

November 29, 2020

To the Austin Historic Landmark Commission,  
Chair and Commissioners:

In August of 2020, we contracted to purchase 815 W. 11<sup>th</sup> Street with the intent of demolishing the structure and rebuilding with a structure that is compatible with the growing area around downtown.

The zoning by the City of Austin allows for +/- 4400 SF. If the Code Next were approved, the zoning would allow up to 6600 SF. The zoning is for office use, which is what we intend for the property, consisting of our offices and maybe one other office tenant. Our business is a local consulting firm working 8-5 M-F, comparable to other uses on the street.

When we were looking for a home for our office, we wanted to be in the downtown area, following the intent of the City of Austin to be more dense in the downtown area, thus less city sprawl and more accessible to public services and transportation.

We put a contract on 815 W. 11<sup>th</sup> and discussed the need for a demolition permit with the Owner. Vivien agreed to sign applicable paperwork with the city to allow for the demolition permit. That is covered in our contract for purchase. We pursued the demolition permit with the understanding that if we could not obtain the permit, we would not be able to purchase the property.

In order to apply for the demo permit, we discovered the city of Austin requires a clean tax certificate prior to placing the item on the HLC agenda. So, we asked for one from the TCAD. We found out that 3 years of taxes had not been paid. We spoke to Vivien about this and she did not have the funds to pay for the taxes. In good faith, we paid the taxes on her behalf so that we could be on the HLC agenda. We were under the impression that Vivien still supported our request for a demo permit.

Our first hearing was postponed as staff requested more time to review. Durin the last HLC meeting, we discovered that Vivien submitted a rejection memo to the HLC opposing the demolition. We found this out just before the meeting. The demo permit was placed on Consent Agenda, but with her opposition (and assuming she was the applicant), the HLC pulled the item for discussion and then referred to the case to the ARC.

We are here now, with our opinion that the structure is not of any historically significant design. It is also in considerable disrepair which may not be entirely evident from the façade. We looked at possible re-use and concluded that the cost to restore and modify the house to be useable for the approved zoning - office is cost prohibitive. One idea presented by Donna Carter is to raise the structure and park underneath. We estimate this cost to be in excess of \$250,000. This will require an easement on her property, which may be difficult to put in place. It will also take about \$100-200,000 to "restore" the building to be code complaint with addition of office space. This is unreasonable for our offices. We also anticipate more complexity to raising the building and tying into a new portion. This additional cost drives the cost to making it unfeasible.

We see no reasonable path to keeping the existing building for its highest and best use. We look at other houses in the area and this one unfortunately does not have the same aesthetics.

We will be available for discussions at the ARC meeting.

Sincerely,

Square One Consultants, Inc.  
Kevin Fleming, CEO