

Lake Austin

**2002 Scenic  
Lake Austin Case**



# Rationale for 2002 Scenic

Architecture

?

Historical Association

x

Archaeology

x

Community Value

?

Landscape Feature

?

The Commission must find that the property meets at least two of the above criteria.

# ARCHITECTURE?



We believe the case for architectural significance is weak, but at the very least, it – alone – is not sufficient.



Much of the structures could not be preserved as they exist today – they would need to be deconstructed and rebuilt.

# LANDSCAPE FEATURE



The “Landscaped Features” in the staff report are common yard amenities laid out in a functional manner.

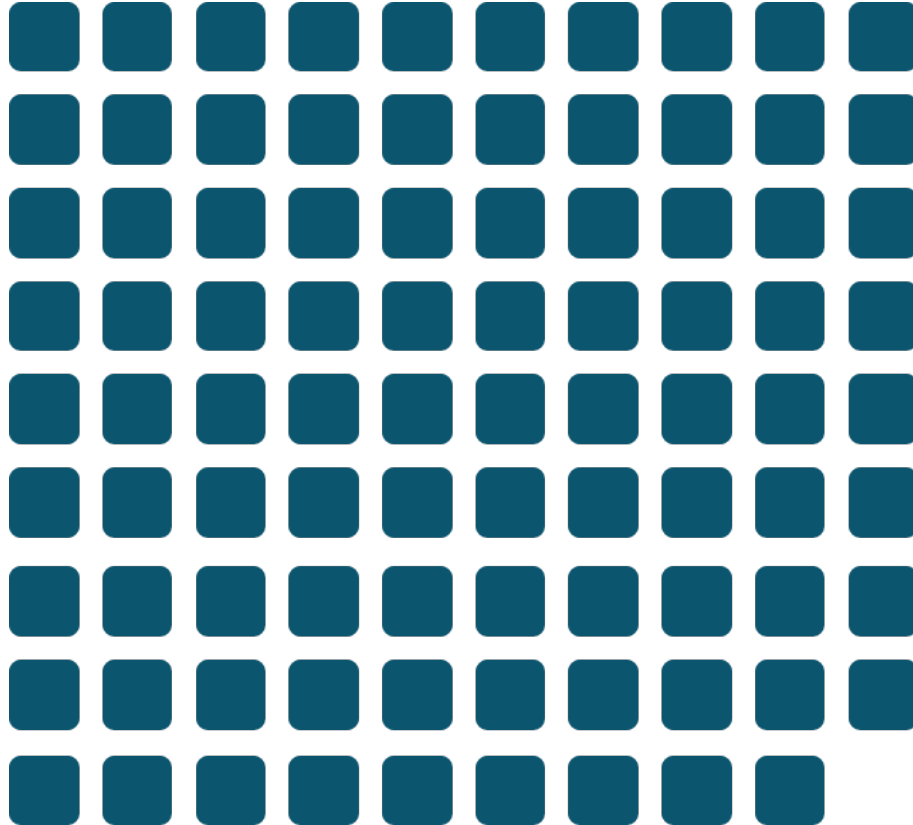
# COMMUNITY VALUE



It is not physically or visually accessible to the community and does not meet precedent for “Community Value.”

# HISTORIC ASSOCIATION

Cases WITH “Historic Association”



Cases With NO “Historic Association”



Historic Zoning Cases (2011-2022)

It is highly unusual to have an historic landmark case in which there is no historic association.

# HISTORIC ASSOCIATION

Cases With NO “Historic Association”

Staff Presentation (Outlier Case):

“Struggle as I have to come up with a second criterion to recommend historic zoning for this house, I have not been able to do it.

Professor Sellstrom – as far as I can tell, in conversations I have had and research that I’ve done – his career has not been as noteworthy and significant as we generally look for when we’re designating a house as a historic landmark.

We have to look at both the architecture – where, I think we have architecture here in spades, I mean there’s no doubt about it – but the Historic Associations, in staff’s opinion, are just not there.”



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“The masonry walls are not adequate for load-bearing, and their reuse as a non-load-bearing veneer is not practical. The foundation is questionable and likely not adequate for reuse in an extensive renovation.”



“The wood roof framing has obvious rot in areas exposed by holes, and I believe it is likely that further investigation will reveal that none of the roof framing is salvageable.”



For the Apartment Unit: "These walls cannot be reused as load-bearing."



“These [pool] walls and slab have failed... The pool and deck are not suitable for reuse.”

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Engineer's Report – Major Structural Issues Impact:

Foundation

Masonry Walls

Wood Framing

Extensive Water Damage

Pool Deck and Slab

2002 Scenic faces extensive structural issues that will necessitate demolition.

# Landscape Feature Rationale

*“The property appears to have a significant and unique designed landscape with aesthetic and historical value. Some landscape features, including the arched bridge and bench, appear to incorporate Delisle’s Urnite material. This material is rare today. Additionally, the landscape designed by Delisle specifically relates to his architectural vision for the house, with meandering walks, an expansive lawn, and an early swimming pool built into the hillside topography to provide a river view.”*

Staff Report’s Landscaping Rationale Relies on Three Claims:

1. That Delisle designed the landscaping.
2. That the landscaping features Urnite.
3. That the landscaping has significant and unique value.

# Landscape Feature Rationale

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- ~~2. That the landscaping features Urnite~~ – UNVERIFIED
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“Landscape Feature” Precedent (Casa McMath)

Intentional Design

Connected to the Site’s History

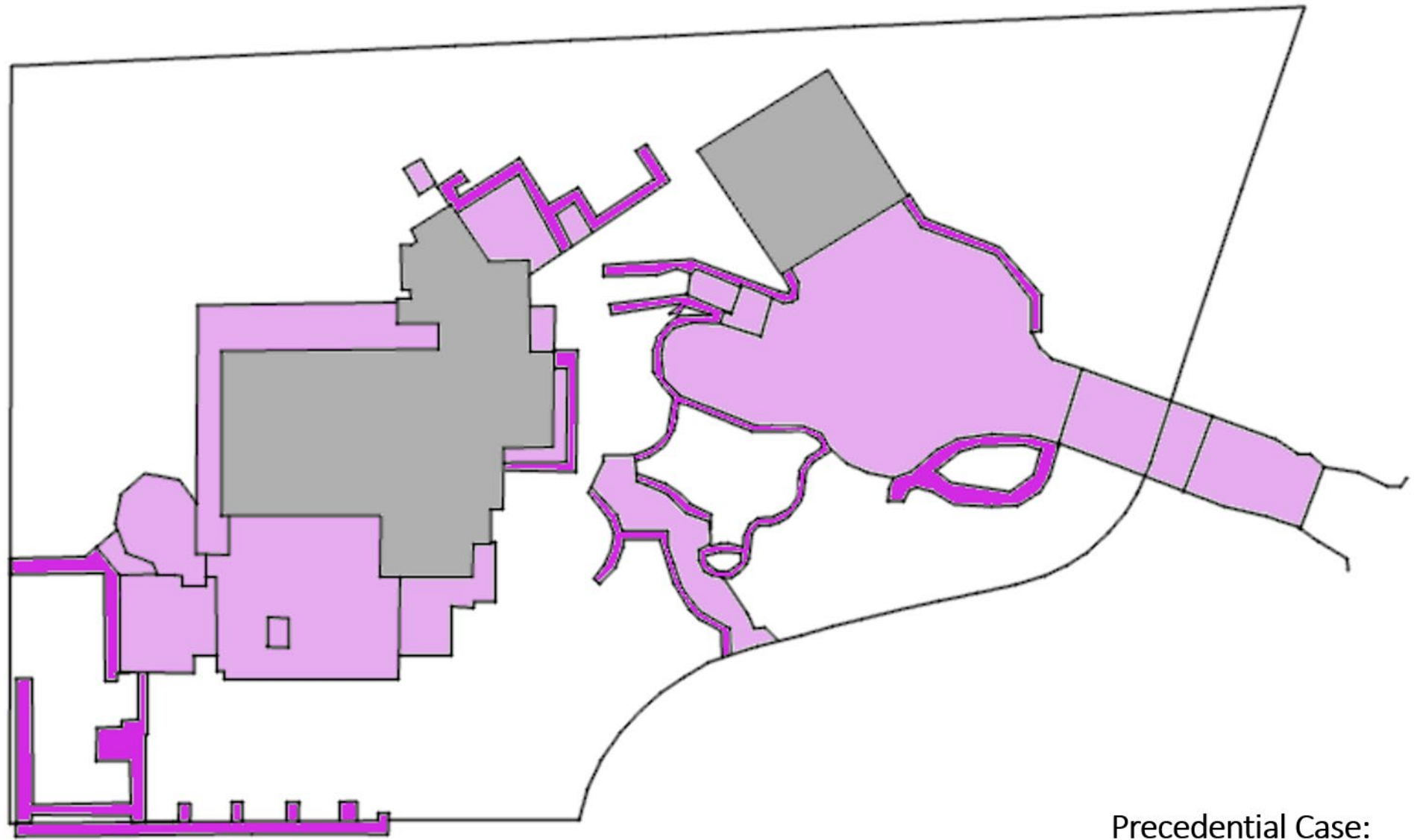
Distinct and Unique Style

We reviewed every historic zoning case in the city’s system over the past decade in order to determine precedent for what constituted an historic “Landscape Feature.”

✓ Intentionality

✓ Site Integration

✓ Unique Style



Precedential Case:  
Casa McMath

- X Functionality
- X Common Yard Amenities
- X "Urnite" Rationale



2002 Scenic



2002 Scenic's landscaping is NOT historic.  
It largely consists of common yard amenities laid out in a functional manner.



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Subject Area	Precedent (McMath)	2002 Scenic
Who	Historic Association	—
What	Integrated Site Features	Common Yard Amenities
Where	Intentional	Functional
How	Distinct and Unique Style	Unverified “Urnite” Claims

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2002 Scenic’s landscape features are not historic.  
It largely consists of common yard amenities laid out in a functional manner.

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Subject Area	Precedent (McMath)	2002 Scenic
Who	✓	✗
What	✓	✗
Where	✓	✗
How	✓	✗

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- 2. That the landscaping features Urnite – UNVERIFIED**
- ~~3. That the landscaping has significant and unique value.~~

# Urnite

- “Urnite” is NOT historic. It was a short-lived and failed business venture.
- Delisle is NOT historic. HLC chose not to invoke the Historic Association criterion.
- Delisle’s connection to “Urnite” is tenuous. He was just one of “the men who owned stock.”

Increasing its capital stock from \$5000 to \$30,000, the Urnite Manufacturing company, synthetic stone manufacturing company and one of Austin's newest, will open on Sept. 1 a plant triple the size of its present one, Max Werkenthin, president of the company, said Monday morning.

The controlling interest in the company will be kept by the original stockholders, Mr. Werkenthin said, and those stockholders will constitute the board of directors.

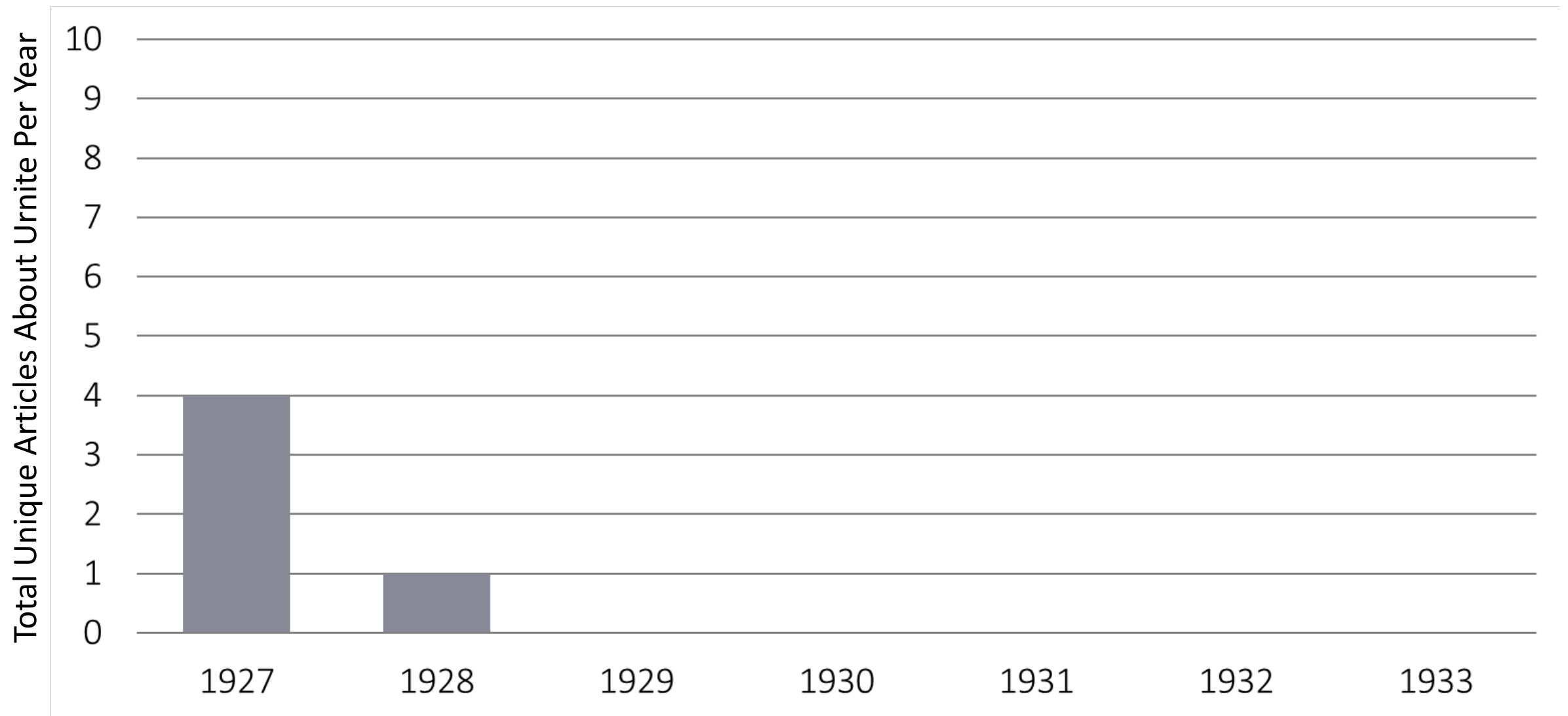
The men who owned stock in the company when it first opened operations in April were C. F. Paul, Max Werkenthin, R. M. DeLisle, H. M. Bohn and M. Holck.



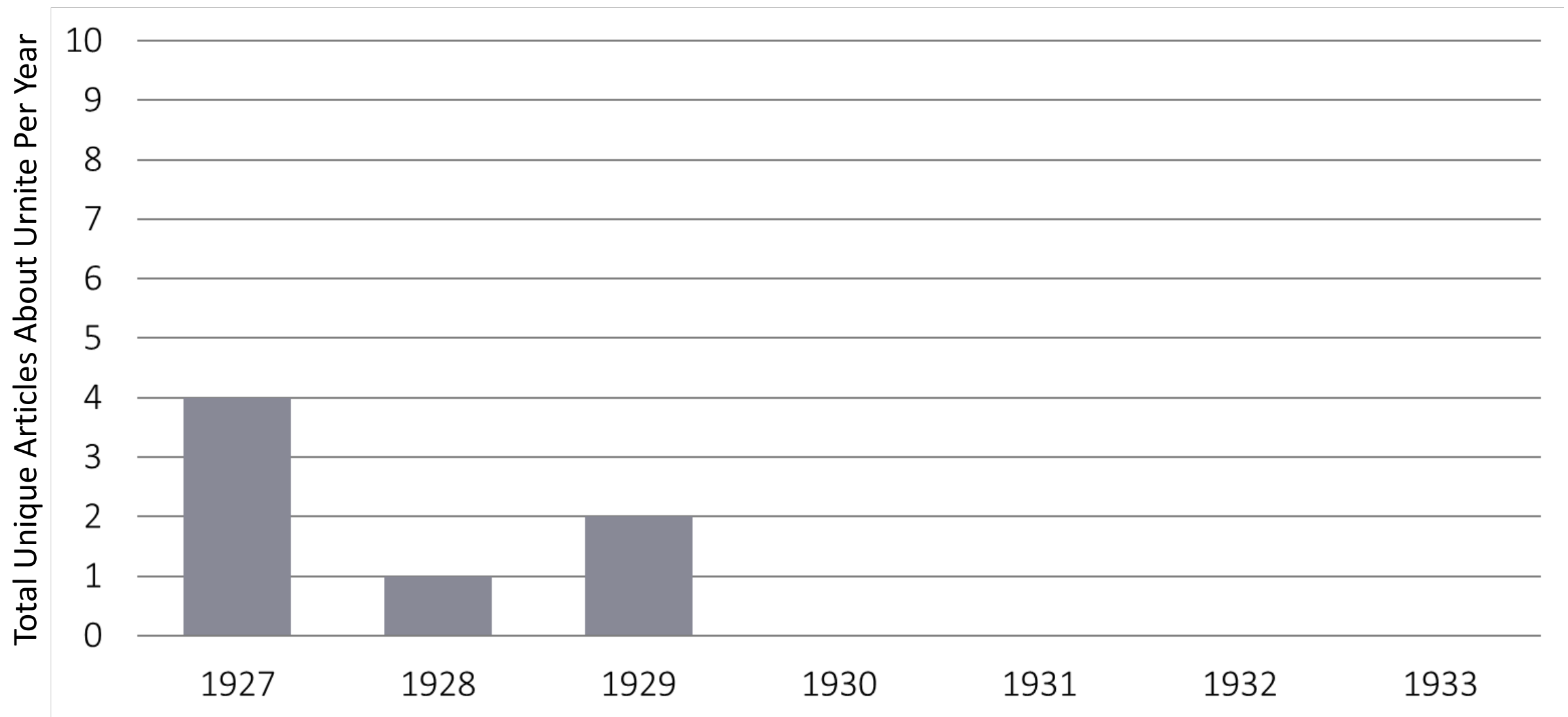
We reviewed every newspaper archive reference available related to “urnite.”



There were four unique articles about “urnite” in 1927, the year the Urnite Manufacturing Company was founded.



There was one more “urnite” article in 1928.



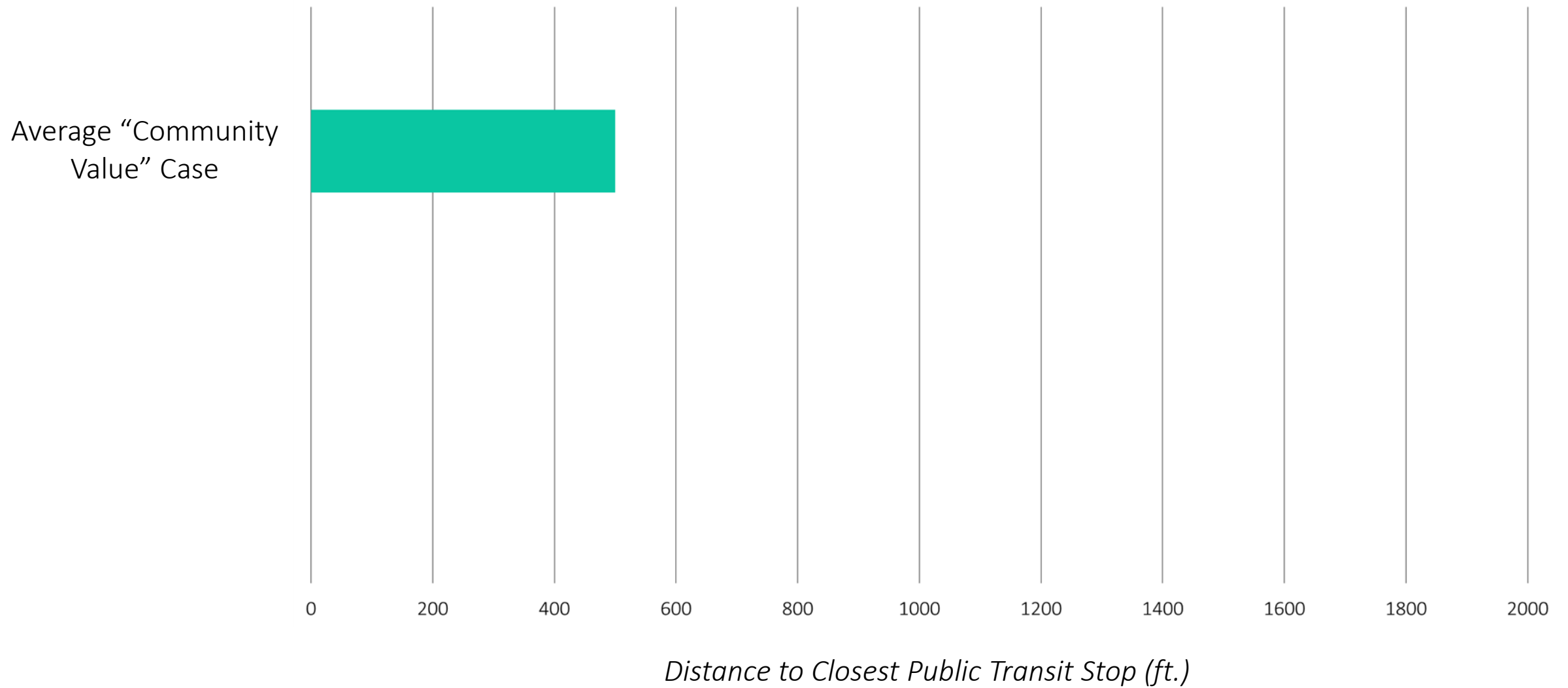
And two more “urnite” articles in 1929. After that we were unable to locate more “urnite” articles.

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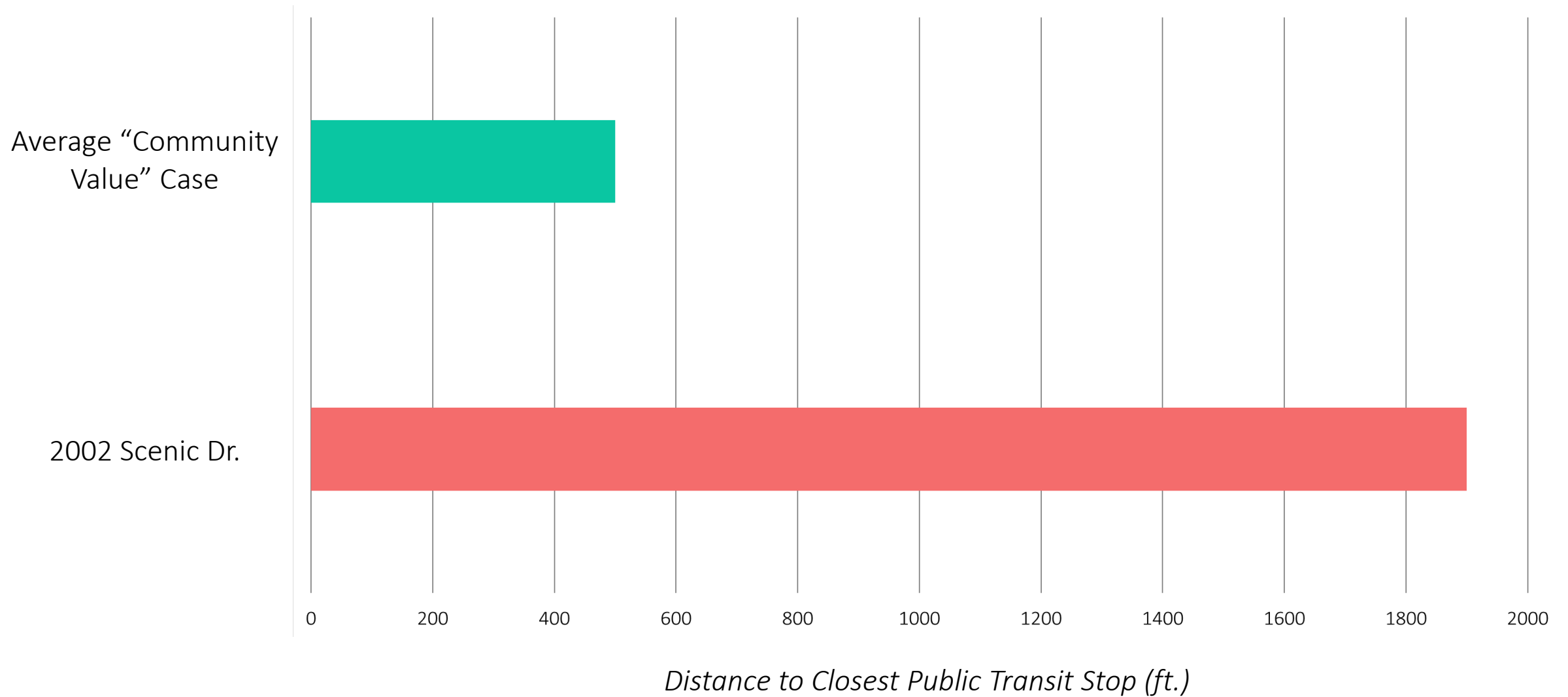
“Community Value” Factors	Precedential Cases
Accessible Location	✓
Visually Accessible	✓
Publicly Accessible / Public Purpose	✓
Connection to Black or Latinx History	✓

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We reviewed every historic zoning case in the city’s system over the past decade in order to determine precedent for what constituted “Community Value.”



"Community Value" cases tend to be accessible to the broader Austin community.



2002 Scenic is nearly four times farther away from public transit than the average "Community Value" case.

Population in  
WANG Boundaries

14,000

12,000

10,000

8,000

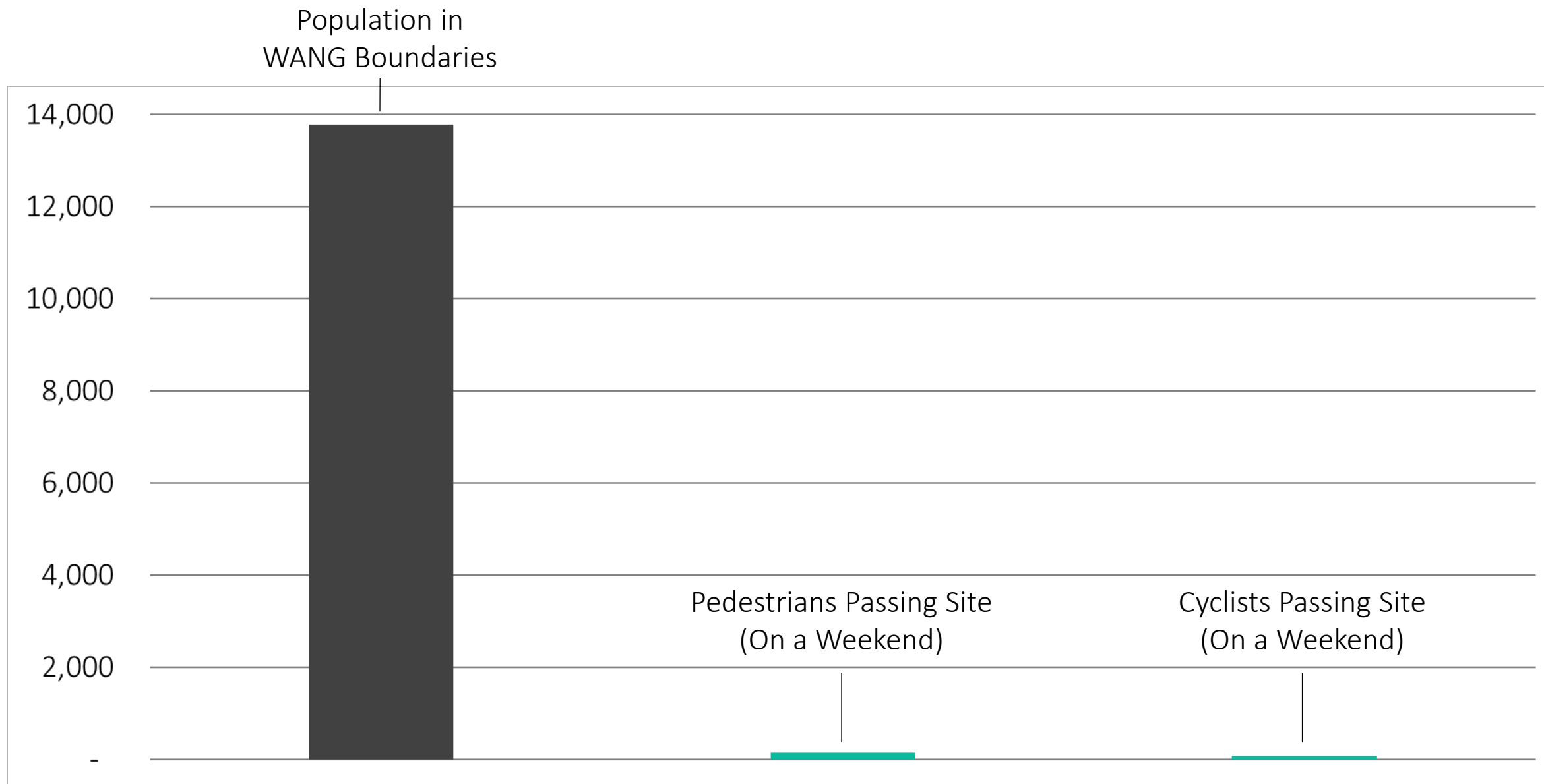
6,000

4,000

2,000

-

According to the Census Bureau, there are a little bit less than 14,000 people  
in the neighborhood (West Austin Neighborhood Group).



Yet a transportation study found only 151 pedestrians and 66 cyclists passing this property over an entire weekend (48 hours, Saturday and Sunday). Combined, that is less than 2 percent of the neighborhood.



Virtually all “Community Value” cases (over 90 percent) were visually accessible from public right-of-way.



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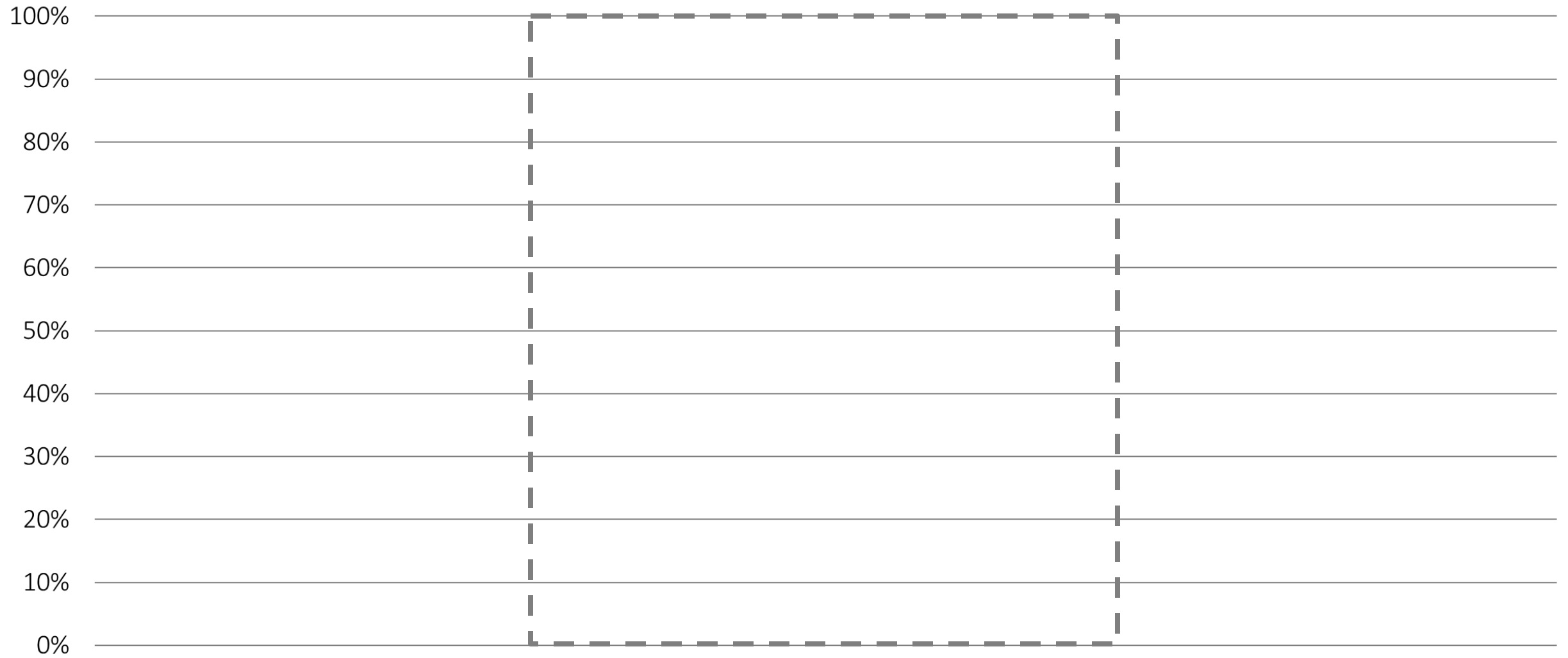
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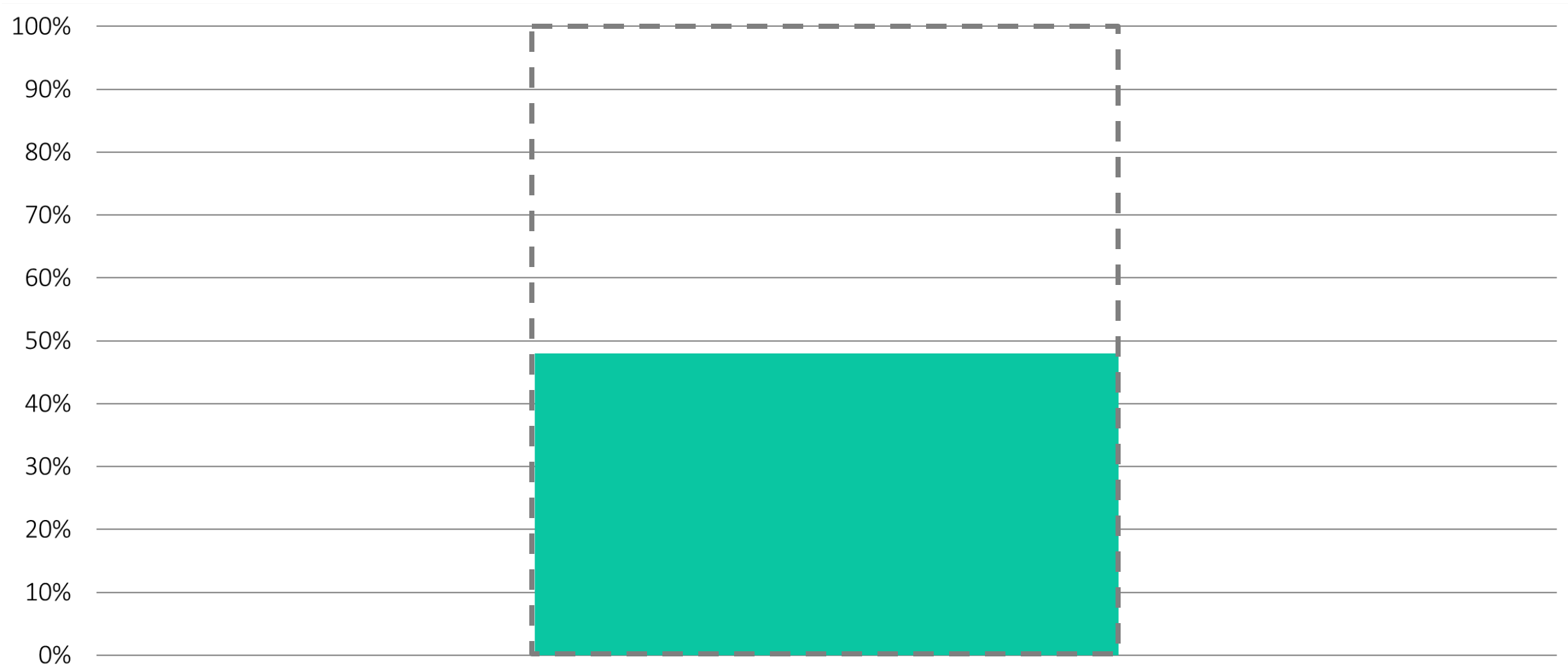
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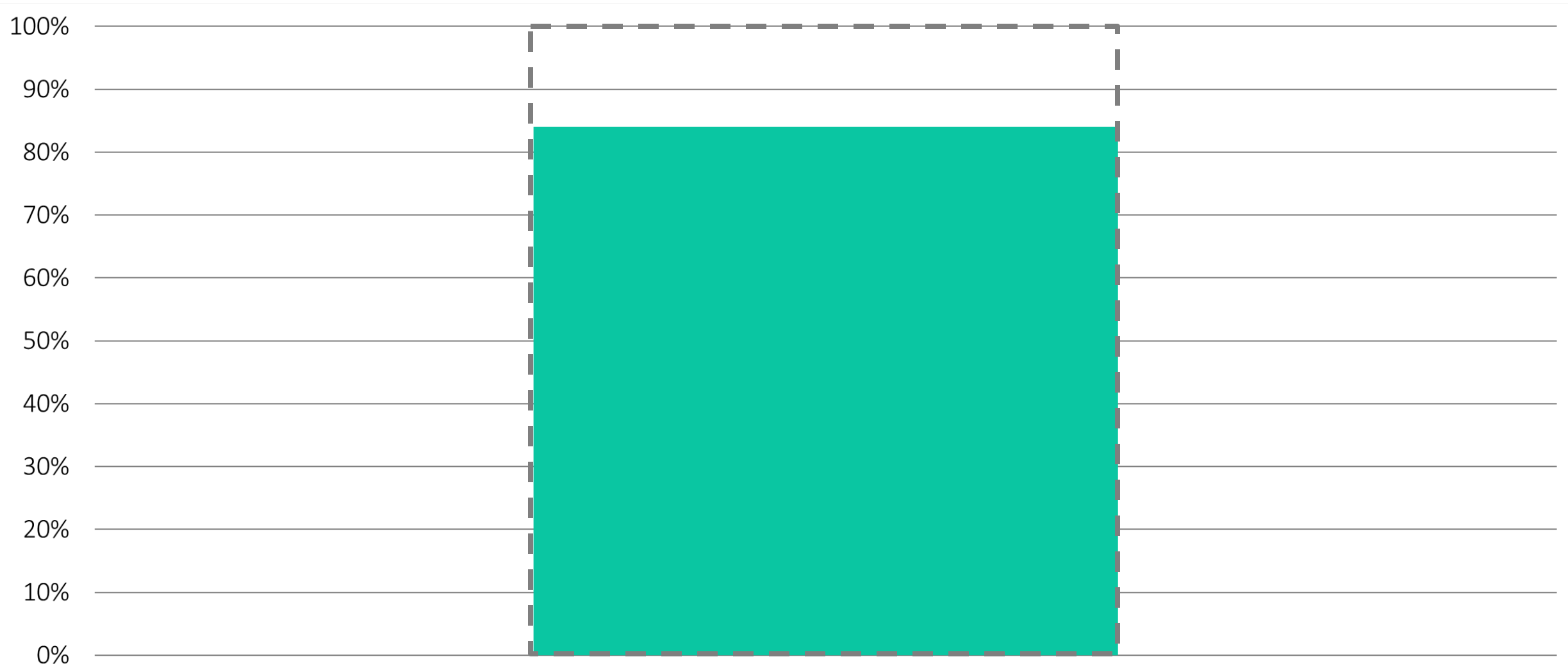
Unlike virtually all “Community Value” cases, 2002 Scenic is not visually accessible for the public.



We evaluated every historic zoning case over the past decade to determine what constituted “Community Value.”



Most “Community Value” cases either involved a landmark that was publicly accessible or had a public purpose...



... or was part of the history of the Black or Latinx communities.  
Very few cases did not include one or more of these factors.

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“Community Value” Factors	Precedential Cases
Accessible Location	✓
Visually Accessible	✓
Publicly Accessible / Public Purpose	✓
Connection to Black or Latinx History	✓

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We reviewed every historic zoning case in the city’s system over the past decade in order to determine precedent for what constituted “Community Value.”

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“Community Value” Factors	2002 Scenic Dr.
Accessible Location	X
Visually Accessible	X
Publicly Accessible / Public Purpose	X
Connection to Black or Latinx History	X

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2002 Scenic Dr. does not meet any of these factors –  
and is an extreme outlier among “Community Value” precedents.

# Rationale for 2002 Scenic

Architecture

?

Historical Association

x

Archaeology

x

Community Value

x

Landscape Feature

x

This case does not meet at least two of the above criteria.



Back-Up Slides

## Precedent

Designed By: Hugh McMath

- Professor of Architecture (UT)
- Director of School of Architecture
- President of Central Texas AIA

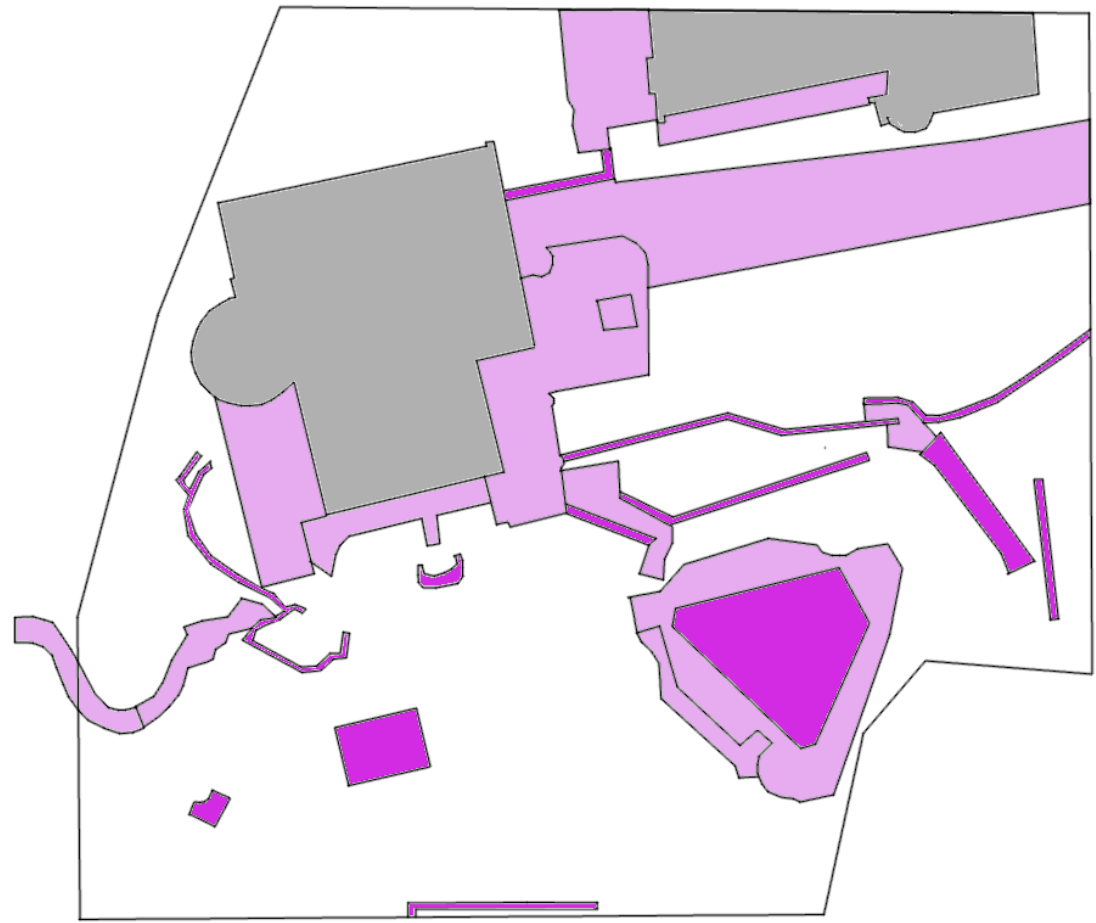
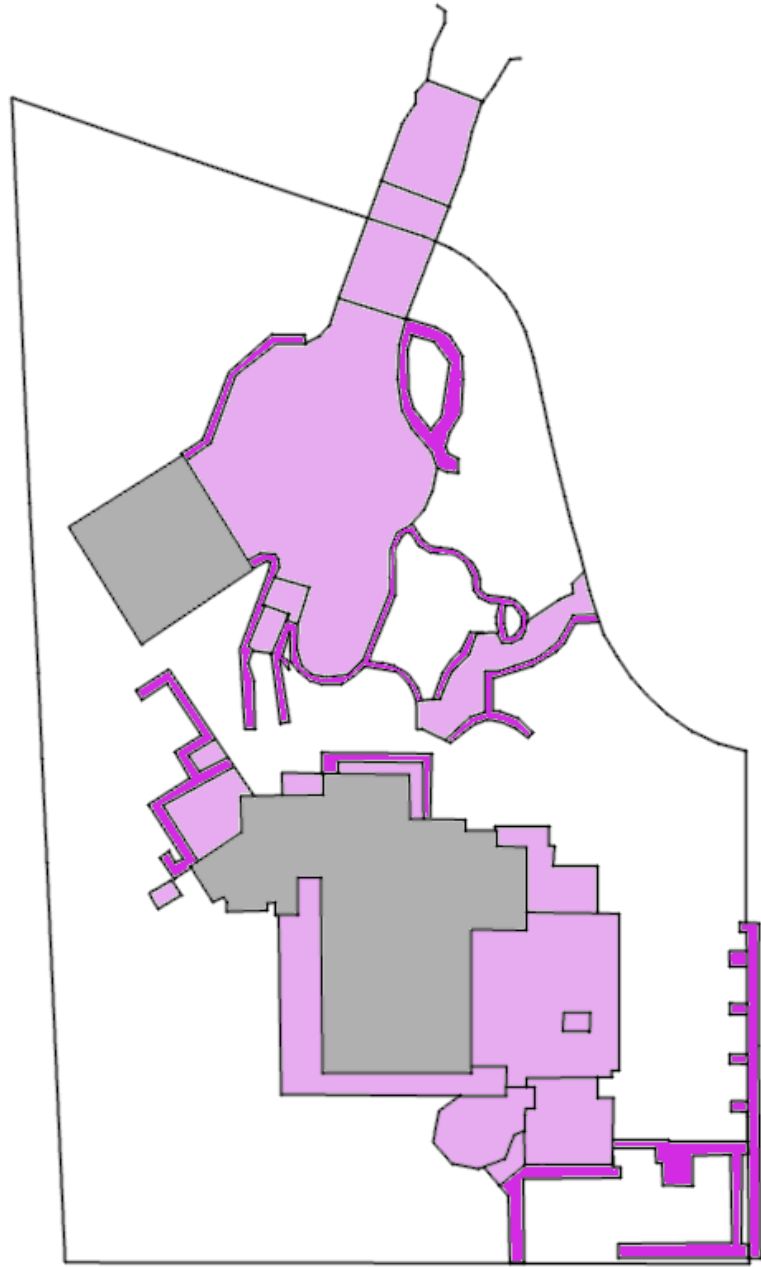
Staff Report: “Although Hugh McMath did not design this house, his interventions quite literally take a modernist architectural form and seek to ground it, both through integration into the landscape and borrowing from regional architectural traditions.”

## 2002 Scenic

Designed By: ?

Staff Report: “Landscape features, including arched bridge and bench, appear to incorporate Delisle’s Urnite material.”

The staff report’s rationale focuses on the unverified assumption that certain common yard amenities may incorporate “urnite” – a short-lived material without historic significance.





2002 Scenic is not accessible to the community.  
It is located on an isolated West Austin street – and fronts onto the lake, far away from the right-of-way.

### Staff Presentation:

“Struggle as I have to come up with a second criterion to recommend historic zoning for this house, I have not been able to do it.

Professor Sellstrom – as far as I can tell, in conversations I have had and research that I’ve done – his career has not been as noteworthy and significant as we generally look for when we’re designating a house as a historic landmark.

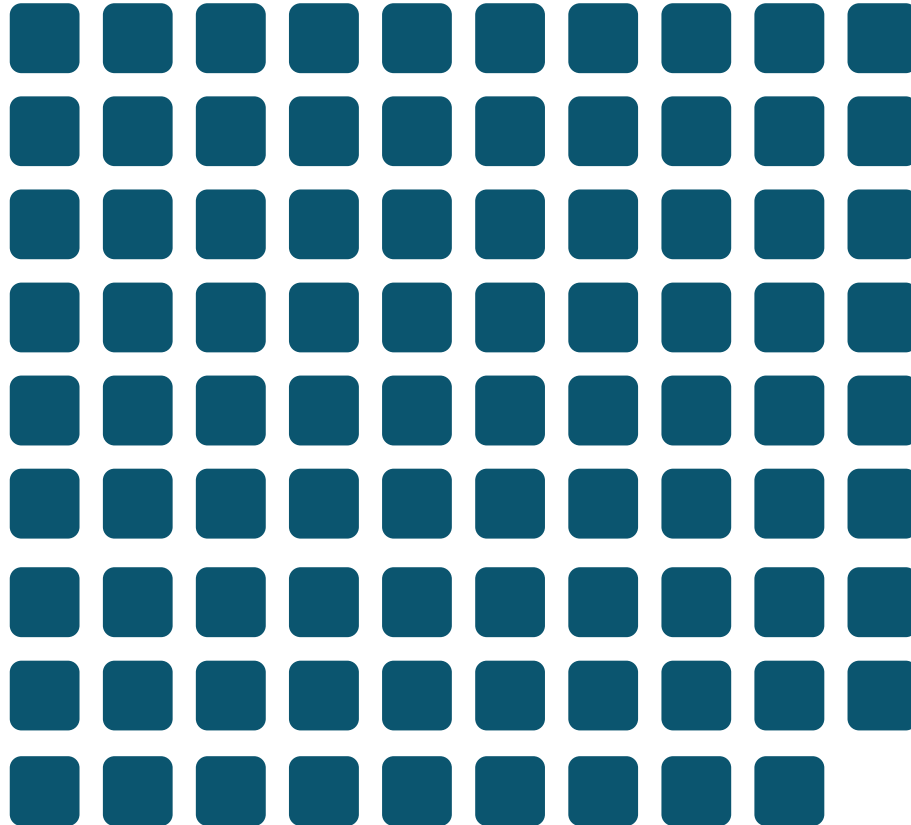
We have to look at both the architecture – where, I think we have architecture here in spades, I mean there’s no doubt about it – but the Historic Associations, in staff’s opinion, are just not there.

...

I don’t know that it could qualify as a historic landmark – especially with owner opposition.”

# HISTORIC ASSOCIATION

Cases WITH “Historic Association”

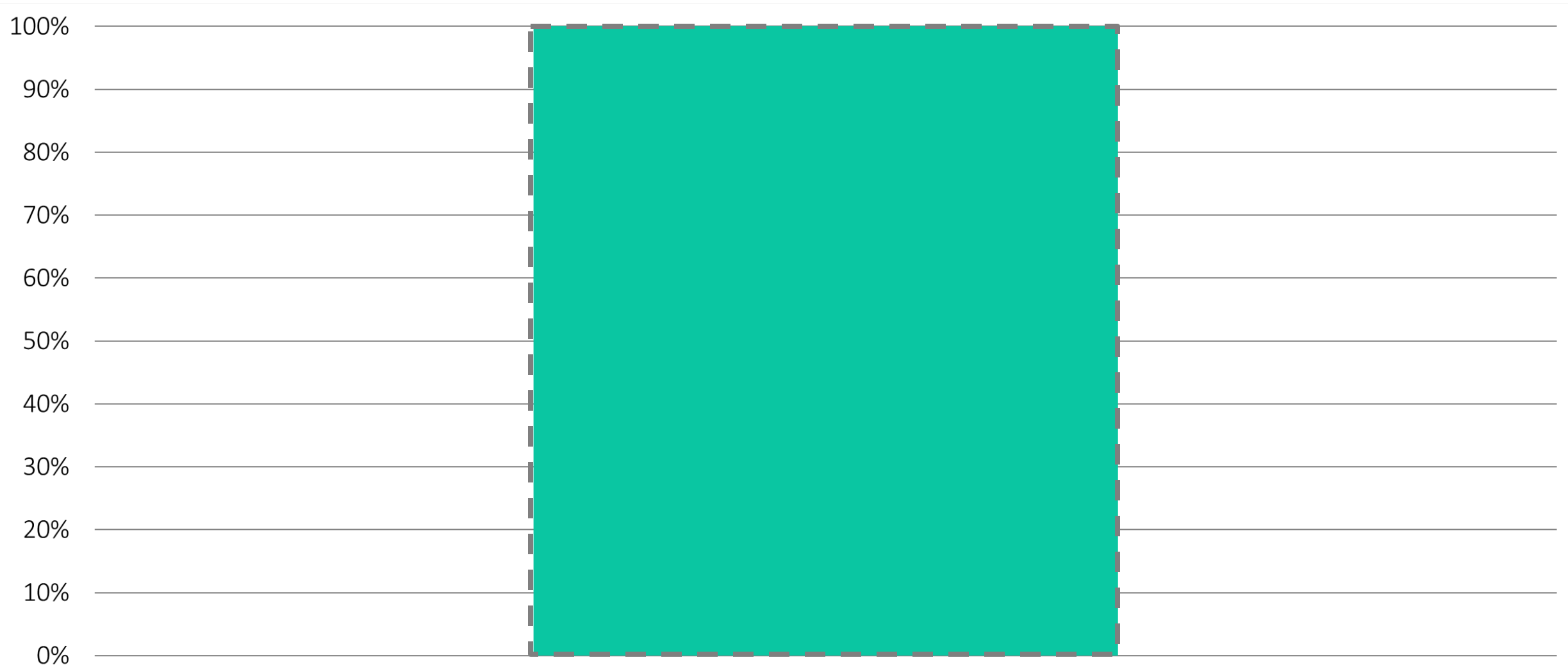


Cases With NO “Historic Association”



Historic Zoning Cases (2011-2022)

It is highly unusual to have an historic landmark case in which there is no historic association.



And all of the “Community Value” cases that Council actually approved included at least one of these factors.

The property appears to have a significant and unique designed landscape with aesthetic and historical value. Some landscape features, including the arched bridge and bench, appear to incorporate Delisle's Urnite material. This material is rare today. Additionally, the landscape designed by Delisle specifically relates to his architectural vision for the house, with meandering walks, an expansive lawn, and an early swimming pool built into the hillside topography to provide a river view.

The staff report's rationale focuses on purely speculative claims about Delisle and "urnite" – a short-lived material without historic significance.

