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October 25, 2020

Terri Myers, Chair
City of Austin
Historic Landmark Commission

Re: 2505 and 2507 Park View Drive

Dear Chair,

Preservation Austin has been our city's leading nonprofit voice for historic preservation since 1953. We write today to express our dismay at the proposed demolition of 2505 and 2507 Park View Drive in the Air-Conditioned Village. We ask the Historic Landmark Commission to support historic zoning for these significant properties in the areas of Architecture, Historical Associations, and Community Value.

The Air-Conditioned Village was built in 1954 to assess the cost-effectiveness and profitability of central air in middle-class housing. Twenty-three houses, each featuring air-conditioning systems from a different manufacturer, were sold to families who agreed to allow their homes and habits to be studied by University of Texas scientists. Austinite Ned Cole, an architect and head of the air-conditioning subcommittee of the National Association of Homes Builders, spearheaded the project, which was the first multi-home experiment of its kind worldwide. Local architects and builders designed each unique home with energy-saving design elements to test their effectiveness.

2505 Park View Drive, known as the "Frigidaire House," retains integrity and clearly conveys its historical significance. Preservation Austin believes the property meets the following criteria for historic zoning:

Architecture:

- The house embodies several of the hallmarks of the Ranch style, including the long, low configuration, deep eaves, and prominent low front porch. Although the house has been somewhat modified, its original form and contextual appearance remains intact.
- The house was specifically designed as a modest house to test the ability to provide central air conditioning in homes for the middle class.

Historical Associations:

- The Air-Conditioned Village was an internationally renowned experiment in building innovation and social science. Its success impacted the architecture and economics of air-conditioning for homebuilders and their middle-class audience.
- The house was designed by Ned Cole, who was instrumental in bringing the experiment of central air conditioning to Austin and who was noted for his innovative architectural designs using prefabricated elements

Community Value:

- The Air-Conditioned Village is embedded in Austin's identity. Cole convinced organizers to locate the project here because of Austin's hot temperatures, booming Sun Belt economy, and proximity to the University of Texas, a prominent research institution. This beloved historic resource is part of Allandale's cultural fabric and an irreplaceable hallmark of Austin's significant postwar heritage.

2507 Park View Drive retains integrity and clearly conveys its historical significance. Preservation Austin believes the property meets the following criteria for historic zoning:

Architecture:

- The house is an excellent example of a modest Ranch style house with few alterations over the years. The Ranch style is typified by a long, low presence, side-gabled, with deep eaves, all of which are present on this house.
- Its design reflects its adaptation for central air conditioning at a price point attractive to middle-class homebuyers.

Historical Association:

- The Air-Conditioned Village was an internationally renowned experiment in building innovation and social science. Its success impacted the architecture and economics of air-conditioning for homebuilders and their middle-class audience.
- The house was designed by local architect H.D. Powers in conjunction with the Carrier Corporation, a pioneer in air conditioning systems for commercial and residential uses. Prior to these commissions, Powers worked for the Federal Housing Administration.

Community Value:

- As one of the more intact houses in the Air-Conditioned Village, this house represents a unique chapter in Austin's history, as the focus of a nationwide study that paved the way for the further development of residential air conditioning for every class of building, not just the expensive houses.

The Air-Conditioned Village has seen too many demolitions, at a rapidly increased rate, over the past several years. Today only fifteen of the original twenty-three homes retain integrity. However, a draft National Register nomination is underway with the support of advocates, neighbors, and our colleagues at Mid Tex Mod. Every loss brings us closer to losing any chance for a historic district to honor and protect these buildings. We urge the Historic Landmark Commission to take action on this issue and offer our support to help protect this irreplaceable piece of Austin's history.

Sincerely,



Clayton Bullock
President
Preservation Austin