LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Claud B. Barrett House
OWNER: Scott S. and Judith S. Nyquist
APPLICANT: Scott S. and Judith S. Nyquist
LOCATION: 1527 Kirby Drive – River Oaks
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Ia
HPO FILE NO.: 07L188
DATE ACCEPTED: Sept-7-2007
HAHC HEARING DATE: Sept-26-2007
PC MEETING DATE: Oct-11-2007

SITE INFORMATION

Lot 3, Block 36, River Oaks Section 1, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site includes a two-story house built by the William G. Farrington Company in 1937.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The house at 1527 Kirby Drive was designed and built by the William G. Farrington Company for Claud B. Barrett in 1937. Barrett was a prominent Houstonian known for his leadership in banking, energy and civic matters. He served as the Chief Executive Officer of Texaco, the founder of the Chemical Bank in Houston, and President of the Chamber of Commerce. He is best known for his aggressive campaigning to establish the Space program in Texas, which materialized when Johnson Space Center was established in Houston. He also advocated for airport expansion which resulted in the construction of Houston Intercontinental Airport. Architectural Historian, Stephen Fox, considers Farrington's company one of the best builders of design/build houses in Houston in the period spanning 1935-1942. Farrington was also an active civic leader, as well as the developer of several prominent Houston subdivisions, including Tanglewood, Braeswood and Monticello. The Barrett House qualifies for Landmark Designation under Criteria 1, 3, 4 and 6.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The house located at 1527 Kirby Drive was built by the William G. Farrington Company in 1937 for Claud B. Barrett. The home attracted early notice and, on July 4, 1937, a drawing appeared in the Houston Post with comments including:

> *"Claud Barrett, district sales manager of the Texas company, is building a large residence located at 1527 Kirby Drive in River Oaks at a cost of $22,000. The home will be of Early American colonial type architecture.*
>
> *The William G. Farrington Company designed and will build the massive residence. The home will be erected on a beautifully wooded tract of land ...*
>
> *On the first floor, the house will contain a large entrance hall, living room, kitchen, butler's pantry and study paneled in clear cypress with beam ceiling and wood burning fireplace. The second floor arrangement consists of a master bedroom with a glazed in sleeping porch, private bath and dressing room, guest room with private bath and a third bedroom with private bath and dressing room. Other than the paneled study, the entire house will be plastered.*

The outside of the home will be of brick veneer construction with the brick to be painted white."

Claud B. Barrett was born in Georgia in 1897. He was a graduate of the University of Georgia Law School and a World War I veteran. He came to Houston in 1935 as a district sales manager for the Texas Company (a predecessor to Texaco). At the time, the Texas Company was listed in the City Directory as "Producers, Refiners, Wholesalers and Retailers of Crude Petroleum and its Products." Barrett later was promoted to Senior Vice President, then Chief Executive Officer, and eventually a member of the Board of Directors of Texaco by the late 1950s. He would remain on the board until his retirement from Texaco in 1962.

His position as CEO of Texaco was only one of the facets of his life that received recognition. In 1960, Barrett became Chairman of the Board of Houston First Federal Savings and Loan Association, and five years later founded Chemical Bank of Houston. In 1982, Chemical Bank of Houston was acquired by Texas Commerce Bank.

In 1963 and 1964, Barrett served as president of the Chamber of Commerce. According to a Houston Chronicle article that appeared upon his death in November 1983, he "aggressively campaigned to bring what is now known as the Johnson Space Center and called on city government to move from the 'horse and buggy days' to the Space Age." Barrett was also instrumental in pushing for the construction of Houston Intercontinental Airport.

Barrett's many community activities included: co-founder and president of the Good Samaritan League which gave scholarships to nursing students; president of the Houston Club; member of the Board of Methodist Hospital; president of the Kiwanis Club; Board of Trustees of St. Paul's Methodist Church (1951-1976); member of the Board of The Boy Scouts of America; and the United Fund. He was the recipient of a Citation by the National Council of Christians and Jews. At the time of his death at age 86, his pallbearers included Claud Hamill, W. B. ("Tex") Trammell, and Clyde Verhyden among others.

The house at 1527 Kirby Drive belonged to a series of prominent businessmen after the ownership of Claud Barrett. In the mid 1960s, Barrett sold the home to Maynard E. Montrose, the president of Hughes Tool Company. By 1972, Montrose had sold the house to Robert H. Allen, the president of Gulf Resource and Chemical Company. Allen lived in the home for almost 20 years, when it was sold to Thomas G. Armstrong. The current owners, Scott and Judy Nyquist, purchased the home from Armstrong in 1998.

The William G. Farrington Company was a well-known Houston-based architectural design and construction company. William G. Farrington was born on September 10, 1901 in Kingfisher, Oklahoma. He was a graduate of Muskogee and Ardmore public schools, and was educated as an engineer at the University of Cincinnati before coming to Houston in 1926.

According to the Houston Chronicle, over the next forty years Farrington would become a "major developer of commercial and residential properties and a leader in Houston civic, educational and religious affairs." After coming to Houston, Farrington worked for the San Jacinto Trust Company, but eventually went into business for himself. He started by building individual homes and later moved into the development of subdivisions. Farrington is probably best known as the developer of the Tanglewood subdivision. According to Architectural Historian, Stephen Fox, he started Tanglewood in 1948 as the post-war successor to River Oaks. According to Stephen Fox, the highlights of Farrington's post-war years were: The Lamar-River Oaks Shopping Center (Westheimer and River Oaks Boulevard), the extensions of the River Oaks Shopping Center on West Gray (where Tony Mandola's is located, and the

companion building across the street), and the Parkwood Apartments (recently demolished by Baylor College of Medicine). He also developed Braeswood and Monticello additions, Post Oak Shopping Center, Fairmont addition, and others.

In 1937, the William G. Farrington Company, advertised as "Architect-Builders" of homes, was located at 2139 Sunset Boulevard. An advertisement of the time is presented below:

> *"The freedom-loving spirit of the American people, especially in the South, demands the freedom of a home. The Colonial home appeals most to the American spirit. Adapting the fundamental structure of walls and roof to our own background and our own needs, we have made the Colonial home a characteristic expression of national life which will endure as long as its sturdiness stands for the strength of American people, its livableness for their practicality and ingenuity, its beauty for their ideals."*

Other William G. Farrington Company homes in River Oaks include:

- 2434 Pelham Drive, 1933
- 2509 Pelham Drive, 1934
- 2241 Chilton Road, 1937 (demolished)
- 1821 Sharp Place, 1937
- 1913 Sharp Place, 1937
- 1917 Sharp Place, 1937
- 1921 Sharp Place, 1937
- 3460 Wickersham, 1938
- 2941 Chevy Chase, 1938 (demolished)

In addition to his building activities, Farrington was very involved in the Houston community. In 1945, he was elected as Trustee of the Houston School Board, and he served as President of the Board from 1949 to 1951. His obituary lists a range of activities including: Board member of St. Luke's Hospital; University of Houston Board of Regents; Board member of Ben Franklin Savings and Loan Association; Board member of Houston Lighting and Power Company; and senior warden of St. John's Episcopal Church. He was a charter member of the National Association of Home Builders and the first president of the Houston chapter.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

The Claud B. Barrett House at 1527 Kirby Drive is situated on a gentle curve on Kirby Drive in a section of River Oaks that retains much of its distinctive pre-World War II character. The house was designed in 1937 in the Georgian style, although it features several stylistic departures from a strict interpretation of Georgian architecture. The house maintains a very high degree of architectural integrity when compared with the July 4, 1937 depiction of the home in the Houston Post.

The house is two stories tall with a gable-end roof oriented parallel to the street. The asymmetrical layout is composed of a two-bay central portion that is placed forward of flanking two-story wings. A large masonry chimney flue is located at the left (north) gable end of the main portion of the house. The forward projecting center portion of the home's facade features a bay window on the north and the front door on the south. The original doorway features pilasters capped by a broken arched pediment. At the

center of the pediment is a pineapple shaped finial, which is a historical symbol of hospitality. Above the doorway is an oculus window whish is divided into eight panes. Three double hung multi-lite wood sash windows, which are ganged together, are located directly above the first floor bay window.

The left (north) wing of the house features a low hipped roof porch area, supported by a small arcade with four columns. A combination of French doors and double hung, multi-lite sash windows are located at the porch area. The second story, above the arcade porch, features a pair of small eyebrow dormer windows. The exterior is clad with red brick veneer.

The current owners, Scott and Judy Nyquist, purchased the home in 1998 and have updated the air conditioning/heating, electrical, and plumbing systems; attached existing quarters to the upstairs of the homes; and have modified the interior kitchen space to better incorporate a 1960s addition to the back of the home.

The home was featured in the March 2006 "art issue" of Paper City. The article highlighted the owners' collection of contemporary art juxtaposed with the 1930s home.

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

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Houston Post, "Texas Company Official's $22,000 Residence", July 4, 1937.

Houston Chronicle, Obituary of Claud B. Barrett, November 18, 1983.

Houston Chronicle, "Founder of Chemical Bank Dies," November 18, 1983.

Houston Chronicle, Obituary of William G. Farrington, December 1, 1967.

Houston Chronicle, "Farrington Rites Set; Was Land Developer", December 1, 1967.

Houston Chronicle, Farrington Advertisement, September 12, 1937.

River Oaks Property Owners Card File.

Stephen Fox e-mail to Kelley Trammell, September 12, 2007

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

The HAHC and the Planning 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	NA		S - satisfies NA - not applicable
☑	☐	(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);

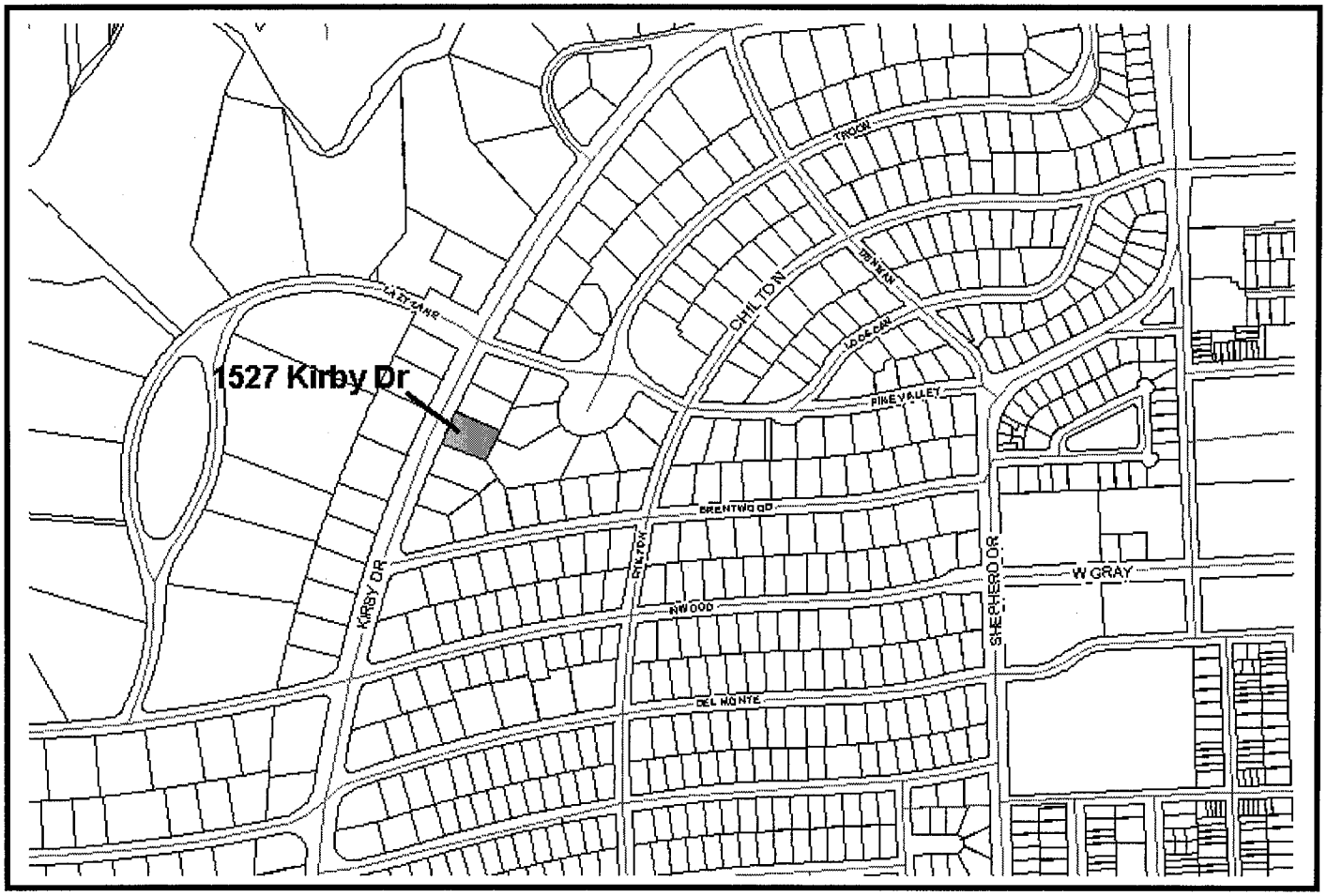
☑ ☐ (6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation (Sec. 33-224(a)(6);

☐ ☑ (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).

☐ ☑ (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).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Houston Planning Commission accepts the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommends to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Claud B. Barrett House at 1527 Kirby Drive.

SITE LOCATION MAP
CLAUD B. BARRETT HOUSE
1527 KIRBY DRIVE
NOT TO SCALE