

**SITE NAME:**

**SITE LOCATION:** 1235 Harvard Street – Houston Heights Historic District East

**Owner:** Paul E. Nunu

**Applicant:** Same

Time Frame	Date Accepted	90-day Waiver
	June-3-2009	Sept-1-2009

**SITE INFORMATION:**

Lots 3 and 4, Block 187, Houston Heights Subdivision, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic two-story, wood frame residence.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:**

On or about June 2, 2009 the applicant was cited by the building official for the removal of all exterior wood siding and installing new horizontal lap cementitious siding without proper permit or approved Certificate of Appropriateness. The applicant requests approval of a certificate of appropriateness for the following work:

- Remove existing horizontal lap wood siding from all exterior elevations;
- Install horizontal lap cementitious siding on all exterior elevations; Siding will feature a similar 5" reveal as original;

**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:**

At the time of the Houston Heights Historic District East survey, the primary building, constructed circa 1905, was classified on the inventory as "potentially contributing" due to minor changes to the porch balustrade which is considered reversible. The historic home is a significant two story Queen Anne building which features an unusual bow front bay.

The property is contained within the boundary of the Houston Heights Historic District East, which was designated by City Council as a historic district. The Historic District is contained within the boundaries of Houston Heights, which was designated as a Multiple Resource Area (MRA) on June 22, 1983 by the National Park Service. Houston Heights was designated as a MRA because it was at one time an independent municipality of less than 50,000 inhabitants (1896-1918), a requirement of the designation, and the area also contains a large number of buildings that have been individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places, another requirement. On April 10, 1991 in conjunction with the Houston Heights Centennial Celebration that year, Houston City Council designated the entire Houston Heights Subdivision as Houston Heights Historic District of the City of Houston (Resolution No. 91-15). The resolution proclaimed Houston Heights as "one of the first planned communities in the State of Texas ... the largest intact historic district in the city .... tangible evidence of Houston's architectural and historical legacy .... an area with great potential for enhancement and revitalization as a point of interest in the city." While that designation granted no powers or conferred no rights or privileges associated with the designation, it was the second of such resolutions passed by City Council to recognize neighborhoods in Houston for their historical and architectural significance to the city. The resolution designating Houston Heights had also been recommended to City Council by the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC) at the request of the Houston Heights Association (HHA). The action taken by City Council was also warranted as Houston Heights had been honored previously in 1988 when the Houston Heights Urban Main Street Project on West 19<sup>th</sup> Street was established by the Texas Historical Commission and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The program successfully achieved economic development and at the same time preserved the historic buildings which enhanced the success and made it unique. The Texas Historical Commission approved a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark (Subject Marker) for Houston Heights which was dedicated during the Centennial Celebration in 1991. Many other sites and buildings in Houston Heights have been designated as Recorded Texas Historical Landmarks as well. After the passage of the city's Historic Preservation Ordinance in 1995 by City Council, many buildings have been designated also as City of Houston Landmarks and Protected Landmarks.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

**AGENDA ITEM: If**

**HPO File No. 090606**

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Houston Heights was so well planned from its inception by the Omaha and South Texas Land Company in 1891, and as the result, it became very attractive to investors, and Houston Heights grew rapidly and eventually was incorporated as a city in 1896. It flourished as a distinct municipality until 1918 when the residents, by vote, agreed to be annexed to the City of Houston. The reason that the citizens of Houston Heights voted for the annexation to Houston was primarily to guarantee a broader tax base with which to support their public schools. Houston Heights voted "dry" in 1912, guaranteeing that alcohol may not be sold – an extremely unique ordinance adopted by Houston Heights and continuously enforced by the City of Houston. Houston Heights grew rapidly in the 20th century, but continued to maintain its unique identity, which was reflected in its original planning. Today the area still maintains the feeling of a distinctive, self contained "small town" with its predominantly small 19<sup>th</sup> century, one-story cottages and larger, two-story Victorian-era homes, and numerous early 20<sup>th</sup> century bungalow style buildings. It also boasts a thriving business district on 19<sup>th</sup> Street (now predominantly antique shops, retail and restaurants) and a large industrial district west of the business section. The neighborhood also contains the original city hall of Houston Heights (also the fire station and jail). Also located there are a number of historic churches, theatres, corner stores, private and public parks, fraternal halls and schools.

When the MRA designation was bestowed on Houston Heights (called "The Heights") in 1983, it was recommended by the National Park Service, as well as by the Texas Historical Commission, that multiple historic districts should be established within the boundaries of Houston Heights, since it was at one time a city and contained a significant collection of historic buildings. Generally the approach for an historic district designation is to designate the entire neighborhood, or suburb, as it was originally platted. Houston Heights was originally a town and planned as such from its beginning, and when it was annexed by Houston and became a subdivision of Houston, it still retained its diversity, but was not like other subdivisions of Houston. Thus the approach for the creation of several historic districts within Houston Heights tries to uniquely identify and denote that diversity of development found in Houston Heights and recognize it. Several subsequent surveys of the historic resources of Houston Heights have also recommended that same approach, including the extensive and costly survey in 1994 which was funded by the Houston Heights Association. With the designation of the historic district, those past recommendations are being addressed. The action was supported by the HHA in response to the desire of a majority of Houston Heights residents.

**Sec. 33-241. Same-Alteration, rehabilitation, restoration, and construction.**

(a) The HAHC shall issue a certificate of appropriateness for the alteration, rehabilitation, restoration or construction of an exterior feature of (I) any landmark, (II) any building, structure or object in an historic district, or (III) any building, structure or object that is part of an archaeological site, upon finding that the application satisfies the following criteria, as applicable:

S D NA S - satisfies D - does not satisfy NA - not applicable

- (1) The proposed activity must retain and preserve the historical character of the property;

**The proposed activity, the majority of which has already been completed, includes the removal of the original, horizontal lap wood siding and the installation of cement siding in its place. The removal of the buildings historic "skin" results in the loss of an important historic component, the majority of which is visible from a public right of way. To lose the original wood siding will result in a building which is almost completely modern on the exterior. The end result is the potential for a formerly historic building to become essentially modern through the loss of historic exterior and interior materials.**

- (6) New materials to be used for any exterior feature must be compatible with the materials being replaced in composition, design, texture and other visual qualities;

**The proposed materials are not compatible with the materials that were replaced in composition, design, texture and other visual qualities outlined in Criteria 1. Cementitious type cement fiber board siding does not feature the same depth or visual qualities of historic beveled wood siding.**

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**Beveled wood siding features a profile which tapers from a thickness of approximately 1/8” at the top to a much wider base which is normally 3/4” in thickness. The tapering thickness of beveled wood siding lends greater visual depth to the exterior skin of the building which is an important physical attribute. Cementitious type siding is very thin with an overall thickness of 1/4” in depth and does not feature any taper.**

- (9) The proposed design for alterations or construction must not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material and must be compatible with the size, scale, material and character of the property and the area in which it is located;

**The cladding of any historic building represents the single, largest visible portion of a building’s historic fabric. To remove the historic cladding of the building represents the loss of a substantial amount of historic material. Furthermore, cementitious type siding appears flat on the building due to its minimal thickness of 1/4.”**

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Denial of the certificate of appropriateness as requested by the applicant.

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## **CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

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**Site Location Map**  
**Not to scale**



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**Before Photograph  
Not to scale**



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