

**STAFF REPORT
HISTORIC AND CULTURAL LANDMARKS COMMISSION
CITY OF FORT WORTH, TEXAS**

DATES: February 12, 2024

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 8

GENERAL INFORMATION

REQUEST	Recommendation for Designation as a Historic and Cultural Landmark
APPLICANT/AGENT	Fort Worth Housing Solutions
LOCATION	1715-1750 and 1801-1825 Stephenson St
ZONING/ USE (S)	C-Medium Density
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION	Individual

REQUEST

The owners request a recommendation to City Council to consider designating the property at 1715-1750 and 1801-1825 Stephenson St as Historic and Cultural Landmarks (HC).

APPLICABLE CITY OF FORT WORTH ZONING ORINANCE PROVISIONS

4.401 Historic Preservation Overlay Districts

(c) Identification and Designation of Cultural Resources

3. Eligibility for Designation
 - a. Eligibility for HC and HC District Designations.
 - i. Individual Property. An individual property may be designation as HC if it meets the following qualifications:
 1. Two or more of the criteria for significance; and
 2. The necessary criteria for assessing integrity.

Criteria for Historic Significance

1. Is distinctive in character, interest or value, and exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of the City of Fort Worth, State of Texas or the United States.
2. Is an important example of a particular architectural type or specimen in the City of Fort Worth.
3. Has been identified as the work of an important architect or master builder whose individual work has contributed to the development of Fort Worth.
4. Has been identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City of Fort Worth, State of Texas or the United States.

5. Bears an important and significant relationship to other distinctive structures, sites or areas, either as an important collection of properties of architectural style or craftsmanship with few intrusions, or by contributing to the overall character of the area according to a plan based on architectural, historic or cultural motif.
8. Is designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Antiquities Landmark or an American Civil Engineering Landmark, or is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed between 1939 and 1940, the buildings at 1715-1750 and 1801-1825 Stephenson Street are significant for their association with the African American community and the development of social housing within Fort Worth after the Great Depression (Criterion 1); as an example of a simplified Colonial Revival style (Criterion 2); as the an example of work from important an local architect of the twentieth century (Criterion 3), bears a significant relationship to other distinctive buildings, structures, sites, objects or areas (Criterion 5), and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Criterion 8)

In regards to Criterion 1, 1715-1750 and 1801-1825 Stephenson St are significant for their association with the African American heritage of the Fort Worth and for their connection to the development of social housing within the city. The area where the apartments are located was previously known as The Chambers Hill District. During the early twentieth century, this was a predominately white neighborhood, however by the 1930s, the demographic shifted to primarily African Americans. In 1938, the Fort Worth Housing Authority (FWHA) reported that 4,000 African-American families earned less than \$1000 per year and lived in unsafe and unsanitary conditions. The FWHA suggested that Chambers Hill District be the location for an African American Housing project, which would eventually become Butler Place. While the housing project was a success in addressing community needs, the Chambers Hill area continued to be neglected in the mid-twentieth century with the development of the highway. Between 1952 and 1963, most of the Chambers Hills District was demolished to make room for the I-35/Spur 280 and I-35/I-30 interchanges, cutting the neighborhood off from Downtown and the Southside. Due to the shrinking of culturally resources associated with African-American heritage west of Downtown, it is important to retain 1715-1750 and 1801-1925 Stephenson Street, to remember the communities that once resided in this area.

Butler Place also played a role in the development of social housing in Fort Worth at the tail end of the Great Depression. As a result of the market crash in 1929, employment and housing were difficult to come by, and in order to combat this issue, President Franklin D Roosevelt ushered in a series of programs to stabilize the economy. One of the programs created during the New Deal Era was the United States Housing Authority (USHA) which financed housing projects throughout the country. Between 1937 and 1940 Fort Worth and eight other cities in Texas, including Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston, received funding for the construction of low-cost housing. In 1938, after two attempts, Fort Worth finally received the funding to construct low-rent housing within the Chambers Hill District.

In regards to Criterion 2, the two buildings at Butler Place are representative of a simplified Colonial Revival style. The buildings feature a side-gabled roof with red brick veneer. One of the most striking features are the varying brick types and patterns found on the exterior. Between the windows and doors, the brick alternates between red and dark brown, creating a striped pattern. At the windows and doors, curved brick is utilized, creating a softer opening, taking cues from Streamline Moderne trends of the 1930s. Near the roof line there is an angled header

course of brick with at mimics the look of a dentil frieze, which is a typical detail of Colonial Revival buildings.

In regards to Criterion 3, 1715-1750 and 1801-1825 Stephenson Street are primarily associated with prolific local architect Wiley G. Clarkson (1885-1952) who was the chief architect for the project. Clarkson designed various buildings around Fort Worth throughout the twentieth century and his projects include the Sinclair Building in downtown, several houses within Ryan Place, the First United Methodist Church on 5th street, and several schools including Polytechnic High School. Other local architects and builders also played a part in the project, including Wyatt C. Hedrick, Hubert Crane, Joseph Pelich, and Preston Geren, and Elmer G. Wither Architectural Company, who served as associate architects, with C.O. Chromaster as the supervising architect.

In regards to Criterion 4, 1715-1750 and 1801-1825 Stephenson Street has associations with Devoyd (Dee) Jennings, who was a member of the Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce and had a founding role in the William Mann Community Development Corporation and Southeast Fort Worth, Inc. He also was part of the effort to reopen I.M. Terrell High School as a STEM and Performing Arts Academy. Butler Place is also named for Henry H. Butler who played a crucial role in expanding education opportunities for African Americans in Fort Worth at the turn of twentieth century.

In regards to Criterion 5, 1715-1750 and 1801-1825 Stephenson Street are part of the original 1940 development of Butler Place, which consists of twenty-three buildings all designed with identical details. Butler Place is also within close proximity to I.M. Terrell Highschool and Carver-Hamilton Elementary-the previous administrative offices for Fort Worth Housing Authority.

In regards to Criterion 8, 1715-1750 and 1801-1825 Stephenson St are part of the Butler Place National Register District, which was listed August 4, 2011.

EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. The designation of a property must not only be shown to have significance under Zoning Ordinance, but it also must have integrity. Within the concept of integrity for example, the National Park Service criteria recognizes seven aspects that define integrity.

Seven Aspects of Integrity

1. **Location.**
2. **Design.**
3. **Setting.**
4. **Materials.**
5. **Workmanship**
6. **Feeling.**
7. **Association.**

In relation to the Seven Aspects of Integrity:

1. The buildings are still in their original **location** from when they were constructed in 1940.
2. The **design** of the buildings are still intact and identifiable with few alterations though the windows have been boarded over for security.
3. The buildings' original **setting** is mostly intact within the area of the original

development and geographic location on the hill, however, the expansion of the highway systems in 1963 cut off the area to the rest of downtown and residential areas.

4. The property's original **materials** appear generally intact. The original masonry walls are still extant and in good condition. The identifiable cast concrete decorative pieces at the entrances and brick work remain intact. The windows and entrances have been boarded up for security. Based on historic photos, the windows seem to have been replaced.
5. The buildings still display the physical evidence of **workmanship** from the 1940s, such as the original brickwork, which is especially evident near the roofline and the different colors of coursework.
6. The buildings still retain their **feeling** of a simplified Colonial Revival style and early examples of public housing structures from the early 1940s.
7. The buildings no longer retain their **association** as early examples of public housing since they are currently no longer occupied.

FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Eligibility for Designation

The structure meets the following City of Fort Worth criteria for historic designation:

Criterion 1: Is distinctive in character, interest or value, and exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of the City of Fort Worth, State of Texas or the United States.

Criterion 2: Is an important example of a particular architectural type or specimen in the City of Fort Worth.

Criterion 3: Has been identified as the work of an important architect or master builder whose individual work has contributed to the development of Fort Worth.

Criterion 4: Has been identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City of Fort Worth, State of Texas or the United States.

Criterion 5: Bears an important and significant relationship to other distinctive structures, sites or areas, either as an important collection of properties of architectural style or craftsmanship with few intrusions, or by contributing to the overall character of the area according to a plan based on architectural, historic or cultural motif.

Criterion 8: Is designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Antiquities Landmark or an American Civil Engineering Landmark, or is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Integrity

Based on the evidence still extant at the property, the buildings at 1715-1750 and 1801-1825 Stephenson St. sufficiently retain six aspects of integrity (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling).

Summary

Staff have found evidence that the properties meet 6 of the 8 Criteria for Designation. The property also retains its original integrity and the identity for which it is significant. This is

consistent with the requirements of the ordinance for Historic & Cultural Landmark properties.

Therefore, staff recommends the following motion:

That the HCLC recommend that City Council consider designating the buildings at 1715-1750 and 1801-1825 Stephenson Street as Historic & Cultural Landmarks (HC) and that the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* be used when evaluating any proposed future change to the property.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS



Figure 1 Aerial Image of subject Properties

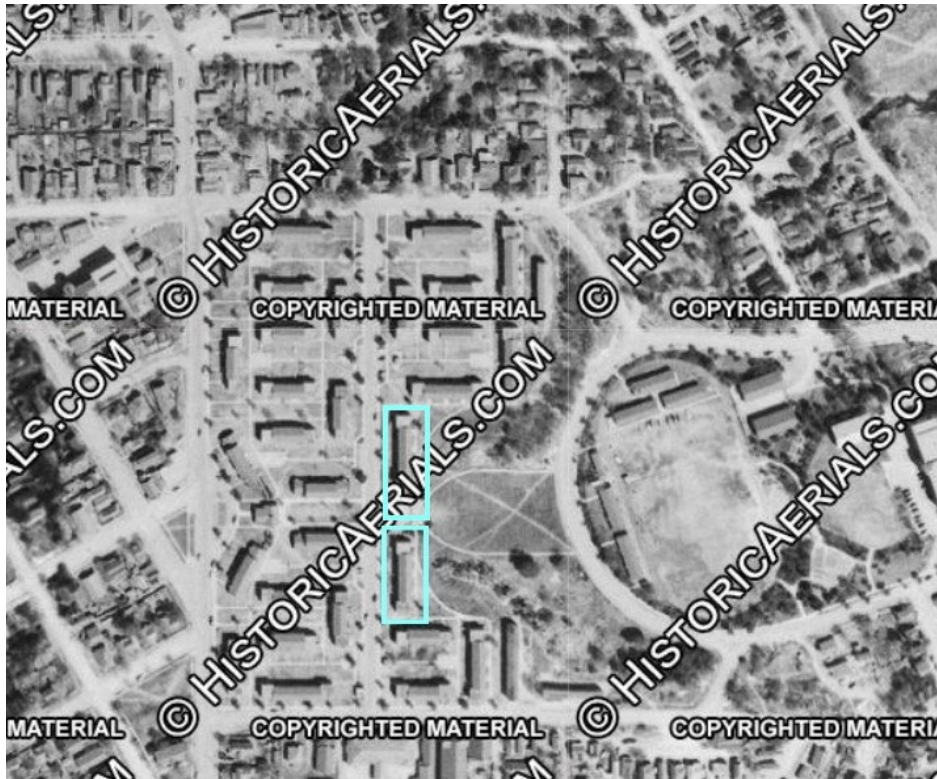


Figure 2 Aerial image of Butler Place in 1952; top-1715-1750, bottom 1801-1825 bottom



Figure 3 Aerial image the Chambers Hill of 1952



Figure 4 Aerial view of the Chambers Hill, c 1963; note the addition of more units to Butler Place, and the demolition of neighboring buildings to make room for the highway interchanges



Figure 5 Historic Aerial, 1940



Figure 6 Butler Place 1940; UTA Libraries. Note the original 4/4 windows

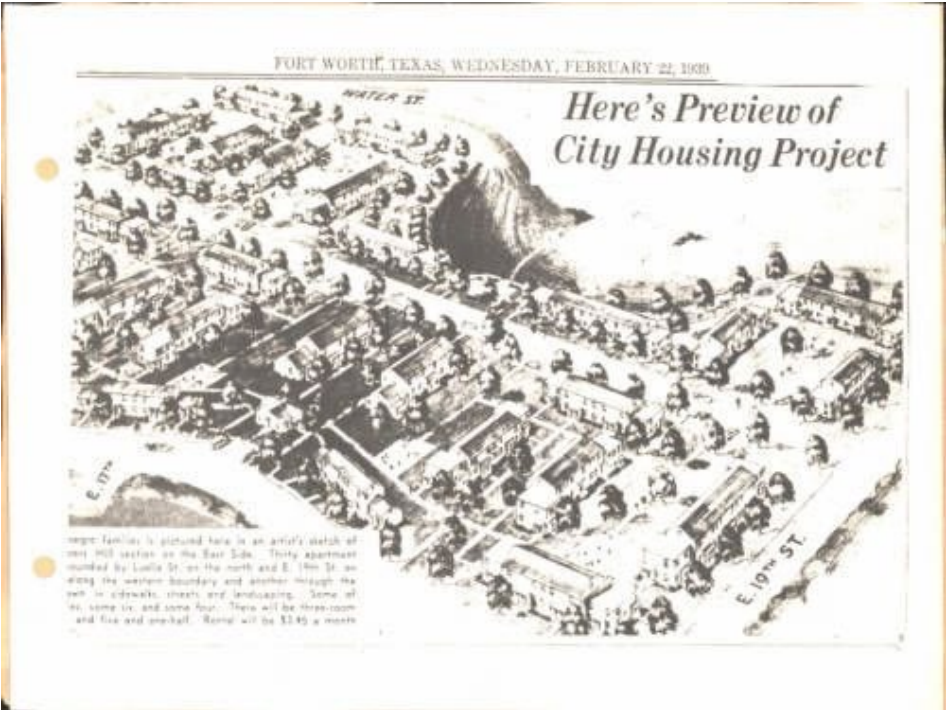


Figure 7 Rendering of Butler Place



Figure 8 Construction of Butler Place additions; c. 1962



Figure 9 View of 1715-1750 (left) and 1801-1825 Stephenson St (right)



Figure 10 View of 1801-1825 Stephenson



Figure 11 View of 1715-1750 Stephenson St



Figure 12 Rear view of 1715-1750 Stephenson St



Figure 13 Cast Concrete porch supports



Figure 14 Corner view 1801-1825 Stephenson St



Figure 15 View entryway for 1801-1825 Stephenson St



Figure 16 Detail view of curved brick and angled header brick



Figure 17 Detail view of curved brick at window; note replacement window materials