

**SITE NAME:** Alabama Theatre  
**SITE LOCATION:** 2922 South Shepherd

**AGENDA ITEM: Ig**  
**HPO File No. 091007**

**Owner:** Weingarten Realty

**Applicant:** Same

Time Frame	Date Accepted	90-day Waiver
	October-05-2009	January-03-2010

**SITE INFORMATION:**

East 2.7625 acres known as Tract 1, Abstract 696, O. Smith Survey, located at the northwest corner of S. Shepherd and W. Alabama, and also Lots 1-7 and Tract 8A, Block 5, Lanier Place Addition, located at the southwest corner of Kipling and S. Shepherd (formerly part of the original Lot 48, O. Smith Survey), Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site includes a former movie theatre with attached one-story, stucco clad commercial buildings on either side.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:**

The previous tenant removed two business signs located above the marquee after they vacated the building. The applicant requests approval of a certificate of appropriateness for the following work:

- Remove two exterior business signs located above the marquee.

**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:**

The Alabama Theatre and Community Shopping Center is a rare Houston example of an early “suburban” Modernistic shopping center and entertainment complex designed to meet the needs of the burgeoning automobile culture which began in earnest in America during the 1920s and 30s. The Alabama Theatre and Alabama Community Shopping Center were determined by the Texas Historical Commission on September 5, 2006 as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Houston City Council designated the building as a Landmark of the City of Houston, whose application was initiated by the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and considered by them on June 13, 2007.

The Modernistic buildings are located at 2900-2946 South Shepherd Drive. The Alabama Theatre was constructed in 1938-1939 by Interstate Theatre Company, and opened on November 2, 1939. Interstate, a large national company, at one time operated 10 movie houses in Houston, including the Garden Oaks, Majestic, Metropolitan, River Oaks, and Village Theatres. They also operated more than 150 theatres located throughout the country. Interstate Theatre Company hired Dallas architect, W. Scott Dunne, who by 1928 had specialized his practice in theatre design. Dunne designed the Alabama Theatre as well as other notable theatres, including Houston’s Tower Theatre on Westheimer and Dallas’ Texas Theatre.

The Alabama Theatre is notable for its imposing façade which forms both the physical and visual axis of the Alabama Shopping Center. The 800-seat theater’s most distinguishing exterior feature is its prominent fluted center bay/canopy. The shopping wings flanking the theater were constructed by the Clayton Foundation in 1940 to service the surrounding River Oaks, Winlow Place, Montrose, and the Museum District neighborhoods. The Clayton Foundation, whose trustees were prominent Houstonians Benjamin, Julia, and William Clayton, commissioned well-known architect, Kenneth Franzheim, to design the wings.

The Alabama Theatre ceased functioning as a theater in 1983. It was extensively restored and sympathetically converted to a retail bookstore in 1984-1985, which received award-winning recognition. The conversion maintained and restored much of the significant elements of the historic building’s ornate interiors as well as the exterior, while simultaneously meeting the changing needs of future tenants.

The Alabama Community Shopping Center, which is built on either side and attached to the theatre, has had its façade and storefronts remodeled several times. The most recent remodeling was completed in 2002-2003 by Weingarten. Even though the architectural significance of the facades may have been diminished as a result of the alterations, the building is nevertheless historic and significant for its association with the Clayton Foundation, which constructed the building, as

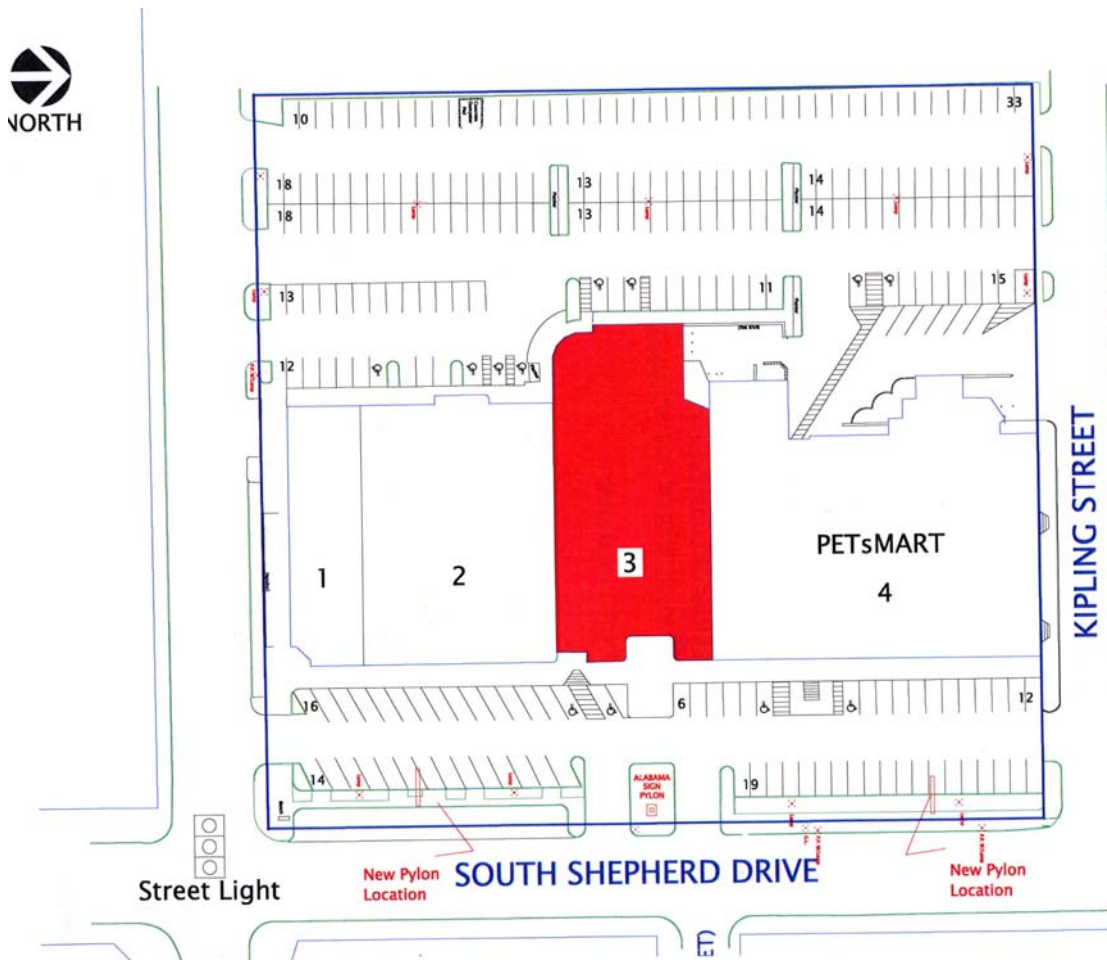
**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**



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

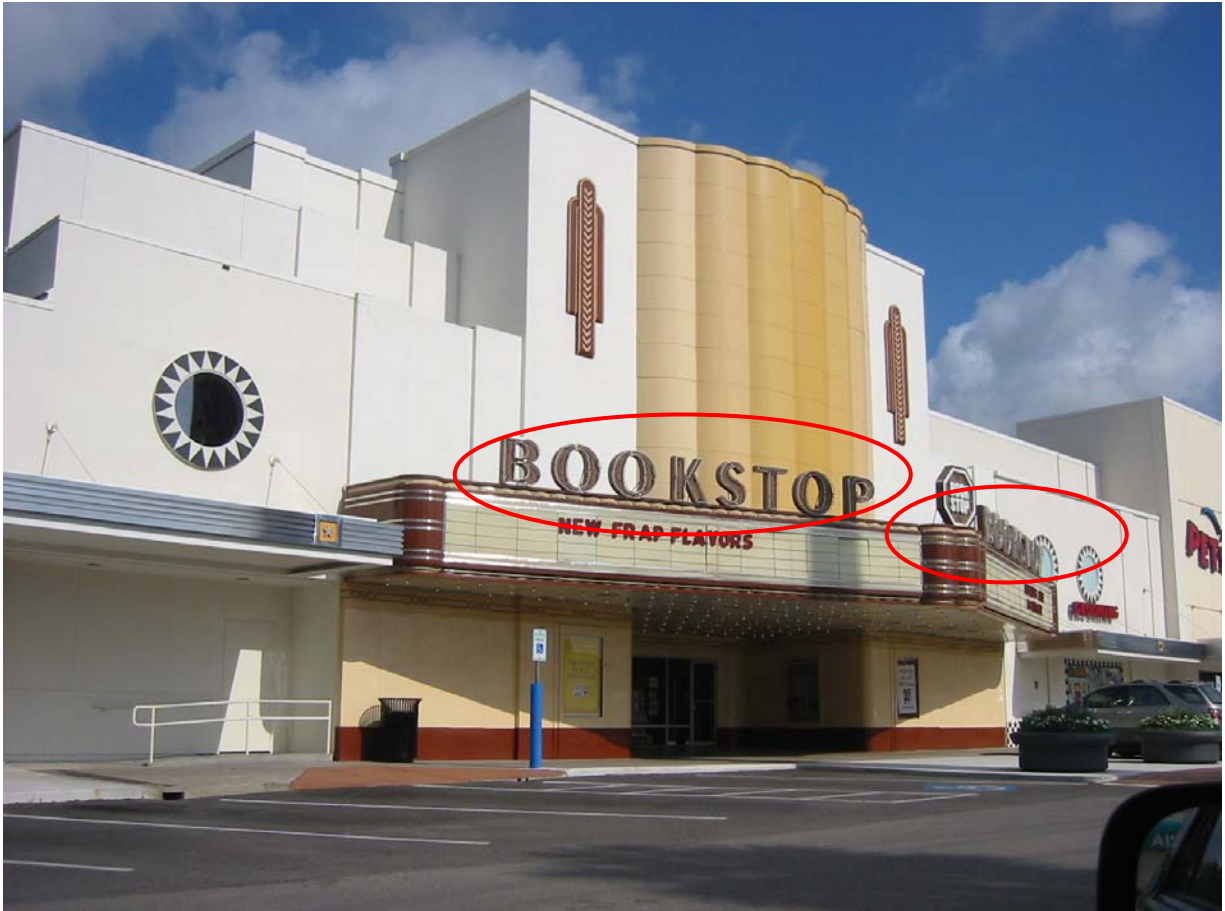


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**Before photograph highlighting business signs  
Not to Scale**



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**After Photograph**  
**Not to Scale**

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