

Commissioners, I am writing for myself. I'm addressing the false idea that making something 'Historic' makes it more expensive.

#### Importance of Affordable Housing

Most Austin residents need 'affordable' housing. The median price is too high. This means that both monthly rental and monthly mortgage payments consume too much of family income. The median price numbers are skewed by new construction, so one approach is to preserve older places as livable space. The older units reflect the building patterns of yesteryear. Most are small single family houses developed at the end of World War II when the veterans got housing benefits. (I will relate my personal story at the end. When I was 3yrs old, my family of 7 moved into a 700sqft house in a housing project on the West City Limit of Dallas.)

#### Impact of Historic Designation

Historic designation is an impediment to scraping a perfectly good, affordable, house into dumpsters and the landfill. A Historic house may have some limits on any changes to its 'street appearance', but it remains viable as a residence and be maintainable. It's a great place for kids and pets.

Historic designation reduces bidding by foreign and corporate buyers when the house is for sale. They want a clear path to getting the most money quickly. They bid up prices, preventing individuals and families from having access to the lower price of existing housing.

Historic designation deters even local serial demolishers, who force individuals and families out of the market. They want to build new and big. But, any new place is much more expensive than older existing residences. Pflugerville Palaces are \$\$\$\$.

If Historic Zoning is denied, 2502 Park View will not remain affordable.

#### Importance of Preserving Culture

Families and communities need experiences of the past to provide stability into the future. Without the heritage each youngster and family must rediscover for themselves ways to approach social and personal problems. Without the cultural surrounding, key community institutions, like churches and social clubs, will fail. Then neighbor-neighbor support fails too.

#### Impact of New Development Destructive

I was very active during the ICRC redistricting of Council Districts. I went to most of the meetings. The loss of traditional 'place' was evident in the new Census data. The racial change of the residents is complete and was precipitous. Areas formerly supporting racial opportunity voting were no longer applicable. Many new housing blocks were permitted with a percentage of 'affordable' units, but the building caused an exodus, and removed the existing affordable housing.

Gentrification from new development caused an almost complete loss of local, traditional culture. Going 'home' for holiday is now mostly 'going nowhere'.

When the traditional residents were displaced, those families lost a source of family wealth. Many went from owning homes to renting, from benefitting from rising property value, to being subject to increased monthly rental. Personal ownership of a house as an asset is replaced by corporate ownership, and by monthly fees adversely impacting budgets.

### My Story of Affordable Housing

I was born at the beginning of WW-II in a house in Dallas that my folks rented. I have visual memories of the house and of a few events. The house is still in use today and roughly the same as in 1941, with a garage being altered. The neighborhood is still intact.

The summer I was 3 yrs. our family moved into a War Housing Project called Dallas Park that was on the west city limit of Dallas, bordered on the North by the Ft.Worth Highway, and on the South by the small town of Cockrell Hill. That year my grandmother was widowed and she moved in with us. The family was Mom, Dad, 4 kids, and Grandmother; 7 of us. And the house in Dallas Park was 700sq ft, 2-bedroom, with a small 6,000sqft lot. Next to us was a duplex, each side 700sq ft.; and there were some two story apartments with 4 units. 300 families in Dallas Park.

There was a maintenance shed that loaned out equipment like lawnmowers, and one of our summer chores was pushing it around to cut the grass. The families became a community. Kids (when chore-free) were on their own; after breakfast you went out to find friends and keep yourself occupied. Lunch was at whoever's house you were at around noon – I'm sure that there were phone calls "They're here and I'll feed 'em." It was a party-line phone so conversations were not private. The rule was to be home by supper.

The group of us kids grew up together, and 75 years later we still keep contact. Grade school, Jr.High, High School, the home room never seemed to change. There were problem kids, but only a few. One stabbed his mother, one went to prison as a habitual criminal. Others became lawyers, one was a founder of Six Flags, one was important in 'Freeze Machines' that are the basis of frozen margaritas, one had an airplane parts business; many stories.

A few years after the war ended, about 1950 or so, the residents could buy their places and stay on. Most did. My folks did. I don't know the price. Rent had been \$20, and the mortgage was something my folks could afford. They stayed in the house until they died in the mid to late 1980s. The house was worth about \$40,000. In 1979 my wife and I bought our house here in Austin, on 49<sup>th</sup> St for \$67,000.

**Historic Designation Supports Affordable Housing  
Case C14H-2021-0164  
2502 Park View**

**Joe Reynolds  
2611 West 49<sup>th</sup> St  
Member Allandale Zoning Committee**

Dallas Park is still a vibrant community; it's Latino now. The food in Cockrell Hill is great. The families know each other, and their relationships seem similar to my childhood. I visit there, mostly to check on the old house. The place hasn't been scraped to put in apartment blocks. There are apartments, but they were built on vacant land while my folks still lived. No one displaced, just more folks.

And, while the house owners gain value as the real estate increases, no one is pushed by rising rents. Mortgages usually are fixed payments. Dallas Park is still Affordable Housing.