

east cesar chavez neighborhood home tour

Learn practical preservation approaches, discover shared values, and celebrate neighborhood character. **April 14, 2012 10 A.M.–3 P.M.**



1711 Canterbury

Not every historic property need be of dramatic design, massive size, or great expense. Even a small working-class family's home can be significant and worthy of preservation. Constructed around 1925, this home is a typical example of the bungalows built at that time. It was used primarily as a rental property for the first few decades of its life, serving as a home to a wide variety of working-class Austinites. Some of the former residents include a truck driver, a stockman, a barber, and a detective. The property changed hands in the late 1940s when it was sold to Walter and Nelda Muesse. These local retailers added the smaller structure on the back of the lot, moving it from its prior home at 1713 Canterbury, and remained in this house until the late 1950s. The house then saw another owner: Joe Martinez and his wife Rachel. Joe was a grocer and he and his family owned the home until the late 1990s.

In 2007, the house was purchased by its current owner. Years of work and love had taken their toll, but the house was still intact and in remarkably good condition. The repairs and renovations to the exterior were performed with sensitivity to the historic nature of the house. The wood siding was maintained and the windows were replaced with modern versions of the originals. Some other features of the exterior—the columns, for example—while not original to the structure, are in keeping with the style of the bungalows of this era. The footprint has been maintained, and minimal changes to the layout of the interior have been made to keep the house up to date. New fixtures and new electricity, plumbing, and climate control keep this house tidy and comfortable. ♦



1403 East 2nd

This beautiful little Queen Anne-style house was built around 1903 by Claus E. Gustafson, a Swedish immigrant who came to Austin in 1895. Formerly a stonemason following in his father's footsteps, he emigrated to work for the railroads. He started as a section worker but moved among many other positions. Before he moved into Austin proper, he lived in the farm house of Emma Johnson, another Swedish immigrant with seven children. He met Emma Carlson and married her in 1899. From the time they built the house until Claus's death in 1942 and Emma's in 1950, the house remained in their possession. It changed owners a few times after Emma's death, but for many years the house remained vacant.

That changed in the 1980s when Steve and Irene Lozano purchased the house, bringing life back to the place once more. The structure was maintained, keeping the dominant gable and its patterned wood shingles as a focal point. Modern owners have shown sensitivity to the elegance of the Queen Anne style. Evidence of this fact can be seen both in the maintenance of significant architectural details and the care with which its addition was built. Coherent in style, harmonious in size and massing, and nestled behind the main structure, the owners took great pains to make sure that the expansion built in 2011 was not distracting. They have shown that expansion and evolution need not come at the expense of maintaining historic integrity. ♦



1306 East 6th (Please note this site will not open until 11 A.M.)

Humans are by nature an adaptive species, so it should come as no surprise that our structures can evolve as well. The metamorphosis of a building from a single-family home to a community focus is in itself an important historic feature. This pyramidal folk house—a term used for homes like this with their square-railed front porches and prominent hipped roofs reminiscent of the famous ancient monuments—began its life in 1906. It was built by Solomon “Sol” Hanna and his wife Laurene, an African-American couple.

Solomon worked outside the house as a porter, first at the Court of Criminal Appeals and later at the American National Bank downtown. Laurene, however, took on more than the homemaking duties we now associate with early 20th century women. She worked as a hairdresser, using the home she and Solomon built as her storefront for years until she opened her own shop on Guadalupe Street. Hairdressers and barbershops were community fixtures in any neighborhood, but their prominence in African-American culture is particularly significant. The business made the Hanna home a vibrant local meeting place as well as turning a profit, and all this was done while maintaining its connection to the culture of its neighborhood. Today, its evolution into a restaurant and music venue maintains it as a local landmark. This house is a particular reminder to those who promote adaptive reuse: even in a residential neighborhood, a new business harmonious with its neighborhood can survive, even thrive. ♦



1010 E. Cesar Chavez

Built by George and Augusta Evans in 1887, this property remained their residence until they built the house highlighted last year at 1000 East Cesar Chavez. George was an Ohio resident prior to moving to Austin and brought his German-born wife with him when he came. He was an operator for a dray freight transfer line which, considering his real estate purposes, must have been quite lucrative. Several others came and went in the next few years until it was purchased by Patrick and Annie Cain in 1910. The property records chart his advancement working for the City Water, Light, and Power Department until he is listed as a salesman and a foreman. The Cains shared the property with two other families in 1930. They continued to rent the property for years until it was purchased by Joel and Anita Quintanilla in 1973. Mrs. Quintanilla ran a beauty shop up the street at what is now France's at 911 ECC.

Between 1910 and the present, several updates were made to both the landscape and the structure's interior. In the 1990's the Pozos family, related to the Quintanillas by marriage, acquired the home and repurposed it as a church. When the Pozos decided to sell the home they received offers from developers interested in tearing down the original home. Out of respect for their history in the neighborhood, the family held out for a buyer with a plan to preserve the house. In 2010, the property was found by Cody Symington and Mary Jenkins who, along with a group of investors, purchased the property for the purpose of opening a cafe. Maintaining the historic integrity of the building is a strong priority, and they have received the Heritage Society of Austin Merit Award for their sensitivity to preservation. They are chronicling their restoration of the building on <http://cenoteaustin.tumblr.com/>. Through the shared values and hard work of the Quintanilla and Pozos families and the Cenote LLC, this unique structure has been preserved for the continued benefit and enjoyment of ECC neighbors. ♦



Robert Weaver Avenue & LBJ's Historic Oak Grove

When the Colorado River was dammed at Pleasant Valley Road to provide a cooling pond for the new Holly Power Plant in 1960, the land upstream of Longhorn Dam became practical for development. Before the dam was built, ramshackle homes on the riverbanks were often flooded during heavy rains. After each flood, poor people would re-build their shanties. Supposedly, a few homeowners were offered \$5,000 each to vacate the riverbanks in order to create a higher quality neighborhood on the north riverbank. Almost all the land between what is now Waller and Comal Street south of Haskell Street was part of a federal fish hatchery. You can still see a large pump on the vacant land south of Robert Weaver Avenue.

In the late 1970s, Texas politicians, including President Lyndon Baines Johnson, were able to get a piece of the old fish hatchery land to use as a demonstration of low-cost, energy-efficient model homes that could be mass-produced at affordable costs. Twenty faculty members from the University of Texas in Austin helped coordinate the design competition and building aspect of the program while UT social scientists studied the concept of creating a new kind of mixed-race neighborhood where people of different ethnic backgrounds could live the American Dream, together. Ten different builders from across the nation participated in the competition to design and build 10 model homes. LBJ saw this project as a culmination of his Great Society, War on Poverty, and Model Cities initiatives. Learn more about this site in the Tejano Trail Guide. ♦



Martin Middle School

In the 1940s this site was used by the War Training Production Program. The buildings might also have been used as a temporary processing center to assign boys for training in Killeen and Camp Swift who were going overseas to fight in WWII. Area elders say that after the war, the center was transformed into a re-training center so returning Vets could gain skills to find good jobs. Some of these Veterans lived in Santa Rita and Chalmers Courts public housing units and could walk to the training. There was a huge fire, and the training center was closed. Neighbors were told to "take anything you can carry", and they used the wood to build additions and garages at their nearby homes. The land stood vacant for some years.

Martin Middle School opened in 1967. The new school is named for Sam Martin, an educator who served the district for 39 years as the vocational coordinator. Mr. Martin took a leadership role in creating the War Training Center on the same site and was director of the Evening School Program which earned local and national recognition. Rumors have it that the school was designed to deter potential race riots among students because it would be the first school to serve white, black and brown students and sociologists at that time didn't think different races could co-exist peacefully. So, in anticipation of large fights, students were assigned to 3 different wings of the building based on race and separating these wings are large, swinging metal gates similar to jail bars that could separate the diverse populations should fights occur. Today, Martin students participate in a range of special projects, including: video production, computer journalism, and a 4-H Club. Be sure to visit the goat and/or chicken pens and big community garden on the west side of the building. ♦