

## ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

HLC DATE: July 6, 2022

PC DATE:

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2022-0073

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 1122 Colorado Street

APPLICANT: Brian Evans, Westgate Condominium Association

HISTORIC NAME: Westgate Tower

WATERSHED: Lady Bird Lake

ZONING CHANGE: CBD to CBD-H

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 9

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from Central Business District (CBD) zoning to Central Business District – Historic Landmark (CBD-H) combining district zoning.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION: Architecture and historical associations: The Westgate Tower is an excellent example of New Formalism, is the only building in Austin designed by architect Edward Durell Stone, and has served as a model for mixed-use building.<sup>1</sup>

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION: 2012 – recommend historic zoning (5-0; Leary/Wolfenden-Guidry).

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

CITY COUNCIL DATE: N/A

ACTION: N/A

ORDINANCE READINGS: N/A

ORDINANCE NUMBER: N/A

CASE MANAGER: Kalan Contreras, 974-2727

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS: Austin Independent School District, Austin Lost and Found Pets, Austin Neighborhoods Council, Central Austin Community Development Corporation, City of Austin Downtown Commission, Downtown Austin Alliance, Downtown Austin Neighborhood Assn.(DANA), Friends of Austin Neighborhoods, Homeless Neighborhood Association, Neighborhood Empowerment Foundation, Preservation Austin, SEL Texas, Sierra Club, Austin Regional Group

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2010. Land Development Code §25-2-352(A)(3)(a) states that City Council may designate a historic landmark if it retains integrity, is over 50 years old, and is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Historic Landmark Commission recommended historic zoning in 2012; however, the application was withdrawn by the applicant prior to Planning Commission hearing.

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

*§25-2-352(A)(3)(a) The property is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places; or is designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Archeological Landmark, or National Historic Landmark.*

The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2010.

*§25-2-352(A)(3)(b)(i) Architecture. The property embodies the distinguishing characteristics of a recognized architectural style, type, or method of construction; exemplifies technological innovation in design or construction; displays high artistic value in representing ethnic or folk art, architecture, or construction; represents a rare example of an architectural style in the city; serves as an outstanding example of the work of an architect, builder, or artisan who significantly contributed to the development of the city, state, or nation; possesses cultural, historical, or architectural value as a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian or vernacular structure; or represents an architectural curiosity or one-of-a-kind building. A property located within a local historic district is ineligible to be nominated for landmark designation under the criterion for architecture, unless it possesses exceptional significance or is representative of a separate period of significance.*

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<sup>1</sup> Sadowsky, Steve. "Zoning Change Review Sheet: C14H-2012-0089." 2012.  
<https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=176342>

The Westgate Tower was designed by New York architect Edward Durell Stone in 1962 and completed under the supervision of prominent local architects Fehr and Granger in 1966. It is an excellent example of New Formalism in the Modern movement as espoused by Stone, who was known worldwide for high-rise buildings that combined verticality with the monumental scale, refinement, and ornamentation of Classical building styles. The Westgate, named for its location just west of the State Capitol grounds, also served Stone's philosophy of building upscale residential buildings in park-like settings in or near downtown areas, luring wealthy residents away from the suburbs. Stone was concerned that most high-rise architecture of the era was the sole solution to overdevelopment, where going up was the only way to develop an already overbuilt site. The location of the Westgate Tower allowed Stone to express the ideals of downtown living with a green setting. It was innovative in providing a model for future central city development by combining residential and commercial uses along with an integral parking garage that formed a significant part of the entire composition rather than as an auxiliary structure.

The Westgate is a 26-story point-block tower, rising squarely out of a cruciform platform. It is constructed of poured-in-place concrete with a brick veneer. Its verticality is emphasized by brick columns which rise symmetrically above the more horizontal and cruciform-shaped parking garage, with each spandrel containing a metal-framed full-height glass window and a balconette, allowing access to fresh air from individual units. Brick solar screens, one of Stone's trademark architectural details, cover the spandrel openings of the parking garage as well as the top two floors of the building. The Westgate embodies the modern goals of accommodating mixed uses and modern facilities in a single building. The Westgate was designed to contain commercial space on the ground floors, a 5-story parking garage, residential units ranging from efficiencies to two-bedroom apartments, and a social club and restaurant on top of the building. It is contemporary to the Cambridge Tower at 1801 Lavaca Street and the Penthouse Apartments at 13th and Guadalupe Streets, all representing the 1960s trend toward high-rise residential living in the central city. However, only the Westgate possesses the refinement of the New Formalism ideals of monumental architecture and Edward Durell Stone's ideal of a residential tower in a park-like setting downtown.<sup>2</sup>

§25-2-352(A)(3)(b)(ii) Historical Associations. *The property has long-standing significant associations with persons, groups, institutions, businesses, or events of historic importance which contributed significantly to the history of the city, state, or nation; or represents a significant portrayal of the cultural practices or the way of life of a definable group of people in a historic time.*

Growing out of an association of Texas lumber dealers in the late 19th century, the Lumbermans' Investment Association planned and built several high-rise residential buildings in Austin, Houston, and Kansas City in the late 1950s and mid-1960s. Julian Zimmerman, who headed the organization during that time, apparently knew New York architect Edward Durell Stone from his work in Washington, including the National Geographic Society Building and the building that would later become the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In 1962, Zimmerman contracted Stone to design the Westgate Tower, a mixed-use residential tower located just west of the Texas State Capitol.

Edward Durell Stone was a native of Arkansas who received his architectural training at Harvard and at MIT. Stone went on to practice in New York City and taught at the Yale School of Architecture. He became well-known for his sleek buildings of the 1930s, and after World War II, he became dissatisfied with the sterility of modern architecture and fascinated by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. His work in the 1950s and 1960s reflected greater verticality, such as in the International Trade Mart in New Orleans, and the General Motors Building in New York City. His trademark was a solar screen, which provided architectural interest as well as privacy and shade. Stone used the solar screen on the Josephine Graf House in Dallas in the 1950s, and continued to employ it, as seen on the Westgate Tower. Stone hired prominent local architectural firm Fehr and Granger to oversee the building's construction. Fehr and Granger were known for their mid-century modern residential designs, and although Stone designed the exterior, Fehr and Granger were responsible for the details.

The Westgate was the first high-rise building that was significantly taller than anything else in Austin, except the Capitol Dome. High-rise buildings in Austin of the 1940s and 1950s were no taller than the buildings of the 1910s and 1920s, including the Scarbrough and Littlefield Buildings and the Norwood Tower. The Westgate, at 26 stories, would be much taller than either of its contemporaries, the Cambridge Tower and the Penthouse Apartments. The height of the Westgate caused some controversy, stemming from concerns that high-rise buildings would overshadow the State Capitol, and resulted in the creation of the Capitol View Corridors by the State of Texas.

The Westgate was also the second home of the Headliners Club, the most prestigious social club in the city. Founded in 1954 by Charles Green, publisher of the American-Statesman, Everett Looney, a local attorney and judge, and Paul Bolton,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

a television and radio commentator and news editor, the Headliners Club began at the Driskill Hotel. Members included politicians and intellectuals, several former Texas governors, and President Lyndon B. Johnson. The Club moved into the Westgate in 1966 and remained there until relocating to a more central location. In addition to the Headliners Club, the Westgate Tower has also been the home of many leaders in state government.<sup>3</sup>

PARCEL NO.: 0208011906

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: ORIGINAL CITY BLOCK 135 0.5 OF LOTS 1, 2, & 3

ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT: Will be determined per owner depending on the proportion of the total area and ownership of common areas ascribed to each condominium apartment.

APPRAISED VALUE: Each condominium in the building is individually appraised and valued by the Travis Central Appraisal District.

DATE BUILT/PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1962-66

INTEGRITY: High

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS: Over the years, failing materials have been replaced in-kind. In 1984, the original wood entry doors were replaced with new metal and glass doors, and in 1998, fine black netting was installed over the brick solar screens to discourage bird infiltration and nesting.<sup>4</sup>

ORIGINAL OWNER(S): Lumbermans' Investment Corporation of Austin (1962)

PRESENT USE: Mixed use

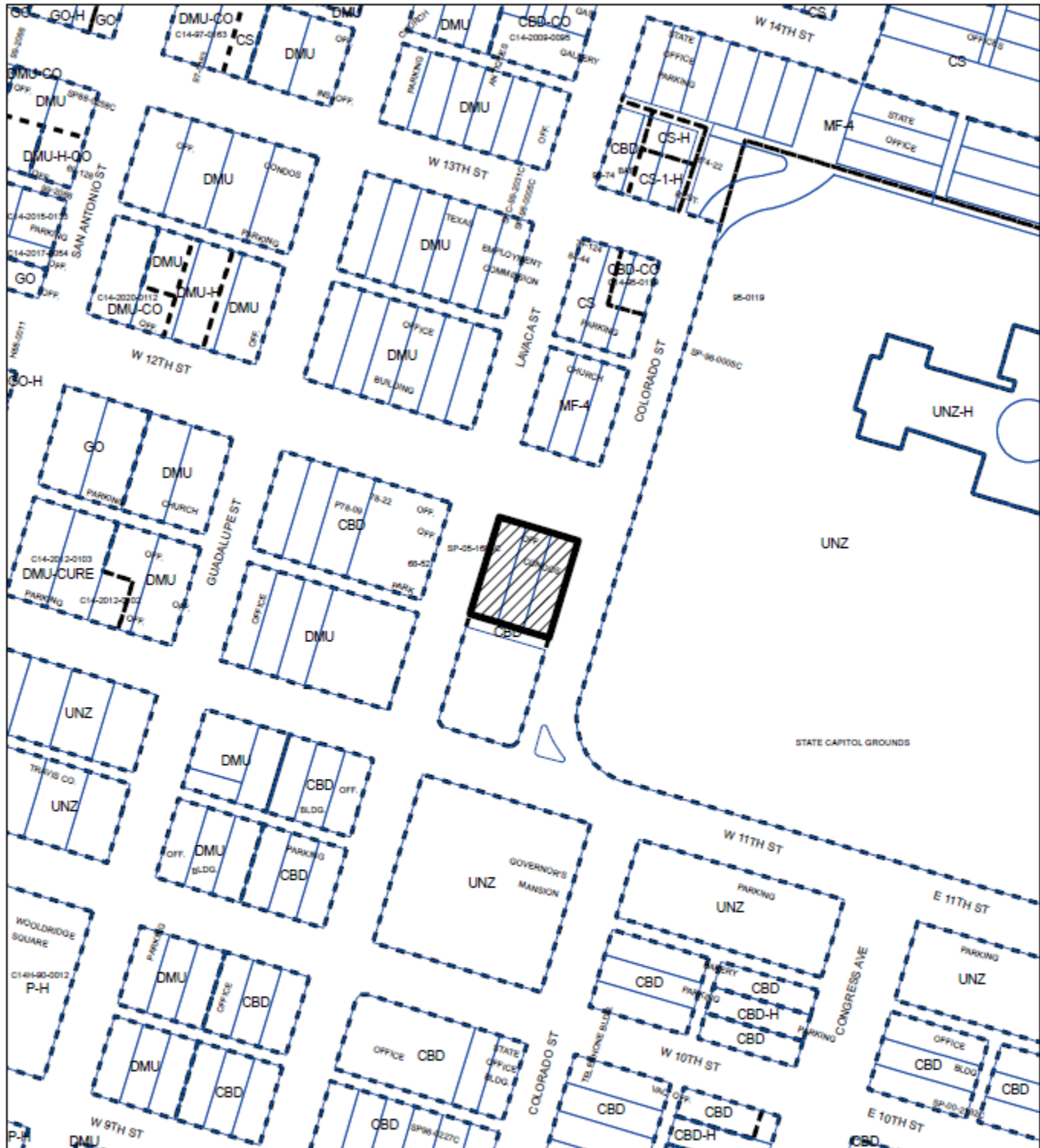
PRESENT OWNERS: Westgate Condominium Association

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: Individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



## PENDING CASE

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