



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

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Agenda Item Number: 18.

Agenda Date: 3/7/2019

In Control: City Council A Session

DEPARTMENT: Office of Historic Preservation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Shanon Shea Miller, Director

COUNCIL DISTRICT IMPACTED: District 1

SUBJECT:

Consideration and action regarding a Resolution to initiate landmark designation for 1411 W Ashby Place and the authorization of a Memorandum of Agreement between the City of San Antonio (City) and San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) for SAISD to mitigate the loss of Beacon Hill #22 and to implement mitigation strategies for structures of historical significance.

SUMMARY:

This resolution requests direction from City Council to move forward with historic landmark designation for the property at 1411 W Ashby Place. On November 7, 2018, the Historic and Design Review Commission (HDRC) found that the property is historically significant and recommended that the property be considered for landmark designation.

Staff finds that Beacon Hill #22 meets eight of the 16 criteria for evaluation and is eligible for landmark designation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Located within the original 36 square miles of San Antonio, the historic 1915 Beacon Hill School #22 is exemplary of educational institutions built during the Progressive Era. The school embodies San Antonio's history of this late 19th and early 20th century period as a reflection of the innovative political, social, cultural and economic reforms that took place at that time, especially in education, technology, and equality for women, children and immigrants.

The structure was designed by prominent San Antonio architect Leo M.J. Dielmann, named school board architect in 1914, and was one of a group of schools erected by the school board in 1915, along with Collins Garden, Lopez Street School, Starr Street School, Highland Park School, and the ground floor of the Calhoun School. Dielmann's career paralleled the period of the Progressive Era, and his designs characterize the

progressive spirit of the time. His most notable works include San Antonio Landmarks such as the Conventual Chapel, The Science Hall, and other buildings at Our Lady of the Lake; the Fort Sam Houston Post Chapel; The 1909 expansion of Joske's at Alamo Plaza; The Fairmont Hotel; and numerous churches and schools throughout San Antonio and Texas.

On August 2, 2018, a demolition application was submitted to the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) by the San Antonio Independent School District, property owner of 1411 W Ashby Place. What follows is a comprehensive timeline regarding the property and SAISD's interactions with OHP regarding its eligibility and potential demolition.

1997: In 1997, as part of the proposed campus plan, SAISD requested demolition of three structures that dated from c. 1915 through the 1930s. The HDRC approved demolition of two structures but found the Beacon Hill #22 building to be significant and did not approve its demolition. SAISD meeting minutes dated February 17, 1997, show that the board approved a resolution to preserve the structure and withdraw the request for demolition as a result of the outcome of the HDRC hearing.

2012: In May 2012, SAISD staff consulted OHP regarding the significance of the building and of potential demolition. OHP advised SAISD that demolition would not be approved administratively based on the significance of the structure and would require review by the HDRC.

2015: In May 2015, SAISD staff consulted with OHP again on the significance of the structure and potential demolition request. OHP hosted an HDRC Demolition Committee meeting attended by SAISD staff and District 1 Councilman Roberto Treviño. Councilman Treviño voiced strong opposition to the potential demolition of the building. OHP staff and the Councilman did not find evidence of significant structural deficiencies and believed the building to be sound. Further assessments by a structural engineer were recommended. SAISD staff was encouraged to explore resources and partnerships to clean up and stabilize the building until a future use for the facility could be determined. SAISD was advised that any formal demolition request would be referred to the HDRC. OHP notified SAISD that the building was eligible for designation and provided SAISD with building maintenance requirements outlined in the City's Property Maintenance Code. SAISD decided not to pursue demolition at that time, and no formal request was submitted.

2018: In February 2018, Councilman Treviño requested assistance from OHP to identify possible resources and rehabilitation options for the vacant Beacon Hill #22 building for consideration by SAISD. OHP conducted research and compiled information regarding potential adaptive reuse. If retained, the building could be utilized for future use by SAISD for school programming or special curriculum. SAISD also has the option to lease or sell to a non-profit to allow for community-based programming, such as arts after-school programs, senior-youth mentoring programs, and other community programs. OHP consulted with the Texas Historical Commission regarding eligibility for Historic Tax Credits. The 1915 building is potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, making tax incentives an option for future rehabilitation. On August 2, 2018, a demolition application was submitted to the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) by the San Antonio Independent School District, property owner of 1411 W Ashby Place.

Structural Reports: On April 13, 2018, SAISD submitted a report from Raba Kistner Engineers stating that a limited structural evaluation was completed and concluded that the building was not salvageable.

The letter states that the “extent of deterioration of the roof and floor structural systems are significant. A high wind event, such as a tornado, could breach the building envelope and cause partial or complete failure of the masonry perimeter walls.” The report from Raba Kistner Engineers did not include a description of the evaluation method and did not indicate any testing or research. Further, the letter did not note any concern with or danger of a collapse or failure to the structural systems without tornadic wind forces.

For these reasons, OHP requested a second professional opinion from Sparks Engineering as the firm specializes in the evaluation and rehabilitation of historic structures. On June 5, 2018, Sparks Engineering completed a second structural report. The Sparks report includes documents reviewed, observations, findings, field sketches, photographs, and technical references and concludes with a professional opinion and recommendation for rehabilitation. The Sparks report concludes the structure is repairable and found the structural frame to be in better condition than previously reported. Recommendations for stabilization and repair were included that could support any efforts to explore adaptive reuse of the structure.

ISSUE:

1411 W Ashby Place meets eight criteria under UDC 35-607(b) and is eligible for landmark designation. If Council approves a resolution to proceed with landmark designation, OHP would apply for a change in zoning to include a historic landmark overlay for the properties. The change in zoning requires a recommendation from the Zoning Commission and approval by City Council. If approved by Council, the properties would become local historic landmarks. Rehabilitation work would qualify for local tax incentives and all future proposals for the properties would require HDRC review.

ALTERNATIVES:

Landmark designation would help protect and preserve this structure. If Council does not approve a resolution to proceed with landmark designation, the designation process would end and the demolition would be approved. New construction on the property would not require review by the HDRC.

In an effort to mitigate the loss of the building, SAISD has worked with City staff to develop and propose a number of actions to be executed through a Memorandum of Agreement with the City. Actions outlined through the draft MOA include:

1. Prior to issuance of a demolition permit, SAISD will provide the City documentation of the Beacon Hill #22 Structure including but not limited to - HABS level 1 drawings, digital 3D model, and photographs.
2. Prior to issuance of a demolition permit, SAISD will provide the City a salvage and reuse plan for the materials of the Beacon Hill #22 Structure.
3. Prior to issuance of the Demolition Permit, SAISD will provide City with a plan and timeline for completion of the inventory, which shall be approved by the Director of the City’s Office of Historic Preservation. Within 12 months of the issuance of the Demolition Permit, SAISD will provide the City a complete inventory of SAISD buildings and identification of all historic resources.
4. SAISD will meet with the Office of Historic Preservation following completion of the inventory outlined above and discuss possible initiation of the landmark designation process for other school

buildings in the district, as a way to underscore the importance of historic schools in the community.

5. SAISD will implement preservation trades courses and/or certification as part of SAISD career and technical education program.
6. SAISD will develop in collaboration with the City, a SAISD-wide Cultural Heritage Curriculum as outlined in Exhibit A.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Historic Preservation requests a waiver of the required zoning fees in an amount of \$1,876.20 that would otherwise be paid to the City's Development Services Fund. Should council not approve the resolution, this amount would be paid to the Development Services Fund.

If Council approves the authorization of Memorandum of Agreement with SAISD, there would be no fiscal impact to the City.

RECOMMENDATION:

The property is eligible for historic designation and the HDRC has recommended that City Council initiate the historic designation process. Any decision should balance the needs of the school with the goals of the City to promote and preserve its cultural heritage. Staff recommends that City Council end the designation process and authorize Director of Office of Historic Preservation to negotiate and execute a Memorandum of Agreement, which includes all six mitigation strategies.