

# Old West Austin National Register Historic District

## *Recommendations for National Register District consideration in the City of Austin Land Development Code Revision*

### Introduction

In 2003, the Austin neighborhoods of Bryker Woods, Pemberton Heights and Old Enfield were together accepted by the Keeper of the National Register as the Old West Austin National Register Historic District. This Historic District, the largest in Texas, encompasses approximately 1600 homes, a total of 2500 buildings, and includes Pease Park and the historic buildings and bridges in that park.

These three neighborhoods were nominated to the National Register of Historic Places based on the following two criteria:

- A. PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY
- B. PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUES, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION

The Texas Historical Commission, administrator of National Register programs in the state of Texas, has placed the Old West Austin National Register District nomination online at: [ftp://ftp.thc.state.tx.us/nr\\_program/Austin,%20Old%20West%20Austin%20NR.pdf](ftp://ftp.thc.state.tx.us/nr_program/Austin,%20Old%20West%20Austin%20NR.pdf) Photos of each house in our three neighborhoods, as well as streetscapes and Pease Park are in the OWANRHD Collection at the Austin History Center.

To fulfill the requirements to become a National Register District, a team of neighborhood volunteers engaged two professional architectural historians to research the history of the three neighborhoods that comprise the District. A team of approximately 60 neighborhood volunteers, working with the architectural historians, surveyed the three neighborhoods, photographed each building and residence, and prepared a descriptive sheet for each, including the following information, which was verified by the professional architectural historians:

- 1) Contributing or Non-Contributing structure
- 2) Style and Plan Type of each dwelling and building
- 3) Stylistic Influence and Decade of Construction of each dwelling and building 1853–1953
- 4) List of Architects and Representative Homes They Designed within the Historic District by Street Address

As described in the nomination, the historic character of the Old West Austin National Register District is largely intact, including the following observations that describe the streetscape and ambiance of these three historic neighborhoods:

- 1) Apartments are relatively uncommon in the Historic District, with only sixty-four apartments or multi-family dwelling units extant. The vast majority of these later, non-historic units stretch along Enfield Road and near the intersection of Windsor Road and West 12th Street.
- 2) A diversity of architectural stylistic influences exist in the historic district, ranging from the mid-nineteenth-century Greek Revival design of Woodlawn (see Nomination Photograph 1) to the mid-twentieth-century International Style architecture of the Nagel House (see Nomination Photograph 5).
- 3) Outbuildings associated with dwellings are garages, carports, garage-apartments, storage buildings, and servant's quarters. Garages are defined as single-story buildings that store automobiles.
- 4) Dwellings are, for the most part, wood-frame construction with variety in exterior cladding and stylistic influences. Exterior materials include brick, stone, stucco, synthetic siding, wood, or combinations of any two materials. By far the more popular choice of material, approximately 32 percent, is the utilization of a brick veneer.
- 5) As a result of planned development and deed restrictions, single-family residences and related outbuildings comprise the bulk of the historic district's building stock.
- 6) Alleys were unnecessary in automobile suburbs, thus access to garages and outbuildings is by way of the main streets.
- 7) Stone curbing or retaining walls, concrete curbs, gutters, and storm drains are standard. Parks and park-like landscaping was and remains part of the historic district. These green- and open-space features are reminiscent of old West Austin's once semirural setting. Fencing was minimal historically and very seldom placed between a house and the street.
- 8) The three Old West Austin NRD suburbs were originally developed on large parcels of land that were subdivided with the goal of building low-density residential developments; they retain a self-contained interior road system for vehicular travel with limited access to exterior streets. Some portions of the system are rectilinear and others are curvilinear.
- 9) Pease Park defines the eastern boundary of the historic district and serves as its most significant landscape feature.

This grouping of nineteenth- and twentieth-century resources includes 2,525 dwellings, garages, and other properties that retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, which remain recognizable to the historic district's period of significance.

As the City of Austin modifies its land development code, the well-researched and defined character of the Old West Austin National Register Historic District, as certified and accepted by the National Park Service's National Register program, should be accepted as a major contributor to Austin's history, present lifestyle and future.

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