

December 8, 2023

To: Historic Landmark Commission
From: Eastwoods Neighborhood Association
Regarding: Demolition application for 701 Sparks Avenue

We very much appreciate your initiation of Historic Landmark zoning for the property at 701 Sparks Avenue. Now we urge you to proceed with forwarding a recommendation for that designation. In its most recent meeting, the Eastwoods Neighborhood Association voted unanimously to support preservation of that property.

The house at 701 Sparks is the keystone entrance to Sparks Avenue, a one-block long street of interesting older homes at the north end of Eastwoods Park. It was one of the earliest houses on the street, built in the 1920s when a few other innovative Mediterranean style stucco houses were being built in the neighborhood, such as the one at 3109 Harris Park Ave at the corner of 32nd Street, one block away. Architect Hugo Kuehne of the UT School of Architecture, whose home at 500 E 32nd Street was of this style, influenced the introduction of the smaller versions.

Others have described the association with residents of the house, but we will say how it is valued by the neighborhood. We live here because we enjoy the interesting mixture of housing styles and types and the informal ambience. The Seminary of the Southwest with its historic Rather House and pleasant campus sits at one corner of the neighborhood and Eastwoods Park holds a place in the center. Waller Creek divides the neighborhood and provides a natural habitat of trees and the creek. The overall feeling is of a pleasant community.

In this small neighborhood our houses are mostly old, at least pre-World War II and of varying styles. Because of our proximity to UT, many of the houses were built by professors, some of prominence, such as J. Frank Dobie and Hyman Ettlinger, and some now provide housing for students. Many original houses have accessory dwellings built over the years to provide income for the homeowners. My own 1914-vintage house on Bellevue Place is a historic landmark and features a large garage apartment built in 1938 which we have rented to international graduate students for 25 years. Two other historic landmark houses on my block are similarly used.

Perhaps due to its proximity to the law school, the neighborhood is mostly quiet and welcoming to students. The house at 701 Sparks has been rented for years and until very recently was maintained well and the landscaping was attractive. The new owner has not maintained the landscaping and has removed all the trees off the side yard, leaving the east side of the house barren and exposed.

We earnestly hope that the property at 701 Sparks Avenue can be protected as a key element of our small neighborhood and an important historic link from the residences to the park. It is valued by the community, as evidenced by the list of people who signed and voted their support of landmark designation.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Austin's historic resources.

Sincerely,
Linda Team
President Emeritus,
Eastwoods Neighborhood Association

We support Historic Landmark designation for 701 Sparks Avenue:

Linda Hallidy
Josiah Harlow
Randall Soileau
Martha Carey Sadler
Rick Luisi
Mike and Marcie Jarratt.
Robyn Turner
Oscar Rodriguez
Joe and Kathryn Asaro
Whit and Betty Bodman
Lin Team
Lewis Donelson

Russell Jones
Kwame Walker
Tara Turner
Kosta Selinidis
Patrick Worrall
Elizabeth Penson
Jenny Davis

