

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
JANUARY 10, 2024
PR-2023-151263; GF-2023-161708
1711 NEWTON STREET**

PROPOSAL

Renovate ca. 1915 church to create a duplex. Replace existing windows and doors with aluminum-clad windows in existing openings. Add new horizontal basement windows. Partially demolish and remodel back house.

ARCHITECTURE

Gabled church building with horizontal siding, square steeple tower with hipped roof, and vertical two-light windows at secondary elevations. Exposed rafter tails are visible beneath the eaves of its seamed metal roof, and a double concrete stairway leads to its gabled entryway.

RESEARCH

According to the 2016 Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Survey, St. Annie’s African Methodist Episcopal Church was built around 1915. In a 2016 article by Alberta Phillips, the author notes the church’s importance to the area as a “[remnant] of a once-thriving black community of freed slaves who lived in this area following the Civil War and into the 1950s. Today, a handful of structures, including at least two African American churches, are all that is left of the so-called Brackenridge community.”¹ Notably, Willie Wells of the Negro League and National Baseball Halls of Fame was laid to rest after services at St. Annie’s, his neighborhood church. Phillips notes the 2016 survey conducted by historian Terri Myers of Preservation Central, Inc., explaining the significance of the Brackenridge neighborhood:

The Brackenridge community, during its apex, comprised nearly half of the Bouldin Creek neighborhood. It was one of Austin’s first freedmen communities named for the former all-black Brackenridge School on Elizabeth Street, near the Texas School for the Deaf. Like other African-American communities, Brackenridge was redlined in the 1930s to prevent banks from making home and business loans to residents.²

In 2016, Myers—a long-serving member of the Historic Landmark Commission—requested initiation of historic zoning for the church, though the designation did not take place at that time.³

PROPERTY EVALUATION

The 2016 Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Survey lists the church building as a high priority and contributing to a potential historic district. The survey does not address the pastor’s house separately.

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 meets two criteria:
 - a. Architecture. The building is a good example of twentieth-century vernacular religious architecture.
 - b. Historical association. The property is associated with St. Annie African Methodist Episcopal Church.
 - 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 may possess 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 as a neighborhood place of worship for a primarily African American congregation.

¹ Phillips, Alberta. “African American churches worth more to Austin than their land value.” Statesman.com, 2016. 2016. <https://www.statesman.com/story/news/2016/09/03/african-american-churches-worth-more-to-austin-than-their-land-value/10003053007/>

² Ibid.

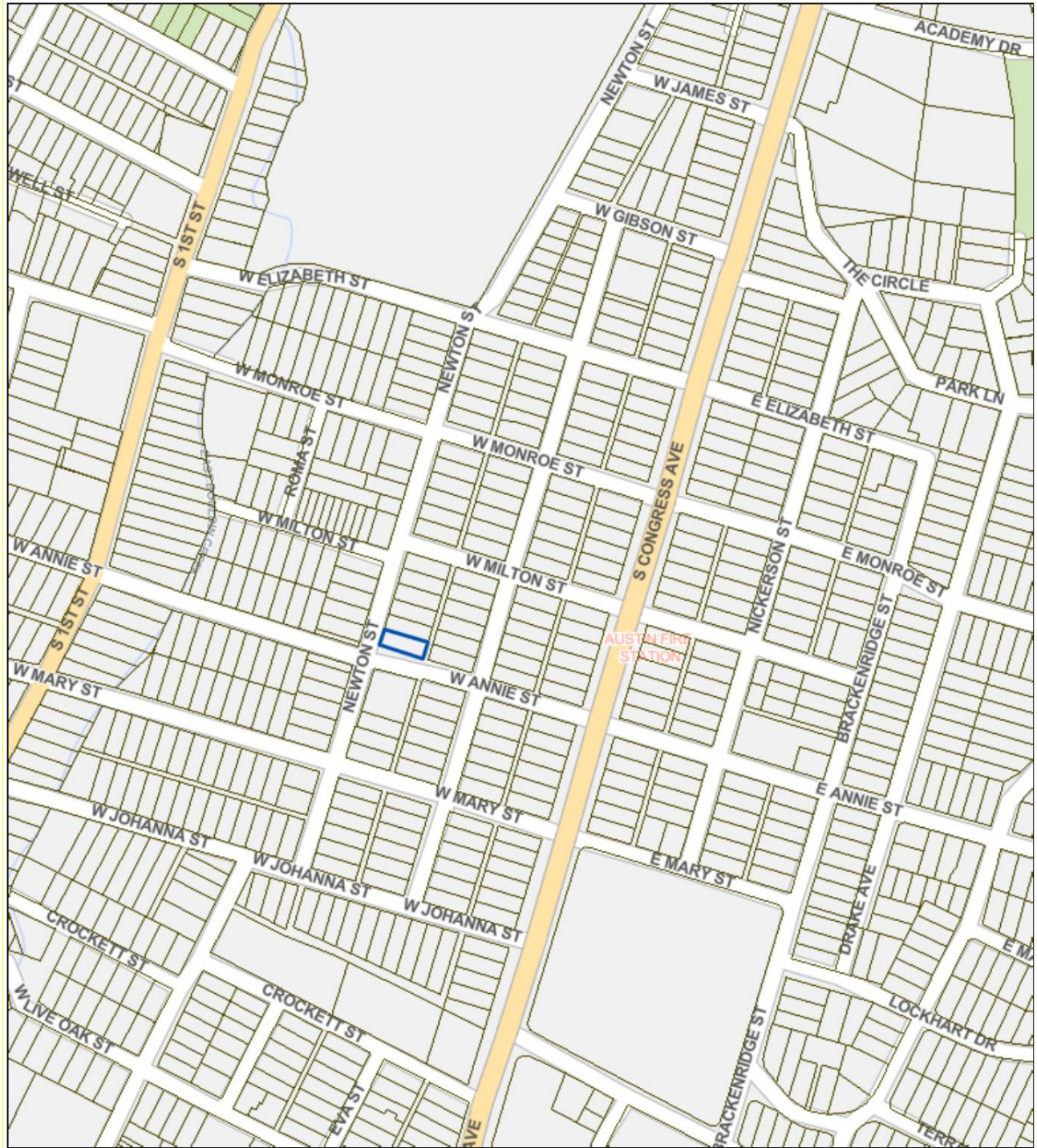
³ <https://www.austinmonitor.com/stories/2016/11/reporters-notebook-apocalypse-later/>


- e.* Landscape feature. The property does not appear to be a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Consider initiation of historic zoning. Should the Commission choose not to initiate historic zoning at this time, approve the application for the church building, as it does not remove or obscure character-defining features and thus does not preclude the possibility of later designation. Strongly encourage a more sympathetic design for the rear building, but release the permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package.

LOCATION MAP






1: 4800

12/27/2023

GF 23-161708

1711 NEWTON STREET



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PROPERTY INFORMATION*Photos**Google Street View, 2022**Occupancy History*

City Directory Research, January 2024

1959	Vacant
1955	Address not listed
1952	St. Anne's Methodist Church
1949	St. Anne's Methodist Church
1944	St. Anne's Methodist Church
1941	St. Anne's Methodist Church
1939	St. Anne's Methodist Church
1935	St. Anne's Methodist Church
1932	St. Anne's Methodist Church
1929	St. Anne's Methodist Church
1927	St. Anne's Methodist Church
1924	St. Anne's Chapel
1922	St. Anne's Chapel
1918	Not listed

Historical Information



A Brief History

St. Annie AME Church

The church was organized in the early nineteen hundreds. Church services were held in a three-room house located on the south side of the street in the four hundred block of West Annie. At that time the pastor was Rev. J. A. Smith and the trustees were Bro. L. P. White, Bro. Wyley, and Bro. R. S. Stanley. The church later moved to a lot on the north side of Annie Street in the same block. The church worshipped in a tent for a period of time. The minister and officers, along with the members, decided to purchase a lot in the two hundred block of Annie Street. A wooden structure was erected at the corner of Annie and Newton Street. The edifice of the building stand at this location today. The first cornerstone for the church was laid in 1915.

The parsonage was built in 1944 under the administration of Rev. V. T. Herron. Under the administration of Rev. A. L. Brown, the church and parsonage were enlarged. A small fellowship hall was built downstairs at the church and a second cornerstone was laid in 1960. Under the administration of Rev. B. J. Satterwhite, the parsonage was renovated, air conditioning was installed in the church, and the church was carpeted. Under Rev. Elliot Lyon's administration the public address system was installed and the parsonage was furnished. The present church building was remodeled in 1982 under the administration of Rev. H. P. Smith. Rev. S. E. Braziel started the church office in one room of the parsonage during his administration in 1983-84.

The church began the purchase of the lot next door on Newton Street and the parsonage was converted to the Fellowship Hall and Education Building. The church office was also moved to the basement of the church during the administration of Rev. E. H. Millett from 1984 until his death in 1988. One room of the Fellowship Hall was furnished for the pastor's study for Rev. M. S. Hodds. The sanctuary was refurbished and all new furnishings were installed during his administration. During the administration of Rev. G. L. Mays in 1989-90 the parking lot and the furniture were paid off.

The church continued to move forward under the pastorate of Rev. R. D. Sanders. A new electric piano and new organ, complete with a Lesley speaker was installed; and new drums were added. The walls were removed to enlarge the choir loft, a new altar was built, and carpeting was installed throughout the church. A ramp was added outside to make the church more accessible. Rev. Sander was reassigned to another church in May 1996.

Our current pastor, Rev. Derwin D. Gipson, started our current building fund upon his arrival, and through your continued support and prayers, and the help of the Lord we have completely remodeled the interior of the fellowship hall, new roof, new floors, expanded rooms, and new electrical wiring and fixtures. We have also remodeled the interior of the church office. We thank our almighty God for these blessings!

We continue to hold to our plans to build a new larger church facility! Your continued prayers and support are deeply appreciated.

<http://www.stannieamec.org/history.html>

South Austin's little white church with an African-American soul

 medium.com/@keepaustinreal2018/south-austins-little-white-church-with-an-african-american-soul-a97c69d4697d

Keep Austin Real 2018

June 3, 2018

By Sahar Chmais

Joanne Kirchhiemer, better known as Granny at the St. Annie African Methodist Episcopal Church, began the celebration of her 94th birthday at the small church off South Congress. She brought with her a home-baked cake and told everyone that she will be moving out of the state. But before leaving, she wanted to say goodbye to the church and its people.

Members began singing "Happy birthday, Granny," when the Reverend Derwin Gipson called her to the front, hugged her, and stood by her while people in the pews took their photo and clapped.

Before heading back to her seat, Granny told the church members: "I pray there won't be any color, just love."

Kirchhiemer, like most of the church's neighbors, is white. St. Annie AME, a majority black church, stands in a neighborhood that was once predominantly an African American community. The church was built in 1944 on Annie Street, and it may not be there much longer. Most of the church congregates come from the outskirts of Austin, like Pflugerville, Georgetown or Cedar Park. Gipson and his wife, Debra Gipson, drive south from Cedar Creek to the church many times a week.

"We don't have to move — the church is paid for," Gipson said. "But the idea is to move to a location where the people are that you know you're going to serve. I'll stay here forever if the people in the community would become congregates."

The church building is up for sale. If the church receives enough money from the sale, the congregation will relocate to North East Austin, near Manor and Parmer Lane, closer to its congregates. Gipson does not want to relocate and potentially put the church in financial debt. He wants to be sure that the new church will not cost more than the available funds.

St. Annie gets funding from offerings from its congregates. The money is spent on keeping the water and electricity in the building going. It also goes to donations for helping people around Austin and Texas, like those in need after a natural disaster.

According to Gipson, neighbors do not want St. Annie to move because the church causes no disturbance to their community. If the church moves, they do not know what kind of building will take its place. Gipson said there are people from the neighborhood who come in to visit from time to time, or just sit on the steps outside.

"The people that's moving into the neighborhood are not inclined to join the church," he said. "Most of the folk around here are agnostic, not interested in Christianity itself, or they attend the two catholic churches in that area. And that's their prerogative."

This is not the first time that a church decides to move because of changes in the neighborhood's community. Friendly Will Baptist Church was a part of this neighborhood, right around the corner from St. Annie. According to Gipson, the church moved to North East Austin so it can be closer to its congregates.

St. Annie serves between 20 to 30 people on a regular Sunday, the Reverend Agnes Habbit said. Easter brings in the most congregates, followed by Christmas.

This past Easter, the church pews were completely filled with people and children. The music and singing overflowed from inside St. Annie to Annie Street. When worship begins, the church locks its doors as a safety measure, but the men guarding them open the doors to anyone wanting to come in. One white family was in the church, visiting from California for the holiday. During one of the songs, Gipson walked to the back to welcome first-timers like this reporter. At the end of the ceremony, the women were hugging me, the children from one pew over introduced themselves, and a young woman came to compliment my shoes.

The next Sunday, the church held 15 congregates, filling only four pews. The women and children hugged me and thanked me for showing up again. On this Sunday, two of the congregates were white women, Kirchhiemer, or "Granny," and Mary Henkins.

"I go to a good Christian church and it is very lively, but it's not as lively as this church," Henkins said. "And when I come here, it's like when you buy gas, you buy supreme, unleaded, or regular unleaded, but usually when I come here I get supreme."

Henkins lives in Dripping Springs and does not attend this church every Sunday, but she tries to come out for her "supreme" experience every month or two. Kirchhiemer lives off Oltorf and tried to come to the church once every month with her backyard neighbor, Patricia Harris.

Many of the congregates said they drive to this church and not one closer to home because it offers a familial feel. One member, Nicole Richard, has been attending this church for almost 25 years, the majority of her life. Although she lives in Pflugerville, she and her family choose South Austin to continue their prayer.

"I can always turn to them and they don't even have to be my blood family," Richard said. "They lend a hand, do activities. They're really good with helping out with youth."

"I can always turn to them and they don't even have to be my blood family," Richard said. "They lend a hand, do activities. They're really good with helping out with youth."

Gipson said he believes the church's uniqueness is derived from its family orientation.

"When you come to St. Annie's, you put on your seatbelt because we enjoy worshipping the lord," he said. "And I think people should worship where they're comfortable, that's the main thing."

Chmais, Sahar. Medium.com, 2018. <https://medium.com/@keepaustinreal2018/south-austins-little-white-church-with-an-african-american-soul-a97c69d4697d>

African-American churches worth more to Austin than their land value

 statesman.com/story/news/2016/09/03/african-american-churches-worth-more-to-austin-than-their-land-value/10003053007

Alberta Phillips



As I toured the trendy Bouldin Creek neighborhood — west of South Congress Avenue and just south of Lady Bird Lake — I could see remnants of a once-thriving black community of freed slaves who lived in this area following the Civil War and into the 1950s. Today, a handful of structures, including at least two African-American churches, are all that is left of the so-called Brackenridge community.

Goodwill Baptist Church and St. Annie's African Methodist Episcopal Church, both on Newton Street, were an integral part of that community, says Cory Walton, president of the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association, who showed me around. He pointed out other structures with historic value, including the home of Negro National League baseball great Willie Wells, which has been designated an Austin landmark.

While congregations of churches fled the neighborhood following Austin's 1928 plan that forced African-Americans to relocate east of Interstate 35, the churches have remained remarkably the same — unmoved by time, events or circumstances.

But there are larger, more threatening forces amassing.

The city's red-hot real estate market — especially in neighborhoods near downtown — has triggered a redevelopment frenzy that has deep-pocketed developers eyeing and buying black churches, which are sitting atop prime real estate in gentrified neighborhoods. With land so scarce near downtown, those churches — specifically the land underneath them — are being targeted for the next wave of condos, townhouses, apartments and other high-end homes.

In some cases, the churches have shunned enticements. In other cases, they realize they are sitting on gold mines and want to cash in on the opportunity at their door.

Greater Mount Zion Baptist Church, looking to relocate to larger facilities to accommodate its growing congregation, recently sold its home since 1958 on Pennsylvania Street in East Austin to Dallas-based Zebra Chalk, a limited liability company. This year, the church's property value was assessed at \$2.1 million by the Travis Central Appraisal District.

Though the church is eligible for historic landmark status because of its age, it never applied for such status. As a historic landmark, its redevelopment value would be greatly diminished by policies governing historic landmarks and zoning, which restrict exterior renovations and make it more difficult to demolish. Without such zoning, demolition is relatively simple.

David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church on East Martin Luther King Boulevard, designed by John Chase and built in 1958, also is contemplating selling its property and moving to another location.

Though those decisions might seem like straight-forward business transactions, they are complicated by race and history because so many African-American churches serve as markers of Austin's racial duality, which denied African-Americans voting rights, equitable schools and access to public and private accommodations, including churches. At the same time, segregated communities in which blacks of all income levels lived spawned a black renaissance of entrepreneurship, homeownership, college education and upward mobility.

Selling out to the highest bidder might be a solid business decision for black churches that are gaining wealth. But it's a losing proposition for Austin's African-American community, whose legacy is being erased with each sale and each demolition.

That is the struggle confronting St. Annie's AME in Bouldin Creek.

The church, which Travis County valued at over \$1 million last year — up from \$240,000 in 2011 — is caught in something of a bidding war between two parties. The competition pits a local lawyer and filmmaker, who want to get it designated as a historic landmark and renovate the interior as offices, against a developer who wants to demolish it to build residential units on the church's two lots.

The neighborhood, Walton said, is backing the lawyer, Duncan Montgomery, because of his desire to preserve the church, built around 1915. On this issue, I side with the neighborhood. I'm hoping that the elders of St. Annie's AME do, too. I was unable to reach them by telephone and didn't get a response to my email.

St. Annie's AME, Goodwill Baptist and other African-American churches are strategic in filling in a largely untold narrative about Austin's history. That much is clear from the research compiled by Terri Myers, a local historian who conducted the research for the Bouldin Creek neighborhood survey project.

The Brackenridge community, during its apex, comprised nearly half of the Bouldin Creek neighborhood. It was one of Austin's first freedmen communities named for the former all-black Brackenridge School on Elizabeth Street, near the Texas School for the Deaf. Like other African-American communities, Brackenridge was redlined in the 1930s to prevent banks from making home and business loans to residents.

Aside from St. Annie's AME and Goodwill Baptist built around 1903, the neighborhood is home to the former Friendly Will Baptist Church, built in the early 1900s, which has been sold but still stands at its original site on Johanna Street. There's also the impressive stone house on Newton Street built by Robert Stanley, a mason, whose family ran one of the first black businesses in the neighborhood.

I do realize that Austin is changing and some trends, such as gentrification, are transforming the city's physical, political and social structures in ways many city leaders didn't foresee, much less care about. But demolishing the city's African-American churches for their land value without due consideration for their significance to Austin history diminishes us all.

Phillips, Alberta. Statesman.com, 2016. <https://www.statesman.com/story/news/2016/09/03/african-american-churches-worth-more-to-austin-than-their-land-value/10003053007/>

Permits

St Anna Methodist Church 1711 Newton St

122

7

28

SWISHER

Enlarge Church Building

64654

9-4-66

300.00

Owner.

St. Annie A.M.E. Church

1711
1700 Newton St.

122

7

28

Swisher Addn
~~Newman & Warner's~~

Frame addition to church

79000

3-7-61

2600.00

Oscar Ulit

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CLASS ROOM One off street parking space provided as
per city ordinance.