

Historic Landmark Commission
Case #PR-20-183612
Permit for Demolition of house at 1601 Brackenridge Street

Dear members of the Austin Historic Landmark Commission,

Join us! The cultural and architectural identity of our South Austin neighborhood is under assault. AGAIN!

Please join in our neighborly effort to preserve the historical home at 1601 Brackenridge Street. This 105-year-old house is of invaluable historic significance, listed as contributing to the pending Travis Heights-Fairview Park National Historic Register.

Too many times we have gone for walks in our neighborhood only to find that another charming, unique old house has been leveled by a developer and replaced with god knows what? If we wanted to be surrounded by shiny glass and steel structures, we'd live downtown in a high-rise condo. But we choose to live in our neighborhood because of its eclectic charm, peaceful ambiance, and timeless community feel.

Also, as a community, we cannot overlook the roles played by William Davis and Lettie Webster Davis at the Texas School for the Deaf and the influence the school has had in our community – especially in South Austin. The history of this house and its original residents tells part of the story of that influence. So many of the staff members and the individuals served by the Texas School for the Deaf lived in the Travis Heights-Fairview Park neighborhood. Travis County became a leader in providing services to the deaf because of William Davis and Lettie Webster Davis. Unfortunately, the deaf community is all too often treated as invisible. Preserving this house is an opportunity to acknowledge meaningful respect to the deaf community's contribution to the rich cultural quilt that is South Austin.

This Craftsman bungalow at 1601 Brackenridge is an example of the architecture that is part of the eclectic nature that is our neighborhood. Craftsman architecture is an integral style in the Travis Heights-Fairview Park neighborhood and – as in all things eclectic – these homes are one of those threads that define this area of South Austin.

We are hopeful that the Historic Landmark Commission's reputation for not confusing "new and shiny" for advancement will prevail, and this salient part of our culture -- as well as our architectural history -- will be preserved. In particular, we request that the Commissioners specifically protect this important property and reject the request to destroy another piece of South Austin.

Thank you for helping protect our neighborhood and saving this Austin Treasure.

Jim Hightower, resident, 1604 Brackenridge Street
Rev. LyAnna Johnson, Life in the City Church
Claudette Lowe resident and coordinator, SRCC