

## Allen, Amber

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**From:** Tony Woodbury [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, October 24, 2021 10:40 AM  
**To:** PAZ Preservation  
**Cc:** Peter Komassa; Audrey Turner; Pattie Epps  
**Subject:** Oct. 25 Hearing Historic Zoning for Casa McMath, 2501 Inwood Pl.

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Dear Amber,

My name is Anthony Woodbury, and I have owned and lived in the house at 2502 Quarry Rd, 78703, since 2000. I understand from my next-door neighbor Peter Komassa that there's going to be a hearing on Monday, Oct. 25, on Historic Zoning for Casa McMath, 2501 Inwood Place. Like Peter, I share a property line (in back) with Casa McMath.

Last month, and in August, I sent you short, handwritten notes against a proposal to demolish Casa McMath. I would now like to submit a statement in FAVOR of Historic Zoning for that property.

I strongly endorse Peter Komassa's statement below, where he says:

"The 'McMath House' has a rich history, a celebrated mid-century aesthetic, and, in many ways, it serves as the cornerstone of the Deep Eddy neighborhood given its prominent positioning on the Possum Trot thoroughway. This is, unequivocally, a historic landmark that I hope our community can preserve."

On the "other side" of this issue, I found a loosely-written 'Property Evaluation' of the McMath House, prepared by an architectural firm called Vincent Gerard & Associates, Inc. (<https://vincentgerard.com/about-us/>) that is summarized here:

<https://bandc.crccheck.com/historic-landmark-commission/368302-d22-2501-inwood-pl-presentation-updated/> (I can't find the original document but would be glad to send it to you if you wish)

I'd like to use my comment here to discuss that document, which concludes, on at least three grounds, that the McMath House is not worthy of preservation:

- The property is not typical of 'Mid-Century Modern' ("The architecture is a mix of three or more architectures and does not conform to the styles of International or Mid-century Modern")
- The house is in poor condition
- McMath was not considered a 'Titan' (lol) of architecture, unlike other notable UT architects

None of these arguments are valid. Just because a property is atypical of some label (here, 'Mid-Century Modern') or shows multiple influences doesn't necessarily make it aesthetically any less worthy (Bach was atypical of the German Baroque; Picasso was atypical in any of the many movements he joined and was most famous for his "mixing", which was properly understood as eclecticism).

The claim that the house is in poor condition is irrelevant, given that landmark properties, virtually by definition, are meant to undergo restoration efforts.

And the claims about McMath's stature are unsubstantiated, unsupported by evidence, and irrelevant.

The essence of the argument FOR preservation is that the property is unique and beautiful, whereas no such case is made for what would replace it if it were demolished.

And one final note about Hugh McMath's cultural significance—something that makes me very proud, since, like him, I'm also a UT professor. He was a very early proponent of cultural diversity in Austin on a number of levels. He was a major exponent of Mexican architecture, especially that of Monterrey (consistently misspelled in the Vincent Gerard document as 'Monterey'), a city with incredibly striking modern architecture, with such an interest in bringing about awareness of Mexican architecture here in the US that he "was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts of Great Britain for his work to develop cultural relations with Mexico" ( <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utaaa/00114/aaa-00114.html> ). He was not, as the Vincent Gerard document asserts, mainly concerned with the influence of American architecture in Mexico, as shown by his long-term writing and teaching about Mexico. Likewise, and touchingly, I found this remembrance of a man named John Chase, whose life and historical importance Hugh McMath significantly influenced:

'In 1950, Chase became the first African-American to enroll at UT, just as the landmark *Sweatt v. Painter* case was heading to the Supreme Court. Chase didn't know UT was segregated until the Dean of Architecture, Hugh McMath, asked him, "Are you familiar with the case that's in front of the Supreme Court right now?"

"Chase was vaguely familiar with the case—and from his parents' experience, he was deeply familiar with how often African-Americans got the doors of the ivory tower slammed in their faces. But that didn't daunt him. With McMath's encouragement, he submitted his UT application.'

<https://alcalde.texasexes.org/2012/04/texas-loses-a-trailblazer-john-chase-dies/>

In conclusion then, I strongly advocate the preservation and historic zoning designation for Casa McMath on both aesthetic and cultural grounds.

Sincerely yours,  
Tony

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