

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK/SITE NAME:** Maurice J. and Reginald A. Hirsch House

**OWNER:** Burkitt Foundation

**APPLICANT:** Linko, Inc. , Nancy Lindsay Koetter

**LOCATION:** 1401 Castle Court Boulevard

**30-DAY HEARING NOTICE:** Feb-11-98

**AGENDA ITEM:** IVa

**MEETING DATE:** Mar-12-98

**HPO FILE NO.:** 98LD46

**DATE ACCEPTED:** Feb-09-98

**HEARING DATE:** Mar-12-98

**SITE INFORMATION:** Lot 6, Obedience Smith Survey, also known as Tract 25 of Castle Court Addition, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas, being a parcel measuring 113' X 166.62', containing .432 acres. The building on the site is a two-story, brick veneer residence with a porte-cochere.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:** The house was constructed circa 1920 for the Hirsch family at 1401 Castle Court Boulevard. Castle Court Boulevard first appears in the City Directory of 1917 since the area was platted on September 26, 1916 by the Westland Investment Company. An article, dated October 15, 1916 appeared in the *Houston Daily Post* which reported that "Castle Court Development is a forerunner of good times." According to the applicant, Mr. Leon Levy, acting as the Executor for the estate of his brother-in-law, Samuel Hirsch in 1920, coordinated the design and construction of the house. It was constructed for the minor children of Samuel Hirsch, Maurice and Reginald. Leon Levy was a bachelor and the uncle of the two boys. Upon the death of both Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Hirsch, Mr. Levy had the house built in trust for the two boys, his wards, and resided with them as guardian.

Although the house design of 1401 Castle Court Boulevard is very similar to one that appeared in the Russell Brown Company catalogue in January 1919 (Design No. 218), it has not been documented that it was actually designed or built by Brown. However, Mr. Brown had a presence in Castle Court during this period. An advertisement for the Russell Brown Company appeared in the *Houston Daily Post* on December 19, 1917 which stated that a new Real Estate Department office had been opened for Castle Court, Montrose, Avondale, Bute, Rossmoyne and Southmore. The information about the two newspaper articles was made available from research by Gary Coover.

According to research by the applicant and information from a Hirsch descendant, Maurice J. Hirsch was the son of Samuel Hirsch and was president of Hirsch Brothers. His brother, Reginald, was Vice President. Through their mother's family, the Hirsch brothers were part owners in Levy's Dry Goods, which was a major competitor of Foleys and Sakowitz. While their fortunes may not have matched the oil or lumber rich Houstonians of the period, the Hirschs and Levys were prominent among the elite Jewish merchants in Houston.

Further research by the applicant revealed that Maurice married his wife, Marjorie in 1934. His brother, Reginald, married his wife, Mildred in 1936. Each son brought his bride to live at the home on Castle Court Boulevard and the two families shared the home until 1944. At that time, Maurice and his wife moved to 965 Woodrow. Reginald, his wife and two sons, Leon Samuel and Reginald Alfred, continued to live there. Mildred is listed as a widow in the 1960 City Directory. She continued to live in the house until 1968 when the house was sold to the Travis Club for \$28,500. The house was vacant until 1970, when the Travis Club leased it to Alcoholics Anonymous. It appears that the Travis Club demolished the original two-story garage apartment at

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the rear of the property in the late 1960's. The Burkitt Foundation acquired the property in 1983 for \$240,000 and leased the property to Casa de Esperanza, a home for abandoned children. They occupied the home until 1993 when the Houston Area Womens Center began operating a shelter for battered women. They continued operation of the center until 1997.

The house is the most elaborately appointed and earliest example of the Prairie style of architecture in the Castle Court neighborhood. Identifying features include pier and beam foundation, a low-pitched, hip roof with widely overhanging eaves supported by paired, oversized brackets. A dormer accentuates the roof above the center bay. The house is a three bay, two-story residence constructed of red brick veneer. Attached to the east elevation is a porte-cochere with an enclosed sleeping porch above. The house features both paired and triple, wood-sash double-hung windows with 9/1 lights. The main entry features a wood door with 9-divided light upper windows and paired 9-divided light sidelights on either side of entry door. The porch features massive brick columns. The columns on either side of main entry bay penetrate the hip roof of the porch and extend up to form square newel posts for an upper balconette. The porch balustrade consists of a series of balusters of alternating widths which is repeated in the balustrade of the balconette. A massive, solid wood frieze which arches as it abuts the columns extends across each bay opening and sides of the main porch and across each opening of the porte-cochere.

### **RESTORATION HISTORY/CURRENT CONDITION:**

The original, two-story garage and quarters above (probably constructed of brick and with a hip roof) was located at the southeast corner of the lot. It was demolished by the Travis Club in the 1960's. They also replaced the original tile roof on the house with a composition one. The applicant applied for a certificate of appropriateness to restore the building as well as make some compatible alterations on February 12, 1998. The applicant has plans to rehabilitate the single-family dwelling for adaptive use as two townhouse-type apartments while retaining its single-family appearance. The applicant plans to construct another compatible building at the rear of the property which will house additional townhouse-type apartments. However, the construction plans for that particular building was not pertinent to the application for a certificate of appropriateness which was granted by the HAHC on February 12, 1998. The certificate of appropriateness was granted for the following proposed work: **North elevation (front):** remove existing aluminum screen door (later alteration) and the horizontal 2 by 4's which were nailed across front window sashes (later alteration); no alterations will be made to the main facade of the house other than the restoration of the paired, divided 6 light windows in the dormer which will match existing; **East elevation (left side):** in order to add necessary square footage for Unit 1, the applicant is requesting approval to enlarge the porte-cochere (currently 13' wide X 17' deep) extending it toward the rear another 9' (shaded area on site plan); applicant also requests approval to replace the existing hip roof over this portion and reconfigure it also as a hip roof to cover the existing porte-cochere and its extension; said new hip roof will tie into existing main hip roof as shown on roof plan; construct a pier and beam foundation inside port-cochere matching main house and enclose to match main house using same window placement/configuration as upper sleeping porch; salvage all brick and windows to reuse; new brick and windows will match existing but will be used to rear of building; wall enclosures will incorporate and retain the existing solid wood frieze which arches as it abuts the massive brick columns across the openings of the porte-cochere; **South elevation (rear):** replace the existing two-story, wood frame screened-in porch with hip roof with a two-story addition (7' X 13') (shaded area on site plan) constructed with pier and beam foundation, wall cladding, windows, hip roof, soffit, fascia and eave overhang to match existing of house (reusing existing brick and windows and new construction materials to match existing).

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### APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

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

(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 D 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.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommends designation of the Maurice J. and Reginald A. Hirsch House as a landmark to the Planning Commission since the application complies with the criteria of the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

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SITE LOCATION MAP

MAURICE J. AND REGINALD A. HIRSCH HOUSE

1401 CASTLE COURT BOULEVARD

NOT TO SCALE