



July 14, 2020

Ms. Emily Reed, Chair and Historic Landmark Commissioners
City of Austin Landmark Commission
Historic Preservation Office
Planning and Zoning Dept.
P.O. Box 1088, Austin, Texas 78767

Dear Ms. Reed and Commissioners,

Re: Rogers-Washington-Holy Cross District Preservation Application

Please accept this letter of support for the Roger-Washington-Holy Cross Neighborhood Association (RWHC) Historic District Designation Application. As you may know the Austin History Center, Austin Public Library has long been a supporter of preserving communities and history, particularly in the East Austin sector of the City of Austin.

The Rogers-Washington-Holy Cross neighborhood was identified in the East Austin Historic Resources Survey (2016) as a potential local historic district, eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The history of the neighborhood tells a rich story of the development of East Austin in the Post-War and early years of the civil rights movement. Initially developed for the African American community veterans returning from serving their country in World War II, the addition of land owned by local Black physician, Dr. M. J. Washington, created space for custom designed homes for luminary figures within the community. It became home to Huston-Tillotson President, John Q. Taylor King, Oscar L. Thompson, the first African American graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and HT professor, Austin Public Library branch namesake Willie Mae Kirk; Principal of Kealing Jr. High School and 75th President of the Colored Teachers State Association, T.C. Calhoun; businesswoman Della Phillips, and other noted professionals. The architecture of the homes speaks to the time period; houses vary in style from John Chase's two mid-century modern designs to handsome split-level and one-story ranch homes. Many of the current residents have lived in the neighborhood all their lives, bringing a pride of continuous ownership and history that is being lost in Austin.

Austin is quickly losing much of the fabric that encases the history of the city. East Austin has been especially hard hit, losing historically and culturally significant places. It is important to recognize and preserve spaces like the Rogers-Washington-Holy Cross neighborhood, in order to exhibit a physical manifestation of our full American history, not just read a plaque about it.

Again, I hope you will support the Rogers-Washington-Holy Cross neighborhood's request which clearly meets the designation criteria established by code. I agree that its history is worth saving, and I support their efforts.

Sincerely,

kYmberly Keeton

kYmberly Keeton, M.L.S., C.A. | Austin History Center, Austin Public Library