

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION  
OCTOBER 26, 2020  
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS  
GF-20-140200  
4509 BALCONES DRIVE**

## **PROPOSAL**

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Construct an addition to a ca. 1959 residence.

## **PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS**

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- 1) Partially demolish exterior at north side of house.
- 2) Construct a single-story addition. The proposed addition features a flat roof, stone veneer and horizontal wood siding, a flat roof with exposed rafter tails, fixed and casement windows, and sliding glass doors.
- 3) Add casement and fixed windows at the west and north elevations.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

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Split-level house with horizontal and vertical wood siding; fixed and sliding undivided full-height and ribbon windows; a cross-gabled roof with gable-end detailing, exposed rafter tails, deep eaves, and triangular brackets; and Japanese-inspired decorative wood details at railings, roofline, and fenestration. The site is terraced with masonry retaining walls that follow the contours of its topography, softening the transition between house and landscape.

## **RESEARCH**

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The building at 4509 Balcones Drive was constructed in 1959 by architect David C. Graeber as his personal dwelling. Graeber, who moved to Austin to attend the University of Texas School of Architecture after building homes with his father's lumber business in San Antonio, joined Kuhne, Brooks, and Barr in 1957. He became a firm partner in 1961. When the firm began consulting for the University of Texas in 1962, Graeber led the design teams for all new UT buildings for the next four years. He established Graeber, Simmons, and Cowan in 1978.

Notable projects throughout Graeber's career include the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, the All Faiths Chapel of the Austin State Supported Living Center, the Johnson Space Center in Houston, the U.S. Consulate in Mexico City, numerous high-tech firms in Austin, and pro-bono work at the Paramount Theater, the Long Center, and the Austin Convention Center.

Graeber also participated enthusiastically in the revitalization of Austin's downtown. Through a philosophy of "continuity, not conflict," (*Austin-American Statesman*, 1965) he championed urban living and moved his family to Sixth Street in 1967, restoring and landmarking a nineteenth-century stone building where he lived for the next forty years. Since then, his vision of a skyscraper-filled residential downtown has come to fruition. He served on the boards of the Texas Society of Architects, Old Pecan Street Association, and other civic-minded planning and architecture organizations. In 1969, he chaired the Governor's Conference on Urban Affairs, and later initiated Austin's street tree planting program along Congress Avenue.

## **STAFF COMMENTS**

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### *Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark*

- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.
- 2) The building retains high integrity. The rear deck and pool do not appear to be original but have not irreversibly altered the building's form.

- 3) Properties must meet two historic designation criteria for landmark designation (LDC §25-2-352). The property may demonstrate significance according to City Code:
- a) *Architecture*. The building is constructed in the Contemporary style (McAlester, 2017). Its use of natural materials, its low-slung form that blends into the hillside, its continuous expanses of glass, and its Japanese-inspired detailing—deep roof overhangs with exposed rafters, styled wood railings and gable ornamentation, “panelized” walls and windows, and the building’s overall orientation around a semi-interior courtyard—exemplify the style. This is a rare example of Graeber’s residential design; his well-known projects are primarily commercial, institutional, and civic buildings.
  - b) *Historical association*. The building is associated with Austin architect David C. Graeber. As the home he designed for himself during the era of his ascension in Texas architecture, 4509 Balcones Dr. appears to be the most closely associated residential property extant in Austin. (Graeber’s work on the commercial building at 410 E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street was limited to interior changes and restoration of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century exterior. Graeber chose to nominate the building for designation in 1974).
  - c) *Archaeology*. The house was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
  - d) *Community value*. The house 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 Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are used to evaluate alterations to historic properties. Applicable standards may include:

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided. A minimal amount of historic fabric at the north elevation, which includes a character-defining gable end, will be removed to accommodate the new addition.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment. The proposed addition’s flat roof, fenestration pattern, and stone veneer cladding differentiate it from the historic portion of the building. Its use of natural cladding, its overall fenestration patterns, and its single-story horizontal massing are compatible with the existing building. The addition’s position on the site may alter the building’s relationship to the landscape.

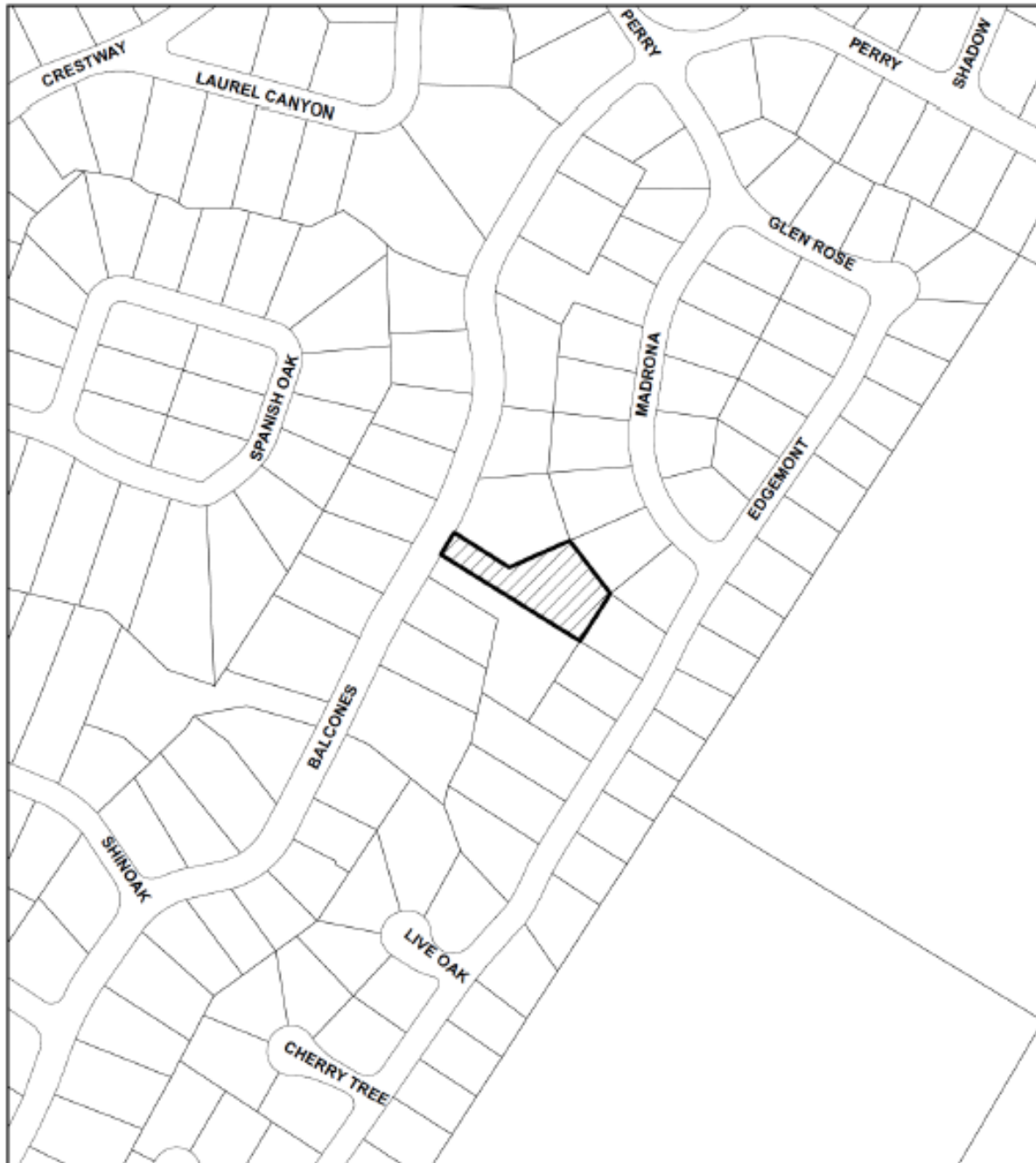
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired. If the proposed addition were removed in the future, some work would be required to restore the original form at the north elevation. The remainder of the building would be unimpaired.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Refer the applicant to the Architectural Review Committee, and consider initiation of historic zoning based on the house’s architecture and association with David C. Graeber. Should the Commission choose instead to release the permit, suggest that the addition be refined to reduce visibility, then require completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package.

## LOCATION MAP



1" = 250'



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

### NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: GF 20-140200

LOCATION: 4509 BALCONES DRIVE

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.





## PROPERTY INFORMATION

### *Photos*







*Source: Zillow.com, 2020*













*Source: Applicant, 2020*

### *Occupancy History*

*Note: post-1959 research unavailable due to facility closure*



### *Biographical Information*

**David Graeber.** David Graeber, architect, age 81, died peacefully at home on February 28, 2010. Survived by his wife of 39 years, Jean Graeber; two sons, Terry and Larry Graeber; daughter-in-law, Sharon Graeber; and granddaughter, Aiyin Graeber. David was born in Amarillo, Texas on September 14, 1928 the son of Hazel and Calvert Graeber. Preceded in death by his parents; sister, Charis McAllister; brothers, Keith McAllister and Peter Graeber; daughter, Jeeta Lynn Graeber; and stepdaughter, Kelly Donovan.

Raised in San Antonio, Texas where he attended Brackenridge High School, a member of the Boy Scouts, a flying enthusiast working at Stinson Field and hauling lumber for his dad's lumber business, Graeber Lumber. At the age of 19, partnered with his dad to form a home building business, building what they called Ranchita homes. Married Jeeta Friend in 1949. In 1950 David enrolled at the University of Texas at Austin, built houses during the summer to pay tuition, and graduated with honors receiving a bachelor's degree in architecture in 1955, having already passed the State Board of Architectural Examiners test in 1954.

Following school he joined the firm of Kuehne, Brooks and Barr, becoming a partner of the firm in 1961 when it was called Brooks, Barr, Graeber and White. Acknowledging numerous mentors who guided and influenced his participation in and leadership of many notable projects some of them being the University of Texas medical schools in Houston and San Antonio, research labs and dormitories for the University of Texas, the United States Embassy in Mexico City as architectural representative of the project, assistant to the project manager and director of architecture for the Johnson Spacecraft Center, Houston.

His firm became consulting architects for the University of Texas system in 1962 and he was responsible for leading teams for the design of buildings on all UT campuses for a four year period, and in the spring of 1979 and 1980 did adjunct teaching for the Center of Middle Eastern Studies at UT, an experience he enjoyed very much.

David also worked in association with other firms such as Skidmore, Owens and Merrill, building the LBJ Presidential Library and School of Public Affairs. Because of work done with Brown and Root on the Johnson Space Center he was often consulted for design solutions, one of which led to one of his favorite projects, crew quarters for British Petroleum at Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, referring to it as the most intriguing project of his career.

After much work in Saudi Arabia for 3-D International he formed the firm of Graeber, Simmons and Cowan in 1978 with one University of Texas job which evolved from a three-man firm into a 110 employee firm at his retirement. Graeber, Simmons and Cowan designed high-tech projects, helping to bring such companies as Sematech, Motorola, Advanced Micro Devices and Applied Materials to Austin.

Not neglecting pro bono work that included the Paramount Theater, The Long Center, master plans for the site selection of the Austin Convention Center, among others. Socially responsible, David served on boards from the Texas Society of Architects, Children's Museum, the Real Estate Commission, The Old Pecan St. Association and acted as Chair of the Governor's Conference on Urban Affairs, 1969. In 1967, elevating his commitment to the city of Austin and the renewal of the inner-city, he bought an old building on run down east 6th Street, refurbishing it into a town home where he and his wife Jean lived until his death. This instigated the revitalization of 6th Street making it an integral part of downtown Austin where David planted the first tree on its sidewalk and initiated a program called, Street Trees for Austin which resulted in the planting of trees on major streets including Congress Avenue.



*In 1970 he married Jean Donovan and together they involved themselves in community service. David played hard. As a young man he belonged to a mountaineering club making many climbs. Later his interests evolved into racing automobiles and then sailing, crossing the Gulf of Mexico on two occasions and often sailed in the Caribbean, finally barging the canals of France. In retirement he found time for his love of books, spending months in England and hours in the Bodleian Library of Oxford reading and theorizing on pyramid construction and resource management, a time he referred to as 'total freedom'. When traveling became difficult he and Jean bought a condominium in San Antonio to be closer to their granddaughter and family, spending weeks and months at a time there.*

*In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the maintenance fund of The Chapel, designed by David Graeber, on the campus of the Austin State Supported Living Center, which when erected in 1961 was referred to as The Chapel for the Children, now The Chapel for the State Supported Living Center. . .*

*The Austin American-Statesman, 2010:*

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/statesman/obituary.aspx?n=david-graeber&pid=140282941>

## **Graeber, who led Johnson Space Center architects, dies at 81**

 [mysanantonio.com/news/local\\_news/article/Graeber-who-led-Johnson-Space-Center-architects-789487.php](https://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local_news/article/Graeber-who-led-Johnson-Space-Center-architects-789487.php)

March 5, 2010

Famed Austin architect David Graeber, who grew up in San Antonio, built homes on the South and West sides to put himself through college and went on to supervise the team that created the Johnson Space Center in Houston among other landmark projects, has died.

Graeber, 81, who climbed mountains, raced cars, sailed extensively and was courted by intelligentsia, was under hospice care in his San Antonio home when he died Sunday.

He left his personal mark on the 19th-century building on Sixth Street in Austin that he refurbished in the 1960s. It was his home for more than 40 years and was credited with jumpstarting downtown revitalization.

Graeber worked on a number of notable projects, including the U.S. Consulate in Mexico, the University of Texas Health Science Centers in San Antonio and Houston and several projects for 3-D International in Saudi Arabia, including helping design the city of Buraydah there, his wife, Jean Graeber, said.

One of his favorite projects was the crew quarters for British Petroleum at Prudhoe Bay, Alaska.

Graeber also was involved in the design of the LBJ Presidential Library and the LBJ School of Public Affairs as well as the UT master plan.

"He had a lot of interests, life in particular," son Larry Graeber said. "Life was a mystery to him, and he was interested in how people lived it and how we try to coexist."

The San Antonio artist and sculptor described his father as "a searcher."

"Books were his passion," his wife added. "Our house was lined with books he read and reread. He called books his friends."



David Graeber: He started out designing homes on the South and West sides.



After retirement, the Graebers spent three to four months a year at the University of Oxford in England, where Graeber read in its Bodleian Library.

"He read about everything," Jean Graeber said, "everything you can possibly think of."

The more than 3,500 books in his collection will be donated to UT.

He was born in Amarillo, but his parents, Hazel and Calvert Graeber, moved to San Antonio when he was a few years old. Graeber attended Brackenridge High School.

Calvert Graeber, initially in the trucking business, arrived in the Alamo City and bought a piece of land at 705 Nogalitos. He also bought a load of lumber, and Hazel Graeber began selling it. That was how Graeber Lumber began.

Their son, a Boy Scout and flying enthusiast who worked at Stinson Field, hauled lumber.

When Graeber was at UT, he spent summers designing and overseeing the construction of small homes on the South and West sides of San Antonio.

"You can see some off South Military," his son said. The sale of Ranchita Homes paid for college.

Graeber graduated from UT with honors with a degree in architecture in 1955. He already had passed the State Board of Architectural Examiners test.

"He was an idealist yet a contrarian, a characteristic he got from his mother," who was also an avid reader, his son said. "On the other hand, he was a pragmatist, which he got from his dad."

Graeber "could imagine ideas and accomplish them," he added.

"He was the most exciting man I have ever known," Jean Graeber said. "The last year of our marriage — they were all excellent ones — we truly, truly had an overwhelming love for each other. If only half of the people in the world had half of what David and I had, they would be fortunate."

*San Antonio Express-News, 2010: [https://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local\\_news/article/Graeber-who-led-Johnson-Space-Center-architects-789487.php](https://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local_news/article/Graeber-who-led-Johnson-Space-Center-architects-789487.php)*



## Longtime architect left his mark on downtown Austin

By Christina Rosales

Posted Sep 1, 2012 at 12:01 AM

Updated Sep 26, 2018 at 7:48 PM

In 1967, Austin architect David Graeber purchased property at 410 E. Sixth St. He refurbished it, turning the old, yellow-brick house into a metropolitan residence. Other downtown property owners soon took his lead, and thus began the urbanization of downtown Austin.

"There are all kinds of people in the world, and most people don't leave any footprints at all," Graeber told downtownaustintv.org in 2009. "Well, there's a little one of my footprints there. Fortunately, it'll be there a very long time."

Graeber, whose architectural projects include NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston and the U.S. Consulate in Mexico, died Sunday in his Sixth Street home. He was 81.

Graeber was born in Amarillo and graduated from Brackenridge High School in San Antonio. At 19, he joined his father, Calvert Graeber, in forming a homebuilding business. David Graeber built houses in the summer to pay his way through the University of Texas School of Architecture. He graduated in 1955 .

The young architect joined Kuehne, Brooks and Barr, becoming a partner in 1961. With his partners' mentoring, Graeber led the projects for UT medical schools in Houston and San Antonio and other buildings.

"He will be remembered as a designer, but also for his leadership," said Tom Cornelius , president of Graeber, Simmons & Cowan, the firm Graeber founded in 1978 . "David was very gifted in leadership. He could, from his architectural pulpit, command an audience and lead a project."

The company he founded evolved from a three-man firm into a 110-employee firm by the time he retired in 1995. Graeber, Simmons & Cowan designed high-tech projects, including ones for Sematech, Motorola, Advanced Micro Devices and Applied Materials.

His design contributions also include work on the Paramount Theatre, the Long Center for the Performing Arts, and master plans for the site selection of the Austin Convention Center.



Graeber's work also extended to Saudi Arabia, where he worked for 3D International with Houston architect Kirby Keahey.

"It was an adventure," Keahey said. "He painted this great picture of it when he asked me to go with him. Storytelling was one of David's great skills. He was able to draw people out."

Looking at the Austin skyline, it might be hard to believe that a few decades ago, the city was just a town, but Graeber's vision influenced dozens of local architects, said Dick Clark of Dick Clark Architecture.

"People like David have made this a young, thriving city," Clark said. "Bigger and higher is better. I'm an urban architect, and I want to see Austin grow and get better, and I think David was looking for the same thing."

Graeber is survived by his wife of 39 years, Jean Graeber; two sons, Terry and Larry Graeber; daughter-in-law Sharon Graeber; and granddaughter Aiyyin Graeber.

*Austin American-Statesman*, 2012: <https://www.statesman.com/article/20120901/news/309012375>

## Architect Firm Adds Associates

Kuehne, Brooks and Barr, Austin architects Saturday announced that David C. Graeber and Hugo F. Kuehne Jr. have been made associate members of the firm. Other associates are J. Roy White and Allwyn G. Gannaway.

Graeber has been with Kuehne, Brooks and Barr since his graduation from the University of Texas School of Architecture, in 1955. While attending the University he was elected to membership in Tau Sigma Delta and Sphinx; both honorary scholastic fraternities, and was president of his graduating class. Graeber received experience in construction in San Antonio where he was a building contractor for two years before attending the University. He was awarded architectural registration in 1954.

Graeber is married to Jetta Friend of San Antonio. They have three children, Larry, Jeeta Lynn, and Terry, and reside at 1305 Norwood Road.

Kuehne attended Austin Public Schools before attending the University of Texas where he received his degree in architecture in 1952. While at the University he was a member of Sphinx honorary architectural fraternity and Sigma Chi fraternity. Since that time he has been employed by Kuehne, Brooks and Barr and received his architectural registration in 1955.

Kuehne served in the Navy from 1942 to 1946. As quartermaster aboard infantry landing ships he participated in three landings on the Philippine Islands and later served in Okinawa, China, Korea and other Pacific areas.

In addition to his architectural work, Kuehne is a director of the American Empire Life Insurance Company, president of Austin Alumnae Association of Sigma Chi Fraternity, and member of Junior Chamber of Commerce, Capital Camera Club, Austin Ski Club, Lake Austin Yacht Club and Commodore Deck Club.

Kuehne, Brooks and Barr, Architectural Firm has designed many buildings in Austin including the new Steck printing plant, Kinsolving Dormitory which will house 776 girls at the University and construction of which is nearing completion, the recently completed Mutual Savings Bank and office building, American National Bank, Austin National Drive-In Bank, First Federal Savings Building, Commodore Perry Hotel, Perry-Brooks Building, International Life Insurance Company Building, Jefferson Chemical Laboratories, Texas Department of Public Safety building.

Kuehne, Brooks and Barr is one of a group of architects designing the new US embassy building for Mexico City to be the second largest US embassy building in the world. Principals in the firm are H. F. Kuehne, R. Max Brooks and Howard R. Barr.

*The Austin American*: Nov 10, 1957

## Mrs. Graeber Party Hostess

Mrs. David C. Graeber, hostess at a Christmas program and party for the Zion's Daughters of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, presented a program on "Christmas Throughout the World."

Mrs. Estella Burch gave a reading describing Christmas celebra-

tions in branches of the church around the world.

The devotional was directed by Mrs. Jack O. Waddell.

The Thursday night party was held in the Graeber home at 4509 Balcones Drives.

*The Austin Statesman: Dec 8, 1961*

## Austin City P-TA Council At Installation Luncheon

Mrs. David C. Graeber was installed as president of the Austin City Council of P-TA at a Villa Capri luncheon ceremony conducted May 2 by Mrs. Hugh Morrison, district vice president of the Texas Congress of Parents and Teachers.

Other new officers are Mrs. Woodrow W. Patterson, vice president; Mrs. B. H. Amstead, recording secretary; Mrs. Roger Rich, corresponding secretary; Mrs. Frederick Hunter, treasurer; Mrs. W. G. Menefee, parliamentarian; and B. W. McCarty, historian.

Special guests were Council scholarship winners, LeAnne Davis of Travis High School; Sally Metcalf of McCallum; Myra Osborn, Stephen F. Austin; and Preston James of Johnston. Others were Mrs. Allen S. Martin of San Antonio, Mrs. Graeber's mother; Dr. and Mrs. Irby B. Carruth, Ernest W. Cabe Jr., members of the School Board, secretaries from the Austin Public School Administration Building, and new presidents of local P-TA units.

Mrs. Graeber will attend the National Congress of Parents and Teachers Convention in Portland, Ore., May 20-23. Other delegates from Austin will be Mrs. Angus McDonald, state publications chairman; Thomas J. Prather, state office director; and Mrs. V. C. Jung, editor of the "Texas Parent-Teacher."

Mrs. S. A. Huber, year book; and C. L. Newell, telephone.

*The Austin Statesman: May 9, 1962*



# Architect Firm Tells Partners



DAVID C. GRAEBER



J. ROY WHITE

David C. Graeber and J. Roy White have been named partners in the Austin architectural firm of Brooks and Barr, R. Max Brooks and Howard R. Barr announced Saturday.

The firm name has also been changed to Brooks, Barr, Graeber and White, architects.

A veteran of 34 years in the architectural profession, White has been associated with the firm since 1943. A graduate of The University of Texas School of Architecture, he designed many of the fine residences of Austin before turning his emphasis to school and campus buildings. Presently, White is project architect for the Huston-Tillotson expansion program which includes the men's and women's dormitories now under construction. White has designed many of Austin's schools including Lamar Junior High, Lanier Junior-Senior High, Anderson High and Oak Springs Elementary. He is past president of the Austin Chapter, American Institute of Architects, a member of the Texas Society of Architects, a past director of the Austin Kiwanis Club, a member of the Texas Fine Arts Association, the Austin Heritage Society and the Austin Country Club. White is an active member of St. David's Episcopal Church and represents his firm in planning the additions and restorations to the church building soon to be constructed.

Graeber is a 1955 graduate of the University of Texas School of Architecture where he was elected to Tau Sigma Delta, national honorary architectural society. He has been with the firm since graduation and has played a major role in the design of Austin's new Federal Building and Post Office, the new US Embassy Office Building in Mexico City, the forthcoming University of Texas Northeast quadrant expansion of engineering, biological sciences and physical sciences, a major expansion program at the medical branch of The University of Texas at Galveston and the South Texas Medical School in San Antonio. Graeber served as design coordinator when the firm was selected as one of the architects on the new Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston. He is secretary of the Austin Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, a member of the Texas society of Architects, and a member of the Explorers Club of Mexico.

Allwyn G. Gannaway, who also played an important part in the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston, and who has been involved in many well-known Austin projects, has been advanced to senior associateship in the firm. Gannaway is a member of the American Institute of Architects and the Construction Specifications Institute. Also advanced to associate membership in the firm are Frank R. Hutchison and Bill H. Paschall.

*The Austin American: Jan 31, 1965*

# Austin: City on the High Rise

By CHRIS WHITCRAFT  
Staff Writer

The University of Texas is a major driving force toward tremendous architectural changes in Austin's future, says architect David C. Graeber.

Growth, he predicts, will come in high rise buildings.

Graeber, 26, is a partner in the major architectural firm of Brooks, Barr, Graeber & White.

The architectural revolution of the 1930s, which eradicated the static, dusty, formal rules, left in full flower the freedom to create new beauty, uses, ideas, techniques and research, Graeber said.

He cites the proposed 1½-million-square-foot new science building to go on the main UT campus. It is equal to almost 35 acres in square footage, but will rise 14 stories. It will not be as tall as the Tower, which in effect has set a limitation on how highrise on the campus can be.

The first 300,000 square feet have been authorized but are still in the planning stage. Trustees are expected to approve final design in September. It will take a year from then to complete detailed working drawings of this first phase. Construction could begin in the fall of 1966.

Graeber said the whole new science complex is a major change in the direction of high rise construction in Austin.

"Austin is changing into a city," he says. "High rise construction is symptomatic of change and growth, literally forcing the city toward the sky. Any attempt to legislate high rise construction out will be an attempt to legislate Austin into a backwash."

Graeber, who came to Austin fresh from building laboratories for unknown uses at NASA in Houston, says he finds working on 35 University of Texas projects, large and small, as the firm is doing, is just as challenging. He also appears to relish his close link with academic stimulation.

The \$14 million dormitories project will have another tremendous impact, he says. This will be on the academic concept of classes and seminars held within the dormitory buildings.

"This will not change the mainstream of university thought," he says, "but it will divert it to some degree into new channels."



UT AREA MAY GO SKYWARD



Graeber talked of the new \$4 million biological pure research building at the groundbreaking stage.

"This investment was entirely based on the prominence of one scientist in his field, Dr. Wilson S. Stone," he said. Stone is professor of zoology, system adviser for graduate and research programs, office of the Chancellor, and director, Genetics Foundation.

Graeber said Dr. Harlan J. Smith, professor of astronomy and director, research in astronomy, has at present space that is "no bigger than a nickel" in the physics lab. He will have 30,000 square feet when the 300,000-square-foot physics-astronomy-mathematics science building is finished.

At one time, consideration was given to reclaiming the leased Brackenridge city golf course area and using it as the site for needed future science and other research buildings, Graeber said. But this was abandoned when it was weighed against the loss to students if research was split away from the campus.

"There was no other way to do it but build on the main campus," said Graeber. "That meant we had to go up."

An exception is Dr. W. Frank Blair's natural zoological development laboratory where a \$250,000 building will be surrounded on an 80-acre tract with fish ponds, and areas of natural habitat for frogs, rusty lizards, and other objects of scientific interest. Field genetics will be part of the experiments. This would be impossible on the campus, Graeber said. So this natural lab will go on Univer-

sity land on the north shore of Town Lake in that part of the Brackenridge tract. It will be enclosed with a fence.

"I don't think anything will go up on the golf course site for quite some time," Graeber said.

He said final working drawings are nearing completion on the new San Antonio Medical School for the University. It is one of the first to be built from scratch since the end of World War II. The state put up \$6 million, or half the estimated cost. The US put up \$4 million, and things look good for the rest.

"A large number of people have been involved in this for years," Graeber said. "The fact is almost there is unbelievable. An architect can get egotistical and claim credit when it's not especially true. But it is true the architects are catalysts who bring something together. It's like the \$7½ million Federal and Post Office buildings we did with Page-Southerland & Page in Austin. We had to put together as precisely as in a Saturn rocket just as many

detailed pieces from across the nation that reflect the fantastic changes in technique."

New techniques include sophisticated control of indoor climate within huge sealed structures where windows are for seeing out, not opening; electric power with extraordinary heat output requirements; better insulation; escalators; more fool-proof materials; the ultimate in structural design to reduce the former heavy construction for a much larger safety factor; longer structural spans; gigantic advances in pre-stressing and pre-casting. Many new structural techniques were used in the Federal Building.

"Today things are being built on a more human scale than a few years back," Graeber says. "The University spent \$7 million expanding the Galveston Medical Branch to provide elbow room. We are real proud of our solutions of problems there. Services are out of the way, yielding to a pedestrian mail, for instance. Academic character is given top priority."

Graeber feels an analogy between the traditional beaux-arts-in-flower present main campus buildings with red brick and red tile roofs and the new science complex to come, and the relationship of architects and the University as academe.

Graeber, who got his bachelor of architecture from the University of Texas in 1955, says there must be communication with the faculty at the early stages of planning to help meet their immediate and 50-years-from-now needs, and there must be a tie to tradition so that architectural changes reflect continuity, not conflict.

"A building is dead without people in it," Graeber says. "The greatest sculpture is nothing unless it is useful. Buildings of the future must provide usable space for academic freedom. We wouldn't be able to meet new needs without the freedom won in the 1930s. But architects can not stand alone in their freedom. It carries with it a fantastic responsibility."

*The Austin Statesman: Jul 10, 1965*

## On Old Pecan Street: The Urban Pioneer

After 6 p.m. on a given workday, shoot a cannon eastward down Austin's Old Pecan (Sixth) Street, from where it intersects with Congress Avenue near the heart of downtown, and you will hit somebody. No sidewalks are rolled up on Sixth Street at the workday's end. "Underdeveloped" in the last 10 years or so into one of the most (some say *the* most) diverse and colorful urban strips in the state, Sixth Street exhibits a texture and vitality that won't quit. Pool halls, cheap bars, expensive bars, fine restaurants, bistros, stage theaters, peep shows, drug stores—all blend in raucous harmony in service to a tri-ethnic patronage. Austin writer Joe Nick Patoski calls it, "in marked contrast to shopping centers and bank plazas, places for people." Distracted over plans to tear down "Catman" Palton's Sixth Street shoe-shine parlor to make way for a parking garage, noted Philadelphia architect and urban planner Edmund Bacon, in town for the "Austin Upturn" Symposium last May, emphasized Sixth Street's importance as being critical to Austin's downtown vi-

### Trailblazing

Most of the credit for Sixth Street's rebirth—after a slow decline as Austin's 19th Century "Main Street"—goes to Austin architect and planner David Graeber, who bought an old (circa 1882) warehouse/saloon in the 400 block of Sixth Street in 1967 and turned it into a townhouse. He was the first "urban pioneer" to blaze a new trail down Sixth Street, at a time when it was still very much in decline—little more than condemned buildings, flop houses and cheap bars. And many thought he was crazy, even indigenous Sixth Street residents.

"I was out front working on the facade one day," Graeber says, "and a guy walking by on the sidewalk stopped and said, 'Man, if I had that kind of money I sure wouldn't live here.' I think I was considered a bit eccentric. It's so ingrained in American society—even in the lower income groups—to move out of this kind of place when you've got the chance. But moving back has been probably one of the most important things I've ever done in my life."

*Graeber and Sixth Street townhouse.*



It was indeed a far cry from Northwest Hills, where Graeber and his wife had lived previously in the traditional suburban norm. But Graeber was convinced that he could live as comfortably and more conveniently on Sixth Street than he could in the suburbs. He had done some traveling, he says, and was aware of how people lived in Mexico City, Paris and London, "where it doesn't matter if there's a bar next door or who walks up and down the street."

It wasn't the easiest move to finance, however. Mortgage bankers thought he was crazy, too. He says the only reason he was able to get a mortgage on the townhouse was because of friends in banking circles who admired his gumption, if not his taste in neighborhoods. But the more Graeber cleaned and scraped the facade of his old saloon (condemned by the city in 1956) the more people realized that there were some fine old buildings beneath the grime, peeling plaster and paint and postwar commercial-schlock facades. And once he settled in, the idea of Sixth Street's being a high crime area largely proved to be a myth. "People saw that those old buildings could be fixed up and reused, so they started coming in with their own ideas—and they saw that no one was getting stabbed or killed or robbed in the process. They also found that perhaps there was more freedom down on Sixth Street than anywhere else."

To maintain that sense of freedom, Graeber says, newcomers came to the area with the unspoken intention to complement rather than supplant what was

already there. In the beginning, however, there was a good deal of pressure from the city to do otherwise. As resident architect and planner, Graeber was encouraged to "do a plan" for Sixth Street. And at that time, he says, "everybody's idea of a plan was to clean up all the facades, clear out the 'undesirable element,' plant saplings along the sidewalk, put up nice Helvetica signage and bring in the 'good people'—turn Sixth Street into a Disneyland."

Nothing could have been further from Graeber's mind, although he admits that he wasn't sure exactly how he envisioned Sixth Street's development in the long run. Partly because he was lazy, he says, partly because he was wrapped up in his own career, and partly because he's a "live-and-let-live person," Graeber discouraged such attempts to define and segregate what is "undesirable" and what is "good." His idea, if there was one, was to sit back and watch Sixth Street spark and pop, like a seaport or border town, places he thinks are inherently more exciting than most "inland" cities. "Just because a guy's different," Graeber says, "doesn't mean he's dangerous. And it makes for variety. That's what Sixth Street has now. It just kind of grew up in its own way."

### Adaptive Reuse

Graeber's idea of adaptive reuse of his Sixth Street brothel-turned-townhouse is in keeping with his general aversion to "Disneyland reconstruction." First of all, the structure wasn't a house to begin with, he points out, so that precluded interior "restoration." Besides, he says, "I believe in adaptive reuse, and modern lifestyles require different types of living space than they did 100 years ago." So he completely revamped the interior, creating what he calls an "avant-garde contemporary space," with a skylighted central living area two stories high and an angled stairway leading to bedrooms on an original second floor, which was retained on each side of the living room. The interior gives little hint of its former function. "It's nothing in London to go into a house that is 300 or 400 years old with an interior that is as modern as tomorrow," Graeber says. "They recognize it over there—the fact that people just can't live in museums."

Others have followed Graeber's trail. Three years after he bought and rehabilitated his old saloon, former Austin city council member Dr. Emma Lou Linn bought the old St. Charles Hotel on Sixth



Street and converted it into three levels of apartments, one in which to live. There are apartments on both sides of Graeber's townhouse now, more up the street and, just west of downtown, construction is now underway on a 22-unit townhouse complex called "Encinal" (Spanish for live-oak grove). Developer David Barnstone, president of Mid-Town Development Corporation, says that 18 of the 22 units, designed by his brother, Houston architect Howard Barnstone, FAIA, and ranging in price from \$35,000 to \$87,000, have already been sold, and he hasn't spent a dollar on advertising.

#### A Drop in the Bucket

There is a nascent market in Austin for in-town living, and city planners agree that attracting people back into the downtown area to live is a major strategy for central city revitalization. But it will be a long while before the tables turn. City studies show that from 1970 to 1976 there was a 28.5 percent decline in the number of residents in central Austin (roughly an area bounded on the north by Martin Luther King Blvd., the east by I-35, the south by Town Lake and to the west by Lamar). There was a 42 percent decrease in the number of families and a 20 percent decline in the number of housing units. Central city property values jumped 105 percent in the same period, but that was due largely to new construction—office towers, drive-in banks, libraries—which replaced the "housing units" and city schools that had accommodated downtown Austin dwellers for generations.

And as encouraging as the revival of Sixth Street is, most everyone agrees that it is still primarily an entertainment strip, or a neighborhood for the adventurous and childless. Building stock is sturdy and plentiful in the downtown area—two- and three-story historic structures with income-producing retail on the sidewalk level and second and third floors that have been vacant for years. And so are incentives to put them to use. (The Tax Reform Act of 1976, for one, which provides for a five-year accelerated depreciation on costs of rehabilitating and converting historic structures into income-producing properties.) But few incentives are presently provided by the city. Mixed-use zoning and the formation of a joint public-private central city economic development corporation are part of city plans, but retail and residential redevelopment downtown still is primarily

*Encinal townhouse project underway on West Sixth in Austin.*



a private effort, and often a complicated gamble.

Nevertheless, the ice has been broken—thanks to Graeber, many say—and the trend toward in-town living in Austin is developing, albeit feebly. Although at this point it is still primarily for people who can afford it, Graeber is convinced that once settled in, the downtown dweller has a better deal economically than would be feasible now in the suburbs. Graeber uses about \$2 of gas a week, he says, commuting to his office four blocks away. Fire insurance is less because of the close proximity of the firehouse. And his old saloon, with thick limestone walls, buildings on both sides and few windows, is well insulated from summer sun and winter cold, cutting down on utility costs.

Aside from practical economic concerns, however, Graeber believes there is a deeper social consideration at work here that cannot be denied.

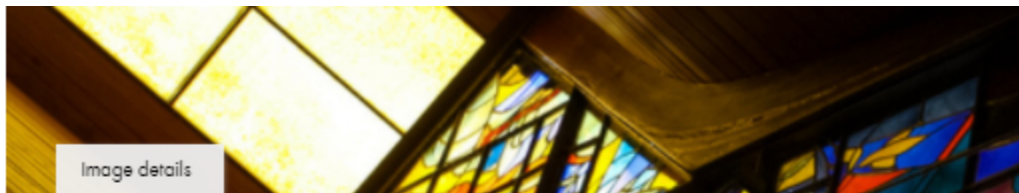
"I think man is very basically an urban creature, that we need to live in diverse colonies of people because we need each other. And the city offers so much, it's almost unfair to take advantage of its benefits then run away to live outside of it. When you do that, I think, ultimately you haven't ended up with anything."

## New People In Old Neighborhoods

When Robert S. Munger opened Dallas' first planned and deed-restricted subdivision in 1905, he wanted it to exude a certain air of exclusion. Three entrance gates marked "Munger Place" dotted the southwestern boundary (Fitzhugh Avenue) of the 140-acre development just east of downtown, planned and laid out to house Dallas' early social elite. To insure the area's distinction from the eclectic neighborhoods surrounding it, deed restrictions required a certain uniform style, orientation and dimension for the structures, although variations in size, cost, porches and roof lines were allowed. The result was a predominant and consistent "Prairie Style" motif with a subtle yet rich variation in detail. Munger Place was a neat neighborhood with just enough diversity to make it snap.

Over the years, however, as Dallas grew by leaps and bounds the city leaped and bounded over East Dallas, and Munger Place evolved from exclusive subdivision to deteriorating inner-city neighborhood. During the housing shortage years of the '40s, much of the area was zoned multi-family. And in the '50s, when Central Expressway went in and divided East Dallas from downtown, most upper-income suburban growth went north, leaving Munger Place and its sur-

Texas Architect



Tucked away in the heart of Austin's Tarrytown neighborhood is a quiet sanctuary for reflection – All Faiths Chapel (originally The Chapel for the Children) by architect David Graeber. Mid Tex Mod is thrilled to offer this rare opportunity to experience this architectural masterpiece.

All Faiths Chapel, completed in 1961, provides a space for religious services at the Austin State Supported Living Center (ASSLC), a state-operated living center providing service and support to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Its A-frame design features a soaring, 52-foot high continuously skylighted cathedral ceiling. Artist Blossom Burns' stained glass, "Miracle in the Sky," adorns the gable ends. The chapel's exquisite interior includes handmade copper light fixtures and door handles depicting birds in flight. All Faiths Chapel was an early commission, and labor of love, for Graeber, who graduated from the University of Texas with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1955. His distinguished career included commissions for NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston and the United States Embassy in Mexico City.

*DOCOMOMO, 2016: <https://docomomo-us.org/event/a-house-of-prayer-for-all-people-david-graeber-s-all-faiths-chapel>*

## Midcentury home by influential Austin architect seeks \$1.3M

[austin.curbed.com/2019/6/20/18693465/austin-homes-for-sale-midcentury-modern](https://austin.curbed.com/2019/6/20/18693465/austin-homes-for-sale-midcentury-modern)

Cindy Widner

June 20, 2019





4509 Balcones Drive  
*Via Moreland Properties*

This distinctive midcentury home in Highland Park West was designed, according to its Moreland Properties listing, by the late David Graeber, an influential Austin architect whose projects included NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, the U.S. Consulate in Mexico, and work on such local landmarks as the Paramount Theatre and the Long Center. Graeber was, according to his *Austin American-Statesman* obituary, an early advocate of revitalizing parts of downtown for residential use.

Built in 1959, the one-story, wood-frame home is sited on a generous lot in the Balcones Park section of the northwest neighborhood, where much of Austin's more notable midcentury-modern residential architecture is located. The 1,819-square-foot house features an open layout, rows of large windows, folding glass doors and screens, and generous outdoor living spaces that connect with the interior both visually and for air circulation. There's a modest, retro pool and hot tub and an expansive deck overlooking the forested lot as well.

The home has three bedrooms and two bathrooms features stainless kitchen cabinets, as well as stainless appliances and butcher block counters, in the kitchen. The master bedroom suite has custom shoji screens, granite tile and counters in the bathroom, and balcony and deck access.



*Curbed.com, 2019: <https://austin.curbed.com/2019/6/20/18693465/austin-homes-for-sale-midcentury-modern>*

# THE GRAEBER HOUSE AT 410

410e6th.com

## HISTORY

This historic home, located right in the heart of famed 6th Street entertainment district, is protected as a Historical Landmark and was carefully restored into a mid-century modern home by renowned Austin architect David Graeber.

Back in the early 1880's, Austin was new and growing. This building was the home to Shamrock Saloon constructed by an Irish immigrant while the Texas State Capitol was being built just a few blocks away. Shamrock Saloon served the community for many years.

However over the years, 6th Street went through a steep decline in the late 50's and early 60's as locals opted for more suburban shops and business. Many of these original 6th Street stone buildings were abandoned and forgotten.

David Graeber bought 410 E 6th Street in 1968 as a run down, falling in, non-habitable shell of a structure. He had a dream of a downtown, city dwelling lifestyle for himself and his family.

In the late 70's he completed a strikingly modern interior that sits in great contrast to the original stone facades. Many of the interior spaces are just as David created them 4 decades ago. It is a time capsule with references to times and lives lived over 130 years in this one location.

This one-of-kind home has been featured in many magazines and articles. Many drinks and good times have been had in this special place from the Shamrock Saloon to private Graeber family parties to public events.

David Graeber once said "Our life has been immeasurably enriched by living here".

We invite you to be our guests. We invite you to add to the story of this home.

The Graeber House at 410 is the perfect location for your next meeting or social gathering.



*"Graeber House at 410," 2020 (venue website: <https://www.410e6th.com/>)*



## Building Permits

WATER SERVICE PERMIT  
Austin, Texas

Received of DAVID C. GROEBER INDEXED  
Address 4509 BALCONES DR.  
Amount TWENTY  
Plumber PARKS Barry 64-36565 Size of Tap 3/4"  
Date of Connection 7-13-59  
Size of Tap Made  
Size Service Made  
Size Main Tapped  
From Front Prop. Line to Curb Cock 75'  
From North Prop. Line to Curb Cock 9'  
Location of Meter  
Type of Box  
Depth of Main in St.  
Depth of Service Line  
From Curb Cock to Tap on Main  
Checked by Engr. Dept. 10-26-59

No. Fittings  
Pipe  
Corp. Cock  
Cop. to Iron ell.  
Cop. to Cop. ell.  
Cop. to Iron Coupling  
Cop. to Cop. Coupling  
Angle Stop  
Stop  
Bushing  
Nipples  
Service Clamp  
Valve  
Meter Box  
Lock Lid  
Drain Tile  
Drain Tile Lid  
Stop & Drain  
Job No. 203-71051  
Foreman Barry Parks

Water tap permit, 7-13-59

SANITARY SEWER SERVICE PERMIT  
Austin, Texas

Received of DAVID C. GROEBER NW/II  
Address 4509 BALCONES DR. Date 5-14-59  
Amount TWENTY FIVE  
Builder or Owner  
Lot 5 Block M Subdivision Balcones Sec 5 Plat No. 277  
Plumber PARKS  
Date of Connection 10-19-59  
By City 18- No Sewer in Area  
By Plumber  
Checked By  
Size Main 8" Depth 3' Rod  
Main Assn. to Curb 100' E of Balcones Dr.  
Stub Depth  
Prop. Line  
Stub Location  
Book No. A-33514  
Paving Cut  
Ch. 9-26-59 J.C.

No. Fittings	Size	Price
12	Pipe 6"	1920
1	Wyes	98
1	Bends	6
	Reducers	
	Plugs	
	Sand	
	Gravel	
	Remix	
	Stoppers	
	Castings	
	Other	
	1 tap	98
	Labor: 16 hr	2000
	1 day	240
	1-1/2 hr	150
	Total	4506

Sewer tap permit, 5-14-59

David C. Groeber 4509 Balcones Drive

77: 5

M

Balcones Park Sec 5

Frame Residence and Att Carport

72849

5/19/59

17000.00

Jackson &amp; Cullen

10

Building permit, 5-19-59