

## PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Reid Memorial United Methodist Church  
**OWNER:** Reid Casa de Alabanza United Methodist Church  
**APPLICANT:** Nila Middleton  
**LOCATION:** 5203 Fulton Street – Lindale Park  
**30-DAY HEARING NOTICE:** N/A

**AGENDA ITEM:** IV.a  
**HPO FILE NO.:** 08PL53  
**DATE ACCEPTED:** Dec-03-07  
**HAHC HEARING:** Feb-21-08  
**PC HEARING:** Mar-13-08

### SITE INFORMATION:

Tracts 3, 13, 14 & 15, Germantown Link Rd Tract, Abst 1, J Austin, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes an historic brick church building with an attached brick wing and separate educational buildings.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark and Protected Landmark Designation for the church and attached wing.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

Reid Memorial United Methodist Church, located at 5203 Fulton Street on Houston's northside, houses one of the oldest Methodist congregations in the City of Houston. The current brick church building was built in 1941, and replaced an earlier wooden church built in 1887 that had burned in 1935. The brick building was designed by architect Frank W. Vesey in the Gothic Revival style, and features unusual rusticated brick detailing.

Originally known as the White Oak Church, the congregation was founded in the 1880s by J. W. Eichwurzel, a Swedish immigrant, whose homestead was located on Little White Oak Bayou near the location of the present day church. Eichwurzel lived to be 100 years old, and is buried in the Eichwurzel family cemetery on the eastern bank of Little White Oak Bayou. After the original church burned, W. R. Reid, the developer of the adjacent Lindale Park neighborhood, generously donated funds to rebuild the church building. In gratitude, the congregation voted to change the name of the church to Reid Memorial Methodist Church in honor of Reid's parents.

Reid Memorial United Methodist Church meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, and 5 for Landmark and Protected Landmark designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

Reid Memorial United Methodist Church is one of the oldest Methodist congregations in Houston. The congregation was formally organized in 1887 by John William Eichwurzel. Eichwurzel, a Swedish immigrant, was born in December 21, 1842, and died March 9, 1943, at the age of 100. He immigrated to Houston in 1871, and purchased land in 1879 that extended from present day Fulton Street to Little White Oak Bayou on Houston's northside. He built a small house on Little White Oak Bayou, and later built a larger home at 5709 Fulton Street. Eichwurzel worked as a truck farmer and carpenter, and he and his wife, Sophie, had a daughter, Annie, and three sons, Will, Hardy, and Fred. After Eichwurzel's death in 1943, he was buried in Eichwurzel Cemetery, which is located on the banks of Little White Oak Bayou at the back of the old family homestead (now in the 5700 block of Enid Street).

# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

According to church records, the small Methodist congregation that was eventually to become Reid Memorial United Methodist Church first organized in 1880. The group met at a combination school and church building, located to the west of Reid's current location at the corner of Fulton and Link Road. The congregation, however, soon wanted its own church building. A Mr. Hamblen gifted land for the new church building with the stipulation that a church for the area be built on it immediately. The church was organized on May 18, 1887, under the leadership of J. W. Eichwurz, who became the first pastor of the church. The new church was a small white ell-shaped wood-frame building set in a wooded rural area near Little White Oak Bayou, and was named the White Oak Church. The White Oak Church was a member of the East Texas Conference, and was one of ten churches on the Harris County Mission, a Methodist circuit that included Crosby and other outlying places.

A string of part-time pastors succeeded Rev. Eichwurz until the congregation acquired its first full time pastor, Rev. Hal Cunningham. In addition to his pastoral duties, Rev. Cunningham also served as the janitor and yardman for the church. On Sunday, October 9, 1932, Rev. Cunningham of 'White Oak Methodist Church' presented the service on the Skyline Radio Chapel from the KPRC radio studios, and Josephine McDonald, the church's choir director, directed the choir. In 1933, White Oak Church merged with the Wesley Mission (located at the 'Old Central Food Market') and became known as St. Luke's Methodist Church. A wing was added to the original church structure, and a small church cemetery was located to the north of the present church buildings.

In 1935, the wood church building caught fire and burned down. Until a new church could be built, the Methodist District's revival tent was loaned to the church for services, and an oil drum was used to heat the tent. The congregation faced a number of challenges during this period as it went through a succession of pastors, and even lacked a pastor for a time. The church lost membership and was under pressure from the conference to merge with another nearby Methodist church. One day the church members found the revival tent had been slashed. Even so, the congregation persisted, and plans for a new church building were made in 1940. The architect of the new church building was Frank W. Vesey. W. R. Reid, the real estate developer who developed the adjacent subdivision of Lindale Park in the late 1930s and 1940s, gave generously to the new church's building fund. In gratitude for his donations, the congregation voted to name the new church in honor of Reid's parents, G. W. and Annie Reid. On December 21, 1941, the cornerstone and bronze plaque were laid for the new building. The chapel building was erected at the cost of \$17,000, and sat 312 people. The lighted cross, organ pulpit, communion table, and chairs were all gifts to the church. The church's distinctive masonry work was provided by A. K. Davidson. The actual dedication of the church took place in October 1944, and was attended by J. W. Eichwurz, who was then 99 years old.

In the 1940s, the Lindale neighborhood started to grow rapidly, and the church grew along with it. An educational building was erected on the church property in 1958, and a new parsonage was built at 611 Sue Street. In 1968, the name of the church was changed to Reid Memorial United Methodist Church in response to the denominational merger between the Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist churches. Over the years, the church has maintained an active presence in the surrounding Lindale neighborhood. In addition to many church-related activities, classes, and festivals, the church has hosted numerous clubs and organizations at its facility, including Scouts and various sports teams. The church's lighted athletic field has been the playground for many neighborhood children over the years.

In the 1980s, the church's membership started to decline, and in 1984, the church entered into partnership with the nearby M. D. Anderson YMCA to house a YMCA Day Care Center on its grounds. This partnership has been of benefit to both the church and the nearby community. The church celebrated its 100-year anniversary in 1987. In 2005, Reid Memorial United Methodist Church merged

# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

with the Casa de Alabanza United Methodist Church, and is now officially known as the Reid Casa de Alabanza United Methodist Church. Casa de Alabanza began as a separate, non-denominational Hispanic congregation, and reflects the changing demographics of the area.

### **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:**

Reid Memorial United Methodist Church is designed in the Gothic Revival style and features unusual rustic dark reddish-brown brickwork. The east-facing chapel features a steeply pitched front-gabled roof and a prominent bell tower. The front gable features three alcoves above an inset entrance area, each alcove containing six-inch-wide vertical metal louvers that are repeated in the bell tower. Three stained glass windows are located on the east facade in the entrance alcove. The center window, depicting Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, was dedicated in the 1940s to those who served in the armed forces during World War II. The two windows flanking this central window depict the Good Shepherd and Christ Blessing the Little Children, and were dedicated in honor of J. W Eichwurzel and Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Reid. The chapel entrances are located to the sides of these three stained glass windows. On the south end of the front facade is another stained glass window surrounded by decorative projecting brickwork in a vertical pattern. The bell tower features a stained glass window surrounded by similar brickwork on its lower half. The chapel has a row of five stained glass windows on both its north and south elevations. The chapel interior features exposed beams, extensive wood paneling, and wooden pews with a decorative scheme matching that of the church doors. The church building is built in an 'ell' shape with a classroom wing located at the rear of the chapel extending north. A separate educational building with coordinating brick was constructed in the 1950s to the north of the 1941 building to provide more space to the growing congregation. Over the years, only minor cosmetic alterations have been made to the church building.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Reid Memorial archival documents.

Construction plans for Reid Memorial Church, F.W. Vesey, 1941.

Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, 2006.

Hispanic Ministries Directory South Central Jurisdiction, The United Methodist Church, 2006.

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

### **APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION:**

The HAHC shall review each application for designation of a protected landmark that is included in an application for designation of a landmark at the same time and in the same manner as it reviews and considers the application for a landmark. The HAHC and the Planning Commission, in making recommendations with respect to a protected landmark designation, and the City Council, in making a designation, shall consider whether the building, structure, site, or area meets at least three of the criteria in Section 33-224, or one of the criteria in Section 33-229, as follows:

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

S NA

S - satisfies NA - not applicable

Meets at least three of the following (Sec. 33-229(a)(1):

- (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);
- (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);
- (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);
- (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);
- (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);
- (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);
- (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present (Sec. 33-224(a)(7);
- (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).

**AND**

- (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).

**OR**

- The property was constructed before 1905 (Sec. 33-229(a)(2);

**OR**

- The property is listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places or designated as a “contributing structure” in an historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Sec. 33-229(a)(3);

**OR**

- The property is recognized by the State of Texas as a Recorded State Historical Landmark (Sec. 33-229(a)(4).

**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 and Protected Landmark Designation of the Reid Memorial United Methodist Church at 5203 Fulton Street.

SITE LOCATION MAP  
REID MEMORIAL METHODIST CHURCH  
5203 FULTON STREET  
NOT TO SCALE

