

# Phil Gilbert

3805 Stevenson Ave.  
Austin, Texas 78703

May 3, 2022

City of Austin  
Residential Permitting

## **Re: Objection to Complete Demolition of 2002 Scenic Drive, Austin, Texas**

To Whom It May Concern,

I am opposed to the complete demolition of the house at 2002 Scenic Drive, Austin.

I live across the street and while a complete demo and new build would no doubt be quicker, it is worth the time and effort to see that the essence of the beautiful, important structure(s) be built upon, not completely torn down.

Austin offers a lot to the imagination. It's that mythology, if you will, that is fueling our growth; it's enticing hundreds of thousands to become new Austinites. That's good. Bob Dylan wrote: "He not busy being born is busy dying." Austin is constantly being born — from the 70's "outlaws" that turned us into "the live music capital of the world" through to the 21st century technologists we are home to today.

Change is good. But we must direct that change into something that is authentic. Something of Austin, not just in Austin. Change for change sake is childish... and change for convenience sake is even worse: it threatens the essence of the Austin ethic that is the wellspring for each renewal.

The house at 2002 Scenic Drive is a great example of that weird, wonderful Austin ethic. It may be one of only a handful of remaining properties with this aesthetic. In fact, Scenic Drive itself is an Austin icon... and on Scenic there's only one other house that achieves the result of the house at 2002 Scenic — and it's The Rock House, right next door. (It also has a colorful history... no doubt when Robert Redford was coming to play at his grandparents' Rock House in those 1950's summers he played with friends next door!)

I won't speak much about the specific architectural and design elements that can never be recreated except to say: why would we destroy these last of a kind works when there is no need? The exterior easily displays its uniqueness. But inside is where the magic truly happens. There are literally dozens of one-of-a-kind design elements that would be destroyed forever, if we allowed a total demolition. If you question their value, then go to the property to see them yourself!

While we want growth, we surely don't want indiscriminate and undifferentiated mansions that inspire nothing more than calculations of price per square foot and "oh my gosh what a view."

If you buy a property with this beauty, history and landmark location I would hope you pay homage to it, restoring and renovating it into a modern expression of itself. I hope the house at 2002 Scenic is restored and renovated into a new architectural masterpiece that will inspire citizens 100 years from today to fight for it, as we fight for this 100 year old masterpiece.

I strongly urge the City to reject the complete demolition of 2002 Scenic Drive. I also urge the City to approve any limited demolition only with simultaneous approval of the new home to be built, so that the essence of the property can be assured, prior to the demo of the old one.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Phil Gilbert

cc: Mayor Pro-Tem Alison Alter