

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
JULY 26, 2021
GF-21-103669
2502 PARK VIEW DRIVE

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1954 house. This case came before the Commission in June, 2020 for a full demolition. The applicant in the 2020 case reconsidered their application for full demolition and submitted plans for a partial demolition and retention of the character-defining features of this house; those plans were reviewed and approved by the Commission. The prior proposal would have preserved much of the street façade of the house, replacing deteriorated materials in kind or with a visually-compatible modern material, and an addition to the back in what promised to be a sensitive rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the house. The Commission initiated historic zoning on the house during the pendency of the preparation of those plans, and satisfied that the plans would preserve the character of the house, dropped the historic zoning case. Since that time, the original applicants sold the house to the current applicant, who is seeking a permit to demolish the house and build a new house in its place.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, rectangular -plan, shallow front-gabled mid-century Modern-styled wood frame house with rectangular asbestos panels set into a metal framing system on the front and back, and wood siding on secondary elevations. The house has fixed-sash and horizontal-sliding fenestration with a row of clerestory windows bridging the space between the asbestos panel section and the slightly-pitched roof, which is notable for its deep eaves. There is a pop-up, shed roofed section in the middle of the roof, that opens onto a side elevation. The house has a shed-roofed double carport with exposed beams and columns; the carport figures prominently into the impression of the house from the street and has ornamental brick walls, further identifying the house as an example of mid-century Modern design.

RESEARCH

The house is located in the “Air Conditioned Village” of northwest Austin, and would be contributing to a potential historic district encompassing the remaining homes of the 22 originally built as demonstration houses to study and promote the feasibility of central air conditioning in moderately-sized and moderately-priced homes. Austin’s Air Conditioned Village was one of and the largest of several demonstration projects throughout the country in the early 1950s, at a time when central air conditioning was more common in commercial buildings and high-end residences, than in more modest houses, mostly due to the cost of installation. The National Association of Home Builders sponsored the construction of Austin’s Air Conditioned Village in 1953 as a new subdivision just west of Burnet Road in the northwestern part of the city. The next year, 22 homes were built to appeal to middle-class taste and budgets, in varying styles, but all with central air conditioning furnished by several manufacturers, including Chrysler, which provided the air conditioning for this house at 2502 Park View Drive. This house was known as the Chrysler “Air-Temp” House, and was designed by local architect Fred Day, who had been associated with several of the leading architectural firms in the city, including Fehr and Granger, noted for their mid-century Modern designs. The house was built by Wayne A. Burns, the developer of the Edgewood Subdivision, which encompassed the Air Conditioned Village.

The Air Conditioned Village was a novel concept, and was part economic feasibility study and part social study. Homes in the Air Conditioned Village were all moderately-sized, but typical for middle class neighborhoods in Austin at the time. Some were designed and constructed with notable architectural features, such as the asbestos panels making up the front wall of this house, as well as the use of clerestory windows, perforated brick, and other materials and design features that came into vogue after World War II. They were all brand new homes, and priced for sale to middle class families. The first owner of the house at 2502 Park View Drive was a military man, William C. Davis, and his wife, Fern. Davis was in the U.S. Air Force and lived in this house from the time of its construction until around 1958. There is very little information about the Davis family, such as whether they had children, but they seem to be typical of the desired demographic for purchasers of houses in the Air Conditioned Village. The 1959 city directory shows this house occupied by Jerrold and Nancy R. Kelly; he was the chief engineer for the Tips Iron and Steel Company, at 300 Baylor Street. The Kelly’s lived in this house until very recently.

Researchers studied air conditioning usage by the families to determine the efficiency and cost-benefit ratios of central air conditioning on a modest residential scale, making this a form of social study as well. The research included comparisons

of energy costs, determining whether central air conditioning made sense for a typical middle-class budget, and looking at peak usage times and the demands on the city's electrical grid.

The homes in Austin's Air Conditioned Village demonstrated that central air conditioning was indeed feasible for use in modest residential buildings, laying the groundwork for the development of modern air conditioning systems as essential for homes in warm climates. Using the data provided by the houses in the Air Conditioned Village, contractors and manufacturers developed systems for new and existing homes throughout the city and country.

PROPERTY EVALUATION

The property contributes to the proposed Air Conditioned Village National Register Historic District, recently submitted and pending review and comment by the State Board of Review.

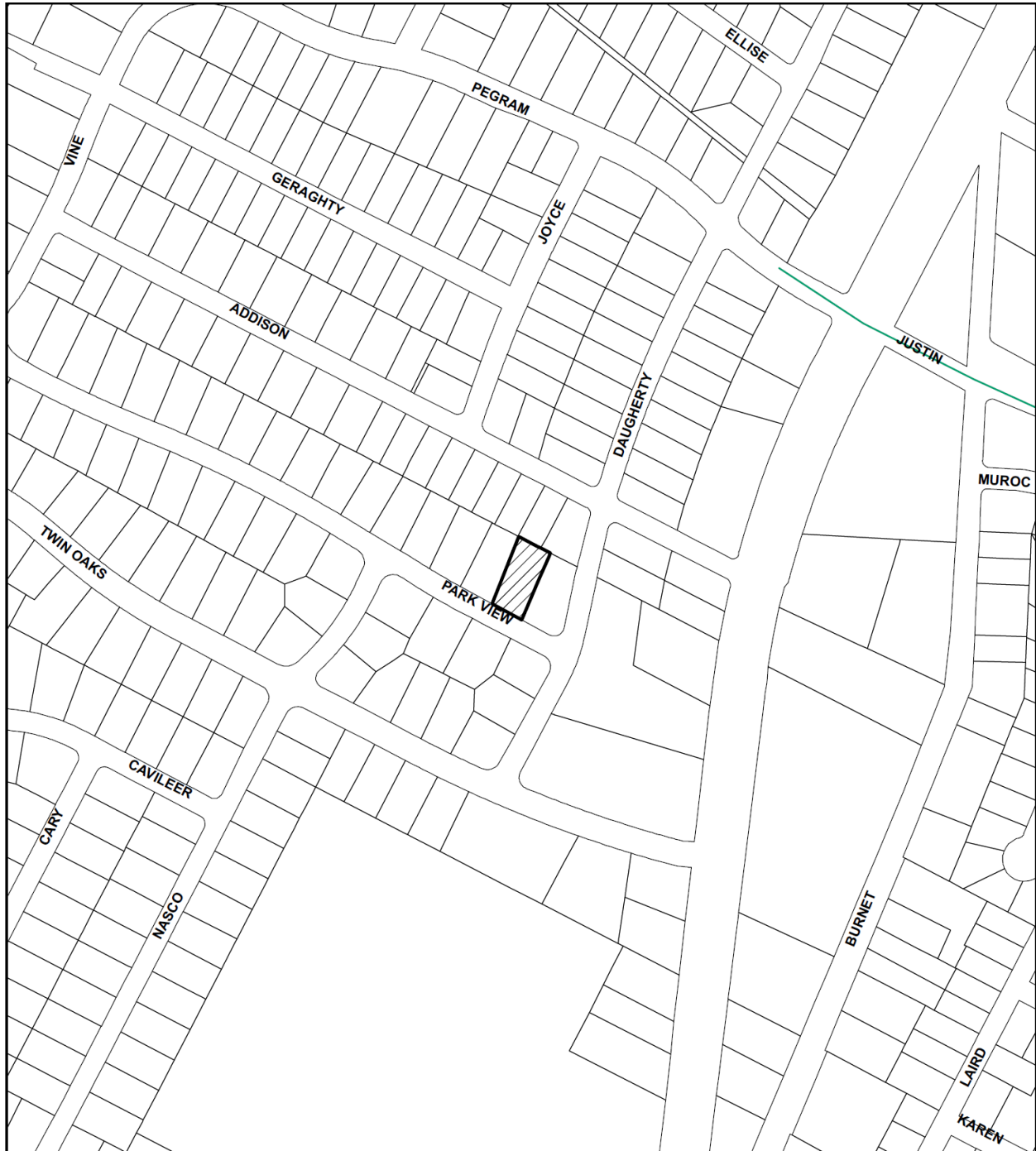
Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark

- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.
- 2) The building appears to retain high integrity.
- 3) Properties must meet two criteria for landmark designation (LDC §25-2-352). Staff has evaluated the property and determined that it may meet two criteria:
 - a. Architecture. The house is an excellent and remarkably intact example of architect-designed mid-century Modern architecture, with the use of modern materials, such as the asbestos panels on the front and back of the house, the deep eaves to shade the house, the clerestory windows to provide additional light into the interior, and the bold statement of the columns and beams of the house and its attached double carport. The house reflects the basic tenets of mid-century Modern design and satisfies the criterion for architecture.
 - b. Historical association. The house was built as a demonstration house for a national experiment to determine the feasibility of installing central air conditioning systems into a new middle-class residential design. While the owners of this house do not appear to have historical significance as would be typically evaluated under this criterion, the identity of the house as a demonstration project associated with the National Home Builders Association's initiative to explore the feasibility of installing central air conditioning into homes for the middle class satisfies this criterion for significant historical associations.
 - c. Archaeology. The property was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
 - d. Community value. The house is located in the Air Conditioned Village, an early 1950s subdivision, specifically designed to evaluate the feasibility of central air conditioning in moderately-sized and moderately-priced houses, thus pioneering the widespread use of central air conditioning in a residential application throughout Austin and the rest of the country. This house does possess a unique location and physical characteristics in its intact design that contribute to the image of the city and the neighborhood, satisfying the criterion for community value.
 - e. Landscape feature. The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Strongly encourage the applicant to reconsider his application for total demolition by initiating historic zoning, as this house meets the historic landmark designation criteria for architecture, historical associations, and community value. This house is one of the premier examples of mid-century Modern architecture in the Air Conditioned Village, a proposed historic district, and every effort should be made to preserve the integrity of the house and historic district. The importance of Austin's Air Conditioned Village in the broader theme of residential climate control for the middle-class families in the Sunbelt was perhaps understated in the first set of public hearings on this case, but Austin's experiment set the stage for similar projects in other areas of the country, and was a significant and determining factor in the development of the American Southwest.

LOCATION MAP



1" = 292'



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: GF 21-103669

LOCATION: 2502 PARK VIEW 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.

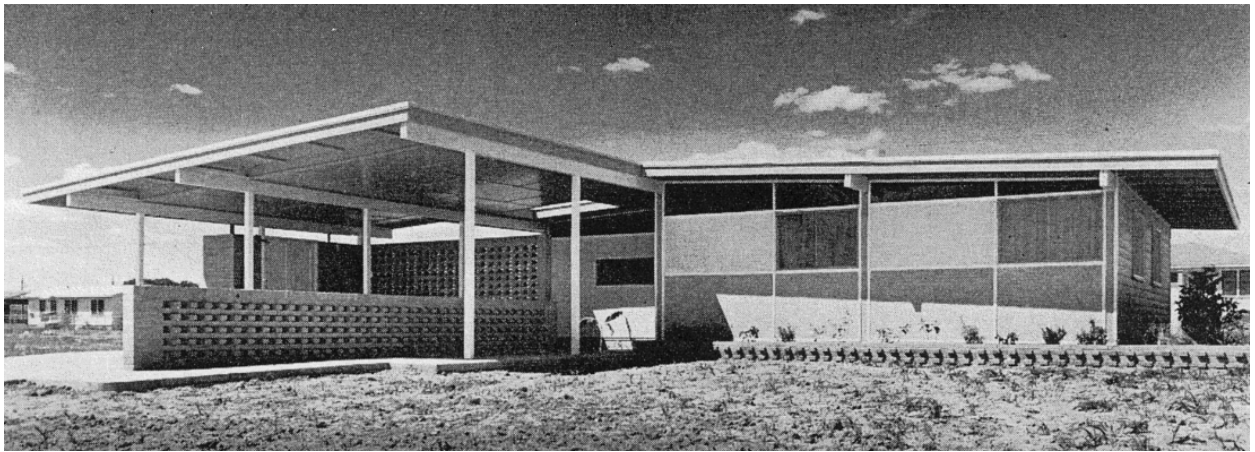
This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.



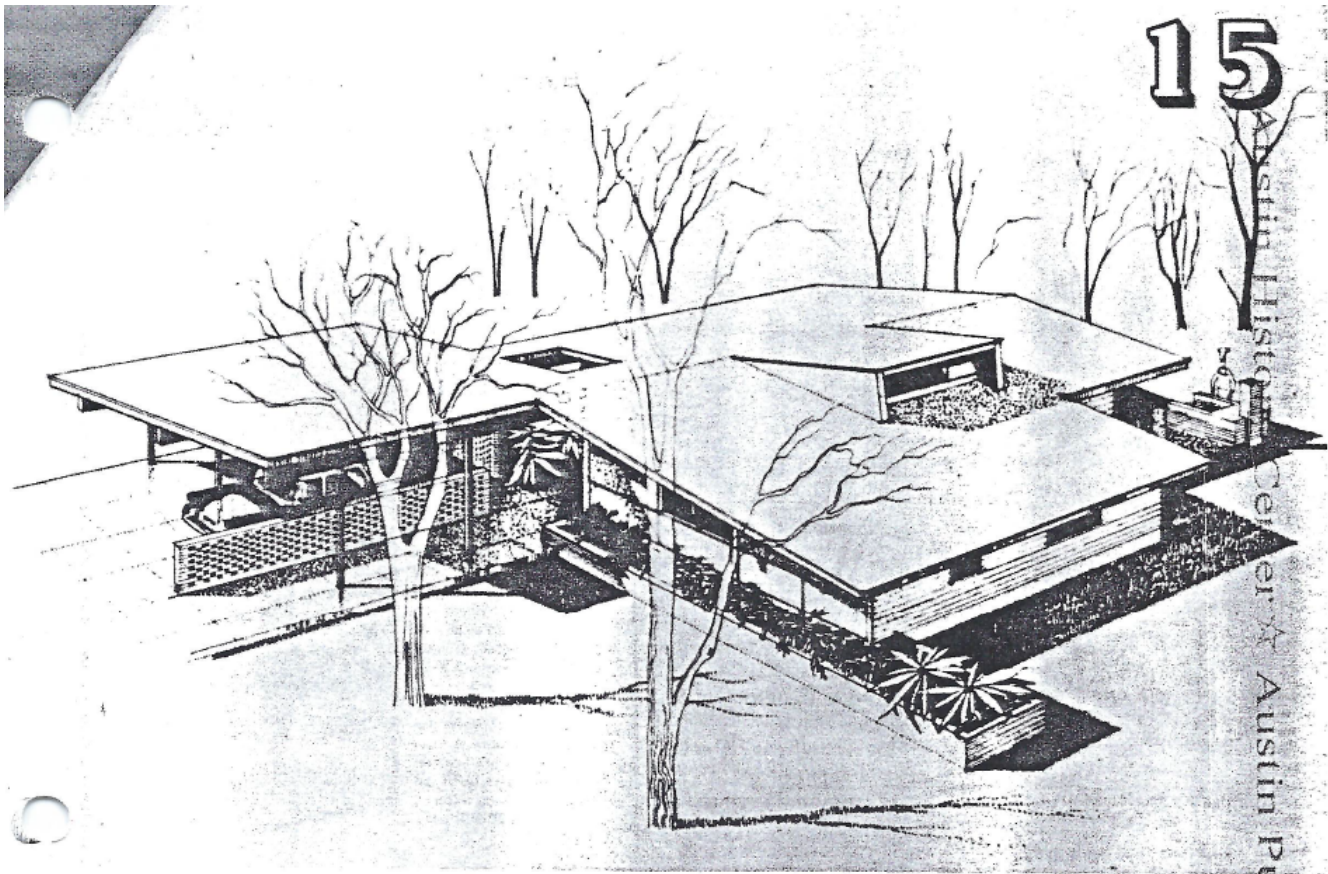
PROPERTY INFORMATION



2502 Park View Drive (ca. 1954)



1954 photograph of the house when brand new



The Air Temp

S/E

Sure to be named "modern-functional-comfortable" is THE AIR TEMP, the home built by Wayne A. Burns at 2502 Park View.

Look at these extra modern features: An L-shaped living area 22 by 23 feet, a 14-foot sliding glass door opening onto a garden area, a bath and a half centralized for economy and with exhaust fans in both, two bedrooms and a den, custom-designed draperies, an outside patio—plus a barbecue pit and exterior brick walls which mark off the double carport and garden area.

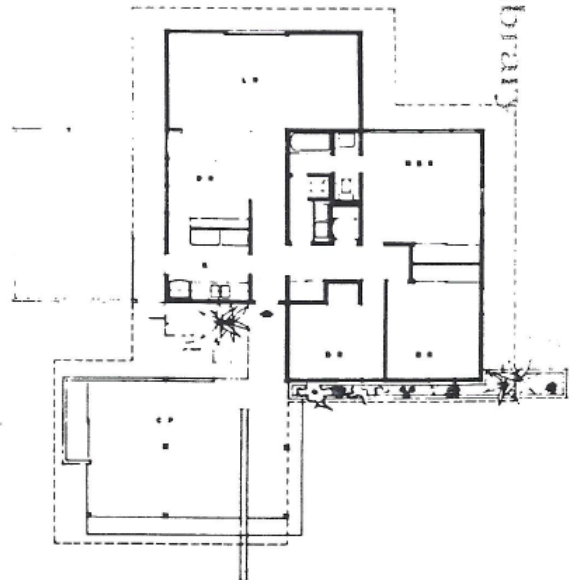
Modernism in this home also means Terrazzo tile flooring (just being introduced in this part of the country), grey beige siding, salmon colored brick trim outside, and a 1954 low-pitched roof.

Burns built an over-hanging roof on all sides almost four feet wide around THE AIR TEMP. Because it faces south, this home is never hit in the face by the western sun.

Complete air conditioning is effective with a two ton forced draft Chrysler Air Temp unit installed by Capitol Air Conditioning. Horizontal sliding windows by Clearstory add to the Southwest modern

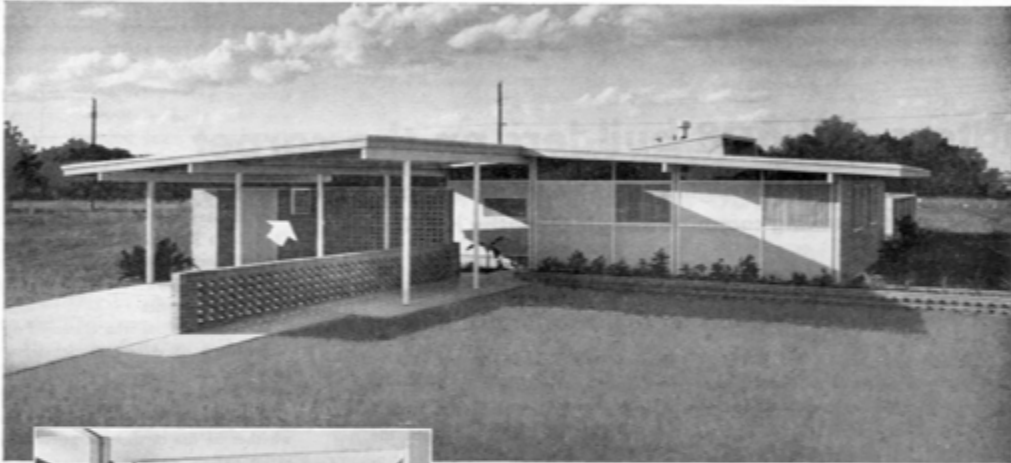
It's open living in this house with 1,160 square feet of floor space inside. 1110?

Fred Day was the architect for the AIR TEMP HOME.



PROOF in the making at air conditioned village

it's CHRYSLER AIRTEMP waterless, all-electric COOLING
for greatest efficiency and economy!



House in NAHB Air Conditioned Village, Austin, Texas, designed for Chrysler Airtemp Air-Cooled Air Conditioning by Fred W. Day and built by Wayne Burns. Cooling coil is located above Chrysler Airtemp Gas Furnace in hall closet. Air-cooled condensing unit for waterless cooling is mounted in wall of storage area at rear of carport at point marked by arrow in top photo.

High wall method of air distribution was used because of successful experience of builder and installer with this method in other homes in area. Compact duct system is confined to least used area of house.

Is year 'round air conditioning feasible for builder houses? The introduction of Chrysler Airtemp waterless, all-electric cooling over a year ago made it practical and economical for any house—anywhere! From actual installations in homes in every section of the country the proof has been recorded. And now, to make it official, there's final proof in the making at the "Chrysler Airtemp House" in NAHB's Air Conditioned Village.

Give your new home "starts" the tremendous "buy" appeal of Chrysler Airtemp Year 'Round Air Conditioning—with waterless, all-electric cooling. See your Chrysler Airtemp Dealer (he's in the Yellow Pages), or return convenient coupon for complete facts.

CHRYSLER AIRTEMP

HEATING • AIR CONDITIONING for HOMES, BUSINESS, INDUSTRY

AIRTEMP DIVISION, CHRYSLER CORPORATION

Dayton 1, Ohio

Comfort Zone



THE TRULY MODERN HOME IS AIR CONDITIONED

Airtemp Division, Chrysler Corporation

P. O. Box 1037, Dayton 1, Ohio

I'd like to know more about Chrysler Airtemp Air Conditioning for homes:

☐ Waterless

☐ Water-Cooled

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Zone _____

State _____

Advertisement for Chrysler AirTemp air conditioning and showing the model house at 2502 Park View Drive