



December 11, 2018

Mayor Mike Rawlings and
Dallas City Council
City of Dallas
1500 Marilla Street
Dallas, TX 75201
VIA CITY SECRETARY'S OFFICE: citysecretary@dallascityhall.com

RE: Fair Housing, Civil Rights and Protection of Historic Black Neighborhoods Require Immediate Amendment of Dallas City Ordinance 51A-4.501(i)

Dear Mayor Rawlings and Dallas City Council:

When the City of Dallas passed its ordinance and chose "residential structures with no more than 3,000 square feet of floor area" as the homes for which certificates for demolition could be sought by the City through its City Attorney Office, it placed a value judgment on what should and should not fall within reach of the City despite historic designation. Not unlike the redlining of the early twentieth century, the City simultaneously created a policy that disparately impacts homes in historic Black neighborhoods and homes that have primarily been owned by residents of color.

Homes in the Historic Tenth Street District were built by formerly enslaved Africans and their decedents. Their means were few. They did not tend to build large homes of the 3,000+ square foot nature. Where homes were built of that size in Dallas is where one will find historic white neighborhoods where homes were built for whites. In historic Black neighborhoods such as the freedman town area of the Tenth Street Historic District, homes tend to be significantly smaller. To the extent the City's 51A-4.501(i) ordinance was crafted to eliminate urban nuisances, nothing about the 3,000+ square foot size makes the larger homes less of a nuisance. In fact, it could be surmised that because of their size larger homes have the potential to be more of a nuisance. (One example is the home in the 4800 block of Worth Street at Fitzhugh Avenue, which has stood in its deteriorated state for an extended period of time despite looking as if the collapse of the porch roof could easily fall.) Historic homes that could be renovated and preserved are being demolished at an unreasonably rapid pace in the Tenth Street District by the hand of the City. This is occurring the same time as construction of the nearby City-supported Southern Gateway Deck Park takes place.

While elected officials and leaders frequently lament about the discrimination and residential segregation in Dallas that they have inherited, they too often do not take affirmative steps to right these wrongs and further fair housing. The City is now presented with such an opportunity. In keeping with the City's duty to affirmatively further fair housing and the purpose and spirit of Historic Overlay District ordinance, the City should immediately amend 51A-4.501(i) by replacing "3,000 square feet" with "500 square feet", a threshold that would help protect historic homes built by and for African Americans as much as those historically built by and for Whites.

We look forward to this change in policy. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Demetria L. McCain
President
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CC: Mr. T.C. Broadnax, City Manager, City of Dallas
Jennifer Rangel, Director of Planning & Community Outreach, ICP