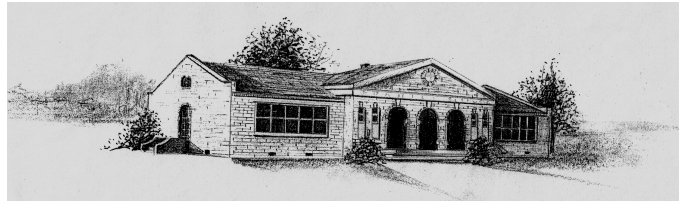


Phoenix Historic Neighborhoods Coalition



HISTORIC FRANKLIN SCHOOL

October 5, 2017

Phoenix Historic Commission
City of Phoenix Planning and Development Department
200 West Washington Street, 2nd Floor
Phoenix, AZ 85003-1611

Via Email

michelle.dodds@phoenix.gov

Re: HPCA 1700373: 1610 West Wilshire Drive- Del Norte Place Historic District

Dear Chairman Horn and Members of the Phoenix Historic Preservation Commission,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Phoenix Historic Neighborhoods Coalition. We are a coalition of people who live throughout the historic neighborhoods within the City of Phoenix. We come together because we value the history of Phoenix and we seek to share our love of our City's historic neighborhoods to preserve not only the buildings but to help stabilize and build strong communities.

Non-permitted work was performed on the house at 1610 West Wilshire Drive, a contributor in the Del Norte Place Historic District, that significantly altered the appearance of the home. The illegal work included stucco being placed over the original redwood siding, resizing of front window openings, and the non-conforming placement of a gate fence. We support the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) staff's recommendation that the pending "Certificate of Appropriateness" application be approved only upon the removal of all stucco from the home with the original redwood siding and brick repaired; and relocation of the gate and fence by the front door. We also believe the front windows should be restored to their original size.

What is particularly disturbing about the assault on this home's historic character, is that it occurred despite the requirements for a building permit and HPO approval before work was initiated, and once the illegal work was begun, the wrongful acts continued to completion even though the City posted two stop work orders at the property, and issued a Notice of Violation. The damage to the house was not the careless result of an accident, it was an intentional act, apparently, part of a business scheme by speculators to buy, fix and flip old homes that the investors have no interest in ever living in and without any regard to the context of the so-called fixing to the area or applicable laws.

The 1610 West Wilshire Drive house was built in 1941 by noted Phoenix architect Frederick W. Whittlesey. As a result of its own significance, the house may have qualified for individual historic designation even if it had not been part of the Del Norte Place Historic District, before the recent illegal mutilation by the owner. As the property sits today, it has no historic integrity, cannot be individually listed, and it is no longer a contributor for the historic neighborhood listing. This is a real and tangible loss to the City of our history, and it should not have occurred.

Structures that do not have special individual significance are only able to be designated and listed on an historic register if they are in an historic neighborhood and are contributing. Once the home is rendered non-contributing, that means that the house itself has been altered so much that it does not have the necessary historic integrity for protection under local and federal laws. 1610 West Wilshire Drive, which was a contributing home of the Del Norte Historic District, has been so drastically mutilated as to render it non-contributing. This is a disaster not only for the house itself, but for the entire neighborhood of 151 homes. The Del Norte Historic District will be subject to removal from historic listing once the percentage of non-contributing homes within its boundaries reaches less than 51%. When this happens to enough homes, then it is the end of the historic neighborhood. There are likely few other homes in the neighborhood that are capable of achieving an individual listing if they are not part of the fabric of a historic neighborhood. What this means is that the mutilation of the historic integrity of 1610 West Wilshire Drive is actually an assault on the investment of the City, the investment of other homeowners, and on the historic integrity of all of the other homes.

At a time when it seems Phoenix's historic buildings are being demolished at a rapid rate to make way for new development, we believe it is more important than ever to enforce existing ordinances and guidelines to protect our remaining historic resources. Each contributor to an historic neighborhood is not only an important reflection of the past, but also an integral component of our ability to preserve and maintain the viability of our historic districts well into the future. For this reason, we urge the Historic Preservation Commission to require the homeowner make the repairs necessary to return the home to contributing status.

We also request that this matter be referred to the City of Phoenix prosecutor's office for criminal charges.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Phoenix Historic Neighborhoods Coalition

/s/ G.G. George
President