

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Saint Elizabeth Hospital

AGENDA ITEM: C

OWNERS: Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation

HPO FILE NO: 16L318

APPLICANT: Kathy Payton, Fifth Ward CRC

DATE ACCEPTED: 7/19/2016

LOCATION: 4514 Lyons Avenue – Augusta

HAHC HEARING: 9/22/2016

SITE INFORMATION: Lots 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 & 10, Block 117, Augusta, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a 120,000 square foot hospital complex.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

Saint Elizabeth Hospital at 4514 Lyons Avenue is a Neo-Gothic and Art Deco style building designed by Maurice J. Sullivan, AIA, which opened in 1947 as a Catholic-operated segregated hospital for African Americans in Fifth Ward. Many southern states throughout the era of Jim Crow passed legislation that hindered blacks' access to medical care. In the mid-1940s, only 175 hospital beds were readily available for blacks in Houston, which resulted in a disparaging ratio of approximately one bed for every 600 persons of color. Recognizing how desperately underserved Houston's black population was, the pastor of Our Mother of Mercy with a group of black Catholic laymen and doctors, approached the Bishop of Galveston Christopher E. Byrne in 1943 to ask for his assistance in providing better healthcare to African Americans in Houston. After a successful building campaign that raised approximately \$450,000, Saint Elizabeth Negro Hospital opened its doors in June 1947. In less than forty years, the hospital nearly tripled in size resulting in a 120,000 square foot complex that spans the width and depth of a city block. The hospital complex has changed ownership several times and been extensively renovated throughout the past six decades to adapt for its changing use. The Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation is currently in the beginning phases of an Adaptive Reuse Preliminary Feasibility Analysis. The group envisions an adaptive mixed-use renovation project which would include commercial, public, and residential uses. Fifth Ward CRC intends to fully engage the community in its preservation and renovation efforts. Saint Elizabeth Hospital meets criteria 1, 4, 6, and 8 for landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Fifth Ward

Fifth Ward is roughly bound by Buffalo Bayou (south), Lockwood Drive (east), Liberty Road (north), and Jensen Drive (west). The area was sparsely inhabited prior to the Civil War, and later became known as the Fifth Ward in 1866. Unlike the population of neighboring Fourth Ward, the population of Fifth Ward post-Civil War was balanced between blacks and whites. In 1870, the black population numbered 578 while the white population numbered 561. By 1876, two schools were established for the respective races. The 1880s were a time of economic prosperity for the ward with much activity surrounding the construction of repair shops for the South Pacific Railroad. In 1891, the community was devastated by a fire at the Phoenix Lumber Mill, and again by another fire in 1912 that burned 119 houses, 116 box cars, 9 oil tanks, 13 plants, St. Patrick's Catholic Church, and a school.

By 1900, the ward's population was predominantly black. Fifth Ward had evolved into a working-class black neighborhood with jobs within walking distance, usually with Southern Pacific Railroad or the Houston Ship Channel. Black women often commuted across town to work as domestic servants for wealthy Houstonians. In 1927, Phyllis Wheatley High School opened with 2,600 students in attendance and 60 teachers, making the high school one of the largest black high schools in America. In the 1930s, black businesses continued to flourish with the openings of printing plants, photography studios, and Club Matinee (later renamed the Cotton Club of the South). Black owned business were prominent on Lyons Avenue and included a pharmacy, a dentist's office, an undertaking parlor, a theater, and several barbershops. By 1940, African Americans owned approximately forty businesses on Lyons Avenue.

Integration laws of the 1960s coupled with suburban flight led to the economic decline of Fifth Ward in the 1970s and 1980s. The ward developed a reputation for crime, with *Texas Monthly* deeming it "Texas' toughest, proudest, baddest ghetto." In 1989, Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation began working to revitalize the neighborhood through new home construction, focus on job training, access to technology, and access to the arts. The revitalization of the area continued throughout the 1990s and early 2000s and by 2008, the neighborhood had an estimated population of 22,000. Revitalization efforts continue today, including installation of public art and monuments, the construction of more than 300 new homes, two multi-family complexes, two commercial developments, and two commercial renovations to date.

Segregated Healthcare

Race-based segregation limited African Americans' access to healthcare, and decreased their quality of life and life expectancy for decades. Many southern states throughout the era of Jim Crow passed legislation that hindered blacks' access to medical care. For example, a law passed by the Alabama legislature in 1915 stated: "No person or corporation shall require any white female nurse to nurse in wards or rooms in hospitals, either public or private, in which Negro men are placed." Georgia passed a similar law in 1935 stating: "The Board of Control shall see that proper and distinct apartments are arranged for said patients, so that in no case shall Negroes and White persons be together." Comparable laws in Mississippi mandated that medical treatment would be made available to African Americans only after all white patients were treated. Segregation laws compounded with lack of opportunity for African Americans in medical professions meant the population as a whole suffered. In 1949, there was only one black physician for every 3,681 blacks in the United States. Additionally, the majority of the African American population in the South lived in poor, rural areas that had limited access to black-only medical facilities and transportation.

Discrimination was also prominent in medical societies. Prior to 1942, the Red Cross did not accept blood donations from African Americans. The policy was amended in 1942 stating the Red Cross would accept African American blood, but only if it remained segregated from white blood. The American Medical Association (AMA) was known for member discrimination that went widely unchallenged throughout the 1940s and 1950s. It was not until 1968 that the AMA officially adopted a policy that banned racial discrimination in membership of national and state medical societies. The National Medical Association, a black medical organization, worked toward promoting admission of black doctors into the workforce and medical societies, as well as supporting national health insurance integration. The group strove to fully integrate southern facilities and require equal treatment under health policies.

Updates to existing hospitals and new hospitals were built for African Americans during what Justice Thurgood Marshall called “deluxe Jim Crow,” a time when states tried to implement truly equal public facilities while still keeping races separate. Advocacy groups began to push for desegregation of healthcare facilities in general throughout the 1950s. Prior to this time, the groups were more concerned about equal treatment and funding for their own facilities. Widespread desegregation in healthcare facilities persisted until the mid-1960s until *Simkins v. Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital* in 1963, a federal case which held that “separate but equal” racial segregation in publicly funded hospitals was a violation of equal protection under the Constitution, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Saint Elizabeth Negro Hospital

By the mid-1940s, only 175 hospital beds were readily available for blacks in Houston, which resulted in a ratio of approximately one bed for every 600 persons of color. Recognizing how desperately underserved Houston’ black population was, the pastor of Our Mother of Mercy with a group of black Catholic laymen and doctors, approached the Bishop of Galveston Christopher E. Byrne (1867-1950) in 1943 to ask for his assistance in providing better healthcare to African Americans in Houston. In November 1943, Father John Roach, the Director of Catholic Charities of the Galveston Diocese, wrote to the Superior of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception to inform her that Bishop Byrne had given his approval and also donated the first \$1,000 for a clinic. The Bishop chose the name Saint Elizabeth.

The Missionary Sisters eventually purchased a site on Lyons Street and the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word donated some adjacent property. The idea for the clinic became so widely popular in the community that the idea blossomed into a fundraising campaign for a hospital. Altogether, the campaign raised over \$450,000 (including a \$26,000 contribution from Houston oilman and philanthropist, George W. Strake, Sr.) allowing for the construction of a sixty-bed, twenty-bassinet, three-story facility named Saint Elizabeth Hospital for Negroes. A groundbreaking ceremony was held for the hospital in June 1945, and the Missionary Sisters arrived in Houston in August 1945. Saint Elizabeth was dedicated on May 18, 1947, with Mayor Oscar Holcombe present, after the original dedication ceremony set for April 20, 1947 was postponed due to the April 16 Texas City Disaster. In June 1947, the hospital formally opened its doors.

Saint Elizabeth acted as a catalyst for change in its self-integration of black and white nurses, nuns, and physicians. However, a mere decade after it opened, the hospital suffered from overcrowding, running at 110% of its official capacity. Patients were crammed into doctor’s lounges, delivery rooms, and corridors. Federal, state, and private funds eventually allowed for the 1958 addition of a west wing and a fourth story to the main building. In 1960, a second building campaign added the east wing. In 1964-1965, a third building campaign added the east wing which included housing for the sisters. In August 1981, the Sisters of Charity took over ownership and operation of the hospital.

In 1989, Saint Elizabeth closed, but was purchased by a group of doctors for \$2.3 million and renamed the Charles R. Drew Medical Center in honor of Charles R. Drew, a black physician who was a pioneer in the development of blood transfusions and the use of blood plasma. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the hospital transitioned to a recovery campus, substance abuse treatment facility, detoxification center, and half-way house operated under the University of Texas Health and Science Center of Houston. The Riverside General Hospital System later purchased the complex in 1996 and renamed it the Barbara Jordan Healthcare Facility. In late 2014, the facility formally shut its doors due to major maintenance

and facility deficiencies, as well as fiscal and legal troubles with Riverside General. The Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation purchased the property in early 2016.

Maurice J. Sullivan, AIA

Maurice Joseph Sullivan was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan on June 21, 1884. He attended Detroit College (1901-1903) and the University of Michigan (1904-1906) where he trained as a civil engineer. He moved to Texas to work as an engineer for a Fort Worth architecture firm Waller, Shaw and Field. He also worked for Waco architects Scott and Pearson. Sullivan moved to Houston in 1912. From 1912-1919, Sullivan was the city architect for the City of Houston. In 1919, he established his independent practice. Sullivan specialized in the design of churches, schools, convents, and hospitals for Catholic religious orders and institutions of the Diocese of Galveston. Sullivan designed buildings with an eclectic style, and most frequently designed building in the Lombard Romanesque, Mediterranean, and Neo-Gothic styles. Among his most notable buildings are:

- Eastwood Elementary School (1916)
- Sacred Heart Dominican Convent (1927 – *demolished*)
- St. Anne’s Church and School (1929-1940)
- Houston Negro Hospital School of Nursing (1931)
- Holy Rosary Church (1933)
- St. Thomas High School (1940)
- St. Elizabeth Negro Hospital (1947)
- St. Mary’s Seminary (1954)

Sullivan joined the American Institute of Architects in 1921, and was elected to the fellowship in 1951. He served as the President of the South Texas Chapter of the AIA in 1924 and 1933-1934. He served as AIA Treasurer from 1951-1954. He was the first Texas architect to be elected to national office within the AIA.

Sullivan’s son, Charles Fitzsimon Sullivan (b. 1919) partnered with him to establish the firm Maurice J. Sullivan-Charles F. Sullivan in 1946. Saint Elizabeth Negro Hospital was among the first collaborations between the father-son firm. Maurice J. Sullivan died in Houston on December 15, 1961.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

Saint Elizabeth Hospital is a ca. 1947 Neo-Gothic and Art Deco style building designed by Maurice J. Sullivan, AIA. In less than forty years, the hospital nearly tripled in size resulting in a 120,000 square foot complex that spans the width and depth of a city block. The original building was an approximately 44,000 square foot, two-story building with a partial raised sunlight basement and 6/12 casement windows. Stone steps led to an over-sized entrance featuring a frieze of the hospital’s namesake in white stone. A stone cross accented the entrance at the roof. The original building façade is covered by geometric black and white limestone, and now has single-pane fixed windows. A chapel which was central to the hospital’s main building separated the two wings, and a convent was constructed to the southeast of the main building, which is now connected by a steel concourse walkway. In 1958, a \$1.4 million expansion program added approximately 13,000 square feet with the construction of a west wing

and another story to the main building. In 1960, a second building campaign led to the construction of the 8,000 square foot east wing. In 1964, a 5,000 square foot south wing was added with housing for the sisters, with an additional 20,000 square feet added in 1965. An additional 30,000 square feet was added to the complex for the Charles R. Drew Medical Center. Later additions are clad in brick while the main façade at the front remains a black and white limestone.

The hospital complex has been extensively renovated throughout the past six decades to adapt for its changing use. The Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation is currently in the beginning phases of an Adaptive Reuse Preliminary Feasibility Analysis. The group envisions an adaptive mixed-use renovation project which would include commercial, public, and residential uses. Residential units would also be economically integrated to further both affordable and market rate housing demands. Much of the building's original construction will be preserved, with the potential for non-historic additions to be removed or substantially altered. Fifth Ward CRC intends to fully engage the community in its preservation and renovation efforts.

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

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation

(a) The HAHC, 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:

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

EXHIBIT A SITE LOCATION

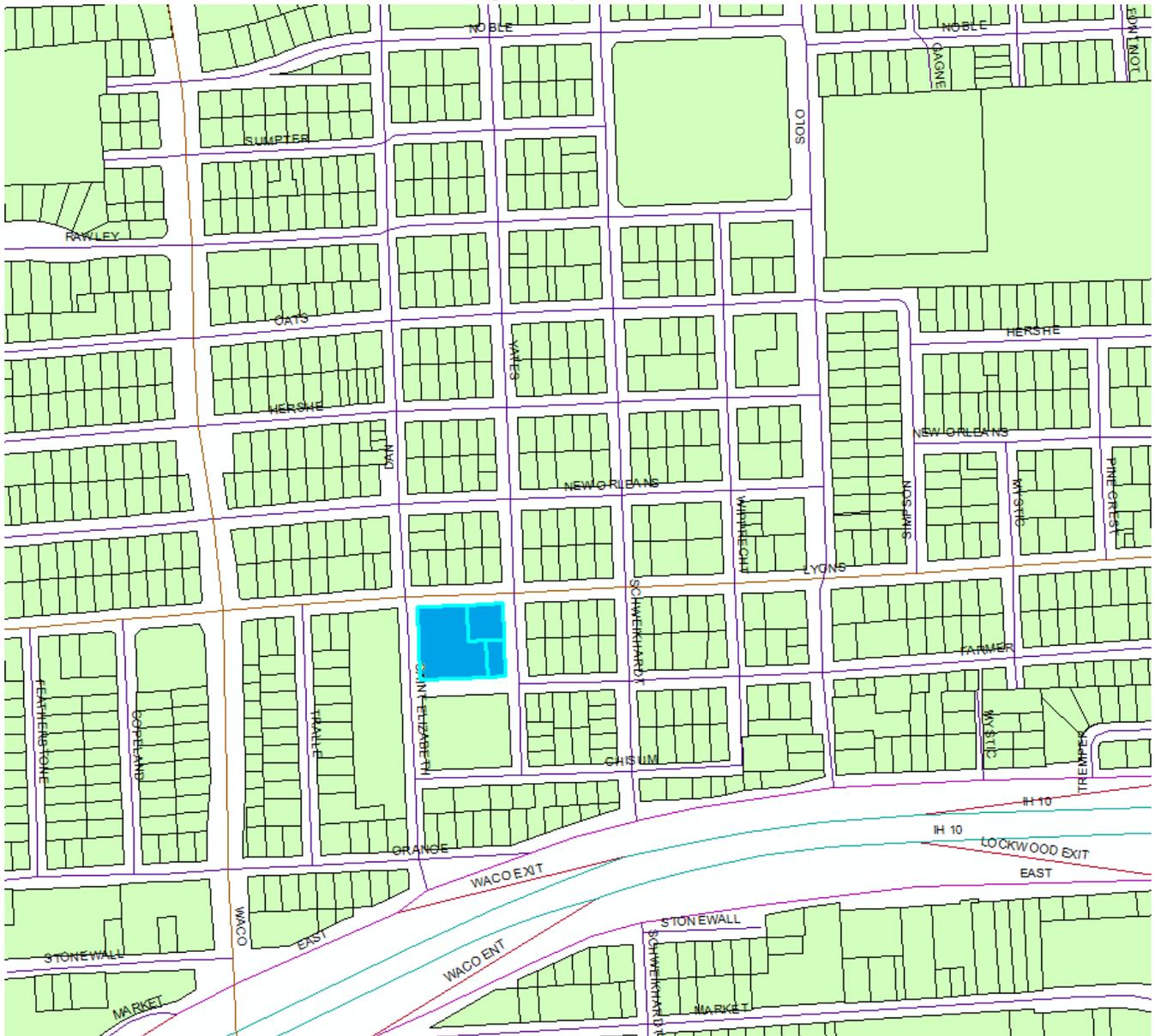


EXHIBIT B HISTORIC PHOTOS



EXHIBIT C CURRENT PHOTOS



