

Gaudette, Angela

From: Melanie Martinez [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 24, 2020 11:41 AM
To: PAZ Preservation
Subject: Item D.3 815 Rutherford Place and 1204 Alta Vista

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

Dear Commissioners,

I am a Travis Heights resident writing to oppose the demolitions of 815 Rutherford Place and 1204 Alta Vista Avenue, in my neighborhood and ask you to delay your decision tonight. I just learned about this fast demolition last night or I would have written sooner.

Some of you may know me from years ago when I first started working to achieve a historic district designation for Travis Heights and Fairview Park. We've certainly had our ups and downs with that process over the past 15 years (mostly downs). But the day has come and we are scheduled for our final approval hearing with the Texas Historical Commission as a National Register district next month. Fifteen years!

These two homes are contributing properties to our National Register district and even though they are modest and don't meet the high bar for landmark status, they do have community value! Besides being examples of the rapidly dwindling inventory of historic properties nation-wide and, particularly, in our neighborhood, they tell a story about our community and of the diversity in housing types and architectural styles that makes it so special. I know that landmark status is all you have to work with, but I still feel they deserve a conversation before allowing demolition.

There are many reasons to rehabilitate these properties rather than demolishing them. They are of a size that allows families to afford a home in our neighborhood. They can provide rental opportunities, as well. We pride ourselves in welcoming renters as much as cherishing old neighbors and welcoming new homeowners. I have worked with neighbors on several occasions to find compromises for a developer and they have found that the home they restored or remodeled sold much faster than the new spec home on a lot where they demolished a home. An example sits at the corner of Monroe and Newning. The house that was retained is one of the cutest in the neighborhood and much loved by its current owner.

If our district should be approved next month, the owner of these properties could benefit by making them rental properties and taking advantage of tax credits for rehabilitation. If the owner is set on building a new home, perhaps they could instead consider one of the available lots in the neighborhood where other demolitions occurred but homes were never built. Additionally, if considering embodied energy, a larger, newly built home will never be as green as two small homes that already exist, should they be thrown in the landfill.

Please give us a chance to speak with the property owner, to understand what they are planning, and allow us the opportunity to consider a compromise. I hope you will consider asking for a slight delay to get more information that might be valuable. Thank you for your time and volunteer efforts on the Commission.

Sincerely,
Melanie Martinez

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Gaudette, Angela

From: Angela Reed [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 24, 2020 9:53 AM
To: PAZ Preservation
Subject: Fwd: Item D.3 - 815 Rutherford Place and 1204 Alta Vista Avenue

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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Hello,

I am sending this to copy HPO staff - the email address listed on the notice. Please see below sent to HLC, Cara and Steve.

Thank you,
Angela Reed
512-653-6343

Begin forwarded message:

From: Angela Reed [REDACTED]
Date: August 23, 2020 at 22:31:41 CDT
To: bc-sarah.valenzuela@austintexas.gov, bc-Alexander.Papavasiliou@austintexas.gov, BC-Mathew.Jacob@austintexas.gov, bc-Terri.Myers@austintexas.gov, BC-Trey.McWhorter@austintexas.gov, bc-Emily.Reed@austintexas.gov, bc-kelly.little@austintexas.gov, bc-Blake.Tollett@austintexas.gov, BC-Ben.Heimsath@austintexas.gov, bc-kevin.koch@austintexas.gov, BC-Witt.Featherston@austintexas.gov
Cc: "Bertron, Cara" <Cara.Bertron@austintexas.gov>, "Sadowsky, Steve" <Steve.Sadowsky@austintexas.gov>
Subject: Item D.3 - 815 Rutherford Place and 1204 Alta Vista Avenue

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing in opposition to the demolitions of 815 Rutherford Place and 1204 Alta Vista Avenue in Travis Heights. My apologies for this late email as the Preservation Committee for SRCC was just informed of this demolition hearing today, on 8/23, the notice having apparently been printed as recently as 8/13. Please note that while I am a member of the SRCC's Preservation Committee and we do have an interest in these properties, I am writing this letter as a concerned citizen and neighbor, and not on behalf of the Preservation Committee or the SRCC, since we have not yet had an opportunity to discuss this case.

As many of you know, our neighborhood has worked long and hard to achieve a National Register Historic District so that we might raise the profile of our historic contributing structures, even as (and especially because) many of those structures are modest homes, which include Tudors and bungalows like these two houses. Of particular interest is the Tudor-style house at 815 Rutherford. It is a distinctive and somewhat unique style that creates visual interest to the streetscape and defines the Travis Heights neighborhood, as ours is a neighborhood dotted with Tudors in a similar style to this one. These small Tudor houses and bungalows make up the overall eclectic historic fabric of our neighborhood, and they are endangered. We desperately wish to keep those we have remaining. The **Travis Heights-Fairview Park National Register District** is soon to be designated, its final State Board of Review meeting scheduled in September (link to that

nomination can be found on the THC's website, here: <https://www.thc.texas.gov/sbrmeeting>, and a quick search on the nomination will show these two buildings as contributing).

On another note tangentially related to historic preservation, keeping these smaller modest homes in our neighborhood allows us to keep more modestly-priced homes in the neighborhood, which allows for a greater diversity of income levels. We are a neighborhood that enjoys a variety of residents whether families, couples or singles, and both renters and homeowners. This street, in particular, is a largely intact street where several 1930s/40s-era duplexes stand alongside smaller single-family homes. I do not know the intention of the owner to demolish the two houses, but I can only assume that he may wish to combine the lots and build a larger, much more expensive house, on this street, as is often the case. That would be a real loss and out of context for this street. It seems that if this owner wishes to build a new structure, there are other empty lots in the neighborhood that are available (two I know of are empty lots where neighbors also opposed those demolitions, and once the houses were demolished, the owners sold the lots and years later, still nothing has been built in their stead).

We hope that you will consider these factors - especially that of the historic district - in your determination and as you talk with the owner. We ask that you ensure that the properties are given their due scrutiny as contributing structures to a historic district and that we allow plenty of time for the owner to consider his options and, hopefully, reconsider.

Thank you,

Angela Reed
Travis Heights Resident

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