



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

CONTACT: Suzy Hartgrove: 713-837-7719
Email: Suzy.Hartgrove@houstontx.gov

City of Houston grants historic designation for seven distinguished properties

HOUSTON, December 16, 2015 – City Council designated the Houston Heights Water Works and the Mr. and Mrs. S.I. Morris House as protected historic landmarks. The Gulf Oil Filing Station, the Melrose Building, the Stowers Building, the Judge and Mrs. J.A. Platt House and the Judge Joseph R. Greenhill III and Violet Stanuell Greenhill House were designated as historic landmarks. The protected designation preserves the structure in perpetuity.

The Gulf Oil Filing Station at 3709 La Branch Street was constructed in 1926 for the Gulf Oil Corporation at a time when the automobile was becoming dominant in American cities. The Gulf Oil Corporation was organized to integrate everything from production of crude oil to refining and retailing under a single brand. The station is significant as a symbol of the importance of the oil and gas industry to America generally and Houston in particular. This structure is one of only a handful of remaining examples of these early small-scale neighborhood filling stations.



As it stands today, the station represents a unique comingling of classical revival style with some Craftsman and Art Deco detailing. More recently, the structure has enjoyed a new lease on life as an ever-changing canvas for public art. Since 2010, the Station Museum of Contemporary Art, located across the street at 1502 Alabama Street, has used the Gulf Filling Station as both an outdoor gallery and art canvas in exhibitions.



The Melrose Building at 1121 Walker Street is a twenty-one story office tower located in downtown Houston. In 1952, Houston developer Melvin A. Silverman and his partner Bennett Rose hired noted Houston architects Hermon Lloyd and W.B. Morgan to design the office building. The two developers named the building the Melrose Building from the combination of both of their names. The building is Houston's first International Style skyscraper and the first to incorporate cast concrete cantilevered sunshades shielding rows of grouped windows. The asymmetrical building is clad with buff colored brick and has a projecting, concrete sunshade that frames the window walls.

The Houston Heights Water Works at 449 West 19th Street represents different periods in the history of the City's management of its water facilities from the late 1800s until present. In 1893, the Houston Heights Electric Light and Water Works, as it was then known, became operational, and within a few years, a section of the property was developed into a community park. Over the years, new buildings were



constructed and old buildings were removed, but the facility continued to provide water to the Houston Heights community for over 100 years.

The Houston Heights Water Works site contains three remaining historic structures: a 1928 brick-clad concrete 750,000 gallon Water Reservoir with an unusual grass roof, which is listed in the National Register of Historical Places; an Art Deco-style Pumping Building built by the federal Work Project Administration in 1939; and a limestone-trimmed brick-clad Pumping Building built in 1949 in a modern industrial style.



The Stowers Building at 820 Fannin Street is a representative example of early high-rise construction in Houston with a combination of traditional classical and Chicago style influences. Designed by the Houston architectural firm Green & Finger and completed in 1913, the building was the Houston headquarters for the G. A. Stowers Furniture Company and its third Houston location.

The Stowers Building is an excellent example of the Commercial Style of the early twentieth century. A notable architectural feature of the Stowers Building is the use of white glazed brick for the exterior veneer. The ten-story building was one of a handful of tall buildings marking the beginning of the city's early skyscraper exploration. The building retains its original exterior glazed brick cladding, overall three part composition, window openings, terra cotta pilaster capitals and pressed tin cornice.

The Mr. and Mrs. S.I. Morris House is a contemporary residence at 2 Waverly Court in the Museum District south of downtown Houston. The house was designed by prominent Houston architect Seth Irwin "S.I." Morris, Jr. and completed in 1952 as his family's home. This contemporary style, flat-roofed, two-story house faces west at 2 Waverly Court on a well-landscaped corner lot. The house is clad in brick veneer and vertical frame siding on a concrete slab. The house has an overall rectangular plan with internal courtyards. The house largely fills the site as a result of three additions designed by Wilson, Morris & Crain.



The Judge and Mrs. J.A. Platt House at 3311 Del Monte Drive in River Oaks Country Club Estates was constructed in 1936 by contractor E.T. Seymour of Beaumont from a design by celebrated architect Joseph Finger. From the 1910s through the 1940s, Finger was one of Houston's foremost architects and was the designer of many landmark buildings, including Houston's City Hall. Finger designed the elaborately detailed, 7,347-square-foot, two-story painted brick house in the French Renaissance style.

The Judge Joseph R. Greenhill III and Violet Stanuell Greenhill House at 2520 Mason Street in the Montrose neighborhood was the childhood home of Judge Joe R. Greenhill III, the longest-serving chief justice of the Texas Supreme Court, and his mother Violet Stanuell Greenhill, who was the first chief executive of the Texas Division of Child Welfare.



The 2,074 square foot, one-story house is clad in horizontal joint siding (aka drop siding) under a hipped roof that is covered in composite shingles. There is a corbelled chimney on the ridge of the roof. While several alterations have modified the original appearance of the structure, the overall form, mass, high level of craftsmanship, and detailing of the residence remains intact, and the house retains its historic character.

###