

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
DECEMBER 13, 2023
PR-2023-138200; GF-2023-147641
6804 MESA DRIVE

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1962 house.

ARCHITECTURE

Mid-century Modern house designed by architect David Barrow, Jr. The Austin American notes its U-shaped plan around a central courtyard, expansive sliding glass doors and walls, and long covered porch.¹

RESEARCH

The house at 6804 Mesa Drive was constructed in 1962 by David B. Barrow and designed by architect David B. Barrow, Jr. for the 1962 Parade of Homes. Barrow and his father, David Barrow, Sr.—a long-time developer, realtor, and Planning Commissioner—were instrumental in establishing the Northwest Hills neighborhood and promoting its picturesque, hilled landscape as an ideal place for midcentury luxury homes. Barrow, Jr. studied under Harwell Hamilton Harris at the University of Texas and was the only student who went on to work for Harris’ Dallas firm as an associate. He joined Chuck Stahl to form Barrow & Stahl in the 1960s. David Barrow, Sr. and his associates in the Austin Corporation employed Barrow & Stahl for most of the planning and engineering services as Northwest Hills developed.²

6804 Mesa was named the “Far Hills View Home” in the 1962 Parade of Homes. “Planned especially for its site,” reads the Austin American article featuring the home and its role in the Parade, “Far Hills View Home has been expertly constructed to blend with its surroundings.”³ In her National Register nomination for another Northwest Hills model home, Karen Twer discusses the importance of the Parade of Homes in Austin’s development history:

By building model houses for events like the Parade of Homes, builders and developers could highlight the attractive and livable qualities of their volume-built houses and market new suburban developments to masses of potential homebuyers. As a kind of conceptual show window, their model houses needed to be centrally located...Not bounded by the existing urban landscape, developers could create the kind of neighborhoods second-time middle-class homebuyers were seeking. By hosting Parade of Homes events in outlying areas of growing cities, developers and builders were influential in shaping the suburban development of expanding cities like Austin. [...] Builders and developers relied on architects to design the kind of distinctive houses that would rival custom-built houses...Model houses built for the Parade of Homes were collaborative interpretations of the kind of modern domestic lifestyle homebuyers dreamt of...In the 1960s, [Austin’s] Parade of Homes events continued focusing on largely undeveloped areas south and northwest of the city. In 1961, it was in Highland Hills, a neighborhood nestled between what is today the Mopac Expressway and Northwest Hills. In 1962, the event was held in David Barrow Sr.’s Northwest Hills development.... In addition to the spectacle the events provided Austinites, Austin builders and developers understood the mass-marketing opportunity the Parade of Homes offered.⁴

During the 1970s, commercial real estate developer and broker Raymond Brown lived in the home. Brown, who appears to have been a close associate of the Barrows, also served as director of the Northwest Savings Association alongside David Barrow, Sr. and David Barrow, Jr.

PROPERTY EVALUATION

Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark

- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.
- 2) The building appears to retain high to moderate integrity. Windows were replaced in 2012, though it is not clear if openings were altered at that time.

¹ The Austin American (1914-1973); Austin, Tex.. 04 Nov 1962: D7.

² Barnes, Michael. “Life flourishes on both sides of Northwest Hills in Austin.” 2008. statesman.com/story/news/2018/06/27/life-flourishes-on-both-sides-of-northwest-hills-in-austin/9997730007

³ The Austin American (1914-1973); Austin, Tex.. 04 Nov 1962: D7.

⁴ Twer, Karen. “National Register Nomination Form: 4022 Greenhill Place.” 2019.

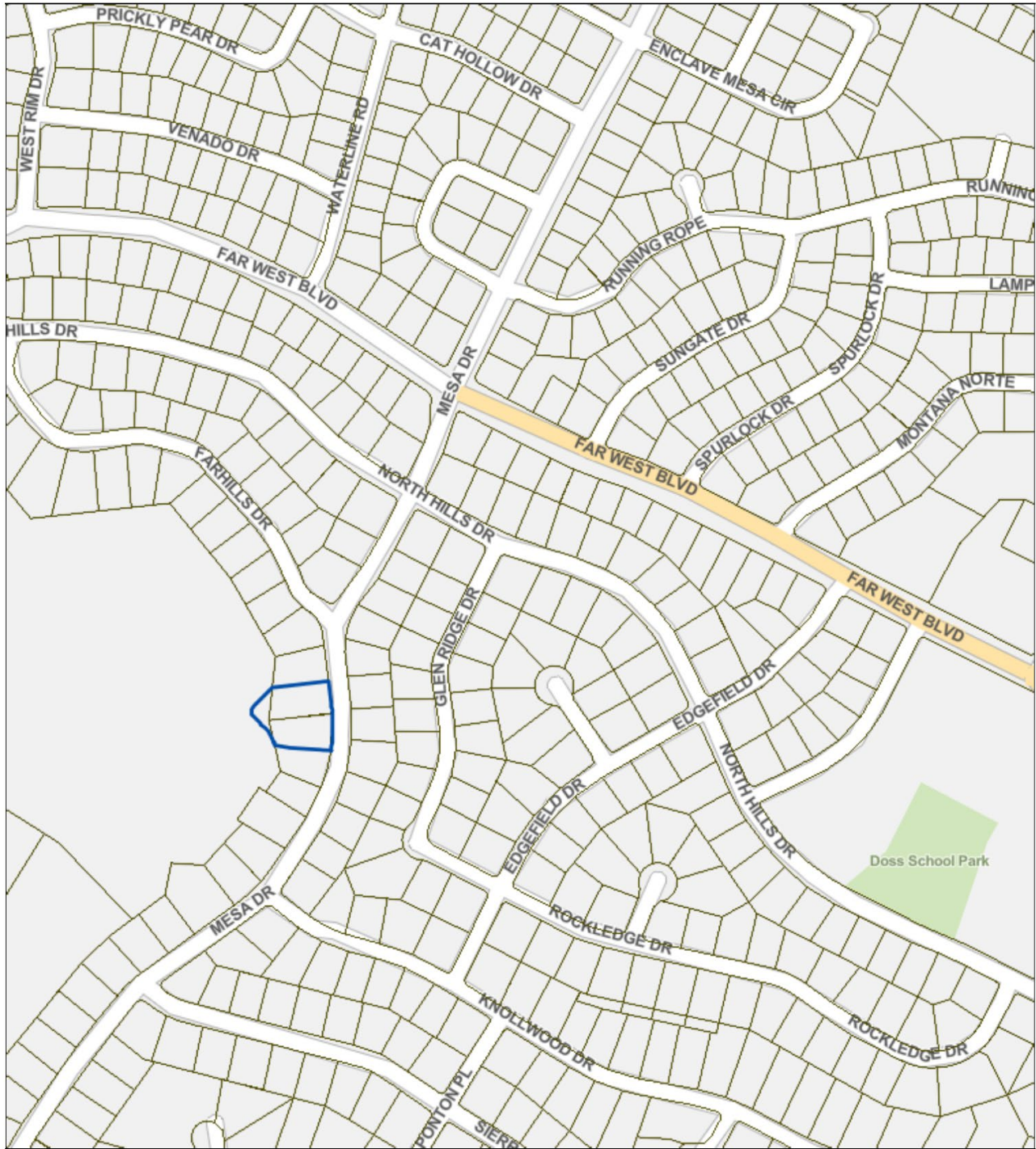
<https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/Austin%2C%20The%20Hanako%20NR%20SBR%20Draft.pdf>

- 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 an example of mid-century Modern design by architect David Barrow Jr. for the 1962 Parade of Homes, prior to his collaboration with Chuck Stahl; together, Barrow and Stahl provided most of the planning and engineering services for the Austin Corporation's developing Northwest Hills area. Its distinct U-shaped plan is designed to respond to the lot's topography.
 - b. Historical association. The property appears to be associated with Raymond Brown, real estate developer, broker, and director of the Northwest Savings Association alongside David Barrow Sr. and David Barrow Jr. Furthermore, it is associated with the early period of development into the Northwest Hills area of Austin, emblematic of the city's postwar changes in development patterns, including the construction of MoPac. The building exemplifies the goals of the Parade of Homes: architect-designed and sited to impress, the Far Hills View Home represented an excellent marketing opportunity for the Barrows and their booming residential development business.
 - 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 was not evaluated for its ability to convey 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 property may represent a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city. The building was specifically designed to suit the hilly site, and landscape elements intentionally placed to respond to the topography and increase privacy to the large-windowed house.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Consider initiation of historic zoning. Should the Commission decide against historic zoning, release the demolition permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package.

LOCATION MAP



Lot Lines
Lot Line

GF 23-147641
6804 MESA DRIVE



11/29/2023

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey. This product has been produced by the City of Austin for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.

PROPERTY INFORMATION*Photos*



Demolition permit application, 2023





Google Street View, 2023

Occupancy History

City Directory Research, November 2023

Directory research not available for this address

Historical Information

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Austin, Texas

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 31 May 1948: 13.
The Austin American (1914-1973); Austin, Tex.. 17 July 1955: C13
The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 31 Jan 1957: 62.

pg. D9



austin's 1962 parade of homes located in beautiful northwest hills

Furnished Model Homes By:

Walter Carrington

6806 Glenn Ridge
"La Casa Colina" as its name indicates, is a home with a Spanish flavor and an inviting wrought iron entrance gate that opens into a beautifully landscaped, walled garden. The home's warmly sophisticated decor is sure to charm you. As for "quality" . . . the name Carrington is assurance enough.

Decorated by Genevieve Biddood • Furnished by Cabanis-Brown

Nash Phillips-Copus

4022 North Hills Drive
The "Chateau Tauraine" is constructed of antique brick and can boast of being the only home in the Parade of Homes with three garages (one of which could easily be converted to a special room . . . or used for boat storage). This is only one of a dozen unique highlights that go into meriting the "N.P.C." title.

Decorated by Nancy Peavy • Furnished by Gage Furniture Co.

Lloyd McLean

6813 Mesa Drive
Unique styling with an Oriental motif mark this home for a "special rating" in the Parade. Idas my the roomful are spaciouly zoned between the home's formal garden-entry and bamboo fenced sun garden just off th master bedroom. An elegant family room, hide-away refreshment bar and elaborate kitchen are only part of this home's story.

Decorated by Amor Forwood • Furnished by Louis Shanks

George MacDonald

6805 Mesa Drive
A new world of Southwestern living is influenced by old world Spanish villas in this warm and gracious "Casa Delicia" (house of delight). From the front plaza-patio, with center fountain, you pass through hand carved doors, imparted from Mexico, into a two-story home of elegance and excitement . . . and the MacDonald tradition of excellence in every room.

Decorated by Nelson Bredthauer • Furnished by Louis Shanks

David B. Barrow

6804 Mesa Drive
The "Far Hills View Home," does indeed live up to its name, for it is situated on the crest of one of Northwest Hill's highest points. Architect David B. Barrow, Jr., has skillfully zoned over 6,000 sq. ft. under the roof in the home's U-shaped design and every foot is planned to take advantage of scenic surroundings.

Decorated by Leon Peik • Furnished by Louis Shanks

Wallace Mayfield

6803 Mesa Drive
A divided walk wraps itself around a small brick garden before it merges into a winding invitation to visit this white brick, French Provincial home. Loaded glass doors, with matching panels, beckon to th interior of the highest construction that makes this Mayfield home outstanding.

Decorated by Carlyle Schelle • Furnished by Louis Shanks

Bob Connelly

6903 Mesa Drive
Texas comfort in country-style is the theme of this antique brick home with thatched-type, wood shingled roof. Fruitwood wall-covering in the family room (and study) eliminates tiresome sameness that is also broken with an elevated corner fireplace and flanking brick seats. A breakfast room and kitchen of modern appliances add still more to this fine home.

Interior Colors by Peggy Connelly • Furnished by House of Maple

William B. Acker

6808 Mesa Drive
A truly luxurious home, situated on a corner lot, the contemporary design is carried out with tan brick construction. A faint touch of the Orient is suggested with Japanese style front doors and a foyer fountain. On th garden side, there is a free-form swimming pool and a sweeping view of Northwest Hills and its valleys.

Decorations by Ann Weber

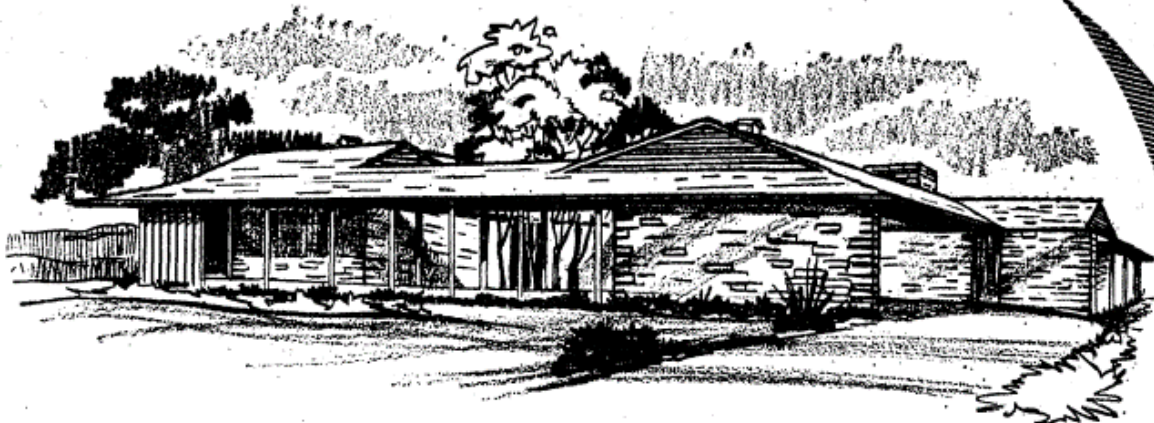
Bradfield-Cummins

6811 Mesa Drive
Parquet flooring in the family room and breakfast room . . . a built-in Early American hutch and antique paneling . . . the master bedroom fireplace . . . and construction perfection are among the many fine features to be found in this desert-pink brick ham with baths that serve each bedroom.

Decorated by Pat Vardell • Furnished by Cabanis-Brown

C. L. Reeves

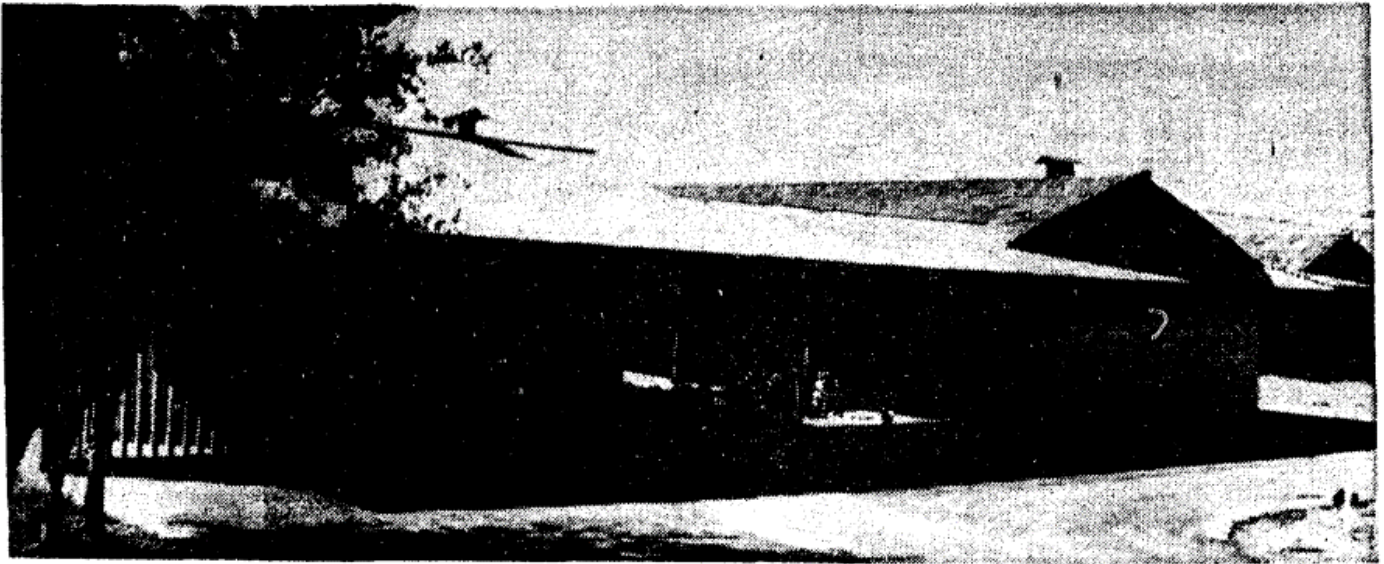
6806 Mesa Drive
"The Oriental" is a pleasant contrast of vibrant colors that are skillfully blended



David B. Barrow

6804 Mesa Drive

The "Far Hills View Home," does indeed live up to its name, for it is situated on the crest of one of Northwest Hills' highest points. Architect David B. Barrow, Jr., has skillfully zoned over 6,000 sq. ft. under the roof in the home's U-shaped design and every foot is planned to take advantage of scenic surroundings.



David B. Barrow, 6804 Mesa Drive

'Far Hills View' Has Just That

As the name implies, the "Far Hills View Home" sits on the crest of one of Northwest Hills highest points. And, long deep valleys of everchanging beauty are walled with equally beautiful tree-covered hills.

There's a sunny informality in the two forward wings of the home, built by David B. Barrow and designed by architect David B. Barrow, Jr. The two extensions form a center courtyard with access to the front door at the end of a long covered, well lighted porch.

Expansive glass walls and sliding glass doors achieve an "indoor-outdoor" living affect, yet privacy is assured with frosted panels in strategic places coupled with easily-drawn drapes.

There is over 6,000 square feet under the roof of the Far Hills View Home, and 3,400 square feet of it is air conditioned with two separate zoning systems.

Traffic and activity areas are also separated through careful floor planning.

Many moods can be created in the home through a unique lighting system that embraces shelf lights, soffitt lights, clerestory windows and recessed tube lights.



DAVID B. BARROW

Another unusual feature of the home is that each of the four bedrooms has its own private bath, and the master bedroom bath has been extended with the addition of a luxurious dressing room.

In the kitchen, visitors will find all the modern builtin appliances anyone could want, plus a huge walkin pantry.

A gallery, in the center of the "U" is opened up with glass walls off the courtyard and those of the living room and formal dining room, both of which have fireplaces.

The living room and dining room glass walls, in turn, open onto a beamed patio with an uninterrupted view of Northwest Hills.

Planned especially for its site, Far Hills View Home has been expertly constructed to blend with its surroundings and as many native shrubs and trees, as possible, have been carefully preserved and supplemented with appealing landscaping.

Matagorda Dunes Planning Progresses

Overall site planning is in progress for the 1,700 acre Matagorda Dunes development located adjacent to where the Colorado River meets the Gulf of Mexico.

The Land planning firm of Raymond Brown in Austin has been engaged by the Matagorda Dunes Development Company to prepare a phased master plan for the tract.

The development approach consists of making the best use of the natural site features. MDDC feels that site preservation will result in a more appealing project. The site features include: the Gulf beach, the Colorado River, the Intercoastal Canal, a lagoon, and an existing air landing strip. All of these will be used to enhance the construction of a second home resort community. Land, sea, and air access will be improved. Commercial service areas and a golf course will be incorporated into the plan.

Phasing will be accomplished by a division of the tract and beginning with the portion next to the existing Gulf Beach area of homes with Townhouse and single family lots and condominiums around the lagoon, all with open beach access. Later phases will include: golf course construction with adjoining lots and complementary open space; canal lots with power boat and small sailboat marina; a village

development work is notable in the areas of luxury homes, apartments, and condominiums. This experience ranges from initial project conception to construction, sales and management.

Raymond Brown is

responsible for the master planning of the development. His project experience includes site and building planning work in Austin for a number of home builders and the master planning of large tracts for the Leavell Development Company

in El Paso.

The master plan will be completed this Winter and the first phase work will begin in the Spring. The goal is to provide an accessible resort community of second homes on the Gulf beach.

Realtors Honor David Barrow

David B. Barrow Sr., born at Manor and a life-long resident of Austin, Tuesday was honored as Realtor of the Year by the Austin Board of Realtors.

Barrow has been subdivision developer and builder in Austin since 1950, when he bought much of the hill country in Northwest Austin. From that came development of the Balcones Park subdivision and Northwest Hills.

Barrow is a graduate of the public schools of Austin and the University of Texas. He quarterbacked the state championship football high school team of 1914 and played baseball in UT. His first major job was with the Southern Pacific railroad where he served 12 years before joining the State of Texas in the insurance department, becoming chief examiner and deputy commissioner.

In 1945 he became an insurance consultant and it was through this work he became interested in land purchase.

In civic activities he served as a member of the Austin City Planning Commission from 1956 to 1968, and as chairman for the last eight years of service. He also was chairman of the Regional Planning Commission for three years and as chairman of the Town Lake Committee for three years.

He is now a member of the committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Quality, recently appointed by the city council.

Barrow has been a director of the Austin National Bank for 13 years and is a director of the Natural Science Center of Austin.

He has been a member of the University Baptist Church since 1909. He and his wife Nelle have been married 48 years. Their son is David Barrow Jr., an architect associated with Northwest Hills development.



DAVID B. BARROW
Realtor of the Year

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 23 May 1972: 19

Founding Chairman Elected At New Savings Association

By CHRIS WHITCRAFT

Financial Writer

Vernon S. Lemens has been elected founding chairman and David Brown Barrow Jr. president of the soon-to-open million-dollar-plus Northwest Savings Association of Austin in Northwest Hills.

It becomes Austin's sixth local savings association, in addition to the branch of Farm & Home Savings. The five older ones, two federal and three state, had assets of over \$350 million as 1972 began.

State charter of the stock association was approved by W. Sale Lewis, S&L commissioner. The founders sold 554,250 shares of \$1 par stock at \$2 a share with maximum individual holdings limited to 10,000 shares, Lemens and Barrow said.

This gives it \$554,250 in capital and the same amount in surplus when it starts doing business. Date for that depends on formal notice of approval for deposit insurance from the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corp.

Lemens is an attorney and former state senator who is a principal in Lemens Finance Co. He is president of First Bank & Trust at Bartlett, and a director at Bank of Austin.

Barrow Jr. is an architect and associate with his father in real estate development concentrated at this time on Northwest Hills. It began about 10 years ago on an area of about 2,000 acres. Boundaries are Balcones Drive where it will become Mo-Pac Boulevard on the east, Farm Road 2222 on the south, Spicewood Springs on the north, and major developments of Baker-Jones-Crow called "Great Hills" and Bill Milburn called "Vista west" on the west.

Barrow Sr., a stockholder and director of Northwest Savings, says about 1,500 lots have been developed in the major subdivision on less than 1,000 acres.

The S&L home office at 3637 Far West Blvd. is at Far West and Hart Lane. It is across from Murchison junior high and Doss elementary public schools. Other major commercial

projects underway on about 50 acres include new HEB and Safeway stores. Far West Blvd. will connect with Farm Road 2222, the new West Loop, and cross Mo-Pac Blvd. going east toward Lamar Blvd.

Other officers elected for Northwest Savings are Vernon Lemens Jr., vice president and counsel; and Amos Gurley, secretary-treasurer.

Gurley is a retired executive of Continental Life Insurance of Chicago. He moved to Austin about two years ago.

Directors include the two Barrows, Lemens and his son, Raymond Brown, James E. Clark, Dr. C. C. Colvert, Dr. Allen Forbes;

Also Charles Nash Jr., LeRoy F. Nagel, H. W. Netherton Jr., Jack E. Ray, Charles F. Stahl, Dr. John C. Watson, and Dr. Michael Wetzel.

**AUSTIN
NORTHWEST SAVINGS ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTIN**

3637 Far West Blvd.

Count of Travis

Charter Date AUGUST 4, 1972

President David B. Barrow, Jr.

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78731

312-345-3550

Date Insured MAY 1, 1973

Executive Vice President C. L. Sampler*

Secretary-Treasurer Amos M. Gurley

(Managing Officer designated by asterisk)

STATEMENT OF CONDITION--DECEMBER 31, 1974

ASSETS

First mortgage loans	2,792,822.28
All other loans	160,925.12
Stock in Federal Home Loan Bank	13,100.00
Cash on hand and in banks	650,683.34
Investments and securities	285,729.66
Office building, less depreciation	357,358.12
Furniture, fixtures, equipment and leasehold improvements, less depreciation	36,599.83
Deferred charges and other assets	21,457.14
TOTAL ASSETS	4,318,675.49

CAPITAL AND LIABILITIES

Savings Accounts	3,108,611.34
Other liabilities	52,143.16
Permanent Reserve fund stock	554,250.00
General reserves:	
Legal reserve and/or Federal Insurance Reserve	21,762.68
Surplus or Undivided Profits	581,908.31
TOTAL CAPITAL AND LIABILITIES	4,318,675.49

Board of Directors (Chairman designated by asterisk)

David B. Barrow*

David B. Barrow, Jr.

Raymond Brown

James E. Clark

Dr. C. C. Colvert

Dr. M. Allen Forbes, Jr.

Vernon Lemens

Vernon Lemens, Jr

LeRoy F. Nagel

Charles D. Nash, Jr.

Horace W. Netherton, Jr.

Jack E. Ray

Charles F. Stahl

Dr. John C. Watson

Water quality, growth issues clash at hearing

By KATHY HAWORTH
Staff Writer

Water quality versus prohibitive development costs were argued Tuesday night before the city Planning Commission which considered a proposed new interim subdivision ordinance for the Lake Austin watershed.

About 150 developers, lawyers and residents owning property on Lake Austin or its tributaries turned out for a public hearing on the proposed requirements.

The ordinance stems from the Lake Austin Growth Management Plan, a comprehensive study of the 92-square-mile watershed presented to the city council last October. The ordinance being considered, which would be used about two years, would serve to control development in the area until a final Lake Austin plan could be adopted.

Charles Stahl, an architect representing Northwest Hills developer David Barrow Jr., called the interim ordinance "an overreaction to an imaginary problem and much too restrictive."

"I submit this is nothing more than a plan to restrict growth," he said.

The architect presented scale drawings made according to specifications in the ordinance which he said would put the price of new homes in the watershed area beyond the reach of most Austinites.

"There is no way to develop any subdivision that would fit in with this ordinance and that disturbs me," Barrow added. "We consider it a confiscation of our property."

Barrow and Stahl disagreed with the proposed

ordinance's restrictions on building on land with more than 15 per cent slope.

Austin attorney Pam Giblin, who said she represented a trust fund that owns acreage in the area, questioned the city's legal authority to impose restrictions on the amount of impervious cover used by builders. The ordinance will prohibit more than 35 per cent of subdivided land to be covered by sidewalks, concrete or any such material.

"I don't think these numbers — and these are fixed numbers, not just guidelines — are really supportable by technical data. You are restrained from the water quality goals by which state law empowers you to pass an ordinance such as this. I think you are coming perilously close to being arbitrary," she said.

"On the legal ground, we're in a perfectly defensible situation," countered Ken Manning, representing the Austin Sierra Club.

"We don't have to show that 35 per cent impervious cover will cause X-per cent pollution. As long as we establish that there is a definite connection between the two, we are on solid legal ground."

Tom Leach, president of the Lake Austin Hill Country Neighborhood Association, asked that the ordinance be put into effect now, contending it could be revised after the city has gathered data on its effect.

"Let's gather the information as we go," he suggested. "Let's not rip the lake off while in the meantime our water supply is lost."

"I am an architect and I can live with these standards so I don't see why others, such as Mr. Barrow, can't," Leach said. "His houses may end up costing a little more but they won't be too expensive for people to buy."

KATHY HAWORTH Staff Writer. *The Austin American - Statesman* (1973-1980), Evening ed.; Austin, Tex.. 20 Apr 1977: B2.

David B. Barrow and Charles F Stahl both graduated from the University of Texas. David Barrow was a student of Harwell Hamilton Harris, and would later work for Mr Harris for several years. In fact Mr Barrow was the only student that would be elevated to status of associate, both an honor and an endorsement of the shared vision of the two and the talent Mr Barrow had. Harwell H Harris even designed a home for Mr Barrow and his wife which was built in 1955.

Barrow & Stahl formed their office in Austin Texas in the 60's and produced both commercial and residential works from the 1960's until present day.

Fitch, Creede. "Barrow and Stahl." <https://creedefitch.com/barrow-stahl-architects>

Harris' Career in Texas

In 1951, with the threat of the Korean War, work slowed in Harris' California office; he and his wife were ready for a change of scenery. Harris decided to accept an offer from the University of Texas to become the first director of the School of Architecture, newly separated from the College of Engineering. He began in September of 1951. Despite scrutiny and hostility from the old faculty and lack of funds for new faculty, Harris pulled together a few new faculty members that supported his artistic educational philosophy.

He was thus able to influence the curriculum enough to "put Texas on the map as the home of a progressive school of architecture."⁹ In 1954 Harris collaborated with six of his students in designing the *House Beautiful* Pace Setter House[®] at the Dallas State Fair. Another innovation in the curriculum included student field trips; he took one group to Mexico City to attend the 8th Pan American Congress of Architects, another to Chicago and St. Louis to see buildings by Sullivan, Wright, and Mies van der Rohe.

Tired of the bickering among the UT faculty, Harris resigned in June of 1955, lured away from his administrative duties and back to a drawing board in Ft. Worth by the daughter of oil and newspaper magnate Amon Carter, Ruth Carter Stephenson, who wanted a Modern, unpretentious house.

In addition to the Cranfill House and Apartments, Harris also completed designs for four other properties in Austin: Portable Sales Office for David B. Barrow Sr. (1954), Balcones House No. 1 for the Austin Corporation at 4002 Edgemont Drive (1955), Balcones House No. 2 for the Austin Corporation (1955, unbuilt), and the **David B. Barrow Sr. Residence** at 4101 Edgemont Drive (1955-56).

In 1958 Harris opened an office in Dallas with David Barrow Jr.¹⁰ as associate; his studio was in Dallas when the drawings for the Apartments were completed. Barrow Jr. later acquired Harris' drawings as a gift to the Center for the Study of American Architecture at the University of Texas – a gift which led to the 1985 exhibition of Harris' work.

Harris' most notable Texas work includes the Seymour Eisenberg residence (1958) in Dallas, the John S. Treanor House in Abilene, St. Mary's Episcopal Church and houses for Milton Talbot and Jack Woodall in Big Spring, the J. Lee Johnson III house and Greenwood Mausoleum in Fort Worth, Stemmons Towers and the Dallas Trade Mart Court¹¹ for Trammell Crow, and the First Unitarian Church in Dallas.

Historic Preservation Office, 2006. Zoning Change Review Sheet: Cranfill-Beacham Apartments.
<https://services.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=200450>

Life flourishes on both sides of Northwest Hills in Austin

 [statesman.com/story/news/2018/06/27/life-flourishes-on-both-sides-of-northwest-hills-in-austin/9997730007](https://www.statesman.com/story/news/2018/06/27/life-flourishes-on-both-sides-of-northwest-hills-in-austin/9997730007)

The rugged west meets the tamer east in this neighborhood of contrasts founded in the 1950s.

Michael Barnes

Picture in your mind Northwest Hills, the Austin neighborhood encompassed loosely by MoPac Boulevard (Loop 1) to the east, Loop 360 to the west, RM 2222 to the south and Spicewood Springs Road to the north.

What do you see?

Relatively mild suburban land with gently curved and landscaped streets leading to offices, stores, apartments, parks and schools? Or precariously high hills creased by deep canyons and dotted with dramatic cliffside homes?

These contrasting terrains both represent Northwest Hills, but it's hard to stitch these two pictures together in your mind unless you live, work, shop or play there regularly.

Its eastern boundary along MoPac follows a low mesa populated by office buildings and apartment complexes. This buttress of regularity doesn't attract much attention from the mobile passerby, even at the entryway to the district's commercial artery on Far West Boulevard, which cuts alongside a former limestone quarry on its way to Mesa Drive and beyond.

At the same time, much of its southern and, especially, western boundaries are extraordinarily rugged. Shady canyons rip through some of the region's highest hills, including spiky Cat Mountain, in the neighborhood's southwestern sector. Anyone cruising by Northwest Hills on RM 2222 or Loop 360 can't help wondering how those houses poking out from the stark cliffs got there in the first place.

Who thought that all this belonged together?

The late David Brown Barrow Sr., who moved to Austin in 1909, served in the Army during World War I and became an almost accidental co-founder of Northwest Hills after World War II, had roamed the wild verges of Austin as a youth. That liberating experience helped inspire his designs for a green neighborhood named with romantic whimsy — Northwest Hills — by his wife.

"I thought when I was a boy I was going to be an artist," Barrow said during a 1964 interview recorded for the Austin History Center. "I used to draw quite a lot. And I drew for the high school annual. And I also drew when I was in the university for the periodicals they put out. And to lay out streets in irregular land like this ... involves, I think, an artistic sense to know where to put the streets as not to damage the land too badly."

Although Northwest Hills is composed of more than a dozen subdivisions, this affluent neighborhood, developed in stages mainly from the 1950s to the 1980s, seems a remarkably close match to its landscape.

"I have used extreme care in laying out the area ... in order to make it very attractive," Barrow said in 1964. "Of course, nature's responsible for a whole lot of that. That area's beautiful, and you have beautiful views from most places, in some places views of the lake and the western mountains."

The Balcones and Mount Bonnell faults to the west helped create this dramatic dichotomy. Meanwhile, Bull Creek and its tributaries slice through the limestone rises in the far western reaches of Northwest Hills. The rises are draped with junipers and oaks, except where subdivisions intervene and residential trees were planted — including a mature magnolia tree that the family of LBJ adviser George Christian brought back as "a stick" from the White House magnolia planted by President Andrew Jackson.

Early days

Journeying through — and surviving on — this rough land was of utmost importance to the Tonkawas and Comanches, who used Spicewood Springs as a key camping ground.

History advocate Richard Denney describes an 1844 kidnapping of the Simpson children, a boy and a girl, from the lower Shoal Creek Valley in or near Austin. The girl was killed at the main spring, which can be found today at Cebery Drive and Spicewood Springs Road. After being ransomed, the boy led Austinites back to the site, where the girl's remains were identified.

During the 1860s, the remote Bull Creek Valley sheltered pioneers from families who resisted the Confederacy during the Civil War while holed up the area's hollows and caves. As described in Ken Roberts' excellent new book, *"Cedar Choppers: Life on the Edge of Nothing,"* Dick Preece arrived in these hills as early as 1850. He is reputed to have killed the last male buffalo in Travis County and to have given Bull Creek its name. The Preece family was among the "Bull Creek Clan," fiercely independent, mostly Scots-Irish migrants who had trickled down from Appalachia into isolated pockets of the Texas Hill Country.

By the 1880s, gentle glens below the central mesa to the east had become picnic spots for urban Austinites. Denney found a poem from 1880 that calls the land around Spicewood Springs — the hills were covered with American spicebush — "enchanted ground." This oasis, 8 miles out of the city, was reached by rail as part of a service promoting Waters (or Watters) Park on Walnut Creek to the north.

In the late 19th century, the International-Great Northern Railroad — later known as the Missouri Pacific Railroad, hence MoPac — helped open up the farmlands to the east of the tracks in today's Allandale. With less fertile soil and narrow roads not much bigger than "cedar-chopper" trails, the Northwest Hills side of the tracks remained the firm redoubt of scattered rural families for another 70 years.

According to Roberts, despite their "hillbilly" reputations and extremely modest digs, the Hill Country clans made the most of the terrain, tracking game, growing little patches of corn for coarse meal, livestock feed and moonshine, and especially cutting old-growth cedar where it grew tall in the shadowy canyons. The red-hearted wood was highly prized far and wide for its durability as fence posts and as the source of charcoal.

During the 20th century, a rail spur served the Texas Crushed Stone Company's quarry, which mined lower-quality limestone that was mostly used for gravel, concrete and lime, right in the middle of what is now Northwest Hills. As aerial photographs show, the mine left a big white gash on the land right up to the MoPac tracks.

By the 1980s, this razed land had become the commercial center of the neighborhood along Far West Boulevard. The only clearly visible sign of the former quarry are the too-regular walls to the north below the Dell Jewish Community Campus.

A measured project

David Barrow Sr. and his brother, Edward — joined later by David Barrow Jr. and his associate Chuck Stahl, who both attended UT and created Barrow & Stahl Architects in the 1960s — saw the value of the land around the quarry as early as the 1940s. Acquiring the land gradually, they started out with a subdivision just south of RM 2222, pushed west toward Mount Bonnell, then expanded north and west into the heart of the current neighborhood.

In his valuable but incompletely transcribed oral history, Barrow Sr. talks about acquiring land from the Milton Hart family — namesake of Hart Lane — the Wendlandt Estate and Wilbur Allan's family. By the end of the 1950s, his team owned or had options on more than 2,500 acres, more than half the total in the district.

Although his father had been in real estate, Barrow Sr. made his career in railroads and insurance. With money from his successful insurance consultancy, he, along with his brother and sister, purchased land around Mount Bonnell and Mount Barker. In fact, at one point he told the city that he owned Mount Bonnell.

"He loved being out there on the land," architect Stahl recalls about Barrow Sr. "And he realized that the growth direction for the city would be north and west."

According to Barrow Sr., he allowed Texas Crushed Stone to quarry on the land for a time before the company consolidated operations in Georgetown just north of Round Rock.

"We were already developing some of the land close to it, and the quarry, of course, was a hindrance to the land because of the noise and the blasting and the dust," Barrow Sr. said. Yet by moving soil from the quarry site into the valleys, the miners had unintentionally created decent land, where some of the first houses went in. Under the surface they found "Walnut Clay," which later would bedevil the slab foundations of houses in the area.

The developers — the Barrows and their associates were not the only ones — thought long and hard about what they wanted for this almost separate suburban "city," which in advertising they called "Beautiful Northwest Hills." All along, they employed Barrow & Stahl Architects as professional planners as well as engineering consultants. Apartments were placed near commercial areas to cut down on traffic through single-family residential zones.

"We realized that Mr. Barrow had much more than good land for homes," Stahl says. "He owned or had options on virtually another little city."

A lovely but rough land-use plan, drawn by Barrow and Stahl, survives today with areas labeled "Flat Land," "Rough Land" and "Really Rough Land," along with a layout of nodes and road routes. The Barrow family refused to sell too many adjacent lots to the same builder in order to avoid a "cookie-cutter" feel.

"Mr. Barrow held a Saturday afternoon barbecue lottery for lots," Stahl recalls, "in order to avoid one builder taking a whole subdivision."

Barrow Sr., who served on the Austin Planning Commission and died in 1972, is credited with lobbying for the construction of MoPac, which allowed Northwest Hills residents to commute downtown more directly than by taking North Lamar Boulevard. MoPac was first proposed in the 1930s but was not built until the 1970s after multiple failed attempts to win its approval by the Texas Highway Department and Austin City Council.

The Hills today

A few years ago, Jason Panzer was looking for a house for his growing family in Northwest Hills where he grew up.

Although the original 1970s and '80s designs for the moderately sized suburban residences there were carefully chosen for each site, some of them rugged, others relatively flat, Panzer discovered that there were occasional reiterations.

His Realtor, Carol Dochen, an expert in the Northwest Hills, showed him a two-story house situated atop a shaded, pentagonal corner lot on Tallowood Drive.

He called his wife, Debra Danziger.

"I found the house to be oddly familiar, but it was Debbie who noticed it was the same layout and design — including the same Saltillo tile — as my mom's old house, only flipped, that I grew up in, which was just a little over a mile away."

For instance, the staircase was on the east side of his childhood home, while it rose to the west here. He took pictures and sent them to his siblings.

"Look where I am!" he texted. They texted back: "Oh my gosh, you're in our old house!"

These days, nobody needs to sell Carol Dochen on the green appeal of Northwest Hills.

"People have a passion about Northwest Hills," says Dochen, a Realtor who settled here 37 years ago and whose business is to know every inch of the district.

In 1967, her husband Sandy's parents built a house on Far West Boulevard in the heart of Northwest Hills. At the time, the street did not extend to Balcones Drive or MoPac. A UT graduate in communications and journalism, Carol came into the picture in 1977 after pursuing careers in Houston and Washington, D.C.

"I visited them in that house quite often, and we actually moved in with them in 1981," she recalls. "Due to his parents' deaths, we inherited the house in 1982. That is how I came to live in Northwest Hills, where we have lived ever since, first in that home and later in another home in the neighborhood."

Now she owns Carol Dochen Realtors on Spicewood Springs Road. Although she and her team work all over the Austin area, they concentrate on Northwest Hills, where she has sold hundreds of homes.

She revels in the variety of house styles, from Colonial Revival to midcentury modern to ultra-contemporary, but acknowledges that during building booms, some plans were virtually duplicated, like the Panzers'. Not many parks were planned early on, according to Barrow Sr.'s record, other than those connected with public buildings like schools. Residents later fought for green spaces such as the Barrow Nature Preserve, the Stillhouse Hollow Nature Preserve, Allen Park and the Lower Bull Creek Greenbelt.

For the past few years, the neighborhood has fought an ongoing battle over the proposed Austin Oaks multiuse project, which would add a great deal of density, height and, perhaps inevitably, traffic at the Spicewood Springs entry into the area, albeit with some promised parkland. Another controversy for any older Austin district: Spacious 50-year-old homes in relatively good condition are being razed. That situation is complicated by the fact that foundations were laid on expanding and shrinking caliche clay soil. Plus, they often back up to canyons teeming with wildlife, which newcomers do not always appreciate.

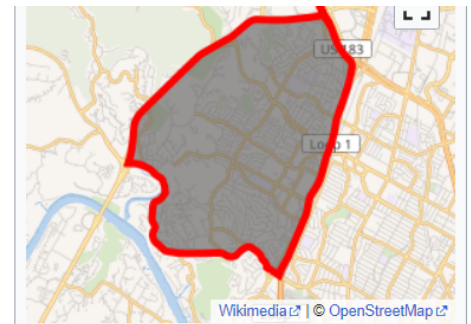
"I am seeing homes going in the \$500,000 to \$600,000 range being torn down," Carol says. "Who could have dreamt that when the original homes here cost about \$35,000 to \$50,000?"

The Dochens' second Northwest Hills home is perched on more than an acre of land aside the lip of one of the area's many canyons.

"You can hear the water rushing down below after a big rain," Carol says. "We have great sunsets and some scary nights spent listening to the wailing calls of the coyotes when they have captured their prey. We are surrounded by nature, and it is fascinating. We have our share of foxes, birds, butterflies, bats, mosquitoes, bunnies, armadillos, scorpions and deer. Lots of deer. We have them all."

Barnes, Michael. "Life flourishes on both sides of Northwest Hills in Austin." *statesman.com/story/news/2018/06/27/life-flourishes-on-both-sides-of-northwest-hills-in-austin/9997730007*

David Barrow Sr. and Edward Barrow, along with their associate Chuck Stahl and David Barrow Jr., were responsible for much of Austin's expansion in the flatlands and in the mountain regions during most of the 1950s and 1960s. David Sr. was also primarily responsible for the eventual construction of [Texas State Highway Loop 1](#) ("Mopac"), the highway that stretches on the east side of the neighborhood. He helped construct Mopac to help the flow of traffic for residents who lived in the northwestern quadrant of the city. Before Mopac was formed in 1966, most Northwest Hills residents had to commute to Lamar Boulevard, or sometimes as far as [Interstate 35](#), to reach downtown, where most of them worked. He ran studies that showed that Austin needed better streets for northwestern residents.^[1]



Country	United States
State	Texas
County	Travis
City	Austin
Founded	1952
Founded by	Barrow family
ZIP Codes	78731 or 78759
Area codes	512 and 737

The first properties the Barrows bought in Northwest Hills were on Balcones Drive. They then moved to the lands at [Mount Bonnell](#), the ones that overlook the [Colorado River](#), and began to develop properties there. Gradually, they developed lands further into the hills, expanding present-day Northwest Hills. Initially, the Barrows had no intention of expanding into Northwest Hills. They believed, however, that the affluent growth of the city was apt for northwestern Austin, and that if Austin were to ever build an area for that segment of the population, the design would take place in hilly terrains like Northwest Hills. The Barrows thus gradually began buying properties in the area by picking few parcels of land in sparse locations, developing them, and then moving to more rugged lands. Most of the lands in Northwest Hills were owned by M.E. Hart, a Canadian businessman, and a man known as Capitan Knox. The Barrows struck a deal with Hart and agreed to buy the lands from him at a rolling option, meaning that they would buy them in parts and purchase them at [market price](#). Both of them benefited from the agreement since the Barrows did not have the capital to [purchase upfront](#), while Hart sold the properties at an increasing market price since the values of the lands grew due to the neighborhood developments. The Barrows and their associates came to own 2,500 acres (1,000 ha) of the 3,500 acres (1,400 ha) of developed land in northwest Austin by the 1950s.^[1]

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The development of the lands by the Barrows were considered unique for its time. When they put together a design for the neighborhood, they wanted to create a "new" town while drawing from other developed lands of Austin's core urban area. Balcones Drive, which borders the eastern part of Northwest Hills, was intended to serve as a counterpart to downtown's [Colorado River](#). Far West Boulevard, which traverses Northwest Hills from east to west, was conceived to be comparable to [Congress Avenue](#), the main street in downtown Austin. The developments by the Barrows were also considered unique because of the plan to include a [Missouri Pacific Railroad](#) system next to the neighborhood, as well as plans to have Far West Boulevard empty into [Airport Boulevard](#), a main thoroughfare in the southeastern part of Austin.^[1]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest_Hills,_Austin,_Texas#cite_note-FOOTNOTERum2002311;_316%E2%80%93320;_325;_343%E2%80%93344-1

Northwest Austin's future residents would work downtown, and developers believed a highway was paramount to the area's growth and home sales.³⁰ Barrow, the City Planning Commission Chairman in the late 1950s, leveraged his influence and connections to secure funding for Mopac. Although it was a protracted effort that began in the 1940s, Barrow and fellow Northwest Austin developers campaigned for its construction through the mid-1960s. Concurrently, Austin gained a second north-south highway (Highway 360/Capital of Texas Highway) that ran roughly parallel to MoPac. In 1962, the Texas Department of Transportation had already outlined plans for building a stretch of State Highway Loop No. 360, also called "the Austin Loop," that would run from US 290 southwest of Austin, northeast to US 183/Research Boulevard, which connected to MoPac on the city's north side.

Built for the 1965 [Parade of Homes](#), the Hanako in Austin, Travis County represents model home marketing methods used by builders, real estate agents, and developers to promote and sell property in the city's emerging Northwest Hills suburbs. In the 1960s, Austin became a center for research and development with one of the fastest growing economies in Texas. Northwest Austin was developed for a growing population of white, middle-class skilled professionals, and the Parade of Homes promoted the new neighborhoods. The parades showcased affordable architect-designed model homes, like the Hanako, with modern amenities, traditional layouts, and a contemporary aesthetic. The Hanako also exemplifies a top-down translation of contemporary architectural high-style as a middle-class suburban house influenced by Japanese design made popular by *House Beautiful* in 1960. Speculative model houses, like those in the Parade of Homes, were marketable and affordable versions of shelter magazine homes that catered to middle-class desires for privacy, spaciousness, and style. Named "the Hanako," a feminine Japanese given name, the nominated

Twer, Karen. *National Register Nomination Form: 4022 Greenhill Place.*

<https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/Austin%2C%20The%20Hanako%20NR%20SBR%20Draft.pdf>

Permits

David Barrow, Jr. 6804 Mesa Drive
 995 12 I
 Northwest Hills # 6
 Masonry Veneer Res. & Attached Garage
 84610 7-12-62 30,000.00
 Owner 20
 w E 31264 s 38194

RESIDENCE

Frm Addn to Residence Permit 127547 1-8-72
 Enlarge Bedroom Est Cost 10,000.00
 6-12-73 136619 Raymond Brown frame addn 270 sq ft
 to res. gar and covered walk 904 sq.ft.

Building permit, 1962, and addition permit, 1972-73

OWNER	Raymond Brown	ADDRESS	6804 Mesa Dr.
PLAT	995	LOT	BLK. I
SUBDIVISION	N.W. Hills # 6		
OCCUPANCY	res.		
BLDG. PERMIT #	161479	DATE	1-6-77
		OWNERS ESTIMATE	35,000.00
CONTRACTOR	Preston Howey	NO. OF FIXTURES	
WATER TAP REC#		SEWER TAP REC#	
repair fire damage to res.			

Building permit for fire damage repair, 1977