SWCA®
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS
Sound Science. Creative Solutions.

Houston Office
7255 Langtry, Suite 100
Houston, TX 77040
Tel 713.934.9900 Fax 713.934.9906
www.swca.com

23 June 2011

Mr. Marty Stump
Austin Parks and Recreation Department
City of Austin
200 S. Lamar
Austin, Texas 78704

Dear Mr. Stump,

SWCA has completed an extensive background review, site visits and an analysis of the landmark designation criteria of the Norwood House and gardens. The background search included the review of the files at the City of Austin Planning Department, Austin History Center and the Texas Historical Commission. Three site visits were conducted to look at overall condition and remaining historic fabric.

The Norwood House and immediate surrounding gardens are a designated City of Austin Historic Landmark. The 1998 designation includes the house and what remains of the formal gardens including the foundations of a tearoom and pergola. That same year, Texas Historical Commission responded to a determination for eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. THC responded that the house was not eligible for listing due to integrity loss.

In order to be designated as a City of Austin Historic Landmark, a property must:

1. Be at least 50 years old, unless it possesses exceptional importance as defined by National Register Bulletin 22, National Park Service (1996); and
2. Retain sufficient integrity of materials and design to convey its historic appearance; and
3. Be individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places, designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Archeological Landmark, or National Historic Landmark, <u>OR</u>
4. Be significant in at least two of the following categories:
   A. ARCHITECTURE
   B. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS
   C. ARCHEOLOGY
   D. COMMUNITY VALUE
   E. LANDSCAPE FEATURE

The Norwood House and adjacent gardens was designated a City of Austin Landmark under Criteria 1, 2, 4A, 4B, 4D and 4E. Currently, I believe the house only meets Criteria 1 and 4D: the house is indeed 50 years old (1) and possesses Community Value (4D). The remaining criterion are not met largely due to lack of integrity, meaning significant character-defining materials and features have been removed and/or are in such poor condition they will need to be replaced.

Criterion 2 states that a property must retain sufficient integrity of materials and design to convey its historic appearance. This criterion is not met due to integrity loss of materials: the original brick and river stone was sold and the terracotta tile roof removed by a previous owner. It is estimated that 60% of the existing wooden structural members, framing, decking and all of the wooden windows would need to be replicated for the integrity of the house to be restored. The result is more of a reconstruction project than a restoration or rehabilitation.

Criterion 4A relates to architectural significance. This criterion is not met due to the loss of the character defining features that render the house unable to be a representative example of a high style bungalow. There are other similar examples of this style in Hyde Park, notably the house at 4110 Speedway that is designated a City of Austin Landmark. Additionally, there are other examples of the work of the attributed architect and builder in Austin including the Austin History Center, the Commodore Perry Hotel, the Fire Practice Tower on Town Lake and numerous private houses.

Criterion 4B is about the Norwood House and its historical associations. This criterion is not met due to loss of integrity; the house is no longer a good example of nor adequately conveys Norwood's importance to the city. There are better examples in Austin that are closely associated with Norwood, namely the Norwood Tower that was recently rehabilitated.

Criterion 4D relates to the community value and the unique location or physical characteristic of the property. This criterion is retained for the site and its location on the lake with its views of downtown. The value to the community is for a public space, such as a park, as it is currently used.

Criterion 4E is relates to the landscaping features and is not met due to the loss of integrity. The formal gardens are in ruins and in a similar condition as the house.

The history of the Norwood family and their significance in early twentieth century Austin business and social arenas is significant. The house and gardens were once extraordinary. I am in the historic preservation business because I enjoy supporting the rehabilitation and/or restoration of historic buildings as safe and enjoyable destinations while retaining links with the past. Given enough money, anything can be restored. It is my recommendation that the City of Austin Historic Designation be removed. The integrity of the house is so severely compromised

that a restoration at this time would be fiscally irresponsible. Additionally, focusing a large amount of public money on the restoration of the Norwood House would take needed funds away from viable city-owned historic properties. The importance of the Norwood family can be commemorated at this site through retention of the park name, the addition of educational panels and creative, thoughtful landscape design.

Sincerely,

Anna Mod
Historic Preservation Specialist

Attachment

2011 Criterion	Previous Criterion	City of Austin Landmark Requirements - 2011	Included in 1997 Landmark application	Comments
1 (A1)	1	Be at least 50 years old	Criterion 1: Character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, cultural characteristics of the City of Austin, state of Texas, or the United States. Response: House constructed in 1922 on the edge of the city limits	Agree – Criterion satisfied based on age; some would argue this is no longer a house (building) and is now a ruin (site).
2 (A2)	3	Retain sufficient integrity of materials and design to convey its historic appearance	Criterion 3: Embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen. Response: Norwood House is one of the best examples in Austin of a 1920s bungalow-style structure. Notable features include the stone and mortar pillars that frame the porch.	Disagree – Criterion not met - the property no longer retains its integrity of materials: the original brick was removed and sold; the original terracotta tile roof was removed by a previous owner; the original river stone cladding for the battered columns was removed and sold. The wooden battered columns are extant and secured inside the house. These piers alone are not enough to convey significance.
4A (A3bi)	4	Architecture • Character defining features • Technological innovation • Features representing ethnic or folk art, architecture of construction; or • Represents a rare example of an architectural style; or • Serves as a representative example of the work of an architect, builder or artisan who significantly contributed to the development of the city, state or nation.	Criterion 4: Identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the City. Response: The Norwood House was designed by prominent local architect Hugo Kuehne, who also designed the Austin History Center, the Commodore Perry Hotel, the Fire Practice Tower on Town Lake, and numerous private homes throughout the city.	Architecture - disagree • Character defining features - removed • Technological innovation – n/a • Features representing ethnic or folk art, architecture of construction; or – n/a • Represents a rare example of an architectural style; or – not sufficient integrity to represent style; not the only example in Austin; 4110 Speedway in Hyde Park is a high style bungalow. • Serves as a representative example of the work of an architect, builder or artisan who significantly contributed to the development of the city, state or nation. There are other significant examples of the work of Hugo Kuehne (architect attributed to the Norwood House) and builder Brydson Lumber & Construction Company in Austin

2011 Criterion	Previous Criterion	City of Austin Landmark Requirements - 2011	Included in 1997 Landmark application	Comments
4B (A3bii)	9 and 11	Historical Associations – Norwood family • Significant associations with persons, groups, institutions, businesses, or events of historical importance which contributed to the history of the city, state or nation • Represents a significant portrayal of the environment of a group of people in a historic time.	Criterion 9: Exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, ethnic, or historical heritage of the City, State or the united states. Response: The Norwood family was very significant to the economic development of Austin because of its involvement in the financial and real estate industries. Criterion 11: Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City, State or United States. Response: The house was built in 1922 for Ollie Norwood, a municipal bonds broker, who in 1928 developed the Norwood Tower at 114 West 7th Street. His sister Beatrice Norwood was one of the first Austin-area women to succeed in real estate.	Historical Associations – Norwood family • The Norwood family was very significant to the economic development of Austin. There are other buildings in Austin that have better associative value including the Norwood Tower that is listed on the National Register. • The Norwood House property no longer conveys is associative significance due to integrity loss. The property is now a ruin – it does not resemble how it looked when the Norwood family lived there.
4D (A3biv)	12, 13	Community Value • The property has a unique location or physical characteristic that represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood or the city, and contributes to the character or image of the city.	Criterion 12: A building or structure that because of its location has become of value to a neighborhood, community area or the City. Response: The site commands a spectacular view of downtown Austin and the Colorado River and has been acquired by the City as a public park. Criterion 13: Value as an aspect of community sentiment or public pride. Response: The Women's Chamber of commerce has taken on the restoration of the Norwood House as an ongoing project and has obtained significant donations of labor, funds, and services to initiate the project. Plans are to renovate the structure and grounds and create a sculpture garden.	Community Value • Unique location – agree • Physical characteristics – agree for the site. In its present condition the house is not the reason people visit this park. • Women's Chamber resigned from the project in the late 1990s.

2011 Criterion	Previous Criterion	City of Austin Landmark Requirements - 2011	Included in 1997 Landmark application	Comments
4E (A3bv)		Landscape Feature • Significant natural or designed landscape or landscape feature with artistic, aesthetic, cultural or historical value to the city.	Not mentioned in 1996 landmark application. Landscape feature were not one of the designation criteria at that time. Was this administratively transferred?	Landscape Feature • Physical characteristics – agree for site. In its present condition the house does not contribute to the character or image of the city
Not listed for archeological significance	8	Archeology	Criterion 8: Archeological value in that it has produced or can be expected to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest. Response: Excavations at the original site of the house have uncovered materials of historic interest that were on or in the building at one time.	No archeological permit has been obtained for archeological investigations at this site as per *Texas Archeological Sites Atlas.*