

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Duke-Shapiro House**AGENDA ITEM:** IIb.**OWNER:** Jonathan C. Clark**HPO FILE NO.:** 12L261**APPLICANT:** Courtney Tardy, for Preservation Houston**DATE ACCEPTED:** January 2, 2012**LOCATION:** 3441 N. Parkwood Drive – Riverside Terrace**HAHC HEARING DATE:** April 19, 2012

SITE INFORMATION: Lot 20, Block 54 in Riverside Terrace Section 10 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site contains a historic, 2-story brick home and detached garage.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Duke-Shapiro House was built in 1939-1940 and was designed by Dixon and Ellis as a speculative home. The two-story, asymmetrical French Eclectic style house is located in the Riverside Terrace neighborhood directly across from Parkwood Park. The house was first occupied by R. Spencer Duke, a local optometrist and was later occupied by Benji and Sara Shapiro. Mr. Shapiro was involved in many successful business ventures over his lifetime.

First platted in 1924, the affluent neighborhood of Riverside Terrace in southeast Houston became known as the 'Jewish River Oaks' from the 1930s through the 1950s. Architects who designed houses in the neighborhood included John Chase, John Staub, Birdsall P. Briscoe, Bolton & Barnstone, Joseph Finger, Bailey A. Swenson, and MacKie and Kamrath. Beginning in the 1950s, the neighborhood transitioned to primarily African-American families. The 1985 documentary "This Is Our Home, It Is Not For Sale" by Jon Schwartz gives a 60-year overview of the community and its struggle to integrate. Today, the neighborhood contains numerous examples of outstanding architecture from the late Art Deco and mid-century modern eras, interspersed with small motels and apartments.

The Duke-Shapiro House meets Criteria 1, 4, and 6 for Landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Robert Spencer Duke

R. Spencer Duke moved to Austin, Texas from Mississippi at the age of four with his parents. His father was a Methodist minister. He was a graduate of the University of Illinois, and from 1932-1946 was the owner of Capitol Optical Company. At the time of his death in 1949, he was the owner of Duke Optometric Clinic at 1926 West Gray, just east of the River Oaks Community Center. He was a member of Omicron Delta and Riverside Memorial Methodist Church. He was married to Vida Lee Duke and had three daughters: Janice, Dolores and Peggy Ann. He lived in 3441 N. Parkwood from 1940-1944. R. Spencer Duke died in 1949 at the young age of 46.

Marcus Cunningham

Marcus and Bernice Cunningham lived in the home briefly in 1945. Marcus was the President of the Houston Slush Pump Company. They moved on to 2321 Swift Blvd., near Rice University.

Isadore Benjamin “Benji” Shapiro

In 1946, Isadore Benjamin “Benji” Shapiro and wife Sara moved into 3441 N. Parkwood. Shapiro was born January 2, 1898 in Carmel, New Jersey and died at the age of 64 in 1962. In his lifetime, he pursued several successful careers. A veteran of World War I and a graduate of the University of Colorado, he came to Houston to work as a chemical engineer for the sugar refining industry. At some point, he left that job to start a career in winemaking, as the owner of Select Wine Company. In 1954, he retired from that business to open a bail bonding company, Western Bonding Co. He also owned significant real estate in Houston, including the Western Union Building at Franklin and Main. At the time of his death he was attending law school with the intention to enter the law. He was a Shriner and a Mason, and a member of Beth Yeshuron Congregation. Benji was married to Sara Shapiro and they had two sons, Dr. Edward M. Shapiro and Robert M. Shapiro. Isadore Benjamin “Benji” Shapiro lived in the Parkwood house at the time of his death.

Dixon and Ellis

Dixon and Ellis worked in partnership throughout the 1930s, building speculative homes. Sam Houston Dixon, Jr., the son of a prominent author, was a draftsman and architect who worked with Birdsall Briscoe from 1922-1926 as Briscoe & Dixon. The firm designed the Stude House in Shadyside and the William L. Clayton Summer House in River Oaks, both City of Houston Landmarks. In addition, 1311 South Boulevard, 1323 South Boulevard, 1405 South Boulevard, and 1506 South Boulevard, all in the Broadacres Historic District, were designed by Briscoe & Dixon. They also designed Jefferson Davis High School and Hogg Middle School in 1926. Over the years, Dixon collaborated with many well-known Houston architects, including Maurice Sullivan and Alfred Bossom.

Athna Bryan Ellis was born in 1897 in Polk County, Texas, where his father was a sawmill engineer. Later, his father worked for the railroad as an engineer and a fireman in Palestine, Anderson County, Texas. Ellis’ education at the Rice Institute was interrupted by World War I. He entered the Navy and trained at the Naval Radio School. He was discharged in 1919 and returned to Rice for his studies; he also ran an amateur radio station at the campus and was President of the Architectural Society. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1923. He died young, at the age of 42, in 1939.

Despite their truncated partnership due to Ellis’ early death, we know that Dixon and Ellis also designed homes in the Southgate neighborhood near Rice University, including 2102 Addison.

Riverside Terrace

The first section of Riverside Terrace was platted in 1924. Development of the area was started by Henry Frederick MacGregor, who came to Houston in 1883 and began investing in real estate. By 1900, MacGregor was instrumental in extending Houston’s residential area southward by building several subdivisions in the South Main area.

During the first two decades of the 20th century, “street-car suburbs,” flourished in Houston and residential developments spurred extension of streetcar lines. But by the mid-1920s, the growing popularity of the automobile led to new “automobile suburbs” in Houston. Several of these were laid out on either side of Brays Bayou in the vicinity of Hermann Park. One such suburbs is Riverside Terrace.

When Riverside Terrace opened, early sales brochures stressed the premier location of this subdivision as being near the South Main cultural, medical, educational, and social facilities. The first section of the project – an area bounded by Almeda, Blodgett, Live Oak, and Oakdale – was financed by the Guardian

Trust Company. The developer, using the same sales rhetoric as the River Oaks Corporation, noted that there would be “rigid building restrictions...so that each purchaser is assured beforehand of the exact character of the improvements with which he will be surrounded.” The successful venture attracted other developers, and the suburbs of Washington Terrace and Riverside were platted. Today, the entire area is known as Riverside Terrace.

The area was once home to a large number of Jewish families such as the Weingartens, the Fingers, the Sakowitz, and the Battlesteins, who were excluded from River Oaks. From the 1930s until the post-war era, the neighborhood became known as the ‘Jewish River Oaks’.

The demographics began to change drastically in the 1950s when the first African-American family moved into the neighborhood. In 1952, a wealthy African-American cattleman named Jack Caesar moved his family into the neighborhood. He stayed despite a bomb being detonated on his front porch. In the middle 1950s, the white and Jewish families began moving out to the suburbs. In the early 1960s, white residents who saw potential for an integrated neighborhood tried to stabilize it by posting signs that read: "This Is Our Home, It Is Not For Sale," which is also the title of a 1985 documentary by Jon Schwartz that gives a 60-year overview of the community and its struggle to integrate. Eventually all but a few whites and Jews succumbed to pressures by their neighbors' departure and left Riverside Terrace entirely.

It wasn't long before Riverside Terrace was once again home to prominent, wealthy families – this time African-American. College professors, doctors, lawyers and politicians moved into the large homes and mansions.

Architects who designed some of the first homes in the neighborhood included John Chase, John Staub, Birdsall Briscoe, Bolton & Barnstone, and Joseph Finger. Several distinctive modern houses were designed by the office of Bailey A. Swenson. The architectural firm of MacKie and Kamrath also produced structures of modern design. One home, published in *Architectural Record* in 1942, was described as having excited neighborhood controversy for being so modern. Today, the neighborhood contains numerous examples of outstanding architecture from the late Art Deco and mid-century modern eras, interspersed with small motels and apartments.

Home construction and commercial development have recently revived, especially on the southern edge of the area. The homes in Riverside Terrace are as diverse as the characters that shaped its history. Houses range from 2,000 to 6,000 square feet. Lots can be as large as two acres. Prices range from \$30,000 to \$1 million. While many changes have occurred over the years, Riverside Terrace continues to be home to many Houstonians who enjoy being a short distance from downtown, the Museum District, and the Medical Center.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The 3,146 square foot Duke-Shapiro House is sited in the center of a 16,114 square foot lot. The house faces south, and located behind it is a detached garage at the northwest corner of the property, accessed by a driveway located along the west property edge. The front of the house faces Parkwood Park located directly across N. Parkwood Drive.

The house is faced in brick, which has been painted, and is designed in an asymmetrical French Eclectic style. The house has two stories and is three bays wide. A main bay on the west side of the house is dominant and contains the entrance, while a middle bay projects a few feet forward from the front of the house, and the east bay sets back to align with the west bay.

The west bay of the house contains a bay window with a metal roof on the first floor façade. The bay windows' central window features a 6-over-6 configuration, while the side windows feature a 4-over-4 configuration. The bay window is followed by two 6-over-6 windows; these windows are capped by brick lintels with keystones. All of the original windows in the house have been replaced with new double-paned aluminum windows that exactly match the dimensions and the pane configuration of the original windows. A metal roofed portico projects over the entrance and is supported by two thin wood columns. These columns are a later addition of the current owner. The original portico supports were of a metal design. However, this is a minor alteration and does not significantly change the character of the house. The entry door is wood paneled with a wooden surround with sidelights of 4 vertically placed panes of glass each.

The second story façade of the west bay contains five 6-over-6 windows with a projecting band of brick that runs beneath them to visually break up the space between the first and second stories of the house. A thin band of painted wood runs underneath the entire roofline.

The middle bay of the house features a three-part window of 4-over-4, 8-over-8 and 4-over-4 placements topped with a brick lintel and keystone on the first floor facade. On the second story façade are two 6-over-6 windows with the same projecting band of brick as is on the west and east bays.

The east bay features a three-part window of 4-over-4, 6-over-6 and 4-over-4 placements topped with a brick lintel and keystone on the first floor facade. On the second story façade is another three-part window of 4-over-4, 6-over-6 and 4-over-4 placements with the same projecting band of brick as is on the west and middle bays.

The house has a high hipped roof over the main portion of the structure with a projecting hipped roof over the middle bay of the house. There are two dormer windows in the attic story of the west bay at the front of the house; these are also topped with hipped roofs. The west and east facades of the house also feature a single dormer window each, topped with hipped roofs. The windows in the dormers are a 6-over-6 with wood surrounds. A brick chimney is placed between the middle and east bays of the house.

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“Robert Duke,” Obituary in *Houston Chronicle*, between April 28, 1949 and April 30, 1949

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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 Delaney Harris-Finch, 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:

- | S | NA | S - satisfies | D - does not satisfy | NA - not applicable |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------|---------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | (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; | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event; | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (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; | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | (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; | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (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; | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | (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; | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present; | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride. | | |

AND

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|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (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)). |
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Duke-Shapiro House at 3441 N Parkway Drive.

EXHIBIT A

DUKE-SHAPIO HOUSE
3441 N PARKWOOD DRIVE



**EXHIBIT B
SITE LOCATION MAP**

**DUKE-SHAPIRO HOUSE
3441 N PARKWOOD DRIVE
NOT TO SCALE**

