 separate occasions. CPI continues to annually support Doss as well as Anderson Football, the Anderson Trojan Belles, Trojan Pop Warner football, and Northwest Little League. I have also coached multiple teams in NWLL baseball, NASA soccer, and I9 flag football.

My wife works as a clinical psychologist and is a fixture as a volunteer in the local community and the school. She is the chairperson of the Austin Jewish Family Services cabinet, which offers services to our community, both Jewish and non-Jewish, including low-cost counseling and therapy, senior outreach, emergency assistance with basic needs, multiple support groups, and far too many other things to mention here. She is the lead Doss library volunteer this academic year, and in years past, she has chaired the fundraising for the Doss Spring Party (the biggest fundraiser of the year). On any given day, you can find my wife around Doss, helping out, making copies for teachers, and generally doing whatever is necessary to help out our school.

My kids, Jack and Emily, are currently in 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Doss. You can see them most mornings and afternoons riding their bikes to and from school. Jack is the one daydreaming, who occasionally runs into a trash can (yes, this has happened). They are active members of the community as well, having recently raised over \$2500 by themselves for the Rainbow Room as part of their outreach project for Generation Serve.

We have now lived in our current house for almost 8 years. We missed having a view like we did in our first house, so in the past couple of years, we started looking at houses that were in our neighborhood that had a view. Leaving our neighborhood, with all of our friends, is not something that we will consider, so it had been a “soft” look until the Farhills house came on the market.

The house had a lot of the things we were looking for: A great view, riding distance to Doss/Murchison, a nice size lot, and a fairly quiet street. As a bonus, it happens to be 3 doors down from our son Jack’s best friend Hayes. The house itself was far too small for our needs and there were a lot of other significant issues, but we decided that we could either remodel the house or completely rebuild it if necessary.

After purchasing the house, we began to meet with different architects to determine the best path to take moving forward. After determining our needs and wants for the new house, it quickly became apparent that remodeling the existing home would not be a realistic option.

First, we would like the entire house to be a single level and the existing structure of the house is a split level. We spend a lot of family time together and we believe that having everyone on the same level is conducive to fostering family time. In addition, we like very large, open spaces, which is almost impossible with a split-level floorplan. Furthermore, we have my parents and my wife’s parents who visit regularly and as they get older, stairs are more difficult to manage.

The current house is also built half on foundation and half on pier-and-beam, which are incongruous in developing a single, unified house, meaning that even with a remodel, we would almost certainly have to destroy one-half of the house. The roofline of the main portion of the house (which would be maintained) is a standard A-line roof, which would also have to be completely removed in order to accommodate any expansion. The wiring in that portion of the house is aluminum, so we would potentially have to tear out all of the walls to replace. Additionally, the current house does not have a garage. The current carport is too small to fit 2 modern cars and the angle of the driveway is such that it is not possible to actually pull 2 cars into it. Therefore, the carport and driveway also would need to be demolished and relocated in any remodel as well. By the time we did all that, we would essentially have destroyed all of the existing house to build a new house, but would be forced to live with 50 year old plumbing, HVAC, and electrical, which are neither cost efficient nor environmentally friendly solutions.

We are very sensitive to the look and feel of our neighborhood. I personally love older neighborhoods with their large trees and established feel. We are not looking to build a "McMansion," but we are looking to build a new house that we love on the property. We have worked closely with an architect to preserve the feel of the current house, including the central courtyard with the existing tree in the center and the front door set back along a similar walkway. Not a single existing tree will be moved or taken down with our plan, and we will remove a large amount of unnecessary asphalt to allow for additional natural cover at the front of the lot.

With regards to the architecture of the house, Northwest Hills is not a historic neighborhood, and it is our understanding that the official review did not indicate that the house has any architectural significance verses other houses built in the same time period. With regards to the original owner of the house, it is my understanding that his work was of importance to the University, and that work is commemorated by a wing named for him in one of the University buildings. His work, however, was not related to the house in any way, and therefore, should not preclude our project.

In summary, we respectfully request that you approve our permit for demolition of the house at 4305 Farhills Dr. We have given this project significant time, effort, and energy and have determined that this is the best course of action to build our dream house.

We look forward to seeing you at the next meeting on February 26<sup>th</sup>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to be "Matt Schocket", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Matt Schocket