

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

DATES: November 14, 2022

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 8

GENERAL INFORMATION

REQUEST	Recommendation for Designation as a Historic and Cultural Landmark
APPLICANT/AGENT	Alyssa Banta Revocable Trust
LOCATION	4445 Rolling Hills Drive
ZONING/ USE (S)	A-10
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION	Individual

REQUEST

The owner requests a recommendation to City Council to consider designating the property at 4445 Rolling Hills Dr. as a Historic and Cultural Landmark (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.
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.
6. Possesses significant archeological value, which has produced or is likely to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest.

EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in 1952, the structure at 4445 Rolling Hills Drive is significant for its association with

the development of southeast Fort Worth after World War II (Criterion 1); for its association with the Ellis family of Fort Worth, a prominent land development family over several generations (Criterion 4); and for its potential archaeological value that is likely to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest in relation to the Caddo Native American tribe (Criterion 6).

In regards to Criterion 1, the property at 4445 Rolling Hills Drive is significant for its association with development in southeast Fort Worth after World War II. In 1947, J. Merida Ellis and his father platted three hundred acres south of downtown and began developing the Rolling Hills Addition. In about 1952, they built 4445 Rolling Hills Avenue on the +/-13.7 acres that is block 9. This property is a rare intact remnant of Blackland Prairie in southeast Fort Worth, retaining much of the original prairie landscape features around the house that extant in 1952. Less than 1% of the original Texas Blackland Prairie ecosystem remains today in North Texas, and 4445 Rolling Hills is a rare remnant of that prairie within Fort Worth.

In regards to Criterion 4, the property at 4445 Rolling Hills Drive is significant for its association with the Ellis family of Fort Worth, a prominent land development family over several generations. J. Merida Ellis — son of real estate developer and land owner James M. Ellis, and grandson of businessman, developer and pioneer of Fort Worth, James F. Ellis — was the third generation in the family business, James M Ellis & Son, which by the 1950s was known as “Fort Worth’s Oldest Firm”. The property is also associated with Dr. Edward Guinn and his wife Addie, who purchased the property in 1968. Dr. Guinn had an early segregated physician’s practice for Black patients in the then segregated St. Joseph’s Hospital. Dr. Guinn later became a Fort Worth City Councilman.

In regards to Criterion 6, the property at 4445 Rolling Hills Drive is significant because it is likely to produce archaeological data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest. The property is located near and may contain the site of a former Caddo Native American tribe guidepost of rocks. This property and the surrounding land were important to the Caddo tribe due to its high elevation, bald prairie land with significant views of surrounding territory, and proximity to Sycamore Creek. This property is likely to produce archaeological data related to the Caddo Native American tribe, helping to further establish the tribe’s history in Fort Worth.

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 structure is still in its original **location** from when it was constructed in 1952.
2. The **design** of the structure is still intact and identifiable.

3. The property's original **setting** is still extant, as the original Blackland Prairie still surrounds the house on most of the 13+ acres with significant views of the surround landscape.
4. The property's original **materials** appear generally intact. The original masonry walls, siding, and iconic chimneys are still extant and in good condition. Most of the original windows are still extant. It appears that an original two-car garage has been enclosed at some point in the building's history. This condition is considered reversible. However, the exterior brick has been painted, which adversely affects the overall integrity of the structure.
5. The property still displays the physical evidence of **workmanship** from the 1950s, such as the original 6/6 and 8/8 wood windows and decorative masonry construction, particularly on the chimneys.
6. The property still retains its **feeling** as a unique Tudor-Revival residence constructed after World War II, as evidenced by the attached two-car garage.
7. The property still retains its **association** with the original Blackland Prairie setting in which was constructed. The property no longer retains its association with the Ellis family, as they sold the property in 1968. The property no longer retains its association with the Guinn family, as they recently sold the property.

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 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 6: Possesses significant archeological value, which has produced or is likely to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest.

Integrity

Based on the evidence still extant at the property, the property at 4445 Rolling Hills Drive sufficiently retains six aspects of integrity (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling).

Summary

Staff have found evidence that the property meets 3 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 property at 4445 Rolling Hills Drive as a Historic & Cultural Landmark (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

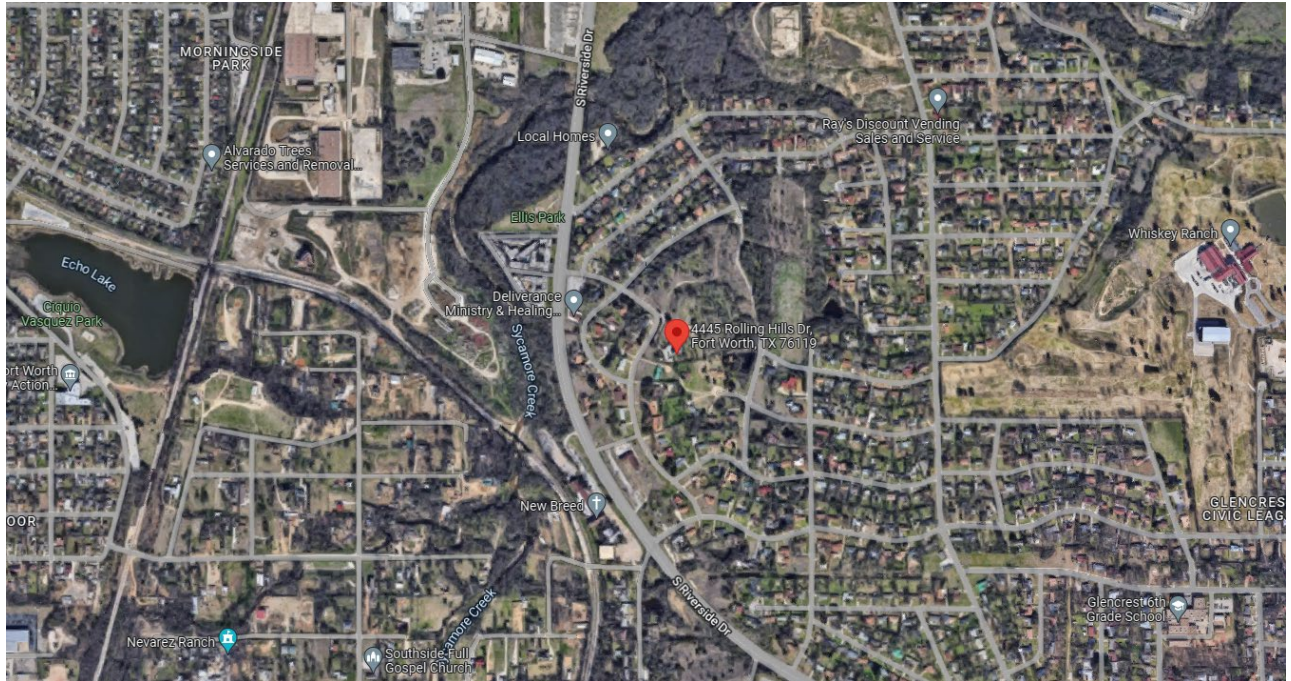


Fig. 1 – Location of 4445 Rolling Hills Drive in southeast Fort Worth.



Fig. 2 – Showing the size of the parcel and untouched Blackland Prairie surrounding the primary residence.

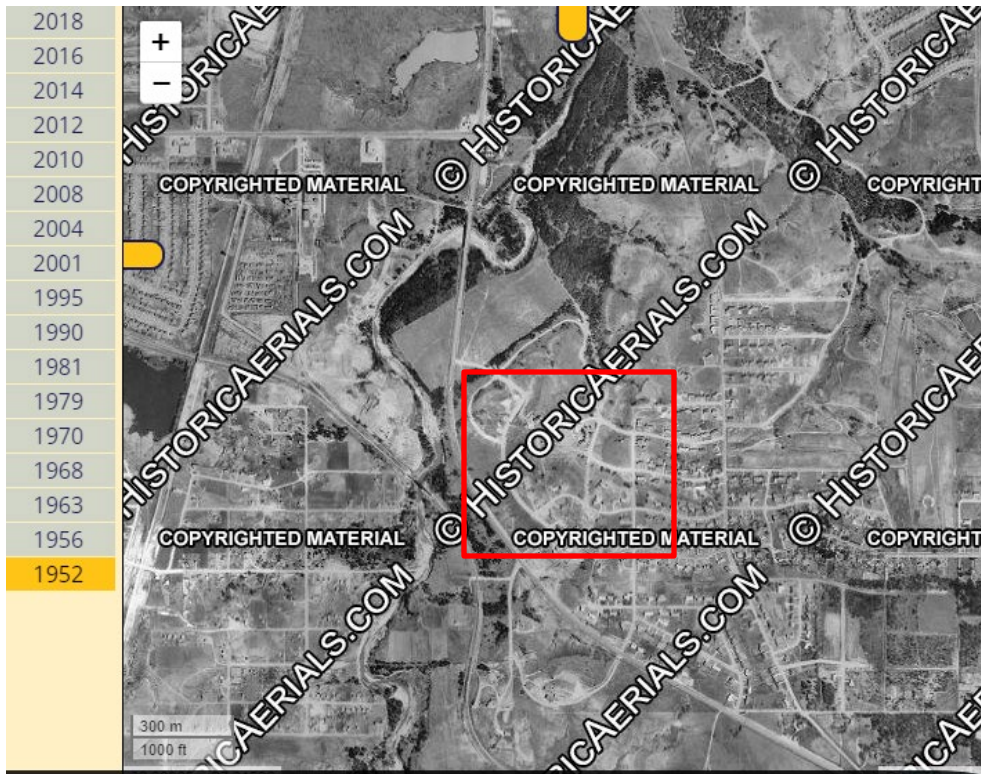


Fig. 3 – Showing location of subject property in 1952. Note that most of the surrounding 300 acres adjacent to 4445 Rolling Hills Drive were being developed for the first time by the Ellis family, one of Fort Worth’s oldest real estate development firms.



Fig. 4 – Showing primary structure. Note enclosed two-car garage on the right, Tudor-Revival style decorative brick chimneys and painted masonry.



Fig. 6 – Showing east elevation. Note remaining 8/8 wood windows.



Fig. 7 – Showing the west elevat



Fig. 8 – Showing the rear elevation and enclosed sunroom.



Fig. 9 – Showing surround Blackland Prairie and views of downtown Fort Worth. The high elevation and views of surrounding territory were important for the Caddo Native American tribe.



Fig. 10 – Showing Blackland Prairie and views to the east.

1952-1953 vintage located south of Park Row and east of Collins in Arlington. Individual homeowners will be contacted concerning the plan which will allow complete remodeling of homes for a cost of \$15 to \$25 a month added to their regular house payments, Schadt said.

THE REDEVELOPMENT,

Umbrell at 6825 rd Mrs. sale by Margie
McCul- some at ve from to in a nder of nd Dor- n Pain-
nes R. e home n Mr. oshy in ktern of Prince
via D. e home L. Stew- rt Real
ies M. e home s. Mae y Nell
ies W. it the s. Drive ohn A. arjorie & Co.

REALTY SALES

McDonald & Co. has announced sales of homes by Margaret Needham to Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Dennis of 446 N. Mason, Mr. and Mrs. Jerry H. Phillips of 3124 Sydney, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Anderson of 1505 Withers and Mr. and Mrs. Charles D. Cahill of 4121 Ave. H.
Lt. Col. and Mrs. Robert D. Peterson have bought the home at 1817 Dakar Road East from Mrs. Margaret McDonald Wood in a sale by Marie Sheridan and Etha Miller of Yager & Co.
Mr. and Mrs. Ben Pickard have bought the home at 6909 Corona in North Richland Hills from Mr. and Mrs. B. J. Caldwell in a sale by Gladys Lyles and Helen Johnson Real Estate.
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin L. Corman have bought the home at 2019 Queen St. in a sale by Gola Key of Helen Perkins Real Estate.
Mr. and Mrs. James A. Broussard have bought the home at 2111 Weatherbee from Mr. and Mrs. D. Ray Muse in a sale by Gola Key of Helen Perkins Real Estate.

been renovated at 1666 Connally Terrace is open to the public daily from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., said Schadt.
Homes renovated under the blue flame homes by Lone Star Gas Co.
Other Arlington homeowners can have their homes redeveloped under the plan, Schadt said.

Mr. and Mrs. Dan L. Davis have bought the cottage at 5304 Westcrest from Don L. Davis in a sale by Rose and Lettye Slime of McDonald & Co.
Mr. and Mrs. Floyd E. Sunrow have bought the home at 3908 Glenwood from Mr.

Mr. and Mrs. Marvin R. Herring have bought the home at 4906 Richards Terrace from Mr. and Mrs. D. B. Crenshaw in a sale by Othella Hall of McDonald & Co.
Mr. and Mrs. Verdon Farris have bought the home at 3833 Corto from Nuel E. Lewallen in a sale by Marjorie Nunnallee of McDonald & Co.

erty.
In 1885 Ellis built the Ellis Hotel in downtown Fort Worth which was considered the epitome of luxury because it had an elevator to carry guests all the way to the top of the four-story building.
"The hotel burned down in 1891," said J. Merida Ellis, "in one of the city's most spectacular fires."
The hotel owner's son, James M. Ellis, became a developer when he took the reins of the business.
He was instrumental in developing Mount Olivet Cemetery, the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital and other large projects.
"HE ALSO HANDLED the land transactions when the city decided to widen West Seventh from Burnett Park to University Drive and did the same when Berry was widened," said Ellis.
J. Merida Ellis and his father developed Rolling Hills, Sunshine Hills and West Morningside additions.
But Ellis now deals primarily in land development for commercial and industrial sites.

Ellis Concern Pioneer Firm

The first Ellis involved in local real estate used to hurry to town occasionally to do a little business.
Business wasn't that good in those days because there was only a handful of people in Fort Worth, but the reason he sometimes hurried was because a band of bellicose Comanche Indians had definite ideas about his hair.
But he kept his hair and founded a land company that is now the oldest continuing business in Fort Worth.
J. MERIDA ELLIS, James F. Ellis' grandson, still runs the family business at 3101 S. Riverstone Drive.
His father, James M. Ellis, also spent his life in the real estate operation founded by the first Ellis.
"My grandfather's family left Missouri and started to Texas in about 1835 but both his mother and father died en route. He came ahead with the wagon train and arrived here while Fort Worth was still a military outpost," said Ellis.
Young Ellis set himself up in business selling pies and butter milk to soldiers and to

people in passing wagon trains — before he was 10 years old.
"Occasionally someone from a wagon train would give him a calf that they couldn't take along on the trip or a pig," said Ellis.
The youngster began acquiring land and may have been the city's first-realtor.
AT ONE TIME HE owned a farm that stretched from the old Mansfield Highway to TCU. The Seminary South shopping center is located on what used to be Ellis' prop-



CARRYING ON TRADITION — J. Merida Ellis now operates the business his grandfather founded in 1859. His father spent his life running the business.

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Fig. 11 – August 1967 *Star-Telegram* article on the history of the Ellis family in Fort Worth, who were one of the first pioneer families to settle in Fort Worth when it was a military outpost in the 1840s.

FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

HOMES * BUILDING

On Hills Near Sycamore Creek

\$10,000,000 of New Homes to Occupy Caddo Indians' Old Stomping Ground

BY E. D. ALEXANDER.

An old stomping ground for Caddo Indians, barren for more than 100 years, now is teeming with new homes as a part of a \$10,000,000 home construction program on the Southeast Side.

Years before the white men came, the Caddos built a guide mound of rocks on the highest peak of the bald hills overlooking Sycamore Creek. The mound was used as a look-out tower and landmark to guide the Indians on their journeys.

Site of the old mound, torn down several years ago, is now the backyard of the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence P. Hoover, 2300 Timberline Dr. Other homes are springing up all around, and the new residents will look out over the city at a height equal to a 10-story building downtown.

INTO COUNTRY CLUB.

Most of the Indian mound rocks were salvaged years ago to build the Glen Garden Country Club. Some of the smaller ones are still kicking around the Hoover back-

74 dwelling units will be completed by July in Wesleyan Hills. The program there calls for 247 homes, priced to sell in the range from \$6,500 to \$7,250.

Newton - Carb Construction Company has plans for 320 homes and a shopping center in Glen Park, two blocks east of the 5100 block of Wichita. A total of 180 homes are completed now and 30 others are under construction. The shopping center will be at Kellis and Foard. The builders are J. R. Newton and M. R. Carb Jr.

FAMILIES MOVE IN.

The first 10 families moved into their new homes last week in Southport, lying west of Mitchell. A total of 260 homes are planned there by Taylor-Todd Corporation and 150 of them are now under construction on an assembly line basis. Two will be completed every day. Paving of streets in the addition will be started in May.

Ted Peters, developer of Sunrise Park, between Riverside Dr. and Sycamore Creek, reported plans for 110 homes. Twenty of them are now under construction, including 10 that are nearing completion. The homes are priced from \$6,150 to \$8,300. Each unit is rated at four and a half rooms.

Fifteen homes have been built in Rolling Hills and 15 more will be started in 60 days. The adjoining Glencrest West is almost completely developed now. Near by is the O. D. Wyatt court.

Fox and Jacobs Construction Company has begun work on 62 duplexes in the 2600 block of Mitchell.

Fifty-three homes are being built in Trudale Addition, two blocks east of Wichita.

Many individuals and smaller developers are building on the southeast side as a part of the overall program estimated to cost more than \$10,000,000.

Fig. 12 - An April 1950 *Star-Telegram* article noting the development of the hills surrounding Sycamore Creek and its importance to the Caddo Native American tribe.