

## ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2024-0100

HLC DATE: August 7, 2024    PC DATE: TBD    CC Date: TBD

APPLICANT: Steve Wilson (owner-initiated)

HISTORIC NAME: Splawn-Green House

WATERSHED: Boggy Creek

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 3311 Lafayette Avenue

ZONING CHANGE: SF-3-NP to SF-3-NP-H

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 9

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from family residence-neighborhood plan (SF-3-NP) to family residence-neighborhood plan-historic landmark (SF-3-H-NP) combining district zoning.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION: architecture and historical associations.

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION:

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

CITY COUNCIL ACTION:

CASE MANAGER: Kalan Contreras, 512-974-2727

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS: Austin Independent School District, Austin Lost and Found Pets, Austin Neighborhoods Council, Cherrywood Neighborhood Assn., Del Valle Community Coalition, Friends of Austin Neighborhoods, Homeless Neighborhood Association, Neighborhood Empowerment Foundation, Neighbors United for Progress, Preservation Austin, SELTexas, Sierra Club, Austin Regional Group, Upper Boggy Creek Neighborhood Planning Team

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The 2020 North Loop-Hancock-Boggy Creek Historic Resource Survey lists the property as a medium priority for preservation.

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.*

The property at 3311 Lafayette Avenue is a good example of a vernacular building type showcasing the transition between more formal stylistic choices of the nineteenth century to the unique Austin interpretation of the National Folk and Craftsman bungalows of the early twentieth century. Furthermore, the house's twin—now located on East 46<sup>th</sup> Street—has already been recognized for its architectural significance; the house at 3311 Lafayette Avenue remains markedly more intact. “Architecturally,” remarks author Steve Wilson in his home’s historic zoning application, “this house is a distinctive and well-preserved missing link in the development of the bungalow style in Austin. It’s an invaluable key to understanding how the form supplanted the traditional Victorian in the city. The home’s unique historical association with an existing landmark, the Pearce-Anderson House, furthers that understanding.”<sup>1</sup> The historic zoning application describes the home’s architectural “rediscovery” and takes a nuanced look at the home’s impressive integrity:

Sometime between 1909 and 1910, sisters Maude and Alma Jones built twin houses side-by-side on lots butting up against the University of Texas. These identical homes on the 2500 block of Wichita Street shared a distinctive look that remained unchanged over time, even after new owners moved them to different spots four decades later. They were unique constructions blending the traditional Victorian with the emerging bungalow that would soon dominate Austin—a hybrid so nice, they did it twice. The city deemed this transitional style special enough to earn Alma’s home historic zoning status as the Pearce-Anderson House in 1994 (C14H-1994-0010), even though that structure

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, Steve. “Historical Narrative: 3311 Lafayette Avenue.” Historic zoning application, 2024.

underwent an initial relocation, a nearly fatal lapse into disrepair, significant reconstruction, and yet another relocation (to 809 E. 46th St.). By contrast, Maude’s home was only moved once (to 3311 Lafayette Ave.), and its successive owners maintained the obscure abode with diligent care. As the Pearce-Anderson House endured the vicissitudes of disrepair, extensive replacement parts, and two traumatic relocations, Maude’s house floated through time in undisturbed anonymity. Profiles of the Pearce-Anderson House refer to Maude [Jones]’s home as lost to history. [The current property owners aim] to reclaim that history by [applying] for historic zoning...like its twin, the house has retained the integrity of the design, materials, workmanship, and feeling of the original, a look that has already earned the Pearce-Anderson Home landmark status in its own right. [...] As the forgotten duplicate of an existing landmark, Maude Jones’s house is the missing half of a story with regional relevance. Reuniting these separated siblings in a “family reunion” will restore an essential Central Texas narrative that’s been lost for far too long.<sup>2</sup>

**§ 25-2-352(3)(c)(ii) Historical Associations.** *The property has long-standing significant associations with persons, groups, institutions, businesses, or events of historical importance that 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.*

The Splawn-Green House is important not only for its historical associations with notable occupants Walter Splawn and Annie Lou Green, but also for its association with Austin’s shifting development patterns: as the “missing half” of a pair of important structures on a journey through time and down the street, the home’s story is a uniquely Austin tale that exemplifies the growth, upheaval, and rebirth of the city during the twentieth century. The house at 3311 Lafayette Avenue is a remarkable example of how Austin’s residents and its built environment changed and adapted to suit the demands of the growing University of Texas and the expansion of Interstate Highway 35, and how determined Austinites overcame the effects of racially restrictive covenants to uplift their communities.

Sisters Maude and Alma Jones purchased adjacent lots in the Raymond & Whitis Subdivision in 1908. Though they built matching homes there, Maude rented hers out rather than living there, and eventually sold the house—then addressed as 2511 Wichita Street—to her sister. Alma Jones continued to rent the property to those in need of housing near the University of Texas, including two-year tenant Walter Marshall William Splawn. “Nationally renowned economist [Splawn] lived in the house in the early 1920s, just before he became the ninth president of the University of Texas,” notes author Steve Wilson. “He moved on to help shape New Deal policy on the national stage, most notably as a long-time commissioner of the Interstate Commerce Commission and advisor to Senator Sam Rayburn.”<sup>3</sup>

After Splawn’s tenancy, Alma Jones sold both houses to the University of Texas, who used them as rental properties for both students and local professionals until the 1940s. In his history of the home, Wilson describes the home’s journey during the postwar years, as well as its historical association with its first true long-term resident owner, Annie Lou Green:

By the late 1940s, the university needed more room for parking, and the Jones homes stood in the way. Rather than demolish the structures, the school sold them to different owners. Carpenter Frank Patton scooped up Maude’s house on Lot 6 and moved it to...the other side of the highway [in the] Upland Addition, [owned by] big-time cotton buyer and one-time city council member D.C. Reed...Horribly enough, he laid out an emphatically racist set of covenants [forbidding Black residents] from owning or occupying homes there.

Widowed housekeeper Annie Lou Green...bought the place and moved in circa 1970. Demographically speaking, Green, a Black woman, bucked a greater demographic trend [in this decade] ...by putting down roots for nearly thirty years, becoming a beloved fixture of the neighborhood in the process. Though D.C. Reed’s racist covenants had been ignored and forgotten by this point, it’s inspiring to think about how Green’s long tenure as an anchor of the community completely debunked the hateful and brutally ignorant premise on which those destructive rules were built....<sup>4</sup>

**PARCEL NO.:** 0214110206

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** LOT 6 BLK 1 OLT 30 DIV C UPLAND ADDN

**ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX EXEMPTION (homestead, capped):**

AISD	COA	TC	TC Health	Total
\$3,500	\$2,500	\$2,094.49	\$692.25	\$8,786.75

**APPRAISED VALUE:** Land: \$446,250; Improvement: \$636,246; Total: \$1,082,496

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, Steve. 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

PRESENT USE: Residence

DATE BUILT/PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1909; 1909-1974

INTEGRITY/ALTERATIONS: High. The house was relocated within the period of significance, which does not affect its integrity; the relocation of the house is part of its historic importance and helps to tell the story of Austin and the University of Texas expansion. A 2023 extension of the existing screened porch to the back of the house maintains the look and feel of the original.

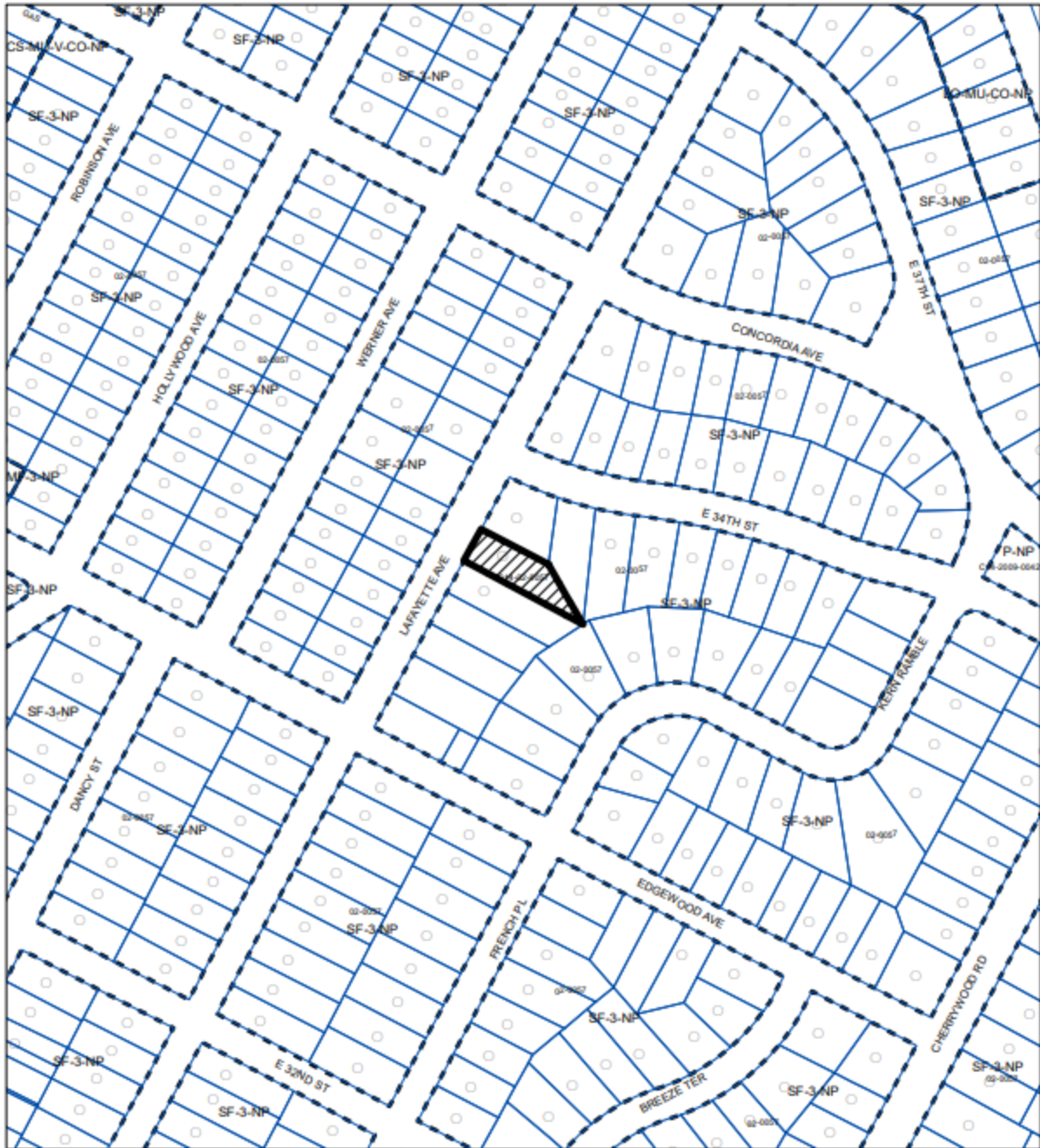
PRESENT OWNERS: Steve Wilson and Erin Mayes

ORIGINAL OWNER(S): Gertrude Whitis

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: None










**HISTORIC ZONING**

ZONING CASE#: C14H-2024-0100



-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 200'

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