

June 124, 2024

Sam Fahnestock
Historic Preservation Office
City of Austin

Subject: Support for Austin Historic Zoning – Fannie Davis Gazebo

Dear Mr. Fahnestock,

The Friends of the Gazebo, who have continued to provide ongoing support for the continuance and maintenance of the Fannie Davis Gazebo, want to endorse Commissioner Rubio and Commissioner Koch's request for consideration of initiation of historic zoning.

Many of us were members of the Austin, Tx. Chapter, National Association of Women in Construction during those early days and as the chapter moved on to meet the changing needs of professional women in construction, we recognized that you just don't build something and walk away. We were the group that initiated and worked with Kim McKnight, Parks and Recreation to seek the National Register marker in the year 2019, marking 50 years, to protect and preserve this icon of architecture modernism which reflected the work of the beautification of Town Lake and the work of Ladybird Johnson.

The Austin Chapter recognized after a number of years that the structure needed care and we had an opportunity to work with Parks to help keep the preservation of the structure and the pond a place of solace and reflection. At one time this was the most photographed spot in the City of Austin.

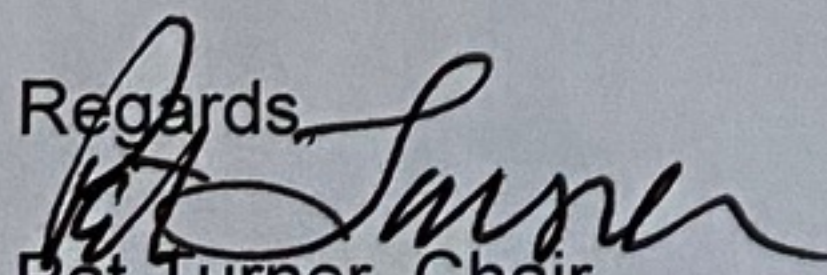
The Chapter commissioned a local artist to do a black and white rendering of the structure and along with Mayor Carol McClellan, we promoted and sold copies to raise funds for the upkeep. We had three consecutive Gazebo runs around the hike and bike trail and assisted Parks in putting in the much-needed handicap ramp.

San Antonio has its Daughters of the Republic to be guardians and supports of the Alamo. In 2001, Austin established its Friends of the Gazebo who serve that same function. Friends of the Gazebo over the years have included NAWIC members, women business and government leaders that supported its cause.

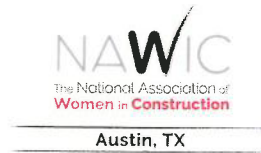
We now need the Landmark Commission to show its support by giving the Fannie Davis Gazebo the local historic designation it deserves and has earned for its historic and ongoing contribution.

Since the improvement of the hike and bike trail, the pond area around the structure, as well as the landscape needs maintenance and it is a concern to maintain its integrity.

Regards,


Pat Turner, Chair
Friends of the Gazebo

Friends of the Gazebo:
Mayor Carole Keeton McClellan
Lori Nill
Ken Wendler
Mayor Carole Keeto McClellan
Councilwoman Laura Morrison
Terry Wadsworth



Mrs. Cathy Schernik
Austin Chapter President
National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), Austin Chapter #07
P.O. Box 80361
Austin, TX 78708
[REDACTED]
512.757.7787

June 26, 2024
Historic Landmark Commission
Mr. Sam Fahnestock, Historic Preservation Officer
sam.fahnestock@austintexas.gov
Austin, TX

RE: Letter of Support for Fannie Davis Town Lake Gazebo

Dear Mr. Fahnestock,

We are writing to express our enthusiastic support for the historic zoning designation of the Fannie Davis Town Lake Gazebo, constructed by the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), as a historic landmark.

This unique structure, built in 1969, stands as a testament to the skill, dedication, and community spirit of the women involved in its construction and our association. NAWIC, established to support and advocate for women in the construction industry, has played a pivotal role in promoting gender equality and fostering professional development within the field. The gazebo not only exemplifies their determination but also symbolizes the progress and achievements of women in a traditionally male-dominated industry.

Motivated by President Johnson and the First Lady, the Austin chapter of NAWIC decided to build a gazebo as their beautification construction project after consulting with Mr. Beverly Sheffield, director of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department. On November 9, 1965, the Austin City Council unanimously approved the Austin Chapter's plans to construct the gazebo on the shores of Town Lake, with fundraising beginning in January 1966. Mayor Lester Palmer noted humorously that, while council members were initially unsure what a gazebo was, they all agreed that Austin should have one, a sentiment clarified by the Austin Statesman as a small circular garden house designed for leisurely strolling and gazing.



The gazebo holds significant historical value, representing a remarkable milestone in the local community's architectural and cultural heritage. Its construction was a groundbreaking project, showcasing innovation and creativity.

Furthermore, it has served as a communal gathering place for numerous events, celebrations, and civic activities over the decades, embedding itself into the social fabric of our community.

Preserving this gazebo as a historic landmark will honor the legacy of the women who built it and highlight the contributions of NAWIC to our local history. It will also serve as an inspiration for future generations, illustrating the importance of diversity and inclusion in the construction industry and beyond.

I firmly believe that the gazebo meets the criteria for landmark designation due to its architectural significance, historical importance, and cultural value. Its preservation will ensure that this exceptional piece of history remains a cherished landmark for years to come.

Thank you for considering this important designation. I am confident that recognizing the gazebo as a historic landmark will not only honor the past achievements of NAWIC but also inspire future generations to pursue excellence in the construction industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cathy Schernik". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cathy" and last name "Schernik" clearly distinguishable.

Cathy Schernik
NAWIC Austin Chapter President 2023-2024

Cc: Juan Raymon Rubio, Associ. AIA - jrubio@architexas.com



June 26, 2024
City of Austin Historic Landmark Commission
PO Box 1088
Austin, Texas 78767

Re: Support for Austin Historic Zoning-Fannie Davis Gazebo

Commissioners,

Mid Tex Mod, the leading voice for the preservation of Modern architecture in our Central Texas region, submits this letter supporting the Landmark designation of the Fannie Davis Town Lake Gazebo, one of Austin's most historically significant works of small-scale architecture. It was one of the first structures built to beautify the shores of the new "Town Lake" crossings in Downtown, led by Lady Bird Johnson, after the completion of the Longhorn Dam in 1960. Future by the 1970s development created what became Austin's "Hike-and-Bike Trail.

The historic gazebo was created and funded by the philanthropic efforts of the Austin Chapter of the National Association of Women in Construction, headed and designed on behalf of the organization by local architect J. Sterry Nill, the husband of NAWIC chapter president Lori Nill.

The structure was constructed using native limestone incorporating the dramatic geometric expression of a zig-zagging octagonal roofline, which has been referenced as resembling an inverted morning glory flower, truly one of the city's more significant public park facilities.

In 1984 the gazebo, was renamed in honor of NAWIC founding member Fannie Davis. The structure was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2019.

Our organization fully supports efforts to designate this architecturally and historically significant structure, honoring the contributions of women in the City of Austin, an Austin City Landmark.

Regards

Charles Peveto, Interim President
Mid Tex Mod, Central Texas Chapter
DOCOMOMO US



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July 2, 2024

RE: Fannie Davis Town Lake Gazebo

Dear Chair Heimsath, Vice Chair Featherston, and Members of the Historic Landmark Commission,

[Preservation Austin](#) exists to empower Austinites to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation. We write today in support of designating the Fannie Davis Town Lake Gazebo as a City of Austin Historic Landmark for its historic associations with women in construction, its Mid-Century Modern architectural style, and its community value as a significant site in the beautification of Lady Bird Lake.

Built in 1969-70, the Austin Chapter of the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) spearheaded the efforts to raise funds for what was originally known as the Town Lake Gazebo. The organization commissioned architect J. Sterry Nill to design the gazebo in a striking Mid-Century Modern style, featuring a dramatic geometric roofline with folded plate ridges and valleys. The gazebo was one of the first structures built to beautify the south shore of Town Lake (now Lady Bird Lake), and its design reflects the spirit of its age and its role as a community space. The gazebo was later named in honor of Fannie Davis, a charter member of the Austin Chapter of NAWIC. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2019.

In alignment with our Underrepresented Heritage [Advocacy Priority](#), we commend the Historic Landmark Commission for taking the initiative to honor this significant site of women's heritage. We wholeheartedly support the designation of the Fannie Davis Town Lake Gazebo as a City of Austin Landmark. Thank you for your consideration and your service to our city.

Sincerely,

Melissa Barry, President