

TO: Mayor via City Secretary **REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION**

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SUBJECT: Approval of a resolution designating River Oaks Community Shopping Center and River Oaks Theatre, and Alabama Community Shopping Center and Alabama Theatre as 2 Historic Landmarks (See attachment - page 2 of 2)	Category #	Page 1 of 2	Agenda Item # 75/13
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FROM (Department or other point of origin): Planning and Development	Origination Date 7/27/2007	Agenda Date AUG 0 1 2007
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DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE: <i>Thomas McWhorter</i>	Council District affected: D & C	Agenda Date AUG 0 8 2007
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For additional information contact: Thomas McWhorter Phone: 713-837-7963	Date and identification of prior authorizing Council action: N/A
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RECOMMENDATION: (Summary)
Approval of a resolution designating River Oaks Community Shopping Center and River Oaks Theatre, and Alabama Community Shopping Center and Alabama Theatre as 2 Historic Landmarks - (See attachment - page 2 of 2)

Amount and Source of Funding: NA	F & A Budget:
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SPECIFIC EXPLANATION:
In accordance with Section 33-222 of the City of Houston Code of Ordinances, the property owner or the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC) may initiate an historic landmark designation application. The HAHC rather than the property owner initiated landmark designation applications of River Oaks Community Shopping Center (1952-2048 W. Gray) and River Oaks Theatre (2009 W. Gray), and Alabama Community Shopping Center (2900-2946 S. Shepherd) and Alabama Theatre (2922 S. Shepherd) on April 25, 2007. When the HAHC voted to initiate the applications for designation of these properties, they became subject to provisions of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. On May 9, 2007 the owner applied for a certificate of appropriateness (COA) to demolish the northwest corner of the River Oaks Community Shopping Center at W. Gray and S. Shepherd (2040-2048 W. Gray) which the HAHC considered and denied on May 23, 2007.

Public Hearings were held by the HAHC and the Houston Planning Commission on June 13, 2007 and June 21, 2007 respectively. Both commissions determined that the applications satisfied applicable criteria of the ordinance and unanimously recommended approval of the two historic landmark designations. On July 20, 2007 the owner provided Planning staff with new information regarding the demolition of a historic building, which was part of the original Landmark designation application for the River Oaks Community Shopping Center. The historic building was demolished in 1979, and instead of being renovated as originally stated in the application, it was replaced with two new buildings, which are immediately adjacent to one another. The Landmark application has been revised to exclude the first building (2002 W. Gray - La Griglia), which was originally built in 1982-83 and then rebuilt in 1991. The second building, also built in 1982-83, includes the following addresses: (2008 W. Gray; 2012 W. Gray; 2020 W. Gray; (2022 W. Gray); and (2028 W. Gray).

The applicant may not proceed with demolition until the 90 day waiver period expires, which is August 7, 2007. On August 8, the owner may apply for a permit for demolition.

There were no objections to the designation applications.

MLG: tm

Attachments: Revised Staff Reports

xc Marty Stein, Agenda Director; Anna Russell, City Secretary; Arturo G. Michel, City Attorney; Deborah McAbee, Land Use Division, Legal Dept; Harold L. Hurtt, Chief, Police Depart; Phil Boriskie, Chief, Fire Department

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATION

F & A Director:	Other Authorization:	Other Authorization:
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Date	Subject: Approval of a resolution designating 2 historic Landmarks	Originator's Initials	Page 2 of 2
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LANDMARKS NAME /ADDRESS:	INITIATED BY:	COUNCIL DISTRICT:	HAHC HEARING:	PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING:
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1. River Oaks Community Shopping Center - the north side of W. Gray including 1952-1998 and 2030-2048 W. Gray and the south side of W. Gray including 1953-2047 W. Gray and the River Oaks Theatre at 2009 W. Gray	HAHC	D	6-13-2007	6-21-2007
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2. Alabama Community Shopping Center and Alabama Theatre including 2900-2946 S. Shepherd Drive, including the Alabama Theatre at 2922 S. Shepherd Drive, being the entire west side of the 2900 block of S. Shepherd Drive between Kipling and W. Alabama	HAHC	C	6-13-2007	6-21-2007
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Photos of the proposed landmarks can be found by going to the following link on the Planning Department's web site:
http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/historic_pres/pending.htm.

REVISED 7-26-07

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT**LANDMARK NAME:** River Oaks Community Shopping Center and River Oaks Theatre**AGENDA ITEM:** II.b**OWNER:** Weingarten Realty**HPO FILE NO.:** 07L183**APPLICANT:** Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission**DATE ACCEPTED:** 05-23-07**LOCATION:** 1952-2048 W. Gray, including the River Oaks Theatre at 2009 W. Gray, being both the north and south sides of W. Gray between Driscoll Street and S. Shepherd Drive, excluding the following addresses: 2050 W. Gray; 2049 W. Gray; 2028 W. Gray; 2022 W. Gray; 2020 W. Gray; 2012 W. Gray; 2008 W. Gray; and 2002 W. Gray.**HAHC HEARING:** 06-13-07**PC HEARING:** 06-21-07**30-DAY HEARING NOTICE:** 05-09-07**SITE INFORMATION**

Tracts 1, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13A, Abstract 696, O. Smith Survey, Houston, Harris County, Texas. The buildings on the site include a movie theatre and several one and two-story, stucco-clad commercial buildings.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:**

The River Oaks Community Shopping Center, one of Houston's most innovative and well-recognized early retail complexes, was determined by the Texas Historical Commission on September 5, 2006 as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. On April 25, 2007 the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC) instructed the Planning Official to prepare a Landmark Designation application for the River Oaks Community Shopping Center and River Oaks Theatre to be considered at the HAHC public hearing on June 13, 2007.

Richard Longstreth, the foremost historian of 20th century American retail architecture, considers the River Oaks Community Shopping Center to be "one of the outstanding examples of shopping center design of the 1930s in a national context." Stephen Fox, Rice University professor and architectural historian, contends that the Center has significance for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the national level, and would be a good candidate for designation as a National Historic Landmark. Furthermore, Fox says it ranks with the downtown Foley's store and The Galleria as one of the three most architectural-historically significant works of 20th century retail architecture in Houston.

The River Oaks Community Shopping Center was constructed between 1936 and 1937 by the River Oaks Corporation from a design by Stayton Nunn-Milton G. McGinty, architects, with Oliver C. Winston as consulting architect. The construction of the River Oaks Community Shopping Center was an important part of the implementation of the overall River Oaks master plan. It provided convenience and commerce for not only the River Oaks neighborhood, but eventually for all Houstonians.

The original center at W. Gray and S. Shepherd consists of two, identical crescent-shaped, one-story masonry, stucco-clad commercial blocks, one on the north side and another on the south side of W. Gray. Each of the two commercial blocks terminates into a two-story, commercial block on the eastern edges, again, one located on the north side and another located on the side south side of W. Gray. This

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symmetrical placement of these two crescent shaped buildings is what one first sees when leaving the upscale, River Oaks neighborhood on W. Gray, or turning onto W. Gray from S. Shepherd. The center was designed to allow drivers to see all storefronts in either half of the center. The exceptional design and quality of the development was the subject of an extensive article in *Architectural Record* in June 1940. Another innovative approach for the center was the introduction by the architects of a backlit, cavetto canopy to Houston. Another first for Houston was that all buildings were unified by restrictions on signs, displays, and lighting.

The buildings are not only significant examples of modern, Art Deco architecture, but are also closely linked to the importance and prominence of the River Oaks Corporation and its innovative development, River Oaks. Moreover, the Center is significant as Houston's first auto-centered, suburban shopping center, and one of the first such developments in the country. The original two buildings were eventually incorporated into a larger complex covering approximately eight blocks, which expanded the shopping complex eastward toward downtown Houston.

The River Oaks Theatre was built and operated by Interstate Theatre Corporation, which owned a number of theaters in the South. Interstate Theatres hired the Dallas-based architectural firm of H. F. Pettigrew and Worley to design the theater, which was designed in the Modernistic style so prevalent in America at the time and in harmony with the balance of the River Oaks Community Shopping Center. The theater building is notable for its sleek modern exterior with bold horizontal lines of alternating black and white bands of enameled steel, a motif which is repeated throughout the complex. A boomerang shaped marquee is affixed horizontally below the black and white banding and is capped by neon letters which spell "River Oaks." The theater remains unique even today as the only historic Houston movie theater still used for its original purpose.

REVISION: The center has undergone several sympathetic remodelings in the past that reversed prior unsympathetic alterations. Since the time of the public hearings before the HAHC and the Planning Commission, Weingarten Realty has provided Planning staff with new information regarding the demolition of a historic building that was part of the original Landmark designation application. They advised that the building was demolished in 1979, and instead of being renovated as originally stated, it was replaced with two new buildings, which are immediately adjacent to one another. These buildings, which are not historic, have been excluded from the revised Landmark designation application. They are located on the north side of W. Gray, being described as Tract 2, Tract 16, and Tract 17. The first building is 2002 W. Gray (La Griglia), which was originally built in 1982-83 and then rebuilt in 1991. The second building, built in 1982-83, includes the following addresses: 2008 W. Gray (Chico's); 2012 W. Gray (Gymboree); 2020 W. Gray (Bath Junkie); 2022 W. Gray (Paula Fridkin); and 2028 W. Gray (Talbot's).

Also excluded originally from the Landmark designation application were the following new buildings: Starbuck's Coffee at 2050 W. Gray (located at the southwest corner of Tract 1), Bank One at 2049 W. Gray (located at the northwest corner of Tracts 11, 12, and 12A), and the Kroger Shopping Center further east. All of the modern, auxiliary buildings, not included in the Landmark designation application, were constructed to harmonize in scale, context and appearance with the historic River Oaks Community Shopping Center. More importantly, the historic Center was not altered in any way during those recent projects. In fact, Weingarten's past actions have done nothing but acknowledge the center's original architectural elements as significant, and by respecting the Center's architectural and historical importance, have strived to create a real "sense of place" for the entire shopping area. This special character is rarely found elsewhere in Houston, and is one that should be respected and preserved.

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The River Oaks Community Shopping Center and River Oaks Theatre, which have been determined as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, qualify for City of Houston Landmark Designation under Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The River Oaks Community Shopping Center located at 1952 to 2050 W. Gray and the River Oaks Theatre at 2009 W. Gray comprise one of Houston's most innovative and well recognized early retail complexes. Designed to provide convenient shopping for the new subdivision of River Oaks, this 'community center' is a fine example of suburban commercial architecture with the attributes of small scale, accessibility by automobile, and dramatic modern architecture.

The original shopping center was constructed by the River Oaks Corporation, which was financed by Will C. Hogg and Mike Hogg, with Hugh Potter acting as its President. The River Oaks Corporation had begun to develop the River Oaks subdivision in 1923. The neighborhood's first building was the summer home for William L. Clayton at 3376 Inwood Drive (City of Houston Landmark), which backed up against the extensive River Oaks Country Club and Golf Course. Clayton, a well respected businessman and civic leader in Houston and in the nation's capitol, set the trend for the high caliber of future residents who would be drawn to the subdivision.

The creation of this type of subdivision was unique for Houston in many respects. The subdivision was laid out at what was then the far western edge of Houston. Prior to 1923, the majority of Houston's residential developments had occurred in a tight girdle around the downtown business district. As the sheer size of Houston increased, the demand for more neighborhoods grew along with it. Beginning in the early 20th century, the development followed a generally westerly and southwesterly expansion. The newer, more fashionable neighborhoods, such as Westmoreland (1902), Avondale (1907), Montrose (1911), Audubon Place (1906), Cherryhurst (1908), Binz, Southmore (1914), and Courtland Place (1906), developed along the Main Street corridor and to the southwest of downtown. River Oaks, however, was situated at the western city limits far away from other developments.

In addition, the developers broke with convention by laying out an organic pattern of roadways which lent a sense of spaciousness to the neighborhood, which was very different from the traditional Houston neighborhoods that followed a more rigid approach to development. These traditional neighborhoods used street grids which carved the land up into predictable square or rectangular blocks. According to the Texas State History Association's Handbook of Texas:

"River Oaks is by Buffalo Bayou and Memorial Park in west central Houston. The residential garden suburb, which comprises 1,100 acres, was developed in the 1920s by Michael Hogg and attorney Hugh Potter, who in 1923 obtained an option to purchase 200 acres surrounding the River Oaks Country Club. In 1924 Hogg organized Country Club Estates to promote the development. The two developers retained Kansas City landscape architects Hare and Hare to provide a master plan that would protect the environmental integrity and natural beauty of the area. They also hired J. C. Nichols, who built one of the first major shopping centers in the United States, to serve as a design consultant. The master plan included homesites, a fifteen-acre campus for River Oaks Elementary School, two shopping centers, and esplanades planted with flowers. It called for underground utility lines, eliminated alleys, allowed only three intersecting streets, provided rigid building codes, and eventually banned all commercial traffic. Deed restrictions and centralized community control assured exclusivity; approval of house designs by a panel of architects and citizens and a purchase price of at least \$7,000 were required. A "gentleman's agreement" excluded

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blacks, Jews, and other minorities. The first home in the area, built by Will and Sue Clayton, is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Among the other notable houses is Ima Hogg's family home Bayou Bend [City of Houston Landmark], designed by John F. Staub and Birdsall P. Briscoe. In the late 1920s the development lost money, but by the late 1930s developers had invested \$3 million in the project, and the community had begun to influence development patterns downtown. In the 1990s River Oaks was at the geographic center of Houston. The community operated independently for three years, after which it was annexed by the city of Houston.”

The creation and implementation of the River Oaks plan went far beyond the layout of the neighborhood itself. The developers also needed to devise a clever way of drawing prospective buyers away from the more traditional neighborhoods located closer to the downtown business district. This was achieved in two ways. The first was to insure that proper roads connected River Oaks with downtown Houston. The second was to bring the amenities to the residents.

Beginning in 1925, work began in earnest on Buffalo Bayou Drive, which would later become Allen Parkway. Buffalo Bayou Drive was designed by the Kansas City architectural landscape firm of Hare and Hare. The thoroughfare, atypical for its time, was built to provide a reliable route by which River Oaks residents could get to their jobs in downtown Houston while simultaneously providing a pleasant driving experience. The street was designed to follow the meanders of nearby Buffalo Bayou and originated at the north entry to the River Oaks neighborhood. The entry was marked by grand entry gates designed by Houston architect John F. Staub in 1926.

The plan for the scenic drive began more than a decade before its implementation with the Arthur Comey plan for Houston in 1912. The Comey plan was a progressive and ambitious plan to guide the future of Houston's development, with quality of life issues as a major component. Parts of the Comey plan called for the creation of scenic drives, considerable park space, and linear parks along the city's bayous. Ultimately, only a small proportion of the components of Comey's plan came to fruition. Among these realized elements were the layout of South Main at Hermann Park with its prominent traffic circles, and Allen Parkway Drive with its adjacent linear park space situated between the drive and Buffalo Bayou.

Once the River Oaks Corporation solved the access dilemma, Will Potter and Mike Hogg also needed to find a way to furnish the new residents with the goods and services with which they had become accustomed. In 1935-36, the Corporation embarked on a building campaign on sites adjacent to River Oaks proper, where deed restrictions precluded the construction of commercial or multi-family dwellings. The construction of the River Oaks Community Shopping Center was an important part of the implementation of the overall River Oaks master plan.

The River Oaks Community Shopping Center was constructed at the head of West Gray Boulevard where it enters River Oaks and becomes Inwood Drive. The center was designed to not only provide convenient shopping opportunities to the residents, but also to frame the entry to the new subdivision. The plan of the shopping center consisted of two symmetrically arranged semi-circular wings on either side of West Gray at the westernmost edge of the center at its point of juncture with South Shepherd Drive and the entrance into the neighborhood. A service station located on each corner of the shopping center at Shepherd welcomed drivers to this automobile friendly development. A Texaco Service Station was located on the northeast corner, and a Gulf Service Station was located on the southeast corner. These buildings also conformed to the architectural style of the center.

The River Oaks Corporation hired Stayton Nunn, Milton McGinty, and Oliver Winston to design the center. Work began on the center in 1937, a decade after the initial development of the River Oaks

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neighborhood. According to the June 1940 *Architectural Record* magazine, the architects for the River Oaks Community Shopping Center had to follow several criteria for its design:

“Establishment of a community shopping center is feasible as soon as there is sufficient population in the surrounding trading area to support a representative group of merchants.... The center should be neighborly in character with the adjoining community, corner locations should be reserved for service stations, which were to be planned without sacrificing maximum visibility for the set-back stores: front parking space and direct delivery access in the rear, were to be provided with large additional parking spaces so disposed that patrons would not hesitate to use them; Form and construction of each shop space were to be adaptable for use either with or without air conditioning; Costs were kept as low as was compatible with reasonably good construction. Appearance of all buildings was to be unified, with restrictions on signs, displays, and lighting.”

The first phase of construction of the shopping center included both of the one-story crescent-shaped structures located on the north and south sides of West Gray at Shepherd Drive. The north section originally comprised 2.34 acres of land, and the southern section was 2.15 acres. Land to the east of the symmetrical wings, leading to McDuffie, was as yet re-platted at the time of the first phase.

Subsequent phases of redevelopment were added to the River Oaks Shopping Center in 1939 and again in 1948. The additions occurred on several smaller tracts, which were adjacent to the east side of the original crescent shaped structures, but which had previously been used for different uses unrelated to the River Oaks Community Shopping Center master plan, including an Humble Oil Service Station and a U-Tote-M store. Additions to the complex in 1948 finished out the River Oaks Community Shopping Center on both the north and south sides. Although the additions to the complex occurred in two distinct phases of construction, the overlying Art Deco theme is carried throughout all of them. Furthermore, the newer additions to the complex were constructed in 1948, and are therefore considered historic by the United States Department of the Interior.

One of the most character-defining elements of the River Oaks Community Shopping Center is the River Oaks Theatre located at 2009 West Gray. The River Oaks Theatre was constructed in 1938-1939 on the southeast side of the center. The building was actually a free standing building, not connected to the original crescent shaped wings facing South Shepherd Drive, when first constructed.

The River Oaks Theatre was built and operated by the Interstate Theatre Corporation, which owned and operated a number of theatres in the South. Interstate Theatres was formed in 1906 by several business partners, including Karl Hoblitzelle (1879-1967), who was an internationally acclaimed early cinematic director, producer, and Oscar winner. Interstate originally operated vaudeville theatres, which were in vogue during the period shortly after the turn of the 20th century until the early 1930s. Vaudeville entertainment was centered around the theatrical stage and provided a wide array of live “talent” acts, like dancers, musicians, and sideshow acts. Vaudeville acts had been extremely popular throughout most of the United States, but struggled in the southern states where popular opinion of vaudeville entertainment was not very favorable. Interstate Theatres worked diligently in the South to establish itself as a reputable and wholesome business, and eventually prevailed in its public relations endeavors and established its brand name as one to be reckoned with. At its height, Interstate owned more than 150 theatres in the South.

As vaudeville acts began to wane in popularity all across the U. S., Interstate Theatres was forced to adapt to the changing trends in entertainment. The company began to feature cinematic works alongside its vaudeville performances. This would eventually give way to full time screenings of cinematic works and the eventual abandonment of the vaudeville acts. Interstate Theatres sold most of its interest to the RKO

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Pictures in 1930. RKO, which has operated continuously since 1929, produced many of the blockbuster films of the 1930s and 1940s.

Interstate Theatres hired the Dallas-based architectural firm of Pettigrew and Worley to design the River Oaks Theatre. The theatre was designed in the Modernistic style so prevalent in America at the time and in harmony with the balance of the River Oaks Community Shopping Center. The building is notable for its sleek modern exterior with bold horizontal lines of alternating black and white bands of enameled steel, a motif which is repeated throughout the complex. A boomerang shaped marquee is affixed horizontally below the black and white banding and is capped by neon letters which spell River Oaks.

The theatre's sleek exterior belies the rich interiors found within the building. The opulent interiors of the River Oaks Theatre were executed in rich displays of high relief plaster scenes painted in a palette of rich tones. The theater was originally configured with one viewing screen, but was later converted to three screens. The theater lobby is separated from the main theater screen which is accessible from the ground floor by pairs of steel doors with round port hole windows. An interior stair with graceful curving banister of brushed aluminum begins near the entry to the theater lobby and extends to the second floor mezzanine level. The two mezzanine level movie screens were carved from the original main theater balcony, but which have not taken away from the grandeur of the main theater on the ground floor.

The River Oaks Theatre opened on November 28, 1939, within one month of the opening of the nearby Alabama Theatre. According to "Old Bayou City History Website: "Opening ceremonies featured Houston Mayor Oscar F. Holcombe; Hugh Potter, president of the River Oaks Association; H. F. Pettigrew, of Pettigrew and Worley; who designed the theatre; Buck Wynn, Jr., who designed the interior; and Paul Scott, theatre operator and manager." "When the theatre first opened, it seated about 1,000 patrons. The balcony stairway was lit with a continuous tube embedded in an aluminum hand rail. The interior and exterior lighting reflected advancements presented for the first time this year at the New York and San Francisco fairs." "Bas reliefs to the left and right of the stage are outstanding decorative features of the theatre. Said to be the largest castings of their kind in the South, the bas reliefs portray the land and the sea. The work of Mr. Wynn, they have caused considerable favorable comment from artists and sculptors."

The movie shown that night was "Batchelor Mother," starring David Niven. A flyer for the gala opening of the new River Oaks Theatre stated "*Safe! You can send your children to the new River Oaks with the comforting thought that the building is as safe as the most advanced architectural design, the most rigid engineering standards, the most careful precautions can make it. It's fireproof throughout, with extra added margins of safety in every detail of construction. EVERY SEAT A GOOD SEAT! The latest developments in theatre design have enabled us to provide every patron with a full undistorted view of our screen. Every seat in the house is a good seat – and luxuriously comfortable.*" There were businesses too which advertised in the flyers and newspapers of the day. One business, Monarch Cleaners on Shepherd Drive, "offered all-night service and allowed theatre patrons to drop off or pick up their clothes anytime after the show." The theater continues to operate as a theater and is the only historic Houston theater still used for its original purpose.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

The River Oaks Community Shopping Center and River Oaks Theatre represent several phases of construction. The earliest phase of construction encompassed the western end of the site at its intersection with West Gray and South Shepherd Drive. This section of the shopping center was constructed circa 1937. It is most recognizable for its symmetrical arrangement of semi-circular wings of one-story store fronts. The symmetrical arrangement is divided by West Gray Avenue, which is a major artery to and from the still fashionable, and now historic, River Oaks neighborhood, where Inwood Drive enters River Oaks.

Further west in the shopping center, located immediately east of the two semi-circular wings, are two-story buildings on both the north and south sides of West Gray. The building on the north side of the shopping center is oriented perpendicular to West Gray. This two-story building, which most recently housed a retail clothing store, is an integral part of the original 1937 portion of the complex. The buildings adjacent to the two-story building on the north side of West Gray are part of the 1948 addition to the center. A 1988 alteration to the 1948 additions, on both the north and south side of the streets, added a clock face at the roofline of the front façade.

Another of the center's architectural highlights is its use of integrated concave stucco-clad canopies throughout. The canopies make clever use of hidden indirect lighting which was a novelty to Houston when first introduced. These canopies are mostly obstructed by canvas awnings which were added to all of the storefronts during one of the subsequent remodelings.

The center has experienced several sympathetic remodeling periods in the past, including one in 1974 (Clovis Heimsath, architect) and another in 1978 (S. I. Morris Associates, architects), both of whom reversed unsympathetic alterations in their restorations.

REVISION: The center has undergone several sympathetic remodelings in the past that reversed prior unsympathetic alterations. Since the time of the public hearings before the HAHC and the Planning Commission, Weingarten Realty has provided Planning staff with new information regarding the demolition of a historic building that was part of the original Landmark designation application. They advised that the building was demolished in 1979, and instead of being renovated as originally stated, it was replaced with two new buildings, which are immediately adjacent to one another. These buildings, which are not historic, have been excluded from the revised Landmark designation application. They are located on the north side of W. Gray, being described as Tract 2, Tract 16, and Tract 17. The first building is 2002 W. Gray (La Griglia), which was originally built in 1982-83 and then rebuilt in 1991. The second building, built in 1982-83, includes the following addresses: 2008 W. Gray (Chico's); 2012 W. Gray (Gymboree); 2020 W. Gray (Bath Junkie); 2022 W. Gray (Paula Fridkin); and 2028 W. Gray (Talbot's).

Also excluded originally from the Landmark designation application were the following new buildings: Starbuck's Coffee at 2050 W. Gray (located at the southwest corner of Tract 1), Bank One at 2049 W. Gray (located at the northwest corner of Tracts 11, 12, and 12A), and the Kroger Shopping Center further east. All of the modern, auxiliary buildings, not included in the Landmark designation application, were constructed to harmonize in scale, context and appearance with the historic River Oaks Community Shopping Center. More importantly, the historic Center was not altered in any way during those recent projects. In fact, Weingarten's past actions have done nothing but acknowledge the center's original architectural elements as significant, and by respecting the Center's architectural and historical importance, have strived to create a real "sense of place" for the entire shopping area. This special character is rarely found elsewhere in Houston, and is one that should be respected and preserved.

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According to Richard Longstreth, the foremost historian of 20th century American retail architecture, the River Oaks Community Shopping Center is “one of the outstanding examples of shopping center design of the 1930s in a national context.” Stephen Fox, Rice University professor and architectural historian, contends that the center has significance for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the National level, and would be a good candidate for designation as a National Historic Landmark. Fox also concludes that the River Oaks Shopping Center ranks with Highland Park Village in the Dallas suburb of Highland Park as one of the two most architectural-historically significant shopping centers in Texas of the interwar era. It ranks with the downtown Foley's store and The Galleria as one of the three most architectural-historically significant works of 20th century retail architecture in Houston.

Richard Longstreth identifies the River Oaks Shopping Center as one of the outstanding examples of shopping center design of the 1930s in a national context. Longstreth writes in his book, "The Drive-In, the Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941":

"Through the combined efforts of an enlightened developer and a talented architect, the examples of the Washington [D.C.] centers and the drive-in market were fused in an arresting design that was at once heralded as a showpiece of its city.

"The River Oaks complex was also touted as a model nationally for nearly a decade. Even after the shopping center began to experience dramatic, fast-paced change after World War II, River Oaks was lauded as a pioneer in the field. [Hugh] Potter [developer of River Oaks and builder of the River Oaks Shopping Center] played a central role in fostering this legacy. In 1940, he joined J. C. Nichols and other colleagues in forming the urban Land Institute, a Washington-based organization devoted to improving the standards of new development.

He served as the group's third president (1943-1944) and in 1950 succeeded Nichols as chairman of its Community Builder's Council, which had become the principal proponent and source of information about shopping centers. In the late 1930s, when the [shopping center] type was still considered an unusual venture of perhaps limited application, and when the drive-in concept was likewise seen as experimental for most purposes other than automobile service, River Oaks offered convincing evidence that such ventures had a sound practical basis. No other example so successfully presented the shopping center concept, crafted in a vocabulary that exuded promise, as a solution that appeared not only realistic but inevitable."

The businesses along the north side of the shopping center between Shepherd and McDuffie have not had their leases renewed and this portion of the center is largely empty at this point. On May 23, 2007, the owner, Weingarten Realty, requested a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HAHC to demolish the historic, crescent-shaped building, including both the one- and two-story portions, located at the northwest corner of W. Gray and S. Shepherd, up to McDuffie Street. Their request was denied unanimously by the HAHC.

The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by Thomas McWhorter, Planning and Development Department, and Randy Pace, Historic Preservation Officer, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

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Longstreth, Richard, "The Drive-in, the Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941," MIT Press, 1999 (p. 159-161).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps, Houston.1924-1950.

Handbook of Texas , Texas State History Association.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

The HAHC and the Planning Commission, 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	NA - not applicable
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(1) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area possesses character, interest or value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity of the city, state, or nation (Sec. 33-224(a)(1);	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event (Sec. 33-224(a)(2);	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(3) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state, or nation (Sec. 33-224(a)(3);	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(4) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city (Sec. 33-224(a)(4);	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(5) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area are the best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood (Sec. 33-224(a)(5);	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation (Sec. 33-224(a)(6);	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present (Sec. 33-224(a)(7);	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride (Sec. 33-224(a)(8).	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(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).	

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

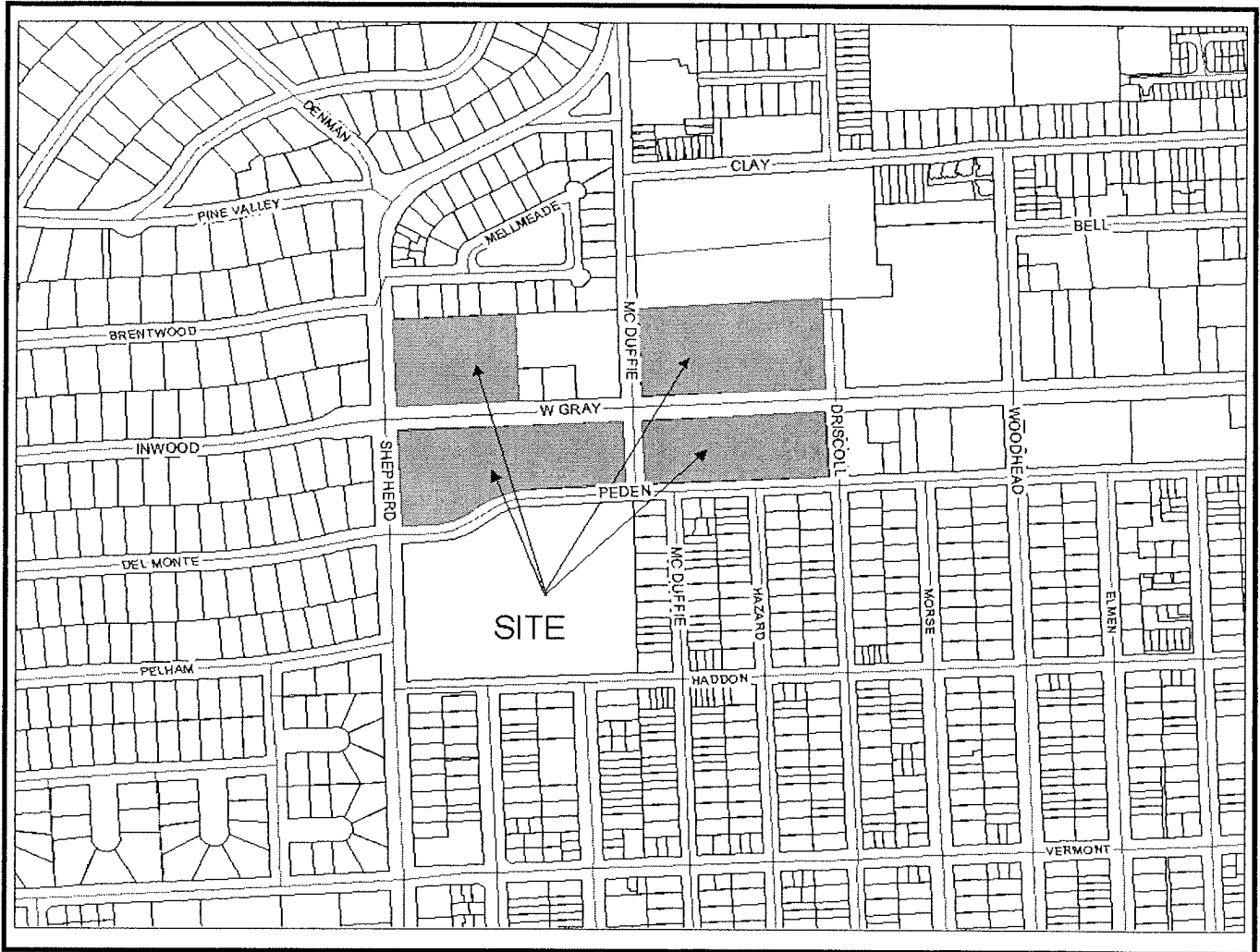
Staff recommends that the Houston Planning Commission accept the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the River Oaks Community Shopping Center at 1952 – 2048 W. Gray, including the River Oaks Theatre at 2009 W. Gray.

CITY OF HOUSTON

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Planning and Development Department

SITE LOCATION MAP
RIVER OAKS COMMUNITY SHOPPING CENTER AND RIVER OAKS THEATRE
1952-2048 W. GRAY, INCLUDING 2009 W. GRAY (THEATRE)
NOT TO SCALE



LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Alabama Theatre and Alabama Community Shopping Center

OWNER: Weingarten Realty

APPLICANT: Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission

LOCATION: 2900 to 2946 S. Shepherd Drive, including the Alabama Theatre at 2922 S. Shepherd, being the west side of the 2900 Block of S. Shepherd Drive between Kipling and W. Alabama

30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: 05-09-07

AGENDA ITEM: II.a

HPO FILE NO.: 07L182

DATE ACCEPTED: 05-23-07

HAHC HEARING: 06-13-07

PC HEARING: 06-21-07

SITE INFORMATION

East 2.7625 acres known as Tract 1, Abstract 696, O. Smith Survey, located at the northwest corner of S. Shepherd and W. Alabama, and also Lots 1-7 and Tract 8A, Block 5, Lanier Place Addition, located at the southwest corner of Kipling and S. Shepherd (formerly part of the original Lot 48, O. Smith Survey), Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site includes a former movie theatre adjacent and attached to a one-story, stucco clad commercial building on either side.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Alabama Theatre and Community Shopping Center is a rare Houston example of an early “suburban” Modernistic shopping center and entertainment complex designed to meet the needs of the burgeoning automobile culture which began in earnest in America during the 1920s and 30s. The Alabama Theatre and Alabama Community Shopping Center were determined by the Texas Historical Commission on September 5, 2006 as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. On April 25, 2007, the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC) instructed the Planning Official to prepare a Landmark Designation application for the Alabama Shopping Center and Alabama Theatre to be considered at the HAHC public hearing on June 13, 2007.

The Modernistic buildings are located at 2900-2946 South Shepherd Drive. The Alabama Theatre was constructed in 1938-1939 by Interstate Theatre Company, and opened on November 2, 1939. Interstate, a large national company, at one time operated 10 movie houses in Houston, including the Garden Oaks, Majestic, Metropolitan, River Oaks, and Village Theatres. They also operated more than 150 theatres located throughout the country. Interstate Theatre Company hired Dallas architect, W. Scott Dunne, who by 1928 had specialized his practice in theatre design. Dunne designed the Alabama Theatre as well as other notable theatres, including Houston’s Tower Theatre on Westheimer and Dallas’ Texas Theatre.

The Alabama Theatre is notable for its imposing façade which forms both the physical and visual axis of the Alabama Shopping Center. The 800-seat theater’s most distinguishing exterior feature is its prominent fluted center bay/canopy. The shopping wings flanking the theater were constructed by the Clayton Foundation in 1940 to service the surrounding River Oaks, Winlow Place, Montrose, and the Museum District neighborhoods. The Clayton Foundation, whose trustees were prominent Houstonians Benjamin, Julia, and William Clayton, commissioned well-known architect, Kenneth Franzheim, to design the wings.

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The Alabama Theatre ceased functioning as a theater in 1983. It was extensively restored and sympathetically converted to a retail bookstore in 1984-1985, which received award-winning recognition. The conversion maintained and restored much of the significant elements of the historic building's ornate interiors as well as the exterior, while simultaneously meeting the changing needs of future tenants. The Alabama Theatre and Shopping Center, which have been determined as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, meet Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 for Landmark Designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The Alabama Theatre and Community Shopping Center at 2900-2946 South Shepherd Drive were constructed between 1938 (theatre) and 1940 (the shopping center) in the "Modernistic" style which is characterized by its use of curved exterior surfaces and generally streamlined appearance. This early example of an automobile-oriented shopping center was designed specifically for patrons with automobiles which was a style departure from earlier pedestrian-oriented retail centers, which relied on storefronts located close to the street adjacent to sidewalks. This new type of design would set the course for later commercial development in Houston.

The Alabama Theatre was constructed and operated by the Interstate Theatre Corporation. Interstate ran a number of theatres in the South and was the brain child of Karl Hoblitzelle (1879-1967), an internationally acclaimed, early cinematic director, producer, and Oscar winner.

The Alabama Shopping Center is located within the Obedience Smith Land survey. The physical location for the Alabama Theatre, at the corner of West Alabama and Shepherd Drive, was just inside the Houston city limits of the mid 1930s. The development followed the trend of Houston's western expansion as many Houstonians began to migrate in a westward direction from older inner city neighborhoods. The shopping center was one of the earliest in Houston to be designed with prominently placed automobile parking lots in front and to the rear of the complex in order to cater to the new "suburbanites."

As late as 1925, the 2.48 acre block on which the Alabama Theatre and Shopping Center were later built, was vacant land owned by the family of real estate developer and philanthropist, Henry F. Macgregor. The Macgregors were instrumental in the development of the Southmore Addition, located near the Houston Museum District. The Macgregor family is most well-known for their donation of the land on which MacGregor Park is now located

A number of residential additions were developed in and around the future location of the Alabama Theatre and Shopping Center. Among the residential neighborhoods located in the near vicinity were Alabama Place (1930), Avalon Place (1931), Colquitt Court (1941), Westlawn Terrace (1928), and Winlow Place (1923). Melrose Place subdivision was also platted nearby. Several residential structures were located along the northern border of the block facing Kipling Street. These would later be demolished to make room for the expansion of the Alabama Shopping Center in 1940.

The Interstate Theatre Company entered into a ground lease agreement with the owners of the land on which the Alabama Theatre would be built. This agreement allowed the tenant, Interstate Theatres, to construct a theater and provide all subsequent maintenance while paying rent to the owners of the land. Interstate hired Dallas architect, W. Scott Dunne, to design the theater. Dunne also designed other notable theaters, such as Houston's Tower Theatre and Dallas' Texas Theatre, which became infamous as the location where Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested by Dallas police on November 22, 1963.

According to Stephen Fox and the National Park Service website, the list of projects by Dunne include many theatres as follows: R & R Theatres in San Angelo and Oak Cliff (Dallas), Laredo, Mesquite, and

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Corpus Christi, Texas; Texas Theatre, 231 W. Jefferson Boulevard, Dallas (N.R.); Plaza Theatre, 125 Pioneer Plaza, El Paso, Texas (N.R.); Del Rio Amusement, Del Rio, Texas; Charles Mangold Hotel (Dallas); Oak Cliff Theatre and Hotel (Dallas); the Martini Theatre (Galveston); and other theaters in Jefferson, Amarillo, and Longview, Texas. He also designed the Oklahoma Theatre, 18 E. Choctaw, Pittsburg, Oklahoma (N.R.). Dunne also designed Astin Memorial Parish House, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Bryan, Texas as well as the Physics Building (now Psychology Building), Texas A & M University, Bryan, Texas. Dunne taught architecture at Texas A & M University just after World War I. By 1928, he was in Dallas already specializing in the design of theatres.

Interstate Theatres had been formed in 1906 by several business partners, including Karl Hoblitzell, who eventually went on to become president of the company. The company originally operated vaudeville theatres, which were in vogue during the period shortly after the turn of the 20th century until the early 1930s. Vaudeville entertainment was centered around the theatrical stage and provided a wide array of live "talent" acts, like dancers, musicians, and side show acts. Vaudeville acts had been extremely popular throughout the United States, but struggled in the southern states. Interstate Theatres worked diligently in the South to establish themselves as a reputable and wholesome business in states where popular opinion of Vaudeville entertainment was not very favorable. Interstate eventually prevailed in their public relations endeavors and established their brand name as one to be reckoned with.

As vaudeville acts began to wane in popularity across the U.S., Interstate Theatres was forced to adapt to the changing trends in entertainment. The company began to feature cinematic works alongside its vaudeville performances. This would eventually give way to the full time screenings of cinematic works and the eventual abandonment of the vaudeville acts which had been so profitable to the company. Interstate Theatres sold most of its interest to RKO Pictures in 1930. RKO, which has operated continuously since 1929, produced many of the blockbuster films of the 1930s and 1940s.

The 1930s saw turbulent times for the Interstate Theatre Company as well as others in the movie industry as the result of the Great Depression which began with the stock market crash of 1929. While RKO was the parent company of Interstate Theatres after 1930, Interstate maintained its ownership of the major Texas theatres. RKO filed for bankruptcy in 1932 and ownership of its Interstate Theatres interest reverted back to Karl Hoblitzell. Paramount Pictures, which had also filed for bankruptcy during this time period, eventually entered into an agreement with Karl Hoblitzell of Interstate Theatres, as well as the RKO Company, to run one of its subsidiaries. The new conglomerate meant market dominance in the southern United States, which in the next decade would lead to more than 150 locations in Texas alone. This alliance was later dismantled by the Federal Courts under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. The Federal Government argued that the movie industry was in violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act because of the conglomerations which were formed in the industry during the 1930s and 1940s, and because these conglomerates were not only producing films, but also distributing the films to their own movie houses. The dissolution of the Interstate-Paramount conglomerate was finalized in 1951. Karl Hoblitzelle maintained ownership of the now independent Interstate Theatre Company until his death in 1967.

The Interstate Theatre Company is currently owned by the Starplex Cinema Corporation. Starplex operates theatres in small towns and cities in California, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and the District of Columbia. The chain does not currently operate any theatres in Houston.

According to the *Houston Post* article of July 21, 1940, "Foundation will erect \$100,000 Community Center" stating further that the Clayton Foundation, whose trustees Benjamin and Julia S. Clayton, and William Clayton, had commissioned Kenneth Franzheim to design the wings flanking the Alabama

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Planning and Development Department

Theatre. A rendering of the community center is included in the article. The Claytons were prominent Houstonians in both business and as philanthropists.

According to the *Handbook of Texas*:

“Anderson, Clayton and Company, cotton merchants, was founded by brothers-in-law Frank E. Anderson and William Lockhart Clayton, cotton merchants, and Monroe D. Anderson, a banker. The partnership was established in Oklahoma City on August 1, 1904. In 1905 Benjamin Clayton, Will's younger brother and an expert in rail and steamship transportation, joined the firm. Company headquarters moved to Houston in 1916 to be nearer the deep-water port facilities of the Houston Ship Channel.

“World War I demands for cotton enhanced the company's fortunes. As its buying and distributing organization expanded, the firm acquired storage and compressors for American cotton handling and improved its finance and insurance arrangements. As United States exports and banking accommodations grew, Anderson, Clayton set up overseas distributing agents. By the mid-1920s company trading firms were operating in Europe, Egypt, India, and China.

“The company was incorporated in 1929 and remained private until 1945. At that time it went public and was listed on the New York Stock Exchange. By 1945, with 223 gins, 33 cottonseed oil plants, and 123 warehouses worldwide, Anderson, Clayton and Company was called the largest buyer, seller, storer, and shipper of raw cotton in the world by Fortune Magazine. Its subsidiaries included a marine insurance company, the barge line, bagging and cotton-blanket mills, a Mexican loan bank, and the machine works. After 1950 sales in the international market reached 3½ percent of all the world's production, and the multimillion-dollar corporation came to be known as ACCO, or the Big Store.

“When rayon threatened the cotton market after the war, ACCO further diversified, reducing its cotton interests by half and adding industrials, government warehousing services, and other interests. A Foods Division was organized after the purchase of Mrs. Tucker's Foods of Sherman, Texas, in 1952 and by 1954 ACCO sold Chiffon margarine and Seven Seas dressing and owned some of the first consumer-product franchises in Mexico. By 1965 the company handled approximately 15 percent of Brazilian coffee exports and a substantial quantity from other countries, as well as cocoa exports and soybean processing.

“By 1977 Anderson, Clayton and Company maintained firms or exclusive agents for cotton in over forty nations; had expanded its Ranger trademark insurance ventures, founded in 1923, with acquisition of Pan Am Insurance in 1968 and American Founders Life in 1977; and had acquired Igloo Corporation, a producer of thermoplastic beverage containers and ice chests. The company climaxed its shipping investments as cooperator of the first nuclear-powered merchant ship, the Savannah.

“Pruning of operations began in the 1960s, and by 1973 the firm had withdrawn from cotton merchandising everywhere except in Brazil and Mexico and considered itself chiefly a producer of food products. Anderson, Clayton and Company became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Quaker Oats Company in 1986, when Quaker Oats purchased the Anderson Clayton stock. Some food products, notably Gaines dog food, continued to be marketed under the name Anderson Clayton, but the company's Houston headquarters was closed and the stock was delisted.”

According to the article by Stephen Fox in the *Handbook of Texas*:

“Kenneth Franzheim, architect, was born on October 28, 1890, in Wheeling, West Virginia. He graduated from Lawrenceville School and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (B. A. 1913), then worked from 1913 until 1917 for the Boston architect Welles Bosworth. He subsequently served for two years at Ellington Field outside Houston, Texas, as a first flight lieutenant in the United States Army Air Corps.

On May 12, 1919, he married Elizabeth Frances Simms; they had three children, one of whom, Kenneth Franzheim II, served as ambassador to New Zealand, Western Samoa, Fiji, and Tonga during President Richard M. Nixon's administration.

"Franzheim became a partner of the Detroit architect C. Howard Crane in 1920. He worked for Crane in Chicago, then in Boston. In 1925 he began independent practice in New York, where he specialized in the design of large commercial buildings and airports. He was retained in 1928 by Jesse H. Jones to collaborate with Alfred C. Finn on the design of the thirty-seven-story Gulf Building, Houston (1929), and to design a temporary coliseum for the Democratic national convention in Houston. Also for Jones, Franzheim designed a forty-two-story office building (1930) and a twenty-story apartment building (1931) in midtown Manhattan. A second round of major projects in Houston, undertaken with John F. Staub, led Franzheim to move his practice from New York to Houston in 1937, although he maintained a New York office until 1940. From 1941 until 1944 Franzheim worked in Washington, D.C. Upon returning to Houston he established himself as the foremost commercial architect in the city, a position he held until his death. Most of the buildings that he produced in Houston were examples of modernistic architecture. Ben A. Dore, another former partner of C. Howard Crane, was his chief designer.

"Franzheim's major buildings in Houston were the seventeen-story Humble Tower (1936, with Staub- City of Houston Landmark); the second Hermann Hospital and the Hermann Professional Building (1949, with Hedrick and Lindsley); the eighteen-story Prudential Building (1952); the twenty-one-story Texas National Bank building (1955); and the twenty-four-story Bank of the Southwest building (1956). Franzheim was also responsible for the twenty-one-story National Bank of Commerce building in San Antonio (1957, with Atlee B. and Robert M. Ayres). Franzheim's best known Houston building was Foley's Department Store (1947, 1957), for which he won an Award of Merit from the American Institute of Architects in 1950.

"Franzheim was particularly interested in incorporating works of art in his architecture, and this led to collaboration with the artists Wheeler Williams, Peter Hurd, Leo Friedlander, and Rufino Tamayo. Franzheim was the first chairman of the board of the Allied Arts Association of Houston and was an honorary member of the National Sculpture Society. In 1949 he was elected to fellowship in the American Institute of Architects, the same year that he served as chairman of the institute's annual convention, which was held in Houston, and as president of the Houston Chapter of the AIA. Franzheim also was an honorary member of the Mexican Society of Architects; after 1945 he maintained a second home in Mexico City. He was a member and deacon of the First Presbyterian Church of Houston. He belonged to the Bayou Club, the Houston Country Club, the Coronado Club, and the Ramada Club. Franzheim died in Mexico on March 13, 1959, and is buried in Glenwood Cemetery, Houston."

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

The Alabama Theatre and Shopping Center were designed in the "Modernistic" Style. This style enjoyed sizeable popularity in America during the mid to late 1930s. The style is often associated with Art Deco or Art Nouveau, which also flourished in America during the 1920s and early 1930s, but which is stylistically different. The Modernistic style is noted for its use of rounded corners, horizontal bands of windows, and smooth surfaces.

The Alabama Theatre is a historic two-story steel and plastered surfaced theater building which is flanked on the north and south sides by conjoined one-story retail buildings. The Alabama Theatre, constructed in 1938 and completed in 1939, is notable for its imposing façade which forms both the physical and visual axis of the Alabama Shopping Center. The theater's most distinguishing exterior feature is its prominent fluted center bay/canopy. The center bay projects forward towards the street, and beyond the stepped-back

massing which characterizes the remainder of the building. The central projecting bay/canopy features large half-round, vertical fluting of smooth enameled steel which lend verticality to the building. The forward projection of the building is also repeated in the marquee which is affixed horizontally to the front of the building and which comes to a point facing South Shepherd Drive. An historic tall, slender enameled steel sign, which advertises the Alabama Theatre and Shopping Center, is located between the theater's projecting canopy and the street. The Alabama Theatre ceased functioning as a theater in 1983. It was extensively restored and sympathetically converted to a retail bookstore in 1984-1985, which received award-winning recognition. The conversion maintained and restored much of the significant elements of the historic building's ornate interiors as well as the exterior while simultaneously meeting the changing needs of future tenants.

A row of one-story buildings adjacent to the south side of the historic theatre building was built during the same construction phase as the theatre (1935-1939). Although this row of buildings was originally separated from the theatre building by a narrow, open-air pedestrian alley, it is now attached as the result of a sympathetic 1988 remodeling which connected the one-story buildings with the two-story theatre. The one-story wing is designed with glass storefronts which span the entire length of the buildings' eastern (front) facade. The interconnected buildings of the south wing of the Alabama Shopping Center were serviced by a covered mezzanine located to the rear. The original mezzanines have been incorporated into additional retail space for the businesses which face South Shepherd Drive. The entire south wing features whitewashed stucco exterior finishes with a continuous band of black and alternating black and white glazed porcelain tiles, which run along the base of all of the buildings facing the front (east) side of the center.

A similar one-story wing exists to the north of the Alabama Theatre. The north wing was originally comprised of a single one-story building attached to the theater's north wall. The first building to be located on the north side of the theatre was constructed during the initial phase of construction (1935-1939). Later phases of construction added additional retail space to the north wing of the shopping center until the wing eventually stretched north to Kipling Street. The subsequent additions are also one-story buildings with similar detailing and massing. The north wing exterior is also clad in a smooth textured, stucco finish which is whitewashed like other buildings of the complex.

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

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Anderson, Thomas D., Handbook of Texas, "Anderson, Clayton and Company."

Fox, Stephen, Handbook of Texas, "Kenneth Franzheim."

Harry Ransom Center; University of Texas at Austin, "The Hoblitzelle and Interstate Theatres Collection".

Houston Architectural Survey, vol.4, "Alabama Theatre".

Harris County Appraisal District Real Property Records.

Houston Chronicle, "A page of history in danger at the Alabama Theatre.", August 7, 2006.

Houston Chronicle, "Mrs. J.C. Bering is Erecting a \$35,000 River Oaks Home", April 17, 1938.

Houston Chronicle, "City Panel Urges Weingarten to Spare Landmarks.

The New York Times, "Fighting the Wrecking Ball to Save Houston Landmarks", August 12, 2006.

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company 1924-1951, Addtl. Sheet 1935.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

The HAHC and the Planning Commission, 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	NA - not applicable
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(1) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area possesses character, interest or value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity of the city, state, or nation (Sec. 33-224(a)(1);		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event (Sec. 33-224(a)(2);		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(3) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state, or nation (Sec. 33-224(a)(3);		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(4) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city (Sec. 33-224(a)(4);		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(5) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area are the best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood (Sec. 33-224(a)(5);		
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present (Sec. 33-224(a)(7);		
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission accept the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Alabama Theatre and Alabama Community Shopping Center at 2900 – 2946 S. Shepherd Drive.

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

SITE LOCATION MAP

ALABAMA THEATER AND ALABAMA COMMUNITY SHOPPING CENTER
2900 TO 2946 S. SHEPHERD DRIVE, INCLUDING 2922 S. SHEPHERD (THEATRE)

NOT TO SCALE

