



TRAVIS COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Austin, Texas

November 12th 2024

City Council, City of Austin Texas

Re: Letter of support for 1500 E. 12th Street, Austin, TX

Greetings,

The Travis County Historical Commission is in support of preserving the building at 1500 E. 12th Street and allowing for a zoning change to historic zoning or until such time as proper documentation of its history can be made, and measures taken, to provide context and interpretation to the site. According to the Zoning Change Review Sheet, the property has served as a German neighborhood grocery/retail outlet, beauty parlor/barber shop, saloon/restaurant and African American fraternity house. It is linked to a variety of notable persons and has served different ethnic groups over time, illustrating the complex and changing nature of the East Austin community. We feel that a rush to develop might unintentionally truncate the possibility of learning more about the history of the tract and how it provides a narrative into the diversity and significance of this building to the neighborhood and larger community. It is eligible for landmark status due to several criteria, such as architecture, historical associations and community value.

Austin is quickly losing its historic fabric to rapid and uncontrolled development. While some preservation initiatives do not warrant objection, we feel that this property is unique in that it is illustrative of the multiple uses and owners that made up the East Austin community. This area witnessed the evolution of Austin from a multi-ethnic enclave to a post 1928 African American District to the gentrification of more recent years. In so doing, it tells a rich historical narrative that both explains and expands our knowledge of the Austin history.

The Travis County Historical Commission supports the nomination of the property at 1500 E. 12th Street as an historic landmark for the City of Austin and if any additional support is requested on this or other matters, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Bob Ward, Chair
Travis County Historical Commission

03 December 2024

Mayor Kirk Watson
City Council Members
T.C. Broadnax, City Manager

CARTER • DESIGN
ASSOCIATES
817 WEST ELEVENTH STREET
AUSTIN • TEXAS • 78701
(P) 512.476.1812 (F) 512.476.1819
ARCHITECTURE • PRESERVATION • PLANNING

Re: Support for Historic Zoning for 1500 East 12th St., Austin, Texas

Mayor, City Councilmembers and City Manager:

I wholeheartedly support historic zoning for the building at 1500 E. 12 St. in East Austin. This is a test of our resolve and commitment to the newly adopted Equity-Based Preservation Plan. This is not just support for one building but a clarion call to preserve what remains of resources that can be used to document, interpret, and celebrate the incredibly diverse cultural and economic history of Austin. This is not just about the rapidly vanishing artifacts and resources related to African Americans in Austin, but retaining ways to tell the story of immigration, migration, enslavement, segregation, and integration in Austin in a comprehensive manner.

I have been a planner and architect in Austin for over 40 years. I did not intend to be a preservation architect. Preservation found me. I had lived in Great Britain, Egypt and New England where buildings were a lot older and very much revered, but in most cases did not speak directly to me as a young African American. Then, in the late 70s, I moved to Austin. I was in awe of African American families that had been in their homes since the early 20th century. I was introduced to families that had rural land that had been theirs since reconstruction. This seemed precious and vulnerable; I was hooked. In 1982, I authored a plan that called for the creation of historic districts, advocated listing individual structures, and illustrated creating both regional and local music and entertainment hubs for the E11th and 12th St Corridors. Nobody listened. Some are listening now, but we have lost so much. We are not obliged to keep repeating these errors and there is a way forward that both preserves and adaptively reuses historic properties and allows for modern, denser development. In these sensitive areas we must demand both / and not either / or.

The exciting aspect of an historic designation for this property is it fosters a district that has the potential to anchor economic development that is reflective and accessible for a diverse community and be reflective of Black East Austin. There is room on this property to do both. We must do both. This property is across the streets from the I.Q. Hurdle House and the Southgate Lewis House and forms an anchor that connects the educational roots of the community north-south (from 7th to Swede Hill) and the commercial /social roots east-west to Chicon. Ther is a time to develop and a time to preserve. This is the time to do both.

Demolition of contributing resources, one by one, without thinking of the whole, will leave us with an E. 12th Street – an area that was once a social center for a segregated African American community – that looks like the 1000 block of E. 5th. What do we get? Well executed, modern mixed use, completely devoid of soul, while mourning the loss of everything that had made Austin the city we love.

Respectfully,



Donna D. Carter, FAIA, NCARB, NOMA, LEED Green Associate
President
Carter Design Associates



December 4, 2024

The Hon. Kirk Watson, Mayor
Austin City Hall
301 W. Second Street, Austin, TX

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JESÚS NAJAR
San Marcos

Re: Zoning Change Review, Case Number: PR-2024-064274; GF-2024-073040

Dear Mayor Watson and Council Members:

We are writing to endorse the efforts of the Austin Historic Landmark Commission to recognize one of East Austin's oldest buildings, Eisenbeiser's East End Saloon, located at 1500 E. 12th Street, as a local historic landmark. We support the application of historic zoning to the property because it clearly meets the criteria required to be eligible for local landmark listing. The building is architecturally significant as a rare example of a vernacular commercial building in Austin, and has historical significance as an important example of the diverse economic and social history of East Austin.

The 2016 East Austin Historic Resource Survey recognizes the property's significance due to its association with prominent German grocers and African-American business owners. The property is also noted for its unique contribution to the neighborhood's cultural identity, having served as a popular gathering place in East Austin. Furthermore, it is part of a historically important urban cultural landscape at the intersection at 12th and Comal Streets, situated across from two other notable African-American landmarks.

The rehabilitation of the building is feasible. Across Austin and Texas, we've seen historic buildings in a similar condition successfully restored and adapted for modern use while preserving their integrity and character. The city has a wealth of preservation architects, consultants, and contractors capable of expertly restoring such structures, demonstrating that no building's condition is beyond revival. Also, the State of Texas and federal government provide historic tax credit incentives of up to 45% of project costs for income-producing historic properties if the building were to be designated at the state or federal level as well.

The East End Saloon deserves recognition and preservation, not only for East Austin but for all Texans who value landmarks that narrate our state's history. As the statewide advocate for historic preservation, we are committed to collaborating with you and the residents of Austin to secure the future of this historic site.

Sincerely,

Evan R. Thompson
Executive Director



Willis Hunt – ARA Board Chair | Gregory L. Smith – President & CEO

November 21, 2024

Dear Mayor and City Council,

I am writing to express the Austin Revitalization Authority strong opposition to the proposed demolition of the historic building located at **1500 E 12th St. in Austin, Texas**. This building holds significant historical and cultural value to our community, and its preservation is vital for preserving a vital part of our city's heritage.

From 1910 to 1950 the Eisenbeis's owned and operated a grocery store, cafe, feed store and saloon for beer. In 1950, Black businessman Buford Johnson bought the building, turning it into a hub for East Austin's African American community. By the mid-1950s, it housed beauty and barber shops, a bar, and a music venue (Aka The Fifteen Hundred). Later, it became home to the Gamma Eta Alpha chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, the oldest Black fraternity. The building also functioned as a community resource center that was operated by the Ministry of Challenge.

Since Eureka has taken over the property, they have let the quality of the structure diminish over time making it almost uninhabitable. Eureka currently owns the majority of properties on 12th street and has a pattern of letting those properties languish. As the properties are left to erode, so are the rich history that once were once points of pride in East Austin.

The historic preservation of the 1501 East 12th Street, locally known as the Southgate Lewis; 1416 East 12th Street House, locally known as I.Q. Hurdle House along with 1500 East 12th Street, locally known as the Ministry of Challenge building at the intersection of East 12th and Comal Street create a grand opportunity to display the rich history and cultural of the African American Cultural Heritage District.

We urge you to oppose the demolition and take steps to protect this valuable asset for future generations so they may be able to learn the true history of this East Austin gem.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Gregory L. Smith
President & CEO

Austin Revitalization Authority



BETHANY CEMETERY Association

To : Austin City Council

November 19, 2024

Dear Council Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Bethany Cemetery Association to express our strong support for preserving the historic property located at East 12th Street and Comal in the East Austin Historic District. This building, which dates back to the late 1800s, has long served as a cornerstone for the Black community in Austin, operating over the years as a grocery store, a meeting place, and a vital social center of community life.

East Austin's historic Black landmarks are rapidly disappearing due to ongoing gentrification, erasing vital cultural markers and diminishing the stories of the Black communities that built and thrived in this city. This building is more than a historic structure; it embodies the resilience, resourcefulness, and unity of Austin's Black community, a story that is worth protecting for future generations.

While the mission of the Bethany Cemetery Association is centered on the preservation of Bethany Cemetery, we also advocate for the protection of Austin's cultural landmarks that highlight the significant contributions of the Black community.

The historical property on East 12th Street and Comal is a rare surviving example of an establishment from Austin's early days, marking a time when East Austin served as a self-sustained, vibrant center for Black families and businesses. In an area that has rapidly changed, often to the detriment of its original residents, these landmarks offer an enduring testament to the strength and heritage of Austin's Black presence and are essential to maintaining our city's true historical and cultural story and identity.

The Bethany Cemetery Association supports the Historic Landmark Commission's efforts to recognize this historic building as a landmark, securing its future as a part of Austin's cultural narrative and saving it from demolition.

Thank you for your dedication to preserving Austin's history and for considering this property for historic landmark status.

Sue E. Spears
President of the Bethany Cemetery Association of Austin

512-300-3675

bethanycemeteryofaustin@gmail.com

7318 Colony Park Drive Austin, Texas 78724



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November 19, 2024

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Sue E. Spears
President of the Bethany Cemetery Association of Austin

512-300-3675

7318 Colony Park Drive Austin, Texas 78724

From: [Smith-Francis, Jacqueline](#)
To: [Misael Ramos](#); [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Call to Action: Help us #SaveEast12th
Date: Friday, December 6, 2024 11:54:26 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)

Greetings, Ms. Poole,

I recommend contacting Misael Ramos and JuanRaymon Rubio, who I have added to this thread, to discuss their organizing communities about next steps.

Best,



Jacqueline Smith-Francis, PhD (she/her)
African American Community Archivist
Austin Public Library, Austin History Center
810 Guadalupe Street
512-974-7390 (Office number)
Jacqueline.smithfrancis@austintexas.gov
<https://library.austintexas.gov/ahc>

From: Marilyn Poole [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2024 6:21 AM
To: Alta Alexander [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Call to Action: Help us #SaveEast12th

Some people who received this message don't often get email from [REDACTED]. [Learn why this is important](#)

External Email - Exercise Caution

I want to hear more about this. Good work!

Marilynn

Serve more. Judge less.

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 4, 2024, at 4:29 PM, Alta Alexander <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Call to Action: Help us #SaveEast12th

<https://www.preservationaustin.org/news/save-east-12th-street>

CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL email. Please use caution when clicking links or opening attachments. If you believe this to be a malicious or phishing email, please report it using the "Report Message" button in Outlook.

For any additional questions or concerns, contact CSIRT at
"cybersecurity@austintexas.gov".

Statement from Howard Ware, longtime coach at Austin Striders Running Club

November 22, 2024

That building is a strong face of Austin, Texas. Please let history live on. We appreciate our history as one of the grand cities in the USA.

Coach Howard Ware