

August 6, 2024

Historic Landmark Commission
City of Austin
301 W. 2nd Street
Austin, TX 78701

Engineer's Letter of Support for Demolition Permit 1500 E. 12th St. – #2024-064274 PR

Dear Historic Landmark Commissioners,

As the Professional Engineer, we continue to object to the staff recommendation to initiate Historic Zoning or otherwise require a Documentation Package before releasing the demolition permit.

As a Professional Engineer (P.E.) with over 12 years of experience in civil engineering in Austin, I have developed extensive expertise in urban redevelopment, infrastructure planning, walkability improvements, etc.

I also want to share that not only am I a Professional Engineer who takes his duties seriously, I'm an Austin resident, born here in the 1980s. Based on the previous commissions meeting repeated statements, I heard no concerns related to public safety or most importantly based on the history of structure. The staff's short presentation was not the focus of the commission. I heard only denial of any safety issues, emotionally based opinions, and attacks on the landowner. This appeared to be based on a single speaker, who focused solely on concerns about the landowner.

It was evident to me as a resident, the Historic Landmark Commission aims to block any development of the owner's property leaving the City of Austin citizens to forever deal with the hazard at this intersection.

After performing additional research and listening to at the last hearing, we even *more* strongly advise that the building presents too many safety hazards to remain. Furthermore, it is undeniable that far more public benefits would be gained by enabling demolition of this structure to advance without delay. Here are facts to further support this recommendation:

1. As the building sits today, presents an unsafe situation. Various Civil Engineering Infrastructure items built around the structure are non-compliant with modern safety driven setbacks.
 - a. We reached out to Austin Energy, which stated the following: "... it does not meet our current standard clearances. We would not permit a new building to be built in that same location. A new building would have to be set back further from our facilities." That is a direct quote from an email from Austin Energy's Power System Managing Engineer.
 - b. The structure's location related to public right-of-way proves compliant sidewalks and sight distance unfeasible, endangering the safety, health and welfare of the members of the public amongst other conflicts.
 - c. These setbacks exist for good reason and need to be brought in accordance with current requirements, both from an electrical point of view and transportation/sidewalk/right of way perspective. The structure is simply too close to a busy corner that is much busier than when it was built to overcome present and future safety concerns.

2. This was a building built utilitarian purposes of day and time that long ago passed. Structures are typically built with lifetime spans in mind, and this structure has clearly exceeded it. That is also why moving the structure is completely unfeasible. It wasn't built or intended to last 100+ years and it's long past the point of being able to withstand the stress of being moved.
3. At the prior meeting, we heard allegations of concerns over building neglect being of concern. However, the present-day safety challenges well pre-date current ownership and can only truly be resolved by removal of the current structure. This is not currently a historic structure, thus it is unreasonable to have expected any owner to maintain it as such.

Again, we stress this structure is a disaster waiting to happen and since becoming aware of the situation, it is my professional assessment that the structure cannot remain. Due to the considerable risk to the health, safety and welfare of the public, it is our professional duty to inform you of the importance that this demolition plan be approved.

Sincerely,

Nick Sandlin, P.E.
President & Principal
TBPELS Firm# 21356

Original Letter

July 1, 2024

Historic Landmark Commission
City of Austin
301 W. 2nd Street
Austin, TX 78701

**Engineer's Letter of Support for Demolition Permit
1500 E. 12th St. – #2024-064274 PR**

Dear Historic Landmark Commissioners,

As the Professional Engineer, we object to the staff recommendation to initiate Historic Zoning or otherwise require a Documentation Package before releasing the demolition permit. As you will see, the public benefits afforded by demolition of the structure far outweigh the marginal benefits of allowing it to remain, and my justification is based on the following facts:

1. This structure type is not conducive nor available for relocation. Anything other than demolition is a safety hazard to the community.
2. Various Civil Engineering Infrastructure items built around the structure are non-compliant with modern safety driven setbacks.
3. Structure proximity to the adjacent major power infrastructure per National Electric Code as also used by the City of Austin is non-compliant. This is a disaster waiting to happen and the structure cannot remain.
4. The structure's location related to public Right-Of-Way proves compliant sidewalks and sight distance unfeasible, endangering the safety, health and welfare of the members of the public amongst other conflicts.

Due to the considerable risk to the health, safety and welfare of the public, it is our professional duty to inform you of the importance that this demolition plan be approved. Should you have any questions or need anything further at this time, please contact me at (806) 679-7303.

Sincerely,
Nick Sandlin, P.E.
President & Principal
TBPELS Firm# 21356