

Dear members of the Historic Landmark Commission,

We are writing in regard to the 4th St development project with Hanover. We serve as the committee chairs of the AIA Austin LGBTQIA + Alliance, a committee that recognizes and celebrates LGBTQIA+ architects and designers, fostering a community for everyone to be a part of. We are speaking as individuals, and the words and emotions expressed in this letter are ours alone and do not reflect the thoughts of AIA Austin nor the architectural firms we work for.

We, like the majority of Austin's LGBT+ community, were outraged once we heard the news about 4th Street. Not only is this a place where we gather to express ourselves, it's the only area in Austin where we have a concentrated community of queer safe spaces. It is the closest thing that we have to a gay district, and one of a few physical representations of queerness in Austin. We will miss venturing to these establishments, but we can't help feeling that their removal is also a statement that the queer community is unwanted and unwelcome in Austin. As American political activist Harry Britt once said, "When gays are spatially scattered, they are not gay because they are invisible."

We approached our AIA Austin President and President-Elect to see what could be done about the situation. They offered to reach out to Hanover on our behalf to see if they could facilitate a conversation between the two parties. To our surprise, David Ott of Hanover agreed to meet and hear us out. We met at the AIA office in Austin with the Director of AIA Ingrid Spencer, President Camille Jobe, and Vice President Christy Taylor.

Based on the limitations that historic designation has on the actual business, we realized that negotiations between the two parties would be a better solution for redeveloping Austin's queer spaces. Christy and Camille's shared knowledge from working with developers in the past shed light on a compromise that seemed reasonable to both parties.

Our biggest concern was the dismantling of our community. Although Hanover has made the initial gesture of keeping Oilcan Harry's as a tenant, that's only one safe queer space out of multiple. We proposed they rethink the programming and design of the ground level and rebuild a new queer community. David Ott with Hanover agreed to:

- maintain the original facades, fully preserving them for the new development (rather than just dismantling and reusing the brick)
- continue to honor his agreement with OCH
- of the 6,000sf of remaining tenant space (originally slotted for a single restaurant tenant), he would divide that up into two tenant spaces:
  - 1,500sf for another gay lounge/bar
  - 4,500sf for a gay-owned restaurant
- David agreed to meet quarterly with AIA Austin and the LGBTQIA+ Alliance to provide updates on the 4th St development
- He also agreed to strategize on the continued efforts to encourage equity-based preservation within the new downtown building fabric.

That last point is crucial to creating a more equitable Austin and preserving any remnants of culture in Austin that isn't mainstream and profitable. The fact that this issue wasn't addressed until the HLC meeting is unacceptable. Hanover was well within the bounds of the current system with their proposal and although as stated above we think more should be done; they actually made an effort to preserve the queer community. We believe there should be another association/review process that can facilitate a discussion between developers and the community they're affecting. This would give a voice to the minority group being displaced and streamline the planning process for developers.

Thank you for your time,

Joe Delia, AIA  
LGBTQIA + Alliance Chair

Tim Petersen, AIA  
LGBTQIA + Alliance Chair Elect

Mikel Bennett, Associate AIA  
Co-Founder LGBTQIA + Alliance