

ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2024-0102

HLC DATE: November 6, 2024_ PC DATE: January 14, 2025 CC Date: February 27, 2025

APPLICANT: Historic Landmark Commission (owner-supported)

HISTORIC NAME: Fannie Davis Town Lake Gazebo

WATERSHED: Lady Bird Lake

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 9307 Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail

ZONING CHANGE: P-NP to P-H-NP

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 9

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Grant the proposed zoning change from public-neighborhood plan (P-NP) to public-historic landmark-neighborhood plan (P-H-NP) combining district zoning.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION: The gazebo is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, rendering it eligible for local landmark designation under Land Development Code [§ 25-2-352\(3\)\(a\)](#). Additionally, it qualifies for the criteria for architecture, community value, and historical associations.

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION: July 3, 2024 - Initiate historic zoning (10-0). November 6, 2024 – recommend historic zoning (10-0).

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: January 14, 2025 – recommend historic zoning (11-0).

CITY COUNCIL ACTION:

CASE MANAGER: Kalan Contreras, 512-974-2727

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS: Austin Independent School District, Austin Lost and Found Pets, Austin Neighborhoods Council, Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association, Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Plan Contact Team, Bouldin Creek Zoning Committee, Friends of Austin Neighborhoods, Homeless Neighborhood Association, Neighborhood Empowerment Foundation, Perry Grid 614, Preservation Austin, SELTexas, Sierra Club, Austin Regional Group, South Central Coalition

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

§ 25-2-352(3)(a) *The property is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places; or is designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Archeological Landmark, or National Historic Landmark.*

The gazebo is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

§ 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 Town Lake Gazebo, as a unique example of Modernist architecture, is an icon of Austin’s Colorado River waterfront. Since its design and construction in 1969, it has been one of the most recognizable Town Lake touchpoints, as one of Austin’s only hyperbolic paraboloid structures, and has changed very little since its construction. Commissioned by the Austin Chapter of the National Association of Women in Construction in 1965, the gazebo project was supported by Over a dozen construction firms with donations of materials and labor. In her 2024 summary of the site, historian Lori Martin describes the building’s

architectural significance in detail:

Construction commenced in 1969, and the gazebo was dedicated in June 1970. Project architect J. Sterry Nill (and husband of NAWIC Austin Chapter president Lori Nill) designed the gazebo in keeping with the Town Lake master plan and described it as a “structure with a view.” The gazebo features a striking hyperbolic paraboloid roof with folded plate ridges and valleys. The design reflects diverse architectural trends of the 1960s, and playfully references Frank Lloyd Wright’s geometric experimentation and combination of organic materials with modern forms, the thinshell innovations of Felix Candela, and the rustic park architecture found in central Texas...

The Town Lake Gazebo stands as one of the most prominent examples of 1960s exuberant modernism in Austin, featuring a striking hyperbolic paraboloid roof with folded plate ridges and valleys, and a central spire. Architect Sterry Nill referred to his final design for the gazebo as an “inverted morning glory.” Stylistically, the gazebo is difficult to categorize, but it reflects diverse architectural trends and influences...This national phenomenon (sometimes categorized as “Googie” or “Populuxe” architecture) also took root in Texas and was at its peak in 1965 when NAWIC introduced its concept of a gazebo to the City of Austin.

Architect J. Sterry Nill was a modernist, but no other work attributed to him is as expressive and whimsical as the Town Lake Gazebo, perhaps due the Austin Chapter of NAWIC’s desire to construct a memorable landmark and set a standard for future lakeside improvements. Nill did not attribute the inspiration of his design to any particular buildings, but well-known examples of postwar architecture help illustrate the eclectic nature of design during the period in which he worked. The gazebo’s striking angular plan and dramatic profile are tempered by the application of rough-cut native limestone in irregular courses on the piers that support the roof...The gazebo’s octagonal roof set on stone piers carries on the tradition of exotic park structure design seen in the Japanese Sunken Garden (1917) in San Antonio’s Breckenridge Park. The gazebo’s plywood folded plate roof, supported by laminated wood (glulam) beams, is an angular variation of a true hyperbolic paraboloid form...The hyperbolic parabolic form – whether built of concrete or wood – appealed to a public desiring space-age form...Texas experienced a small movement in vaulted roof structures in the early 1960s, particularly emanating from Corpus Christi and along the Coastal Bend.¹

§ 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 Fannie Davis Town Lake Gazebo was the first public structure built with the express purpose of beautifying Town Lake’s south shore, spearheaded by the Austin Chapter of the National Association of Women in Construction. Thus, it represents a significant public planning effort, is associated with a unique and forward-thinking women’s movement, and plays a central part in the Town Lake beautification effort inspired by Ladybird Johnson’s statewide endeavor to enhance and celebrate Texas’ natural vistas. Martin describes the gazebo’s associations as follows:

The 1960 completion of the Longhorn Dam on the Colorado River, approximately 2.5 miles downstream from the gazebo, created Town Lake, which served as a reservoir for the Holly Power Plant. The Austin Chamber of Commerce promoted the public bond measure that financed the Longhorn Dam, as well as planning and development of the lakefront. In 1961, the Austin City Council formed the Town Lake Study Committee (TLSC), charged with overseeing and guiding development on the city’s public land. Town Lake beautification efforts were inspired in part by Claudia “Lady Bird” Johnson. From the beginning of her tenure as First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson expressed interest in environmental conservation issues, working to beautify the national highway system, which was then visually cluttered with billboards and junkyards...Lady Bird’s efforts began with her formation of the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital, where she emphasized community participation, stressing that “It is in our own communities that we can best participate

¹ Martin, Lori. “Fannie Davis Town Lake Gazebo.” Historic zoning application, 2024.

in creating an environment which has beauty, joyousness, liveliness, as well as dignity.” ... Lady Bird’s appeal to beautification inspired projects large and small, including the Town Lake Gazebo.

In 1953, sixteen women working in the construction industry in Fort Worth began the organization “Women in Construction of Fort Worth.” Understanding that women had very limited participation in the construction industry, the group was formed as a support network for its members... the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), [was established] to enhance women’s success in the industry. In 1957, the Dallas chapter contacted Fannie Davis, executive secretary of the Austin Associated General Contractors, to gauge interest in starting an Austin chapter...The Austin chapter received its charter of February 15, 1958...

Austin architect J. Sterry Nill, designer of the Town Lake Gazebo, was married to Austin Chapter president Loretta Nill, the project coordinator for the gazebo... Nill worked as a secretary and bookkeeper for several architecture firms, including her husband’s... Lori began supporting John’s career even before he [became] a licensed architect...In 1965, while serving as the chapter’s president, Lori persuaded John to design the Town Lake Gazebo...Lori retired from the Architecture division of the Texas Department of Transportation [and] played a significant [fundraising] role in many organizations...including the Austin Association of Home Builders, the Women’s Architectural League and the Texas Society of Architects’ annual meeting.²

§ 25-2-352(3)(c)(iv) Community Value. *The property has a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, a neighborhood, or a particular group.*

As a community-led, community-funded project, the Town Lake Gazebo is an excellent example of a public project that overcame initial skepticism and construction difficulties through the hard work of its organizers, supporters, and craftspeople:

Encouraged by the President Johnson and the First Lady, the Austin chapter of NAWIC approached Austin’s Parks and Recreation Department for suggestions on how they could contribute. After this meeting, the group decided to build a gazebo as their beautification construction project....Mayor Lester Palmer observed that “not a member of the Council knew what a gazebo was, but we all felt every city ought to have one.”...Vice President Wilma Williams explained that...“the city provides the view, and we wish to provide the structure to enjoy that view.”

...Progress was slow because all the work was provided pro bono...At the ceremony, Lori Nill summarized the efforts to build the gazebo, describing it as a “lasting tribute to the construction industry” that would “spur other organizations to contribute to the beautification of Town Lake.”

The Town Lake Gazebo was the first of many Town Lake beautification projects...Although Lady Bird Johnson was not involved with the project, [she] was photographed at the gazebo at two separate events promoting [her beautification program], an indication of the gazebo’s symbolic connection to the overall program.³

PARCEL NO.: 0203000103

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: 13.46 ACR BLK A BOULDIN JAMES E ESTATE

ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX EXEMPTION: None.

APPRAISED VALUE: N/A

PRESENT USE: Recreational

DATE BUILT/PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1969-1974

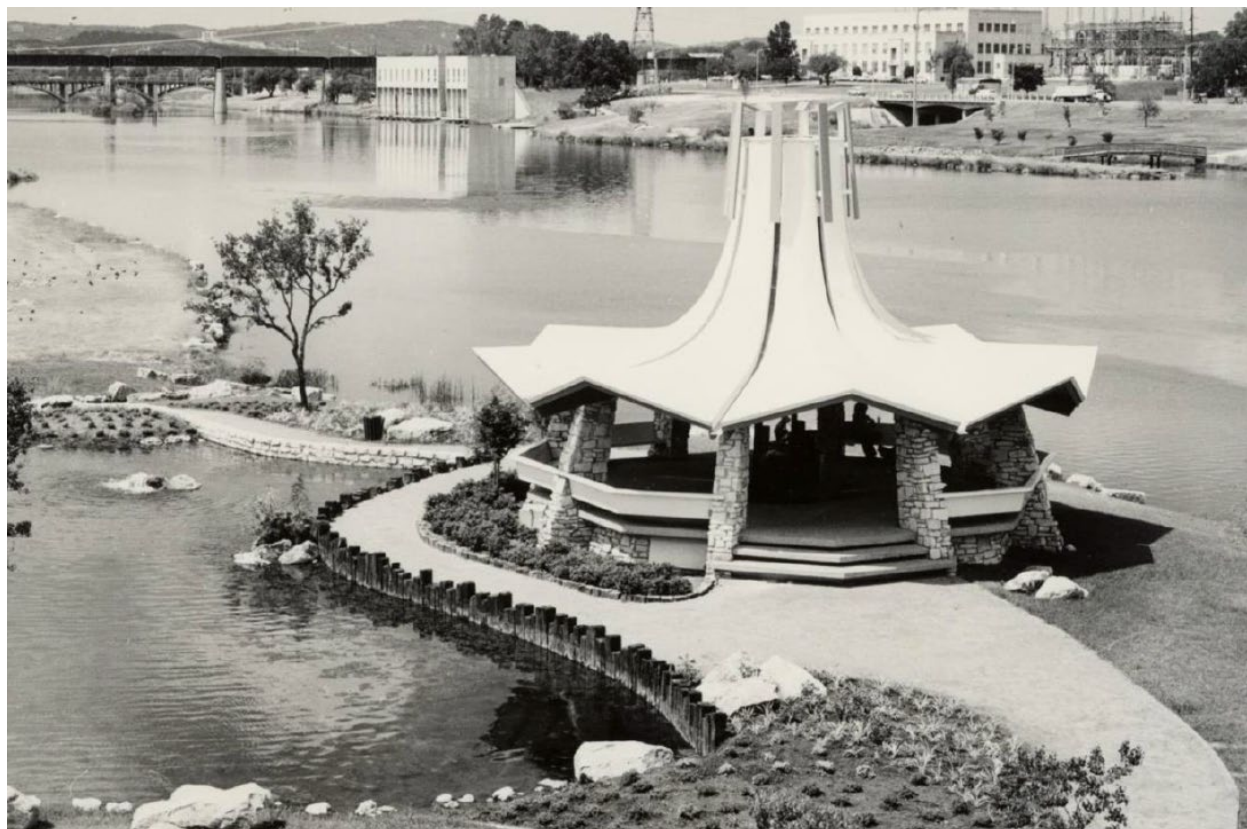
INTEGRITY/ALTERATIONS: High.

² Ibid.

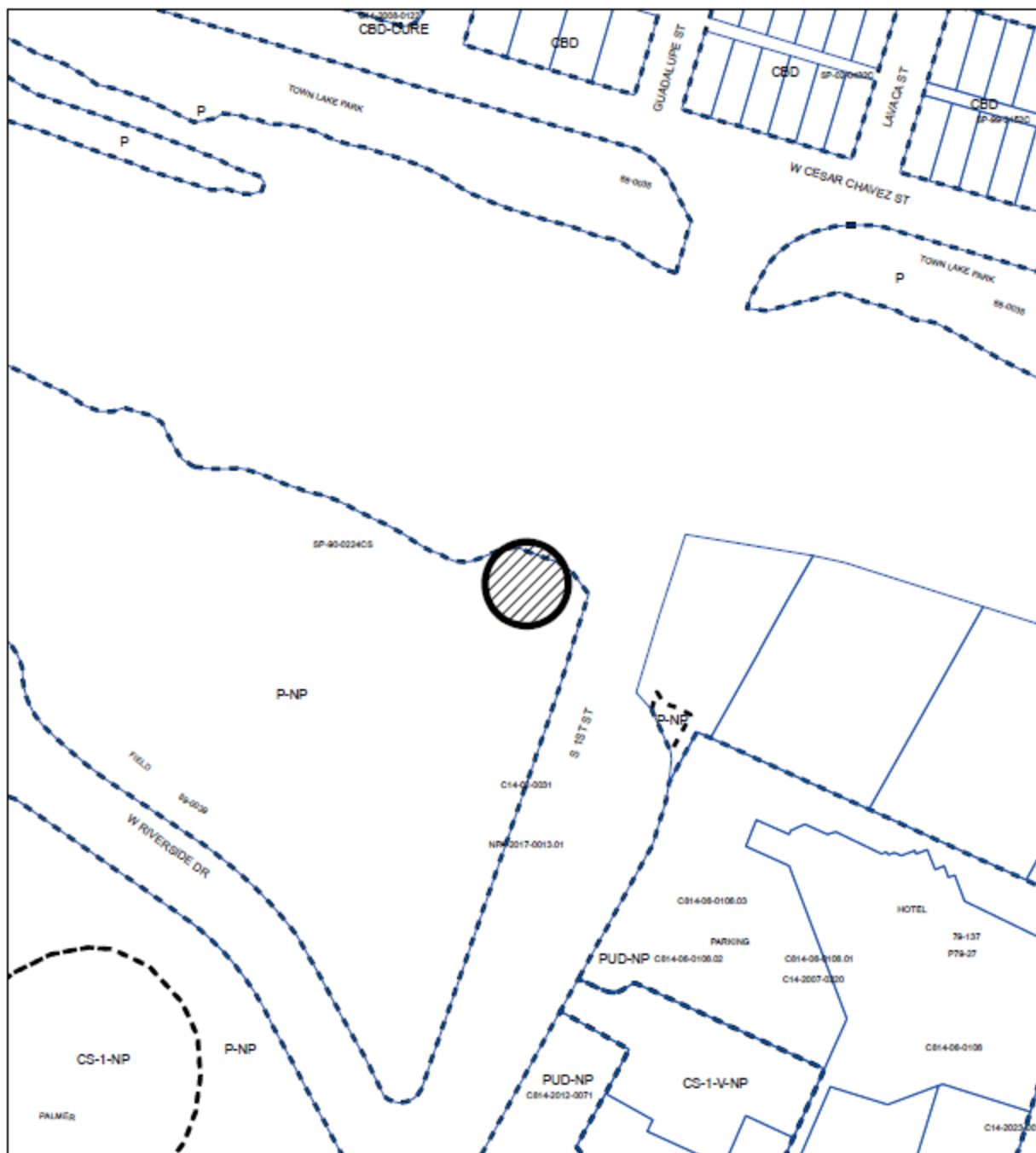
³ Ibid.

ORIGINAL/PRESENT OWNERS: City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department




OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: The gazebo was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2019.



Historic zoning application, 2025



1" = 200'

-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

HISTORIC ZONING

ZONING CASE#: C14H-2024-0102

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

This product has been produced by the Planning Department for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.



Sam Fahnestock
Historic Preservation Office
City of Austin
May 23, 2024

**Subject: Request to consider initiation of historic zoning, Fannie Davis Town Lake
Gazebo/Women in Construction Gazebo
(9037 Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail)**

Dear Mr. Fahnestock,

We would like to include the Fannie Davis Town Lake Gazebo/Women in Construction Gazebo, located at 9037 Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail, on the Historic Landmark Commission's June agenda for consideration of initiation of historic zoning. The owner, the City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department (PARC), has been notified of this request. The gazebo was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2019.

Originally known as the Town Lake Gazebo, the Fannie Davis Town Lake Gazebo was the first public structure built in the effort to beautify the south shore of Town Lake (now Lady Bird Lake). The Austin Chapter of the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), established in the 1950s for women working in the construction industry, spearheaded and raised funds for the project's completion. The structure was built from 1969-1970 and features a striking hyperbolic paraboloid roof with folded plate ridges and valleys. Architect J. Sterry Nill designed a community structure that reflected the architectural trends of the 1960s and brought an iconic piece of architecture to the shores of Lady Bird Lake. The gazebo was later named after Fannie Davis, a charter member of the Austin chapter of NAWIC.

The gazebo's Mid-Century Modern design and contributions to the beautification of Town Lake meet the City's Architecture and Community Value criteria for local landmark designation. It is also eligible for its Historical Associations with the development of the hike and bike trail, and women in construction. Thank you for your consideration and feel free to reach out regarding any questions or concerns.

Thank you,



JuanRaymon Rubio, Associate AIA
Historic Landmark Commissioner, District 2



Kevin Koch, AIA
Historic Landmark Commissioner, District 3

708.743.8148
BC-JuanRaymon.Rubio@AustinTexas.gov
Motioned By: Commissioner Rubio

BC-Kevin.Koch@AustinTexas.gov
Seconded By: Commissioner Koch

July 3, 2024

Historic Landmark Commission
City of Austin

Subject: Fannie Davis Gazebo

Dear Members of the Historic Landmark Commission:

Please accept this letter of support from the Austin Parks and Recreation Department for the designation of the Fannie Davis Gazebo as a City of Austin Historic Landmark.

The 1969 Town Lake Gazebo was the first public structure built in the effort to beautify the south shore of Town Lake (now Lady Bird Lake), which was created after the construction of Longhorn Dam on the Colorado River in 1960. The Austin Chapter of the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), established in the 1950s for women working in the construction industry, spearheaded and raised funds for the project. Inspired by Lady Bird Johnson, a national leader in environmental beautification and later the honorary co-chair of the Town Lake Beautification Committee, the Austin chapter began planning and raising money for the structure in 1965. Nearly 100 contractors and suppliers enthusiastically supported the gazebo project with donations of materials and labor. The gazebo was dedicated in June 1970, and then in 1984, the structure was named for Fannie Davis, a founding member of the Austin chapter of NAWIC.

The gazebo was designed by architect, J. Sterry Nill, to resemble an inverted morning glory flower and its design reflects diverse architectural trends of the 1960s. The Fannie Davis Gazebo was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2020. Noted for its historical and architectural significance, the Fannie Davis Gazebo joined other properties under the stewardship of the Austin Parks and Recreation Department system with historic designation.

The Parks and Recreation Department Historic Preservation & Tourism Program appreciates the support of the Historic Landmark Commission and looks forward to collaborating on the historic designation process.

Best regards,



Kim McKnight, MSHP, AICP
Program Manager, Historic Preservation & Tourism Program

Cc: Alyssa Tharrett RA, NCARB, Division Manager, Architectural Development
Liana Kallivoka, PhD, PE, LEED Fellow, Assistant Director
Angela Means, MPA, Interim Director