



**CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Z2018295

Statement of Significance

Property Address: 230 Cactus St.

Tier: 3

Known Name: n/a

1. Application Details

Applicant: Eugenio & Alma Chavarria

Type: Designation Request

Date: May 18, 2018

2. Findings

The property at 230 Cactus St. is a Spanish Eclectic residence built c. 1917 and is currently owned by Eugenio & Alma Chavarria. An attached structure in the rear of the home, facing Martin Luther King Dr., was built c. 1910.

230 Cactus St. is located at the northwest corner of Cactus St. and Martin Luther King Dr. San Antonio's east side neighborhoods were the earliest to welcome African-American property owners and residents. Mt. Zion Baptist Church and Douglass Elementary are located one block to the west at the intersection of South Hackberry and Martin Luther King Dr. These institutions both were founded in the late 19th century to serve the African American community, and relocated to their present sites by 1940. The residential blocks east of South Hackberry developed over the first decades of the 20th century. Many of the original structures have been lost in the area surrounding 230 Cactus St.

Willie Silar Lee purchased the corner lot at Cactus St. and Nebraska (now Martin Luther King Dr) from P.H. & Catherine Wolf in 1913. Wolf was a successful baker and real estate investor. According to the San Antonio Light & Gazette, Willie pulled a building permit for a three room house on this lot in August of 1910. She married Erastus Lee in February 1911, and the 1912 City Directory lists them as residents at 230 Cactus St.. Based on the 1912 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, it appears the Lees lived in the wood frame structure facing Nebraska at that time. After Willie Lee's death, her siblings sold the property to Frank Abernathy in 1917. Frank and his wife Josephine operated Abernathy Grocery on Nebraska Street, apparently in the former Lee residence. The store seems to have been an important community gathering space according to the current property owner and newspaper articles which list it as a polling location in the 1930s and 1940s. It remained in business from 1922 through 1967. Abernathy appears to have been connected with political leader Charles Bellinger, and was at one point accused of participating in a gambling syndicate weld by Bellinger. Frank Abernathy was reportedly the cousin of Rev. Ralph Abernathy, close companion to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



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Abernathy, an active member of the Mt. Zion Baptist Church, was engaged with local politics and his connection to these civil rights legends remains an important touchstone for the community.

3. Architectural Description

The house is a single story Spanish Eclectic structure with a flat roof and parapet wall, and a stucco exterior. A concrete carriage step with the initials "F.M.A." is placed at the sidewalk curb; this is the only carriage step that remains along the block. Two narrow, red, blue, and yellow barrel tile covered shed roofs hang above the covered front porch. The front porch metal shed roof was likely added at a later time; the porch has non-original wood lattice that obstructs the front porch from view. The porch has a wrought iron balustrade and tiled steps that lead from the front walk to the original inset porch with a front and side archway. Small blue diamond tiles accent the top of each elevation. A prominent exterior stucco chimney is attached to the south elevation, tapering at the top. Double hung wood windows are installed throughout the house, some covered by multi-light screens. At the rear of the main structure is an attached yellow stucco garage with an overhead wood garage door. The Spanish Eclectic features include the stucco exterior, flat roof and parapet, clay barrel tiles, arched inset porch, tiled porch floor and wood, one-over-one windows. Located at the eastern side of the property is a small commercial structure with a wood storefront with a flat roof and parapet. It has a rectangular footprint, wood siding, two wood windows and two non-original wooden double doors that face Martin Luther King Drive. The front façade fenestration has been altered and the doors and windows are asymmetrical to the front façade. The store appears to have been originally a residence. After converting to a store, a porch was added but has since been removed based on the 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

4. Landmark Criteria

230 Cactus St. is not currently designated as a historic landmark. Staff concludes that the property meets the following criteria:

5. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials; as a fine example of Spanish Eclectic architecture and an early twentieth century commercial storefront.
7. Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature; for its prominent location at the corner of Cactus and Martin Luther King Blvd.
11. It is distinctive in character, interest or value; strongly exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of San Antonio, Texas or the United



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States; for the role of Abernathy Grocery role as a modified residence serving as an important community space operated by Frank Abernathy.

5. Outcome of Review

Based on this assessment, 230 Cactus St. meets three of the sixteen criteria listed in UDC Section 35-607(b). In order to be eligible for landmark designation, a property must meet at least three of these criteria; thus 230 Cactus St. is eligible for designation as a local landmark.

