

## HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

June 19, 2019

**HDRC CASE NO:** 2019-345  
**ADDRESS:** 138 S JOSEPHINE TOBIN  
**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** NCB 2027 BLK LOT A1  
**ZONING:** R-6 NCD-8  
**CITY COUNCIL DIST.:** 1  
**APPLICANT:** Kathleen Trenchard  
**OWNER:** City of San Antonio  
**TYPE OF WORK:** A request for review by the HDRC regarding eligibility of the property located at 138 S Josephine Tobin for landmark designation.

### REQUEST:

A request for review by the HDRC regarding eligibility of the property located at 138 S Josephine Tobin for landmark designation.

### APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

*Unified Development Code Sec. 35-606. - Designation Process for Historic Landmarks.*

- a. **Authority.** Requests for landmark designation may only be made by or with the concurrence of the property owner. In instances where a property owner does not consent to the landmark designation, the historic preservation officer shall request a resolution from city council to proceed with the designation process prior to any zoning commission hearing. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a request for landmark designation may be made and approved by the city council. To the extent that this subsection conflicts with any other provisions of this chapter, this paragraph shall control except for buildings, objects, sites, structures, or clusters heretofore designated as local landmarks or districts, National Register landmarks or districts, state historic landmarks or sites, or state archaeological landmarks or sites. Additionally, requests for designation shall be made on a form obtained from the city historic preservation officer through the office of historic preservation. Completed request forms shall be returned to the office of historic preservation for processing. All buildings, objects, sites, structures, or clusters heretofore designated by the city council as historic landmarks under any pre-existing ordinance of the City of San Antonio shall be accorded the protection of properties designated historic landmarks under this chapter and shall continue to bear the words "historic, exceptional" (HE) or "historic, significant" (HS) in their zoning designation.
- b. **Designation of Historic Landmarks.**
  1. **Initiation.** Any person, the historic and design review commission, zoning commission, the historic preservation officer, or the city council may initiate a historic landmark designation by filing an application with the historic preservation officer. Requests for designation shall be made on a form obtained from the city historic preservation officer. Completed request forms shall be returned to the office of historic preservation for processing. Owner consent for historic landmark designation shall be required unless a city council resolution to proceed with the designation has been approved. Additionally, owners may submit with the application a written description and photographs or other visual material of any buildings or structures that they wish to be considered for designation as non-contributing to the historic landmark.
  2. **Decision.** The historic preservation officer shall refer a completed application for historic landmark designation to the historic and design review commission. Property owners of proposed historic landmarks shall be notified of the historic and design review commission hearing by the historic preservation officer by mail prior to a historic and design review commission hearing for historic landmark designation. Notice to property owners shall state the place, date, time and purpose of the historic and design review commission hearing. The historic preservation officer shall also send notice of the meeting to any registered neighborhood associations located within the proposed district boundary. The historic and design review commission shall make and forward its recommendation to the zoning commission within forty-five (45) days from the date of submittal of the designation request by the historic preservation officer. Upon submittal of the historic and design review commission's recommendation, the proposed historic district or landmark designation shall be submitted to the zoning commission for its review recommendations along with its finding of historic significance. The zoning commission and the city council shall process the application as prescribed in [section 35-421](#) of this chapter and this section. The zoning commission shall schedule a hearing on the historic and design review commission recommendation to be held within sixty (60) days of

receipt of such recommendation and shall forward its recommendation to city council which shall schedule a hearing to be held within sixty (60) days of council's receipt of such recommendation. Upon passage of any ordinance designating a historic landmark, or removing or upgrading the designation of historic, the city clerk shall send notice of the fact by mail to the owner or owners of affected property.

*Unified Development Code Sec. 35-607. – Designation Criteria for Historic Districts and Landmarks.*

1. **Process for Considering Designation of Historic Districts and Landmarks.** Historic districts and landmarks shall be evaluated for designation using the criteria listed in subsection (b) and the criteria applied to evaluate properties for inclusion in the National Register. In order to be eligible for historic landmark designation, properties shall meet at least three (3) of the criteria listed. Historic districts shall consist of at least two (2) or more structures within a legally defined boundary that meet at least three (3) of the criteria. Additionally, all designated landmarks and districts shall demonstrate clear delineation of the legal boundaries of such designated resources.
2. Criteria for Evaluation.
  1. **Its value as a visible or archeological reminder of the cultural heritage of the community, or national event;**
  3. **Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, state, or nation;**
  4. **Its identification as the work of a master builder, designer, architect, or landscape architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the community, county, state, or nation;**
  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;**

**FINDINGS:**

- a. On May 17, 2019, an application for demolition with new construction was submitted to the Office of Historic Preservation by the property owner of the structure at 138 S Josephine Tobin, located in the Woodlawn Lake neighborhood conservation district (NCD-8) of District 1. OHP staff researched the property to determine potential significance and contacted the Woodlawn Lake Community Association and other neighborhood stakeholders during the 30-day review period provided by UDC 35-455.
- b. On May 28, 2019, Kathleen Trenchard submitted a request for review of historic significance of the structure at 138 S Josephine Tobin.
- c. **BACKGROUND:** The structure at 138 S. Josephine Tobin Dr, known as the Berta Almaguer Dance Studio, is a midcentury modern park structure designed by Reginald Roberts and built in 1955 for the City of San Antonio. The Woodlawn Lake casting pool was previously built in 1941 by the San Antonio *Express-News* for a target-casting tournament. In April 1955, the San Antonio Anglers Club backed a proposal to city council for a civic center at "Little Woodlawn lake." By mid-month, the Anglers Club released a drawing by Reginald Roberts Associates of the proposed center, which would accommodate not only recreational fishing but also community functions including meetings, parties, and dance classes. The city council unanimously approved the building; the city provided \$14,000, while the remainder was furnished by the Anglers Club. Reginald H. Roberts was a prominent local architect whose firm, Reginald Robert Associates, designed modern homes in San Antonio, Windcrest, Terrell Hills, and Castle Hills. He designed the 1959 Main Bank & Trust building (now Luby's), the 1958 Petroleum Center at 410 and Broadway, and flat-bottomed steel-hulled barges for the San Antonio River and Riverwalk. The Woodlawn Activity Center was renamed Berta Almaguer Dance Studio in 1984 in honor of the woman who served as Spanish and Mexican dance instructor for the city for 34 years. Almaguer retired in 1970 after directing countless student performances and teaching an estimated 5,000 girls and 200 boys to dance over two generations. The Berta Almaguer dance studio is a significant part of San Antonio's cultural heritage and image. The studio is responsible for producing San Antonio's most elite dancers. Almaguer, who created the dance program through the parks and recreation department in 1934 is often credited with jumpstarting cultural tourism to San Antonio. Dancers trained under Almaguer would go on to perform at the Arneson River Theater and become the focal point of national and international tourism marketing. The famed, internationally recognized Fandango Dance Troupe is a product of this studio. Almaguer was part of a musical family dynasty that included famed singer, Rosita Fernandez. Many thousands of San Antonians, from all walks of life, all ages, and every part of the city, have participated in learning both traditional cultural and modern dance at the studio. For San Antonians, this legacy is deeply rooted and celebrated. For the dancers, the studio is part of their identity and important symbol of their heritage. The space is also deeply inspirational to them because of its proximity to nature, specifically, the casting pond.

- d. **SITE CONTEXT:** The structure at 138 S Josephine Tobin is southeast of Woodlawn Lake damn on the south side of S Josephine Tobin Drive and to the west of the Woodlawn Casting Pond and Park. The park is somewhat triangular, bordered on the north by S Josephine Tobin Dr, the east by Alexander Avenue, and the south/southwest by Alazan Creek. The structure at 138 S Josephine Tobin is located in the Woodlawn Lake neighborhood conservation district (NCD-8), but outside the Woodlawn Lake and park historic district. The historic district includes structures on the north side of S Josephine Tobin surrounding the lake, but does not include the south side of the park.
- e. **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:** The structure at 138 S Josephine Tobin is a single-story midcentury-modern park structure built in 1955. It has a slab foundation and a low-pitch end-gabled membrane roof with an off-center ridge. The building is clad in brick with plate glass windows running between brick pillars running along the east side of the building. The main entrance is on the north side of the northeast corner of the building, next to a massive brick chimney with concrete cap that is roughly one-third the width of the building. The entrance and the windows along the east side are capped by clerestory windows. Massive wood rafter tails are visible on the east façade, extending to create a covered patio space.
- Character-defining features of 430 E Magnolia include:
- Adjacency to the Woodlawn Lake casting pond
  - Massive brick chimney with concrete cap
  - Massive wood rafter tails
  - Low-pitch roof with off-center ridge
  - Plate-glass windows facing the casting pond
- f. **EVALUATION:** In order to be eligible for historic landmark designation, properties shall meet at least three (3) of the 16 criteria listed. Staff evaluated the structure against all 16 criteria and determined that it was consistent with UDC sec. 35-607(b):
1. **Its value as a visible or archeological reminder of the cultural heritage of the community, or national event;** the structure is a visible reminder of the city's intangible heritage in traditional and cultural dance forms as it houses the city's renowned dance program.
  3. **Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, state, or nation;** the structure was renamed for Berta Almaguer, who was responsible for teaching more than 5,000 children Spanish and Mexican dance through the municipal dance program.
  4. **Its identification as the work of a master builder, designer, architect, or landscape architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the community, county, state, or nation;** the structure was designed by prominent local architect Reginald H. Roberts.
  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;** the building is a midcentury-modern park structure influenced by the WPA-built architecture found in Woodlawn Lake Park.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

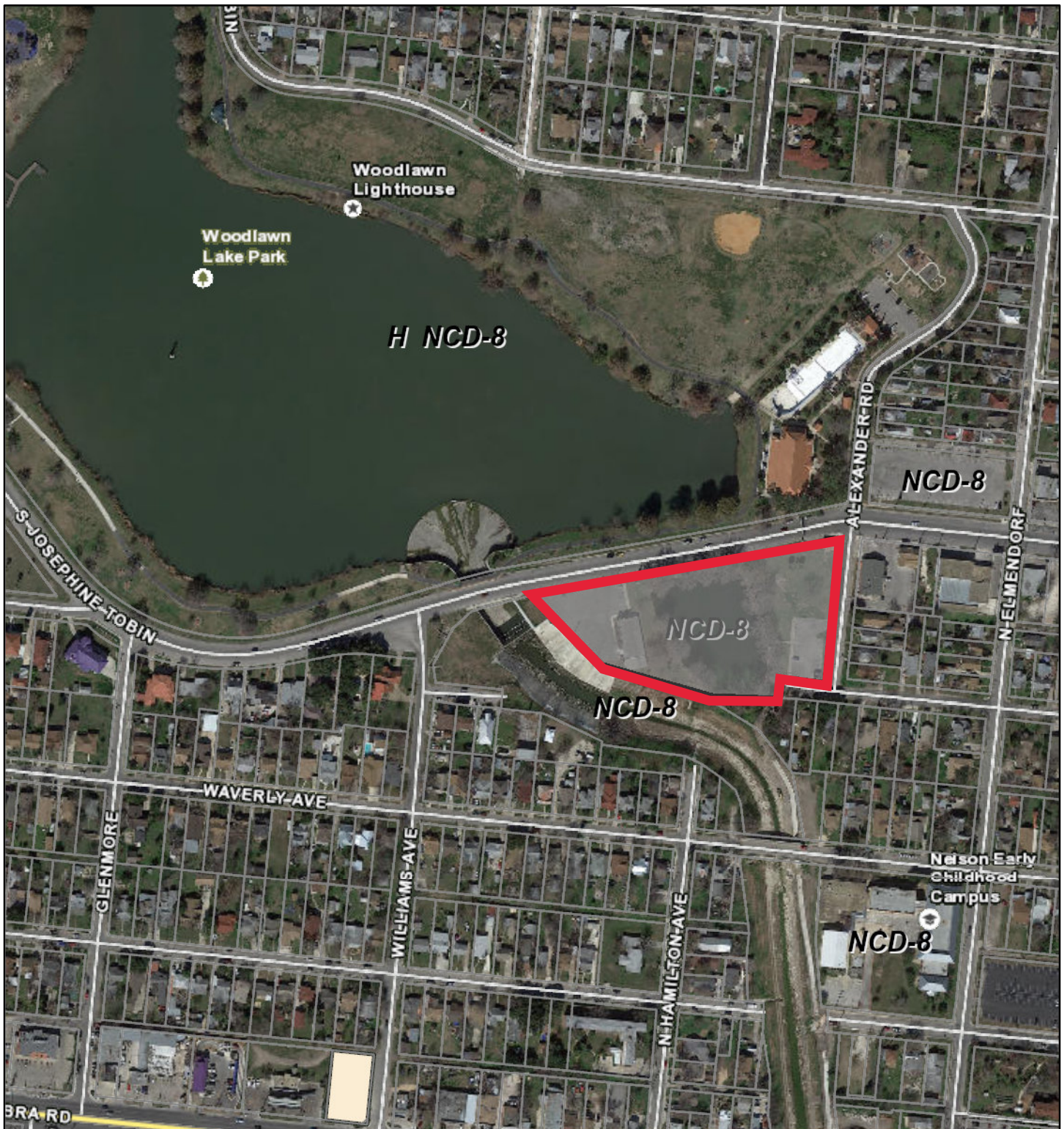
Staff concurs with the applicant that the property is eligible based on findings a through f.

HDRC Case 2019-283 is the request for new construction of a community center. This request is dependent on the demolition of the structure in question. If HDRC concurs that the property eligible for designation, the existing structure should be incorporated into the design of the new construction proposal to the fullest extent possible.

If the HDRC is satisfied with the merits of the design proposal as it relates to the historic significance of the site and approves the request, then staff recommends the following stipulations:

- i. That the applicant provides a comprehensive salvage plan for the existing materials and reuses as much material as possible in the new structure, particularly the façade bricks, chimney bricks, and structural beams. Plans for material reuse within the new structure should be clearly illustrated in the submittal for final approval.
- ii. That the design includes an interpretative element. A gallery of images and video paying tribute to Berta Almaguer should be incorporated in the lobby (or other highly visible and sizeable area approved by HDRC). The gallery should include interpretative text describing Ms. Almaguer's contributions to the cultural heritage of San Antonio using research and materials existing in archives of the City of San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department.
- iii. That the Berta Almaguer building name be retained.

# City of San Antonio One Stop



June 11, 2019

## drawGraphics\_poly



User drawn polygons



Community Service Centers



Pre-K Sites



CoSA Parcels

## BCAD Parcels



Recorded Plats

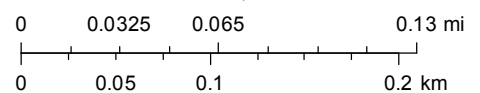


Preliminary Plats



COSA City Limit Boundary

1:4,000





## CITY OF SAN ANTONIO OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### Statement of Significance

**Property Address:** 138 S Josephine Tobin Dr

#### 1. Application Details

Applicant: Kathleen Trenchard  
Type: Request for Review of Historic Significance  
Date Received: 28 May 2019

#### 2. Findings

The structure at 138 S. Josephine Tobin Dr, known as the Berta Almaguer Dance Studio, is a midcentury modern park structure designed by Reginald Roberts and built in 1955 for the City of San Antonio. The City of San Antonio currently owns the property.

The land that now includes Woodlawn Lake was first acquired in 1887 by General W. Russ, F. H. Brown, and W. P. Anderson under the name West End Town Company. The men named their development Maverick's Pasture, and it was the first subdivision of its kind outside San Antonio city limits. In 1889, soil was extracted from what is now the casting pond to build a dam across Alazan Creek, creating an 80-acre lake. Ownership of the land previously known as the West End was relinquished to the City of San Antonio in 1918, and the area was renamed Woodlawn Addition and the West End Lake renamed Woodlawn Lake on December 7, 1922, by the West End Improvement Club.<sup>1</sup> The City of San Antonio acquired five acres on the northeast side of the lake in 1924; a subsequent bond package approved in 1928 allowed for the construction of the public pool and community center located across S Josephine Tobin from the subject structure. Silt and drainage from development of neighborhoods surrounding the lake necessitated WPA-led dredging of Woodlawn Lake in the late 1930s, the first in a number of remediation projects that occurred in the life of the lake. The most recent remediation happened from 1981 to 1983 when the lake was drained to allow the city to dredge it to a depth of six feet.<sup>2</sup> Woodlawn Lake and Park was designated a local historic district in 2000;<sup>3</sup> the surrounding 527 acres known as the Woodlawn Lake Area became a neighborhood conservation district (NCD-8) in 2010. The NCD is bounded by Bandera Rd, N Zarzamora St, W Woodlawn Ave, and Culebra.<sup>4</sup>

The Woodlawn Lake casting pool was built in 1941 by the *San Antonio Express-News* for a target-casting tournament; the pool included a 190'x10' casting platform that stretched bank to bank.<sup>5</sup> In the early 1950s, the Anglers Club saw renewed interest in target casting and decided to restore the casting pond, which had become overgrown with aquatic plants.<sup>6</sup> An April 1950 article said "new lights will be installed to facilitate night casting, and the pool will be cleared of lily growth."<sup>7</sup> In 1951, newly minted city parks commissioner Alvin Schmidt promised the pool would be cleared of lily pads and deepened to 10 feet to support the casting sport in San Antonio.<sup>8</sup> But 1955 aerials show what looks like a field because

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<sup>1</sup> "Woodlawn Lake Now Instead of West End." *San Antonio Express*, Friday, 8 December 1922, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Office of Historic Preservation. "Woodlawn Lake." Accessed 5 June 2019.

<https://www.sanantonio.gov/historic/historicsites/HistoricDistricts/WoodlawnLake>

<sup>3</sup> "Woodlawn Lake."

<sup>4</sup> Fisher, Lewis F. *Saving San Antonio: The Preservation of a Heritage*. Trinity University Press, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> "Casting may bloom into big time sport here." *San Antonio Express*, Sunday, 24 June 1951, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> "Anglers to Go All-Out At Targets." *San Antonio Express*, Sunday, 2 April 1950, p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> "Casting Pool Work to Start." *San Antonio Express*, Sunday, 16 April 1950, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> "City Plans for Casting Layout In Small Pool." *San Antonio Express*, Sunday, 24 June 1951, p. 21.

1901 S. ALAMO ST, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78204

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the pond was still overgrown with plants; additionally, the casting pier was no longer visible by this year. By 1963, the pond was cleaned up, and a Y-shaped casting platform is visible, as well as the new Woodlawn Activity Center and parking lot, northwest of the pond.<sup>9</sup>

In April 1955, the San Antonio Anglers Club backed a proposal to city council for a civic center at “Little Woodlawn lake,” which would be used for weekly meetings not only by the fishermen, but also by clubs “such as the Optimists, Kiwanis, garden clubs, Chesapeake’s and so on.” The Anglers Club stated they would furnish funds for the foundation, and that they already had stone donated for the building.<sup>10</sup> By mid-month, the club released a drawing by Reginald Roberts Associates of the proposed center, the total cost of which was reported to be \$25,000. The city council unanimously approved the building; the city provided \$14,000, while the remainder was furnished by the Anglers Club.<sup>11</sup>

Reginald H. Roberts was a prominent local architect whose firm, Reginald Robert Associates, designed modern homes in San Antonio, Windcrest, Terrell Hills, and Castle Hills. He became the second vice president of the Texas Society of Architects in 1956, and then president in 1958.<sup>12</sup> In 1962, he was president of AIA San Antonio,<sup>13</sup> and in 1963 he was president of the Texas Architectural Foundation. A few notable contributions Roberts made to San Antonio are the Main Bank & Trust building on Main (now Luby’s), which opened on May 25, 1959;<sup>14</sup> the 1958 Petroleum Center at 410 and Broadway;<sup>15</sup> and the design of a “flat-bottomed, steel-hulled barge” for the San Antonio River and Riverwalk. Previous iterations of a Riverwalk barge were either too heavy, splashed water on rider (as was the case with one version that had a rear paddle wheel), weren’t designed for the strong currents of the river (see: the Venetian gondola imported from Italy and donated to the city), or their decorative swans were decapitated by Rosita’s Bridge.<sup>16</sup>

The structure Roberts designed for the casting pond is a midcentury interpretation of Civilian Conservation Corps-era park architecture that came to be known as National Park Service Rustic. The style sought to “minimize the silhouettes of buildings and use native materials to blend into the natural surroundings.”<sup>17</sup> Though the Woodlawn Activity Center replaces rough-hewn rock with midcentury brick (the stone promised to the Anglers Club during the planning phase didn’t make it to the final iteration of the center), the structure contributes to an understanding of a style of building designed to respond to its surroundings. The form of the building indicates the pond side of the center was open-air, with the space between brick pillars now infilled with fixed plate glass windows. The structure’s wide chimney—roughly a third the total width of the building—is reminiscent of open-air pavilions built of

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<sup>9</sup> Historic Aerials (web site). Address search: 138 S. Josephine Tobin, 1955, 1963. Accessed 1 June 2019. [Historicaerials.com](http://Historicaerials.com).

<sup>10</sup> “Anglers Ask Woodlawn Civic Center.” *San Antonio Light*, Sunday, 3 April 1955, p. 5-[illegible].

<sup>11</sup> “Anglers Club Center.” *San Antonio Light*, Sunday, 17 April 1955, p. 5-D.

<sup>12</sup> Texas Society of Architects (web site). “Past Presidents of Society.” Accessed 7 June 2019. [Texasarchitects.org/past-presidents](http://Texasarchitects.org/past-presidents).

<sup>13</sup> AIA San Antonio (web site). “Past Presidents.” Accessed 7 June 2019. [Aiasa.org/about/chapter-presidents/](http://Aiasa.org/about/chapter-presidents/).

<sup>14</sup> “Bank to Make A Millionaire.” *San Antonio Express and News*, Sunday, 17 May 1959, p. 12-A.

<sup>15</sup> “Office Building Started.” *San Antonio Express and News*, Saturday, 8 November 1958, p. 1-C.

<sup>16</sup> Allen, Paula. “Casa Rio kin, others offer funny boat stories.” *mySA.com*, Tuesday, 21 August 2012. Accessed 7 June 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Texas Highways (web site). “Hail to the Boys of the CCC,” July 2016. Accessed 7 June 2019.

<https://texashighways.com/things-to-do/parks/hail-to-the-boys-of-the-civilian-conservation-corps-texas-state-parks/>



## CITY OF SAN ANTONIO OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

fieldstone and found not only in San Antonio parks, but in local and national parks across the US. The center's massive low-pitch roof, wood beams and ceiling, and its relationship on the site to the casting pond all speak to the designer's desire to compliment nature with the built environment.

The Woodlawn Activity Center was renamed Berta Almaguer Dance Studio in honor of the woman who served as Spanish and Mexican dance instructor for the city for 34 years. Almaguer retired in 1970 after directing countless student performances and teaching an estimated 5,000 girls and 200 boys to dance over two generations. She began her lifelong career as a dance teacher in 1932, "showing children in West San Antonio how to dance Spanish and Mexican dances." She was employed by the city starting in 1934 after instructor Lydia Lozano saw Almaguer dance at Ursuline Academy. Almaguer died in May 1971. The center, previously known as Woodlawn Recreation Center, was later renamed after Almaguer. Dance classes continue there to this day; it is the longest-running municipal dance program in the country.<sup>18</sup>

Aside from the windows added to the pond side of the Woodlawn Activity Center and what appears to be an addition to the south end of the building (note a change in the color of materials that indicates two building phases), the center appears much as it did when it was built in 1955.

### 3. Architectural Description

The structure at 138 S Josephine Tobin is a single-story midcentury-modern park structure built in 1955. It is southeast of Woodlawn Lake dam on the south side of S Josephine Tobin Drive and to the west of the Woodlawn Casting Pond and Park. The park is somewhat triangular, bordered on the north by S Josephine Tobin Dr, the east by Alexander Avenue, and the south/southwest by Alazan Creek. The park surrounding the subject structure and casting pond includes a parking lot to the northwest that serves the dance studio, Woodlawn Lake Dog Park and its parking lot to the east, and an historic Woodlawn Park structure similar to other bathroom structures found near the lake but which now appears to serve as a location for city electric infrastructure. The structure at 138 S Josephine Tobin is located in the Woodlawn Lake neighborhood conservation district (NCD-8), but outside the Woodlawn Lake and park historic district. The historic district includes structures on the north side of S Josephine Tobin surrounding the lake, but does not include the south side of the park.

The structure has a slab foundation and a low-pitch end-gabled membrane roof with an off-center ridge. The building is clad in brick with plate glass windows running between brick pillars running along the east side of the building, which should be considered the primary façade due to its relationship to the adjacent casting pond. The main entrance is on the north side of the northeast corner of the building, next to a massive brick chimney with concrete cap that is roughly one-third the width of the building. The entrance and the windows along the east side are capped by clerestory windows; while windows at the ground level have unpainted silver sashes, the clerestory windows have brown painted sashes. The eight east window bays alternate between running floor-to-ceiling and having a brick windowsill over a low wall. Massive wood rafter tails are visible on the east façade, extending to create a covered patio space.

The south end of the building features a flat-roofed addition to the original Woodlawn Activity Center, as evidenced by a change in the type of brick used, a brick pilaster where the addition meets the original

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<sup>18</sup> Herrera, Jennifer. "Celebrating the dancing life of Bertha Almaguer." mySA.com, Wednesday, 28 October 2009. Accessed 7 June 2019.



## CITY OF SAN ANTONIO OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

building, and a visible parapet where the historic roof meets the addition. The addition has a ramp on the east side leading to a door near the southeast corner. The south façade has three small fixed windows high in the elevation. There is no fenestration on the west side of the addition.

Shorter wood rafter tails are visible on the west elevation of the structure. There is a small window just before the brick pilaster at the south end of the original structure. A ramp, short staircase, and concrete patio lead to a door on the west elevation. Clerestory windows run between the seven northernmost bays of the west elevation.

The building is surrounded by old-growth trees, with a clump of bamboo at the northwest corner of the north elevation. Trees include oak, pecan, crepe myrtle, and cypress.

Character-defining features of 138 S Josephine Tobin include:

- Adjacency to the Woodlawn Lake casting pond
- Massive brick chimney with concrete cap
- Massive wood rafter tails
- Low-pitch roof with off-center ridge
- Plate-glass windows facing the casting pond

#### 4. Landmark Criteria

The property meets two criteria under UDC 35-607(b):

- **1: Its value as a visible or archeological reminder of the cultural heritage of the community, or national event;** the structure is a visible reminder of the city's intangible heritage in traditional and cultural dance forms as it houses the city's renowned dance program.
- **3: Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, state, or nation;** the structure was renamed for Berta Almaguer, who was responsible for teaching more than 5,000 children Spanish and Mexican dance through the municipal dance program.
- **4: Its identification as the work of a master builder, designer, architect, or landscape architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the community, county, state, or nation;** the structure was designed by prominent local architect Reginald H. Roberts.
- **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;** the building is a midcentury-modern park structure influenced by the WPA-built architecture found in Woodlawn Lake Park.

#### 5. Staff Recommendation

A property must meet at least three of the 16 criteria used to evaluate eligibility for landmark designation, and this assessment determined that 138 S Josephine Tobin meets this threshold. Further research may reveal additional significance associated with this property.



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*North/primary façade.*



*East façade, facing the casting pond.*

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*Southeast corner, showing the south façade.*



*West façade.*

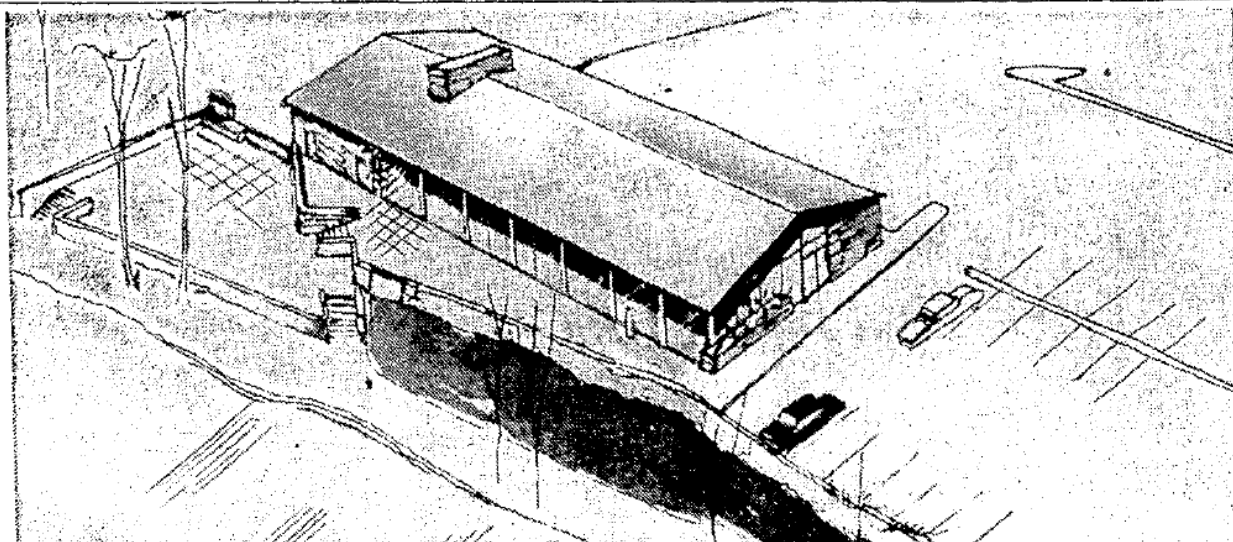
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# THE LIGHT'S *Fishing and Hunting* Page



**ANGLERS CLUB CENTER**—Here is an architect's drawing (Reginald Roberts Associates) of the civic center to be built near the Woodlawn lake casting pool by the city and the Anglers club. Total cost, including furnishings, is estimated at \$25,000. The city will provide about \$14,000 and the Anglers club

will furnish the remainder. The building was approved unanimously by the city council the past week. Bids are being taken for construction. Civic clubs will be free to meet in the new center, alongside the Woodlawn casting pool. Ample parking space will be provided behind the building.

*San Antonio Light, Sunday, 17 April 1955, p. 5-D.*



## CITY OF SAN ANTONIO OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

THE SAN ANTONIO LIGHT

Classified Want Ads—CA 6-1231

### Two Generations *Veteran Recreational Teacher Soon to Retire*

By FRANK TREJO

Miss Bertha Almaguer, who has been the Spanish dance instructor for the City Recreation Department for 34 years, is retiring.

A program honoring Miss Almaguer will be held at 6 p.m. Saturday at the HemisFair Plaza amphitheater.

The veteran Spanish dances teacher started showing children in West San Antonio how to dance Spanish and Mexican dances in 1932.

Miss Almaguer has arranged countless performances by students over the years for social clubs, churches, service organizations and visiting groups.

Miss Almaguer, according to her own figures, has taught about 5,000 girls how to dance in 28 years.

#### TWO GENERATIONS

She said she has taught two



MISS BERTHA ALMAGUER  
Serves city for 34 years.

generations, including 200 boys, how to dance.

In fact, several of the boys are now big-time performers. Three of them are now with Jose Greco's dancing group.

The dance instructor will take a few months vacation. She will visit several towns in Mexico, including Saltillo, where she was born.

She said her father came to San Antonio in 1917. They first lived on Saunders and then moved to several other sections of town. She has never married.

#### PROSPECT HILL

Miss Almaguer became involved in the dancing instruction business when Mrs. Lydia Lozano, then an employee for the city, saw her dance at a festival at Ursuline Academy.

She asked Miss Almaguer if she would like to dance with the group she was organizing at the Prospect Hill Library. Miss Almaguer agreed. Her first

performance with the Prospect Hill group was at a program sponsored by the city at the Sunken Garden.

Miss Almaguer still rides the

bus. During all these years she's been teaching, she has taken the bus to get where her children are performing — and she is there early.

**GRAYSON**  
HOUSTON ST. AT PRESA

ITALIAN LOOK

For Missy **SANDALS** For Ladies

San Antonio Light, Wednesday, 27 May 1970, p. 98.

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# Berta Almaguer Dance Studio

## Statement of Significance

By Kathleen Trenchard, [REDACTED]  
Home owner, Woodlawn Lake Neighborhood, Dist. 7. May, 2019

The beloved, West side historic dance studio actually was built in 1958, by the City of San Antonio and the Anglers Club, approved unanimously by City Council, which provided \$14,000 in funds. The remainder of the estimated total cost of \$25,000, including furnishings, was provided by the Anglers. As the building sits next to the Woodlawn Lake Casting pond, an entire wall of windows overlooks the pond, surrounded by majestic cypress trees, and home to a variety of ducks, geese, turtles and herons, not to mention, catfish.

The structure is in the same view shed as the Saint Theresa Basilica and other downtown towers to the East. At the height of its history, the Woodlawn Lake area was a resort, accessed by downtown trolley, with the tracks still visible along Cincinnati Avenue, near the WPA cut metal and masonry arched South Josephine Tobin Drive gateway.

The original one story, brick masonry building was designed by Reginald Roberts, AIA, who championed Mid Century Modern and Frank Lloyd Wright style architecture. Born in 1931, in Smithville, Texas, serving in WWII, Roberts, like Wright, was also an engineer, designing the S.A. International Airport, Luby's Restaurant on Main, and numerous residential and commercial buildings. His own residence in Terrell Hills, on Eventide Dr. reflects his appreciation for F.L. Wright's style, featuring a fireplace at the center of the living room, surrounded by open space. And he also brings nature indoors with spectacular window views of gardens, and use of natural materials, such as rock, brick and wooden carpentry features.

All of these elements are evident in the Anglers' Fishing Lodge, repurposed as the Berta Almaguer Dance Studio, in the 70's. It appears that all the City needed, to accomplish the metamorphosis, was to add mirrors, ballet bars, wooden floors and a sound system. Happily, the panoramic view of the casting pond, remains, creating a Zen like marriage of dance and nature. The symbiotic relationship conveys the ambience of WPA era park and ski lodges.

The large fire place remains the center of the primary dance studio, with its chimney, prominently displayed on the front façade. The City has been diligently maintaining the beautiful wooden floors of both large and small studios, and the acoustics function well. The arched wooden ceiling beams compliment the flooring, and create an intimate, warm ambience, despite spanning the enormous space. The height, contrary to what the City now attests, is perfect for dancing, or any other purpose, as this not a Gothic structure.

City requests demolition in order to build a "Community Center".

Now, in 2019, comes the City, requesting demolition, in order to build, in the same space, a new two story "community center", including dance studios, City staff offices, classrooms, storage,

library, and reception desk. The new building would sacrifice valuable parking to accommodate the larger structure, in the tiny wedge of space between the casting pond, the creek, and Woodlawn Lake.

The City has been quietly planning this demolition for some time. City planners believe that the demolition plan would satisfy a recent bond issue, proposed by former City Councilman, Chris Medina of Dist. 7. His proposal, approved by a City wide vote, simply asked for a Community Center somewhere on Woodlawn Lake. None of the above mentioned uses, nor a demolition request, were included in the bond proposal, making this process a clear a case of "bait and switch". The dance studio is actually located in District one, Roberto Trevino's district.

There already exists a Jefferson Woodlawn Lake Community Development Corporation, in the City owned "Deco Building" at 1800 Fredericksburg Road, 78201.

Another serious issue with the City's demolition request, is that the dance studio is not on Woodlawn Lake. It is across the street from the lake. There are other potential properties, near the lake but also, across the street, which now serve as overflow, perhaps illegal, parking on weekends and special events. The City says it doesn't want to lose any green space in building a new center. Yet it appears, that is not the real issue, as there is available land facing the park, but not on its green space.

However, the main issue is that the Almaguer Dance Center qualifies, for several reasons, as an historic landmark, and should be maintained and preserved as such. If the City feels the building is too old and too expensive to restore, then it should seek the funds needed, perhaps in another bond issue, to restore it. If not, the City could be in violation of its own mandate of preserving historical buildings and fining property owners who are engaging in demolition by neglect. The potential demolition of this building, sets an ominous precedent, which could have major ramifications for the future of San Antonio, its landmarks and view sheds.

Meanwhile, the City is conducting public meetings as if it is a "done deal" with emphasis on all the new amenities which will be provided, and is even collecting signatures from dance students and their families, in a petition drive, which calls for the Almaguer studio demolition and Community center construction. City Staff is telling instructors that if the demolition is not approved, the CITY will never spend a penny on the up keep of the original building. Everyone knows that means no working bathrooms, which has been an ongoing issue for years.

Parks and Rec. Dir. Urrutia, at a public meeting, when pressed about the reasoning for demolition, said it would cost five million dollars to restore the Almaguer studio, so there would be no bond monies, left to build a community center. At the very least, the City should hire another architect to get a second opinion on whatever is needed to "restore" the building. The reasoning The City plans on demolition in November, when it will move all dance classes to another location, during construction.

The best use of this property, is a dance studio. The City's recognition of Historic Landmark Significance would, at this point, be necessary to prevent the wrecking ball. A cost estimate of what funding would be needed to rebuild this exact edifice, might give everyone "pause". This property has value and significance. I have been dancing here for thirty wonderful years, and hope to continue doing so.

## Berta Almaguer Dance Studio application.

(a) **Process for Considering Designation of Historic Districts and Landmarks.** Historic districts and landmarks shall be evaluated for designation using the criteria listed in subsection (b) and the criteria applied to evaluate properties for inclusion in the National Register. In order to be eligible for historic landmark designation, properties shall meet at least three (3) of the criteria listed. Historic districts shall consist of at least two (2) or more structures within a legally defined boundary that meet at least three (3) of the criteria. Additionally, all designated landmarks and districts shall demonstrate clear delineation of the legal boundaries of such designated resources.

(b) **Criteria For Evaluation.**

1. Its value as a visible or archeological reminder of the cultural heritage of the community, or national event;

yes

2. Its location as a site of a significant local, county, state, or national event;

yes

3. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, state, or nation;

Yes, Berta Amaguer, founder of the dance department, under the City Parks and Rec. Dept. in 1934

4. Its identification as the work of a master builder, designer, architect, or landscape architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the community, county, state, or nation;

Yes, the architect was Reginald Roberts, AIA, who also designed the S.A. International Airport, and Lubys' on Main Ave, and other Mid Century Modern and F L Wright inspired homes and residences.

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;

Yes, Mid Century Modern and F L Wright inspired homes and residences often using local made bricks.

6. Its historical, architectural or cultural character as a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including, but not limited to, bridges, acequias, gas stations, transportation shelters, or other commercial structures;

Yes, the building was repurposed from the original 1958 Anglers Club, to a City wide dance studio, in the 70's.

7. Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature;

Yes, The structure is squeezed between the Woodlawn Lake casting pond, a creek, and Cincinnati Ave.

8. Its historical, architectural, or cultural integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship;

Yes, the use of local brick on facing, fireplace and chimney, curved wooden beams spanning the entire ceiling, in both studios.

9. Its character as a geographically definable area possessing a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of historically, architecturally or culturally significant sites, buildings, objects or structures united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development;

Yes, the building is just across the street from the Historic WPA built gymnasium, originally a library, and the distinctive Josephine Tobin Drive archway and other smaller structures built as part of the WPA program.

10. Its character as an established and geographically definable neighborhood, united by culture, architectural style or physical plan and development;

Yes, it is located in the historic Woodlawn Lake viewshed.

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 States;

Yes, For over forty years, flamenco, Mexican folkloric, Latin and belly dance has, and continues to be taught here.

12. It is an important example of a particular architectural type or specimen;

Yes, mid century modern and use of large fireplace and masonry chimney.

13. It bears an important and significant relationship to other distinctive structures, sites, or areas, either as an important collection of properties or architectural style or craftsmanship with few intrusions, or by contributing to the overall character of the area according to the plan based on architectural, historic or cultural motif;

Yes, it complements the nearby WPA architectural style, perfectly.

14. It possesses significant archeological value that has produced or is likely to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest;

15. It represents a resource, whether natural or man-made, which greatly contributes to the character or image of a defined neighborhood or community area; or

Yes, it is an iconic building associated with Woodlawn Lake and the Parks and Recreation Dept.

16. It is designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark or State Archeological Landmark, or is included on the National Register of Historic Places.

Properties eligible for designation include those listed below:

1. Buildings or places which have come to represent a part of San Antonio's cultural heritage for at least twenty-five (25) years;

Yes, 50 years

2. Architectural curiosities, one-of-a-kind buildings and notable examples of architectural styles and periods or methods of construction, particularly local or regional types and buildings by internationally known architects or master builders and important works by minor ones;

Yes, unique repurposing of a building from Anglers' lodge to Dance Studio.

3. Properties that are part of a cluster which provide a specific representation of an architectural or historic era or event;
4. Parks, plazas, bridges, streets, walkways, acequias, vistas and objects that have special cultural, historic or architectural significance, including studios of artists, writers or musicians during years of significant activity;

Yes, famous dancers from Spain and other countries, as well as local celebrities conducted workshops and classes here for at least forty years.

5. Institutions that provide evidence of the cultural history of San Antonio (churches, universities, art centers, theaters and entertainment halls) as well as stores, businesses and other properties that provide a physical record of the experience of particular ethnic groups;

Yes, see # 5 above.

6. Markets and commercial structures or blocks which are important to the cultural life of San Antonio and groups of buildings, structures and/or sites representative of, or associated with particular social, ethnic or economic groups during a particular period;
7. Archaeological sites of cultural importance to local people or social or ethnic groups, such as locations of important events in their history, historic or prehistoric cemeteries, battlefields or shrines;
8. Buildings that physically and spatially comprise a specific historical or architectural environment or clusters of historically, architecturally, or culturally related buildings that represent the standards and tastes of a specific segment of a community or neighborhood;
9. Unrelated structures that represent a historical or cultural progression or various styles and functions, or cohesive townscapes or streetscapes that possess an identity of place;
10. Objects such as fountains, clocks, markers, sculpture, bridges, and acequias which are important to the historical and cultural life of the city and related to a specific location; or
11. Walkways, setbacks, open grass or landscaped areas along the San Antonio River, including special vistas associated throughout city development patterns in and near plazas, parks and riverbanks.

(Ord. No. 98697 § 6) (Ord. No. 2010-06-24-0616, § 2, 6-24-10)



## Berta Almaguer Dance Studio

Reginald H. Roberts, Architect

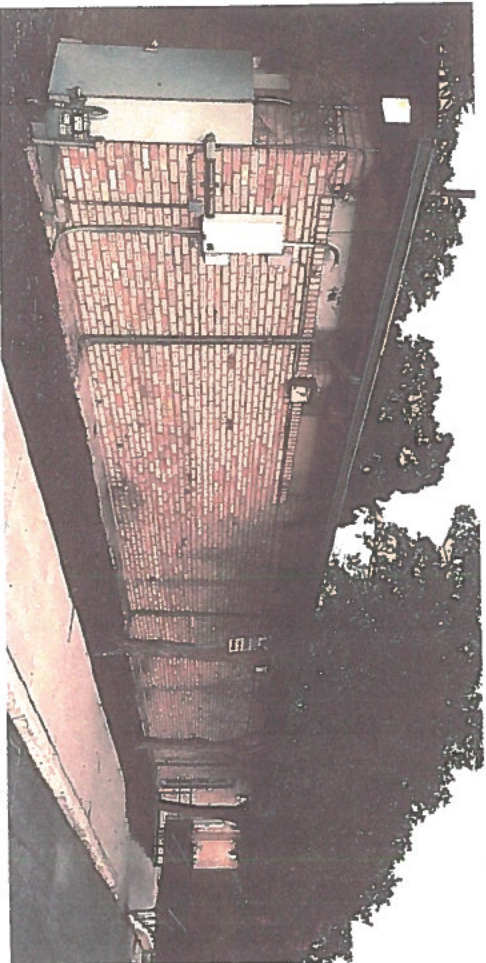
Firm of Schoop & Roberts: 1945-1953



**Address:** 138 S Josephine Tobin Dr, San Antonio, TX 78201  
**Phone:** (210) 207-3132



Berta Almagner Dance Studio  
138 S. Josephine Tobin Drive  
San Antonio, TX 78201



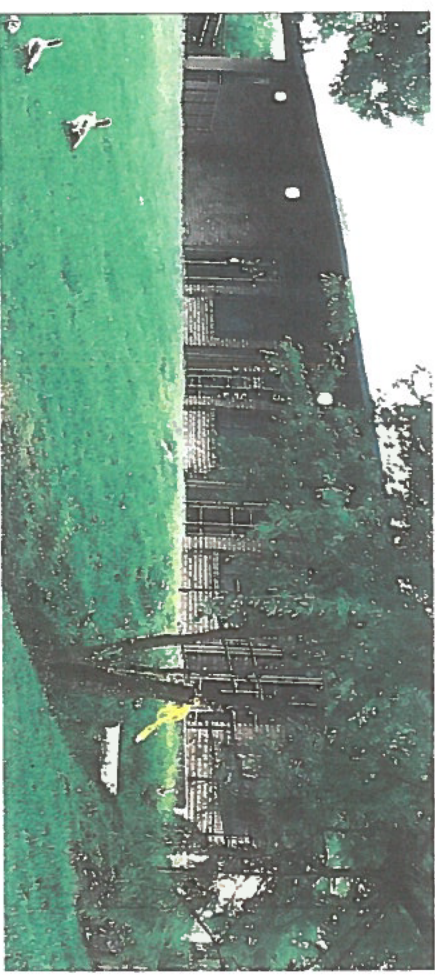
West side, entrance, facing parking lot



South, Rear, facing downtown



Roof overhang facing north,  
overlooking casting pond



East Side, facing casting pond

( Frank Lloyd Wright feature, used in Falling Water,  
and other designs featuring exterior views )