

When 'no' means 'buy me'

By **LISA GRAY** Copyright 2010 Houston Chronicle
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COURTESY PHOTO

This restored Craftsman bungalow at 4630 Walker is part of the Eastwood Historic Home Tour Saturday and Oct. 17.

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Bill Baldwin, along with two other Heights-area Realtors, founded Responsible Historic Preservation for Houston, the group that's dotted the Heights with signs saying "YES to Preservation/NO to Protected Districts."

Preservation, they argue, ought to be a matter of personal choice. Even in historic districts, a landowner ought to be able to bulldoze a pesky Victorian or bothersome bungalow.

Why the fuss? Because the city council is considering a change to Houston's preservation laws. Right now, in historic districts such as Houston Heights East, when the city's historic commission denies permission to tear down a historically significant building, that doesn't mean "no." It means "wait 90 days." Then: Bring on the bulldozers!

The change would give the historic commission teeth: No would mean no.

The Responsible Historic Preservation crew argues that putting that kind of restrictions on historic neighborhoods would hurt property values by scaring away potential buyers.

But apparently, in his professional life as a real-estate agent, Baldwin doesn't think that's always true.

Among his listings on har.com is 525 Frasier, a 2BR/1BA whose \$279,900 price tag derives chiefly from its excellent Heights-area neighborhood.

Or as Baldwin describes it in the listing: "Very, very cute bungalow on an oversized lot in the Historic Freeland District — soon to be a Protected Historic District - where 'No means No' with regards to demolitions and inappropriate new construction or renovations. ... A great place to live!"

Home tours

Fans of historic neighborhoods will want to check out a couple of home tours soon. Courtlandt Place is only one block in Montrose, but it contains some of the city's most spectacular, best-preserved houses, most of them built between 1910 and 1926 for some of Houston's most powerful families. The street is normally closed to the public, but the tour, Saturday and Oct. 17, will get you into seven houses plus two gardens. For tickets, see brownpapertickets.com/event/100369.

Eastwood is of a similar vintage but has a far funkier vibe. William A. Wilson, the developer responsible for the Woodland Heights, launched the similar-looking Eastwood in 1913. The Arts & Crafts neighborhood is unfashionably east of downtown, and has attracted the sort of artsy crowd that signals an early stage of gentrification. The tour includes five restored houses, one work-in-progress, a brand-new foursquare that looks 100 years old, and a cutting-edge 2003 house that appeared in *Dwell* - as well as the 1916 Dora Lantrip Elementary School and the 1920 Church of the Redeemer. For information, see eastwoodcivicasociation.org.

lisa.gray@chron.com