

ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2021-0164

HLC DATE: July 26, 2021

August 23, 2021

ZAP DATE: November 2, 2021

APPLICANT: Historic Landmark Commission

HISTORIC NAME: Chrysler Air-Temp House

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 7

WATERSHED: Shoal Creek

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 2502 Park View Drive

ZONING FROM: SF-2 to SF-2-H

SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from single family residence – standard lot (SF-2) district to single family residence – standard lot – Historic Landmark (SF-2-H) combining district zoning if the Commission believes that this house qualifies as a historic landmark and represents the entire proposed historic district.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

Architecture, historical significance, community value.

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION: July 26, 2021: Initiated historic zoning.
August 23, 2021: Recommended historic zoning. Vote: 9-0 (Larosche and Tollett absent).

ZONING and PLATTING COMMISSION ACTION:

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The house is beyond the bounds of the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey (1984) but is contributing to the identified Air Conditioned Village National Register Historic District, which was unfortunately not recommended by the State Board of Review.

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.

This house, being remarkably intact from the time of its construction, would have been contributing to the Air-Conditioned Village National Register Historic District, presented to the State Board of Renew earlier this month. There was owner opposition to the creation of the district and the nomination failed to move forward. However, this disappointing setback

had little to do with the significance of Austin's Air Conditioned Village experiment, and this house would have been one of the best preserved examples of the houses built and studied.

CITY COUNCIL DATE:**ACTION:****ORDINANCE READINGS:** 1ST 2ND 3RD**ORDINANCE NUMBER:****CASE MANAGER:** Steve Sadowsky**PHONE:** 974-6454

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION: Allandale Neighborhood Association, Austin Independent School District, Austin Lost and Found Pets, Austin Neighborhoods Council, Central Austin Urbanists, Friends of Austin Neighborhoods, Homeless Neighborhood Association, Lower District 7 Green, NW Austin Neighbors, Neighborhood Empowerment Foundation, North Austin Neighborhood Alliance, SELTexas, Shoal Creek Conservancy, Sierra Club, Austin Regional Group

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**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.

Historical Associations and Community Value:

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 Kellys 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. Further, the Air Conditioned Village experiment in Austin was instrumental in shaping FHA policies for home loans well past the post-World War II building boom.

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.

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.

PARCEL NO.: 0234030616

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: LOT 17 BLK E EDGEWOOD SEC 2

ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT: \$5,239 (owner-occupied); city portion: \$1,915.

APPRAISED VALUE: \$534,010

PRESENT USE: Residential

CONDITION: Good

PRESENT OWNERS:

Cedar and Oak, Incorporated
13330 Galleria Circle
Austin, Texas 78738

NOTE: TCAD records show that Cedar and Oak Incorporated sold the property to Hugh F. Corrigan in May, 2021.

DATE BUILT: ca. 1954

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS: None

ORIGINAL OWNER(S): William C. and Fern Davis

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: None.

LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 292'

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: GF 21-103669

LOCATION: 2502 PARK VIEW DRIVE

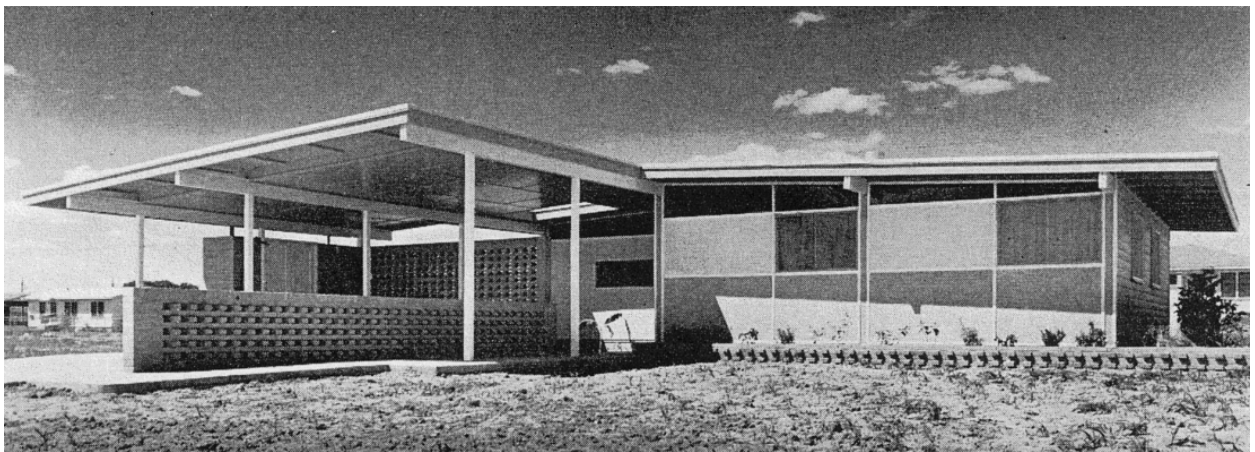
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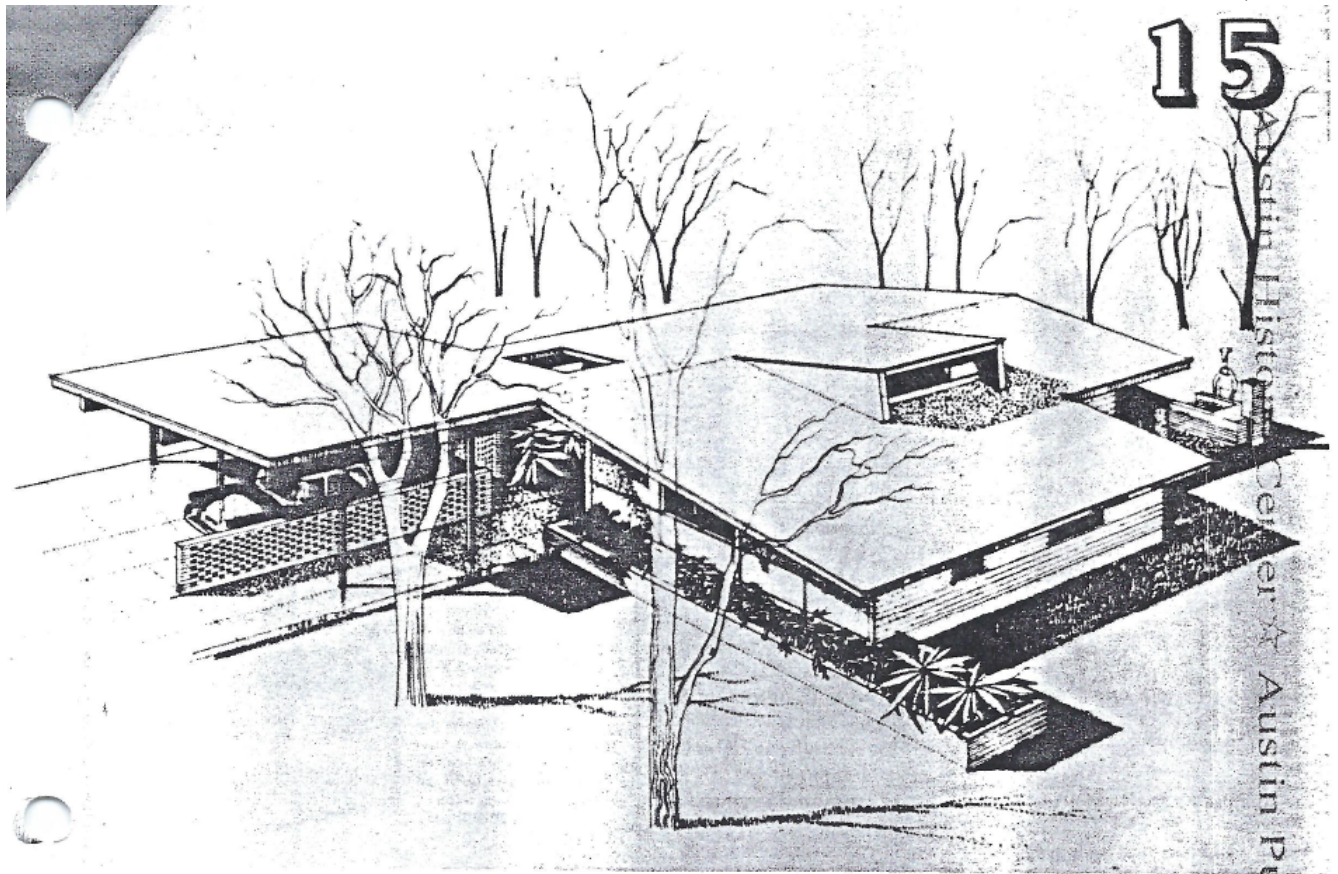




2502 Park View Drive (ca. 1954)



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.

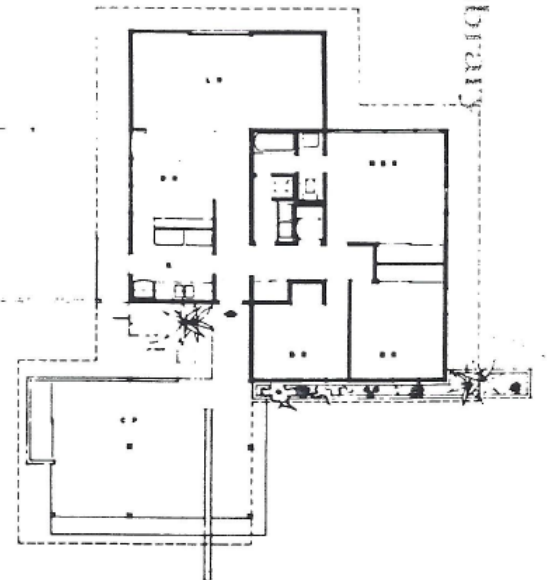
Modernism in this home also means Terrazzo tile flooring (just being introduced in this part of the country), grey beige siding, salmon colored brick trim outside, and a 1954 low-pitched roof.

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.

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

Post in the Allandale Neighbor, October 26, 2009

How Allandale Pioneered Central Air Conditioning

by *Allandale Reporter* | Oct 26, 2009 | [History](#)



It is hard to believe that anyone ever lived in central Texas without air conditioning. Imagine trying to survive last summer's oppressive heat without cool air in the home! While I've welcomed the opportunity to open windows now that the weather has cooled, I would never have dreamed of turning off the central air conditioning during the last few months' string of hundred-degree days. However, central AC is a relatively recent amenity, and our neighborhood played an important part in its development.



an experimental project conducted in 1954 – 1955 in Allandale, which was then in the northwestern suburbs of Austin. In this project, the National Association of Home Builders, the University of Texas, and dozens of other organizations and companies joined together to try out a novel idea: using the AC equipment that had been developed for commercial and business applications to provide central air conditioning for residences.

To do this, the organizations contracted with Austin homebuilders to build 22 differensingle-story homes, each using a different AC manufacturer's equipment. The builders constructed these homes quickly in an already existing subdivision called Edgewood, northwest of the 1954 Austin city limits. They faced onto four streets: Park View Drive, Twin Oaks Drive, Nasco Drive, and Daugherty Street. These street names may be familiar already; they are within our Allandale neighborhood, just west of Burnet Road. It is unclear who first used the phrase "Air Conditioned Village" to refer to the project, but the name stuck.

This project was essentially a test of the then-current AC technology in a residential setting – what today we might call a "proof of concept." However, it was not a mere technical laboratory; the builders sold the houses to families, who agreed that researchers could observe various aspects of their home life in a one-year field test of the houses. While the houses were similar in size, they varied dramatically in their construction; according to a contemporaneous article in *House + Home*, they used "practically every type of cooling equipment, air-distribution systems, insulation and shading device."

Glenn Jones, a current Allandale resident, viewed one of the Air Conditioned Village houses a few years ago. Glenn says, "One of the interesting things about the house was that the AC ductwork in the ceilings was all exposed; none of it was run through the attic. Apparently, the builder installed it that way to showcase the new technology."

Companies were indeed eager to display their products. The AC manufacturers included many well-known names: Westinghouse, Coleman, Carrier, Frigidaire, American Standard, Lennox, General Electric, and even Chrysler. Other types of companies were equally eager to tout their products' use in the Air Conditioned Village; these ranged from cabinetry (by Curtis Woodwork) to interior doors with built-in vents for air circulation (Amweld) and accordion-style wall partitions (Modernfold Doors). The Air Conditioned Village project was quite well known; its visitors even included a group of 10 housing experts from the Cold War-era Soviet Union.

One key variable in the construction was the type and quantity of wall insulation used. Sheryl Novak and John Michael Whitman have lived on Twin Oaks since 1994, in what was the water-cooled "General Electric" house. When they remodeled and added to their house a few years ago, they found that the exterior insulation material was no more than a thin radiant barrier, which looks like grocery bag paper with a shiny silvery coating on both sides. At the time, the manufacturers described this material as "2-ply foil" insulation. (Sheryl and John Michael replaced it with a more modern, and effective, alternative.)

The thin radiant barrier insulation, while skimpy by today's standards, was probably more than most houses in the region had at that time. The 1954 *House + Home* article states "wall insulation was practically unheard of in the South until a few years ago." A 1960

article in The Victoria Advocate reports on one Air Conditioned Village resident who seemed particularly happy with her house:

A good illustration of the value of insulation was a joking comment by Mrs. William J. White, of the Air Conditioned Village. "We don't even need air conditioning," she laughed. "The house is so well insulated all we have to do to keep cool is open the refrigerator door."

Insulation was not the only thing that made each house unique. The houses varied significantly with respect to various aspects of their construction. One house was reportedly built with steel rafters rather than wood; some had garages, others carports. Some used masonry for the walls, others used wood siding, and still others used both. The houses were oriented in different directions, and even had different roof overhangs.



The Air Conditioned Village research lasted for one year. It addressed issues such as electricity usage, effectiveness of insulation, and various energy efficiency issues relating to the design of the houses. These studies, in turn, informed the boom in central air conditioning in the following few years. According to an article in Cabinet, by 1962, nearly 6.5 million US homes had air conditioning.

According to a 1955 article in Texas Architect, the project aimed "to determine the effect of manufactured weather on the budget, health, and home life of American

families.” Thus, the project sought to not only highlight the AC equipment’s efficacy and test a variety of building methods, but also to examine how year-round cool weather could affect family life. The researchers planned to examine questions such as whether children eat better in air-conditioned homes, whether people wanted to open windows, and whether AC helped alleviate allergy symptoms.

Since the AC industry sponsored the project, it is perhaps no surprise that the research found a number of improvements in the quality of life of the Air Conditioned Village families. These included:

- Being able to sleep 10% to 35% longer
- Improving social skills
- Increasing the number of hobbies
- Having less dirt and dust in the house
- Staying at home more and having better appetites (amazingly enough, without gaining weight)
- Spending more time together as a family and entertaining guests

While the more skeptical among us may question the scientific validity of these findings, I, for one, am not willing to give up my central AC in order to put them to the test!

Thanks to the many neighbors who provided research materials and shared their experiences, including Cathy Yang, Sheryl Novak, John Michael Whitman, Richard and Agnes Martin, Glenn Jones, Joyce Hogan, and Peggy Maceo. Thanks also to the families of the Air Conditioned Village for playing a valuable part in our nation’s cultural history.