

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION**  
**PERMITS IN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICTS**  
**APRIL 5, 2023**  
**HR-2023-032962**  
**ZILKER PARK NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT**  
**2131 WILLIAM BARTON DRIVE**

## **PROPOSAL**

Rehabilitate and update historic bathhouse.

## **PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS**

- 1) Repair all exterior masonry using limestone and mortar to match existing materials and configuration. Stabilize for flood load with stainless steel vents and stiffener rods.
- 2) Restore the building entry to the historic rotunda, creating new door openings at the entry and pool sides of the rotunda and retaining existing openings.
- 3) Install an exhibit sign at the main entry with LED display.
- 4) Restore the historic spectator gallery, removing non-original raised paving, railings, and steps.
- 5) Add seasonal entries at the east and west ends of the bathhouse.
- 6) Consolidate rooftop equipment and remove old equipment. Install louvered screens.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

Designed by Austin architect Dan J. Driscoll, the bath house displays distinctive Moderne characteristics that signifies post-Depression era park development.

## **RESEARCH**

The Zilker Park National Register nomination describes the bathhouse as an integral part of the district and the endcap for its period of significance:

Zilker Park alone was a well-developed municipal park exhibiting an impressive number of amenities. By integrating Barton Springs Park, with its bathing facility, playfields, and playgrounds, into the complementary Zilker Park, per master plan suggestions, the larger, combined reservation could offer an even better array of functions and serve a greater number of persons. Critical to Zilker's development was its timing relative to pressing national events, i.e. the Great Depression and federally-funded programs, which were significantly responsible for its comprehensive, high-dollar, labor-intensive, swift-paced development. Additionally, the park was then ready for an influx of patrons brought to Austin for work associated with World War II. The construction of the current Barton Springs Bath House in 1947 denotes the end of the period of significance and the 50-year cut-off for National Register eligibility. Designed by Austin architect Dan J. Driscoll, the bath house displays distinctive Moderne characteristics that signifies post-Depression era park development. Later development of Zilker Park reflects the continued use of the park as an important nature and recreational facility.[...] The Zilker Park Historic District, which encompasses these two parks and includes the Barton Springs Archeological and Historical District, constitutes a significant entity representing the history of park development and planning in Austin during the period of significance.<sup>1</sup>

The bathhouse has been somewhat altered over its lifespan, but retains its overall integrity. According to the applicant's research, "The Barton Springs Bathhouse was constructed in 1947 after a previous wooden structure, installed in 1922, was destroyed by flood. Its original service design included a mechanized basket system that was removed circa 1968 after another flood damaged the system. About this time the primary entrance was moved from the rotunda to the southeast corner of the building where it remains today. Several other alterations have been made to enhance accessibility and service to the pool. In 1998 the Beverly Sheffield Educational Center and the Splash! aquifer exhibits were added within the original basket room area."<sup>2</sup>

## **DESIGN STANDARDS**

The City of Austin's [Historic Design Standards](#) (March 2021) are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and are used to evaluate projects in National Register districts. The following standards apply to the proposed

<sup>1</sup> "Zilker Park Historic District." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/97000479/97000479.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Scope of Work. Application, 2023.

project:

Repair and alterations

*1. General standards*

The project removes minimal historic material and repairs historic elements.

*3. Roofs*

Proposed louvered screens appear appropriate.

*4. Exterior walls and trim*

Proposed masonry repair appears appropriate.

*5. Windows, doors, and screens*

Proposed new windows and doors appear mostly appropriate.

Institutional buildings

*1. General standards*

The project largely preserves the building's historic character through repair and maintenance of historic materials.

Guidelines for Signs in National Register Historic Districts or at a City Historic Landmark

*Lighting: Lighting must be indirect, and may be accomplished through shielded incandescent lights attached to the top of the sign, "halo" lighting, or recessed can lighting in awnings. Internally-lit cabinet signs are not allowed for signs on historic buildings or within the historic districts.*

The proposed scope of work specifies internal LED-lit signage, which is not allowed in the National Register district.

Summary

The project meets the applicable standards except for the provision on sign lighting.

**PROPERTY EVALUATION**

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The property contributes to the Zilker Park National Register district.

*Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark*

- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.
- 2) The building appears to retain high integrity.
- 3) Properties must meet two criteria for landmark designation (LDC §25-2-352). Staff has evaluated the property and determined that it may meet two criteria:
  - a. Architecture. The building is a good example of Moderne-style architecture, and is representative of post-Depression park architecture.
  - b. Historical association. The property is associated with the Reform Park Movement and the development of Zilker Park as a hub of recreation in Austin.
  - c. Archaeology. The property was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
  - d. Community value. The property possesses a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, the neighborhood, or a particular demographic group.
  - e. Landscape feature. The building is within a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

**COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

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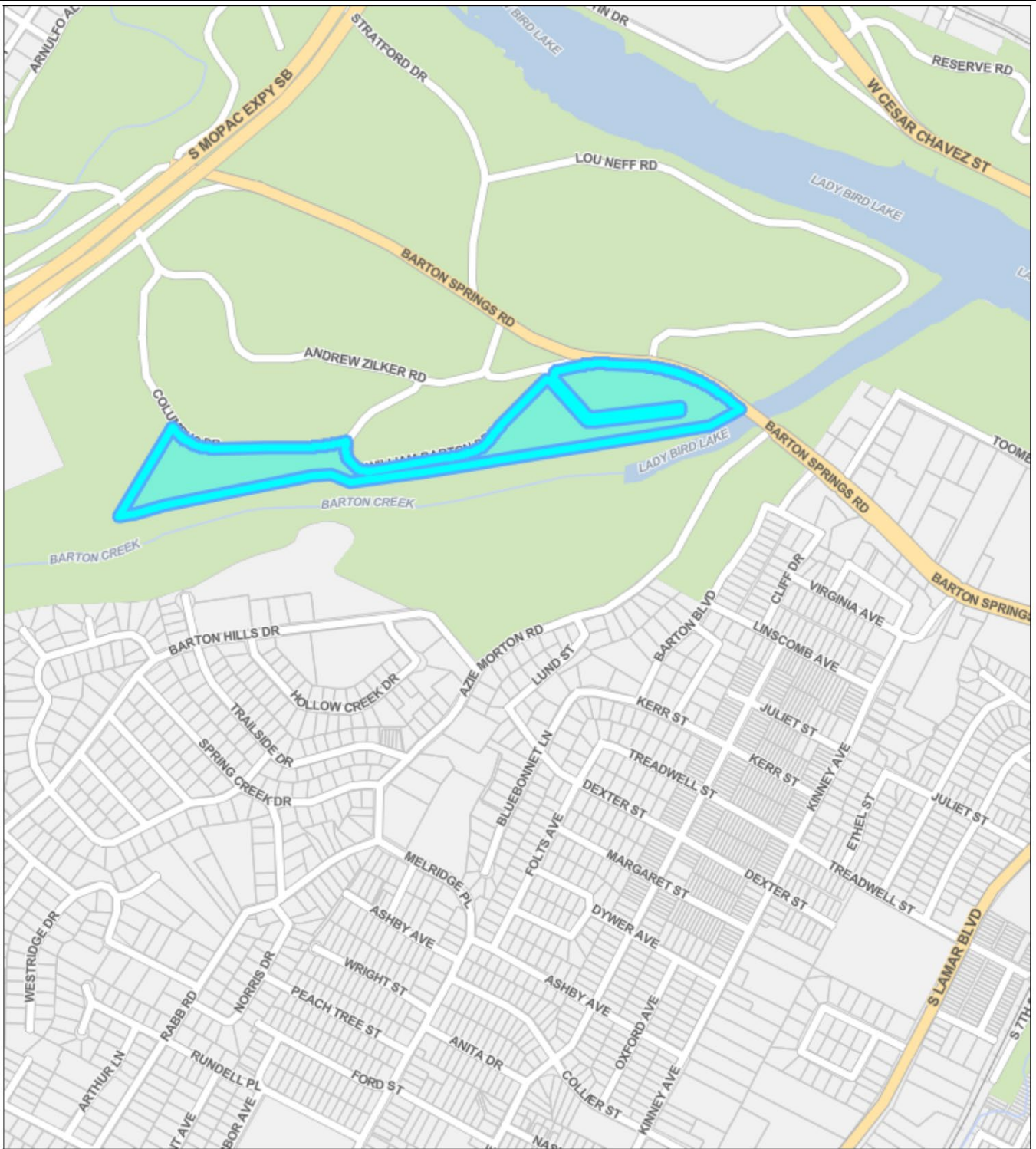
The application was presented to the Architectural Review Committee in February of 2023.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Comment on and release plans, encouraging the applicant to move lit sign indoors.

## LOCATION MAP



1: 9600

3/22/2023

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2131 WILLIAM BARTON DR



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