

SAVED BUILDING

Settegast Estate Building
242-256 W. Gray Avenue

The Houston Independent School District has saved the Settegast Estate Building at 242-256 W. Gray Avenue by renovating it to serve as the art annex for Carnegie Vanguard High School. When the renovation is completed, the structure will include a 130-seat theatre, art room and photo lab. The building, designed by the Moore and Lloyd architectural firm in 1938, features streamlined Art Deco detailing and oversize porthole windows. Its fluted, stepped turret is visible from Montrose Boulevard and marks the pivot point where W. Gray enters historic Freedmen's Town. The building originally held neighborhood service shops. It later was home to Houston's Orange Crush bottling plant which remained there until the early 1950s. Jules J. Settegast, a member of the Houston Parks Commission and the executor of the Hermann Estate which planned and erected Hermann Hospital in the 1920s, owned considerable property in the city, including 75 acres given by the Settegast Estate to the University of Houston as part of its original campus. The Settegast Estate Building, vacant for a number of years, was slated at one time to be razed for a parking lot. In 1994 the property was rehabbed to return it to its retailing roots with eight store fronts that could be used for shops or restaurants. The commercial redevelopment stalled, however, and in 2001-2002 HISD took the property by eminent domain. Plans lagged for several years and reports were widespread that the building would be demolished. But today the story is a much more positive one. The HISD Trustees are to be commended for saving this distinctive building and using it in a significant way to educate our youth.