

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Houston City Hall and Hermann Square
OWNER: City of Houston, Texas
APPLICANT: Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission
LOCATION: 901 Bagby Street
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: Aug-10-2001

AGENDA ITEM: I
P.C.MEETING DATE: 11-15-2001
HPO FILE NO.: 01L98
DATE ACCEPTED: Aug-10-01
HAHC HEARING DATE: 09-13-01

SITE INFORMATION

All of Blocks 149 and 146, SSBB, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site is a ten-story, masonry block government building (Block 149) with shell limestone cladding and terraced plaza with fountain and T-shaped, concrete pool basin (Block 146) bounded by Bagby, Walker, McKinney and Smith Streets.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

Houston City Hall was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 18, 1990. Constructed in 1939 and designed by Joseph Finger, one of Houston's premier architects, Houston City Hall is constructed of solidly, massed blocks faced with Texas Cordova shell limestone. The notable aluminum panels, constructed over the entry doors depicting famous lawgivers in history, were also the work of Finger's office. Herman Square, accessed from a series of paved terraces extending from City Hall, comprises a block of ground bequeathed to the City of Houston in 1914 by George H. Hermann, one of Houston's most prominent philanthropists. In 1939 the Kansas City landscape architects, Hare & Hare, installed the reflecting basin that stretches out on axis with City Hall, as well as the broad grass terrace, hedgerows and live oak trees that ring the pool.

At the March 13, 1997 public hearing of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC), the HAHC discussed the expiration of the two-year temporary designation of all landmarks that City Council had previously designated when the Historic Preservation Ordinance was adopted on March 1, 1995. Since the designation had expired, the HAHC requested that the planning staff contact the owners of these landmarks to determine their interest in the HAHC initiating an application for permanent designation. At the request of the City Hall Historic Preservation Committee on July 10, 2001, the HAHC has initiated this application for the designation of Houston City Hall and Hermann Square as a Landmark of the City of Houston. The HAHC instructed the planning staff previously that if any landmark had been designated either by the National Register program (N.R.), as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL), a State Archaeological Site (SAL), or a temporary landmark of the City of Houston, then the application would be considered for permanent landmark designation on that merit alone because all of the required information has been filed to obtain status. Therefore, regarding the preparation of the application, HAHC agreed to consider the application with minimal information provided to them.

RESTORATION HISTORY/CURRENT CONDITION:

Restoration on the building, owned by the City of Houston, was completed in October 1997.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION...:

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation of a Landmark.

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

(a) The HAHC and the 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 | D - does not satisfy | NA - not applicable |
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- (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;
 - (2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;
 - (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;
 - (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;
 - (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;
 - (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;
 - (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;
 - (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: NONE

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Recommends that the Houston Planning Commission accepts the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommends to City Council the landmark designation of Houston City Hall and Hermann Square.

CITY OF HOUSTON

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SITE LOCATION MAP

HOUSTON CITY HALL AND HERMANN SQUARE

901 BAGBY STREET

NOT TO SCALE