

ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2022-0176

HLC DATE: March 1, 2023 PC DATE: March 28, 2023 CC Date: April 20, 2023 (tentative)

APPLICANT: Historic Preservation Office--initiated by City Council

HISTORIC NAME: The Broken Spoke

WATERSHED: West Bouldin Creek

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 3201 S. Lamar Blvd.

ZONING CHANGE: CS to CS-H

ZONING OVERLAYS/NPA: ADU Approximate Area Reduced Parking, Wildland Urban Interface: Proximity Class - Within 1.5 miles of a Wildland Area; South Lamar NPA

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 5

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from commercial services (CS) to commercial services-historic landmark (CS-H) combining district zoning for the building footprint.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION: Community value, architecture, and historical associations

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION: Recommend the proposed zoning change from commercial services (CS) to commercial services-historic landmark (CS-H) combining district zoning.(9-0 with 1 recusal).

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: TBD

CITY COUNCIL ACTION: November 2, 2022: Initiate historic zoning per Resolution No. 20221103-081.

CASE MANAGER: Kalan Contreras

PHONE: 512-974-2727

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS: Austin Independent School District, Austin Lost and Found Pets, Austin Neighborhoods Council, Friends of Austin Neighborhoods, Homeless Neighborhood Association, Neighborhood Empowerment Foundation, Perry Grid 614, Preservation Austin, SELTexas, Save Our Springs Alliance, Sierra Club, Austin Regional Group, South Central Coalition, TNR BCP - Travis County Natural Resources

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Historic zoning was initiated on the Broken Spoke by Council [Resolution No. 20221103-081](#), sponsored by former District 5 Councilmember Kitchen's office. The resolution text states:

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin plan states that creativity is a cornerstone of Austin's identity and economic prosperity, and that arts, culture, and creativity are essential keys to the City's unique and distinctive identity, and further are valued as vital contributors to our community's character, quality of life and economy, and collectively, the Austin Music and creative ecosystem generates rich, social, cultural, and economic benefits; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 20201203-046 created the Iconic Venue Fund to preserve and protect iconic music venues that have defined the landscape of Austin as the Live Music Capital of the World. Mentioned in the resolution was: Historic Scoot Inn, Victory Grill, The Broken Spoke, Continental Club, Hole in the Wall, Antone's, Stubb's, The Little Longhorn Saloon, Threadgill's Donn's Depot, Saxon Pub, Elephant Room, Mohawk, The White Horse Honky Tonk, Joe's Bakery and Coffee Shop, Sam's BBQ, and Cisco's; and

WHEREAS, since its founding on November 11, 1964, by James White, The Broken Spoke has entertained legions of Austinites and visitors from around the globe, and helped shape the music career of many distinct country music superstars, as well as defined the character of the live music capital of the world; and

WHEREAS, the legions of performers include music legends like Bob Wills, Ernest Tubb, Tex Ritter and Kitty Wells, Jerry Jeff Walker, Kevin Fowler, Ray Benson of Asleep at the Wheel, Date Watson, Brian Hofeldt of the Derailers, Monte Warden of the Wagoneers, Bobby Earl Smith of the Jackalopes, Marcia Ball, Weldon Henson, Kevin Geil of Two Tons of Steel, as well as many others. Both Willie Nelson and George Strait started their careers at The Broken Spoke during the 1970s, and Dolly Parton also filmed her 1980 made-for-TV-movie "Wild Texas Wind" at The Broken Spoke; and

WHEREAS, the property has been represented in a variety of media and mementos, such as a photograph of Austin's Broken Spoke on the cover of George Strait's March 2019 album, Honky Tonk Time Machine, his 27th No. 1 Billboard country album; and

WHEREAS, The Broken Spoke maintains a museum of artifacts and souvenirs from the various performers, politicians and celebrities who have been at The Broken Spoke, documenting much of modern Texas and Austin history, including the legacy of Honky Tonk and similar dance halls throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, The Broken Spoke has received a Texas Historical Marker recognizing its long history from the founding by James White 58 years ago, and the venue continues to be operated by the White Family;

NOW, THEREFORE, WHEREAS, Resolution No. 20200521-095 acknowledged multiple steps taken by councils through time recognizing the essential nature and need to protect, preserve, and cultivate creative spaces with long-term and short-term relief as well as through creation of an economic development corporation (EDC), review of city owned assets and regional partnering, as well as bond funding mechanisms; and

WHEREAS, many of Austin's creative spaces continue to be lost or displaced due to Austin's continuing real estate boom, resulting in the loss of some of Austin's most significant creative cultural incubators and unique Austin character; and

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN: The City Council initiates the potential designation of The Broken Spoke as a Historical Landmark under City Code Section 25-2-352 (Historic Designation Criteria). As the area around The Broken Spoke has prospered, and significant development has occurred, it is imperative to secure this venue from a fate suffered by many venues in the City. Designating The Broken Spoke as a historic landmark will provide permanent protection to the structure and the operations of the venue. The Broken Spoke should be considered a historical landmark as it aligns with the following key criteria required to be considered: 1. The venue is more than 50 years old and retains the original integrity of its character of a classic Texas music and dance hall; 2. The property has significant associations with historical events, including famous performers, visitors, and events, and provides distinct community value as a cornerstone of Austin's live music scene; and 3. The Broken Spoke has long-standing significant associations with persons and groups of historic importance that contributed significantly to the history of the city and state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The City Council directs the City Manager to fully review and document the historic designation suitability, including any related documentation, to efficiently and effectively advance the property for Historic Landmark designation, and proceed through the Historic Landmark Commission, and the Planning Commission, and return to Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: This City Council requests that the work be done with a sense of urgency in order to protect and preserve the important institution within Austin and to align with the anticipated placement of the Historical Marker in April 2023. **ADOPTED:** November 3, 2022¹

ISSUES: The business and land are owned by two separate entities: Mrs. White, widow of Broken Spoke founder James White, retains control of the business; the landowner on file with the Travis Central Appraisal District is listed as HLLC CWS 704 SPE LLC Et Al.

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

§ 25-2-352(3)(c)(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.*

§ 25-2-352(3)(c)(ii) Historical Associations. *The property has long-standing significant associations with persons, groups,*

¹ Resolution No. 20221103-081, November 2022. <https://services.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=397902>

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.

§ 25-2-352(3)(c)(iv) Community Value. *The property has a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, a neighborhood, or a particular group.*

Council Resolution No. 20221103-081 describes the building's significance:

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A 2015 National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Broken Spoke by Kathryn Clarke expands upon its historical and architectural significance:

The Broken Spoke is a west-facing, rambling, one-story dance hall on South Lamar Avenue. It was built in late 1964 by owner James White as a simple restaurant serving chicken-fried steak, with a jukebox and a bar in the corner. It quickly became an important staple in the country music scene. The establishment attracted early attention with well-known classic country acts such as Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys, Roy Acuff, Merle Travis and his Westerners, Ernest Tubb, as well as a clean shaven and smartly dressed Willie Nelson in the late 1960s...White expanded the Spoke [in its first year of operation] with a bigger bar on the back and a larger dance hall behind the bar. By 1973, the Spoke was unique as the only "true" honky-tonk in the area that was open to new, local progressive country acts such as Alvin Crow & the Pleasant Valley Boys, Freda & the Firedogs, Asleep at the Wheel, Dolly Parton, Jerry Jeff Walker, and George Strait with Ace in the Hole. The Broken Spoke bridged the gap between classic Texas two-step country and the new style that attracted "longhairs."³ In the 1980s, it was popular with state legislators, who came for "Speaker Night" every Tuesday from the capital building and have passed several resolutions praising the establishment. The building itself is [a typical example of a] modest Texas honky-tonk dance hall, [with] the porch facade and dance floor being the most important aspects of the utilitarian one-story wood building. The Broken Spoke [meets] National Register Criterion A for its association with the Texas honky-tonk and country music scene and Criterion C for being a typical example of Texas vernacular dancehall architecture.⁴

Donna Marie Miller's 2017 book on the Broken Spoke's legacy notes its importance to the national country music scene:

When the Broken Spoke opened in 1964, it represented the last stop for civilization one mile south of what then served as Austin's city limits. More than 50 years later the dance hall endures as a legacy for a city that has grown up around it. It stands as the place in Austin where long-time legendary country entertainers, Bob Wills, Ernest Tubb, Roy Acuff, Tex Ritter, and Beecher Ray Kirby...performed on its hallowed stage...And it still stands as the place in Austin where more recent legendary country music entertainers come to perform. When co-founder James M. White died on January 24, 2021, he left behind a 57-year legacy of good music and good times...that lives on today.⁵

Finally, the Broken Spoke's State Historical Marker, erected in 1921, sums up its cultural importance:

In 1964, Austin native James M. White (1939-2021) opened a new dance hall and restaurant south of the city limits at a former lumberyard on South Lamar. It was designed in the style of a traditional honky tonk, and patrons danced to jukebox records and live bands on weekends. The Broken Spoke was so popular that White enlarged the facility with a dance hall and stage. He hired local bands from all over the Austin area, and soon country music legends like Bob Wills, Ernest Tubb, Tex Ritter and Kitty Wells played here. Performances by continuing generations of musicians and appearances in movies, songs, music videos and travel articles helped to make the Broken Spoke a cultural treasure.⁶

PARCEL NO.: 0403100139

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: ABS 14 SUR 21 HILL H P ACR 0.8813

² Ibid.

³ Blackstock, Peter. "50 Years Later, the Broken Spoke Still Stands." The Washington Times, Associated Press: 9 Nov. 2014.

⁴ Clarke, Kathryn. "The Broken Spoke." National Register nomination. University of Texas at Austin, 2015.

⁵ Miller, Donna Marie. *The Broken Spoke: Austin's Legendary Honky-Tonk*. Texas A&M University Press, 2017.

⁶ "Details for Broken Spoke Historical Marker--Atlas Number 5000023384." Texas Historical Commission, 2021. <https://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/Details/5000023384>

ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX EXEMPTION

PARCEL: \$10,607.28 total (non-homestead, no cap); city portion: \$3,561.87

*BUILDING + FOOTPRINT: \$3,168.54 (non-homestead, no cap); city portion: \$1,063.98

**Travis Central Appraisal District determines amount of land needed for footprints and building access for partial rezoning.*

APPRAISED VALUE: \$2,979,207 (entire parcel); \$100,000 (improvement only); \$819,802 (improvement and footprint)

PRESENT USE: dance hall/bar

DATE BUILT/PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: ca. 1964; 1964-1973

INTEGRITY/ALTERATIONS: High. In Donna Marie Miller's 2017 book on the Broken Spoke, she notes that "the Broken Spoke remains authentic after more than 50 years. The roof leaked for 25 years until it was replaced in 1989. One of the only structural renovations occurred after October 2, 2005, when a driver for The Geezinslaw Brothers band tour bus drove it through the back wall...it took four days to remove it."⁷

PRESENT OWNERS:

Land: HLLC CWS 704 SPE LLC Et Al., 14 Corporate Plaza Ste. 210, Newport Beach, CA 92660-7928

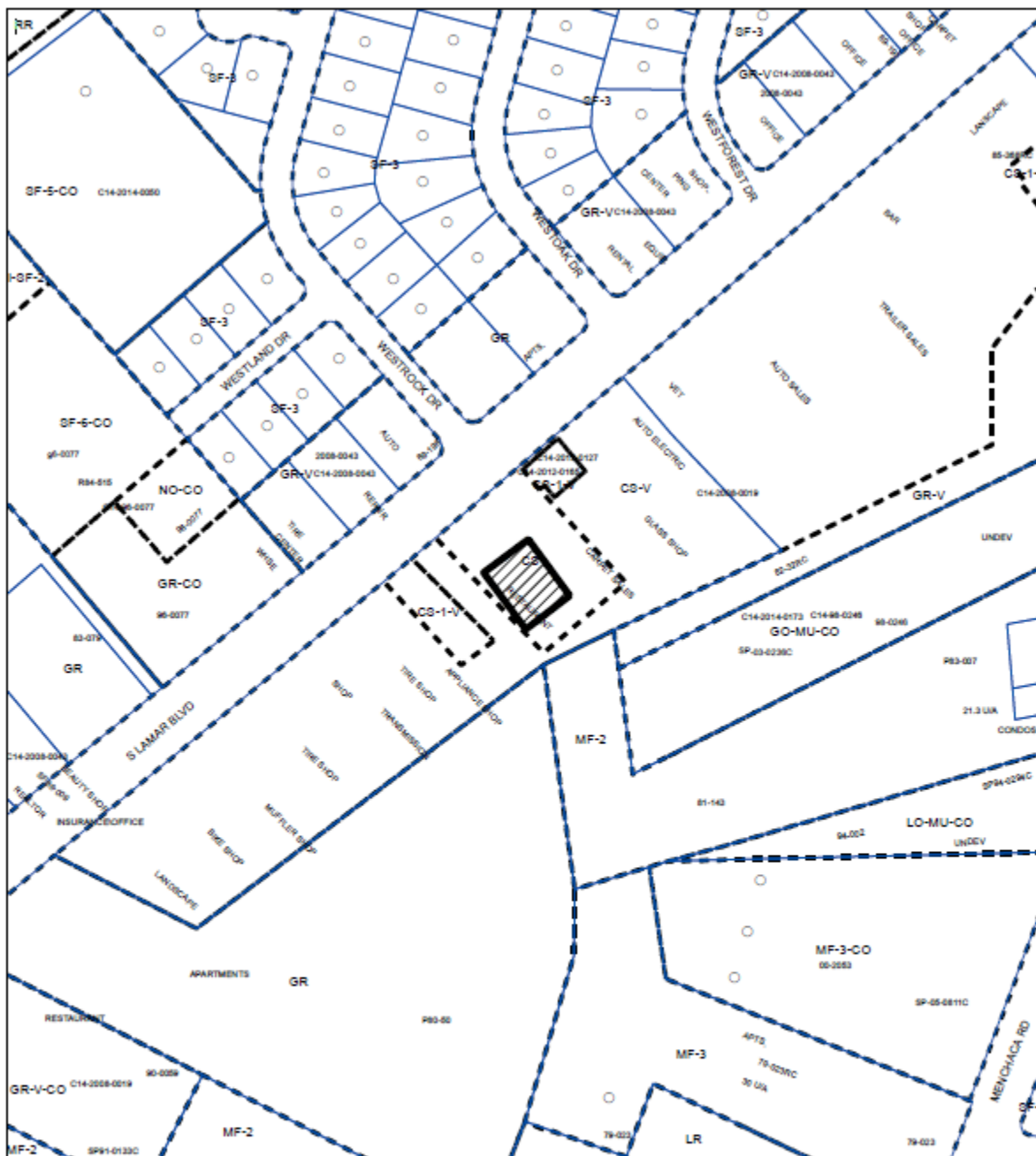
Business: Annetta White


ORIGINAL OWNER(S): James M. and Annetta White

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: Pending Texas State Historical Marker (2023)

⁷ Miller, 2017.

LOCATION MAP



-  N
-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

HISTORIC ZONING
ZONING CASE#: C14H-2022-0176

1" = 200'

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