

## PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** The Zischang-Alvarado House

**OWNERS:** David R. and Maria Alvarado

**APPLICANTS:** David R. and Maria Alvarado

**LOCATION:** 2011 Johnson Street, Houston, Texas, 77007 – First Ward

**AGENDA ITEM:** B

**HPO FILE NO.:** HP2021\_0305

**DATE ACCEPTED:** 10/7/2021

**HAHC HEARING:** 10/21/2021

**SITE INFORMATION:** Lots 2 and 3A, Block 3, Fritz, First Ward, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. Designation is requested for the 888 square foot, single-family house on a 3,200 square foot lot.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Protected Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Zischang-Alvarado House is a c. 1903, one-story, frame, Folk Victorian-style house in Houston's historic First Ward neighborhood. The area lies immediately west of I-45, east of Sawyer Street, south of I-10 and north of Washington Avenue. The First Ward is one of the four original wards created by the City of Houston in 1840. It included part of Houston's early business district, strategically located at the intersection of Buffalo Bayou and White Oak Bayou near Allen's Landing at the foot of Main Street.

While the neighborhood is in transition and continues to face rapid development, some Victorian cottages and Craftsman bungalows built between 1890-1930 are still part of its historic housing stock. The High First Ward Historic District was created in 2014 to preserve some of these historic structures, however, 2011 Johnson Street is not within its boundaries and currently has no city protections.

There have been five owners of the house at 2011 Johnson Street. The first was Mrs. Lena Pope, who used it as a rental property after the death of her husband. The two families that owned the home the longest are the Zischangs and the Alvarados. In 1922, Albert C. and Carrie Zischang bought the house and lived there 56 years. There were a few short-term subsequent owners. The current owners, David R. and Maria Alvarado, began renting the home in 1983 and purchased it in 1987.

The Alvarados are seeking a protected landmark nomination for 2011 Johnson Street. They have seen the neighborhood change rapidly in the past 38 years and want to ensure that the house remains part of the First Ward's historic architecture. The Zischang-Alvarado House meets criteria 1, 4, 5 and 8 for landmark designation and criteria 1 and 2 for protected landmark designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

#### *FIRST WARD*

The First Ward was established in 1840 as one of the original four wards in Houston. At the time, the ward system provided neighborhood representation in city government with Main Street and Congress

Avenue as the dividing lines between the wards. The First Ward covered all the area northwest of the intersection at Main and Congress to the city limits; it included Market Square and part of the original Port of Houston at the foot of Main Street. Although the ward system was abolished in 1905, the name First Ward is still used to describe the general area immediately west of I-45, east of Sawyer Street, south of I-10 and north of Washington Avenue.

Most land within the First Ward was outside the city's central business district and was surveyed and sold to private landholders for residential development beginning in the late 1830s. It quickly developed into a working-class community because of its proximity to the downtown port and what would become the Houston & Texas Central Railroad shops. Robust economic activity attracted German, Italian and Irish immigrants to the area who sought employment with the railroad or who would start their own businesses to serve the neighborhood. Population increase led the City of Houston to designate the part of First Ward east of White Oak Bayou as the Fifth Ward in 1866.

Many of the structures built in First Ward reflected styles that were popular in working class communities of the time, including small vernacular Victorian cottages and Craftsman bungalows. About 30 percent of the properties in the area were originally rentals, reflecting the transient nature of the occupants. Houston Avenue was First Ward's main business thoroughfare, but small commercial buildings that housed corner grocery stores, saloons, barber shops, bakeries, meat markets and drug stores were scattered throughout the neighborhood.

Like many neighborhoods its age, the First Ward began a long period of decline in the 1950s. Many of the historic houses and buildings were demolished and replaced by industrial buildings. Construction of interstates 10 and 45 also decreased the desirability of the area for anything beyond commercial buildings. The integrity of the neighborhood was further endangered as residents fled to more stable areas, and much of the remaining housing stock and commercial buildings that were not demolished fell into disrepair.

Today, the First Ward is a neighborhood in transition. There is a thriving arts community in the area, and new retail is opening on its western edge. Demands for high-density housing near downtown, though, are putting increased pressures on the area. While small businesses are opening in rehabbed buildings and a new hike and bike trail runs along the neighborhood's northern edge, historic houses are being replaced at a rapid pace by modern townhomes. Nevertheless, the First Ward still has several late 19<sup>th</sup>-and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, including some of the oldest surviving structures in Houston. Concerted efforts by residents and advocacy groups to preserve the remaining historic housing stock resulted in the City of Houston designating part of the neighborhood as the High First Ward Historic District on May 28, 2014.

### *2011 JOHNSON STREET HISTORY*

Newspaper references indicate that the house was built around 1903 and place the Pope family at the residence.

The first reference to 2011 Johnson Street was in July 1903, when the *Houston Chronicle* reported that Miss Kate Pope would be hosting a meeting of the First Ward Civic Club at her home at 2011 Johnson Street. The following year, Kate Pope's father, Thomas, passed away and his funeral was held at the 2011 Johnson Street residence. The marriage of Miss Kate Pope to Henry Moran also took place at the home in September 1904.

Members of the Pope family lived at either 2011 Johnson or 2019 Johnson Street, a cottage that Mrs. Lena Pope had built in 1900. She acquired the lot at 2019 Johnson in 1900 from Henry Fritz in the Fritz Addition and applied for a building permit to construct a cottage on the property.

Starting in 1923, the City Directories listed four addresses on the Johnson Street block: 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2019. The 1924 Sanborn map included the footprints of all the residences.

#### *OWNERSHIP HISTORY*

*Thomas A. Pope (b. September 1854, d. January 26, 1904)*

*Lena Elizabeth Turner Pope (b. December 21, 1856, d. January 16, 1944)*

Thomas A. Pope was born in 1854 in Georgia. In 1876, he married Lena Turner, also from Georgia. Around 1878, they moved to Freestone County, Texas, where most of their children were born. Following the birth of their seventh child, the Turners moved to Houston. Thomas worked as a carpenter, cabinet maker and builder, and also operated a used furniture store. Early on, the Pops resided in the Third and Fourth Wards. By 1895, the family had moved to the First Ward and lived on Shearn Street.

Thomas died in January 1904. The 1905 Houston city directory listed Lena Pope at the 2019 Johnson Street address, where she continued to live until 1922. In the 1920 Federal Census, she identified her occupation as a dealer in real estate.

Lena occasionally rented out rooms at 2011 Johnson Street. Other occupants of 2011 Johnson Street in the 1910s included: Frank H. Bender, a bookbinder with Standard Printing & Litho. Co., in 1913; Mrs. Lizzie Smith and Peter Plutznar in 1915; Otis W. Akin, an inspector, in 1917; F.C. Callender in 1918 and W.F. Lehde in 1920. In 1922, Lena Pope sold the property at 2011 Johnson Street to Albert Zischang.

*Albert Christian Zischang (b. December 24, 1897, d. May 21, 1977)*

*Carrie May Brewer Zischang (b. December 9, 1899, d. October 26, 1978)*

Albert Christian Zischang was born in 1897 to John T. and Mary Zscheck Zischang. John and Mary immigrated from Germany to the United States and settled in Texas some time before November 1882, when their first child was. John worked as a carpenter, wood machinist and foreman for Lottman Myers Manufacturing Company. Mary was a homemaker and raised their five children. Their family home was at 515 Oxford Street in Houston Heights.

Albert was the fourth child in the family. As a teenager, he held jobs as a messenger, a glazier and a shipping clerk. For most of his life, he worked as a railroad clerk – first with the Texas & New Orleans Railroad and later with the Southern Pacific Railroad.

On December 30, 1920, Albert married Carrie May Brewer, who was born in Mississippi. The couple took their vows at the Baptist Temple in the Heights. The 1923-1924 Houston city directory listed the Zischangs at 2011 Johnson Street. Albert's older sister, Alma, and her husband, Albert B. Rutland, lived next door at 2013 Johnson Street.

In 1929, Carrie Zischang gave birth to their only child, Beverly, at Baptist Hospital. Albert died at age 90 in May 1977 and was interred in Woodlawn Cemetery. Following his death, Carrie moved to a convalescent center. In March 1978, their home of 56 years was offered for sale in a classified ad in the *Houston Chronicle*. The listing read, "Charming Cottage with Copper Roof behind wrought iron fence. Perfect for single person or couple. 2011 Johnson, 1 1 1, only \$21,900. Pirkle Real Estate 869-1487, 864-3853."

In May 1978, Carrie Zischang sold the property to Larry Dale Pepper. She died in October 1978 and was interred next to her husband in Woodlawn Cemetery. After owning it for just six months, Larry Pepper sold 2011 Johnson Street to John T. and Nita Pirkle. John was the son of the real estate agent whom Carrie Zischang had engaged to list the home.

#### *CURRENT OWNERS*

David R. and Maria Alvarado, the current owners, began renting the home from the Pirkles in 1983. They purchased the in 1987 and continue to reside there.

David Alvarado was born in Weimar, Texas, and Maria Alvarado was born in Houston. Both were raised in the Heights area and grew up relatively close to each other; Maria resided on 27th Street and David on Louise Street.

Maria's aunt, Emilia, and her husband, Mike Gomez, had lived at 2013 Johnson since the 1950s, and Emilia informed Maria and David Alvarado about the rental opportunity at 2011 Johnson Street. On October 1, 1983, the Alvarados moved to 2011 Johnson with their three sons, David Jr., Gabriel and David Anthony. In 1985, they welcomed their fourth son, Joseph. They purchased the house from the Pirkles in 1987.

David and Maria have seen many historic homes in the neighborhood be demolished, including the Gomez home at 2013 Johnson Street. This is the driving force behind their decision to pursue a protected landmark designation.

The Alvarados do not think they could ever live in a different neighborhood and have truly enjoyed making memories in the First Ward. They raised their four sons in the house, and have made many new memories with their grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Their only wish is for the house to continue standing; they hope to help other families create new and wonderful memories for years to come.

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**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY***ARCHITECTURAL STYLE**Folk Victorian*

The house at 2011 Johnson Street is typical of the Folk Victorian homes built in working-class neighborhoods throughout the United States from 1870 to 1910. Folk Victorian design was the dominant house style in Houston's First, Fifth and Sixth wards, particularly in the residential areas that were adjacent to the city's burgeoning railyards.

The nature of American vernacular housing changed dramatically as railroads spread across the country in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As heavy woodworking equipment became widely accessible, houses that were earlier built with logs or heavy hewn frames could be constructed with lighter braced framing covered by wood sheathing.

The railroads also gave local builders access to large supplies of inexpensive, pre-cut detailing, allowing carpenters to update familiar folk house forms with newly available trim. This trend was particularly evident in the construction of ornate Victorian porches, which were incorporated into new construction and also often added to update older homes. In the South, the most popular form of Folk Victorian design was the one-story, L-shaped, gable-front-and-wing house.

*ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION*

The Zischang-Alvarado house is a one-story, frame Folk Victorian-style home that sits on a pier and beam foundation. Lattice skirting panels are placed between the piers around the perimeter of the house.

The house has a hipped roof with a front-facing, projecting gable and boxed eaves. Centered in the gable is a single-pane casement window with a simple ledge molding above and below the window. The roof is covered in composition shingles.

The asymmetrical front façade has two bays that are clad in horizontal wood siding. The first (left) bay contains an inset porch with two, 2-over-2 sash windows. Each window has a simple wood frame and surround, with a simple ledge molding above the window.

Two Doric porch supports are spaced symmetrically in the balustrade, located to the left of painted wooden steps that lead onto the porch. The balustrade consists of a simple wood railing and balusters. The porch frieze has a sawtooth pattern with seven downward facing, turned finials. A single, sawcut decorative bracket is at either end of the frieze.

The front entry door is on the main body of the house, between the first and second bay; it faces the left side of the property. The door has a wooden frame with a wrought iron security door. Above the entry door is a transom with a simple ledge molding on top.

The second (right) bay contains a two, 2-over-2 sash windows. Each window has a simple wood frame and surround, with a simple ledge molding above the window.

#### *RESTORATION HISTORY*

The current owners have rehabilitated the front porch and stairs of the house.

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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*The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by [Planner Name], Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.*

## APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

### Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation

(a) The HAHC, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the city council, in making a designation, shall consider one or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the type of designation:

S	NA	S - satisfies	D - does not satisfy	NA - not applicable
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**AND**



- (9) If less than 50 years old, or proposed historic district containing a majority of buildings, structures, or objects that are less than 50 years old, whether the building, structure, object, site, or area is of extraordinary importance to the city, state or nation for reasons not based on age (Sec. 33-224(b)).

## Sec. 33-229. Criteria for protected landmark designation

**S    NA** **S - satisfies** **D - does not satisfy** **NA - not applicable**

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- (1) Meets at least three of the criteria for designation in section 33-224 of this Code;
- (2) Was constructed more than 100 years before application for designation was received by the director;
- (3) Is listed individually or as a contributing structure in an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places; or
- (4) Is recognized by the State of Texas as a Recorded State Historical Landmark.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**HAHC RECOMMENDATION**



**EXHIBIT A**  
**CURRENT PHOTOS**  
THE ZISCHANG-ALVARADO HOUSE  
2011 JOHNSON STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77007



PHOTO BY PRESERVATION HOUSTON

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Houston Archaeological & Historical Commission  
Department

Planning and Development

## EXHIBIT B SITE MAP

THE ZISCHANG-ALVARADO HOUSE  
2011 JOHNSON STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77007





EXHIBIT C  
SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAP  
HOUSTON 1924-FEB. 1951 VOL. 2, 1924-DEC. 1950, SHEET 235  
THE ZISCHANG-ALVARADO HOUSE  
2011 JOHNSON STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77007

