

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Ira and Minnette McFarland House

**OWNERS:** Richard and Josephine Jackson

**APPLICANTS:** Same as Owners

**LOCATION:** 3251 Ella Lee Lane – River Oaks

**AGENDA ITEM:** III.B

**HPO FILE NO.:** 13L289

**DATE ACCEPTED:** Oct-15-2013

**HAHC HEARING DATE:** Nov-07-2013

### SITE INFORMATION

Lot 4, Block 22, River Oaks Sec. 4., City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic two-story, brick single family residence.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Ira and Minnette McFarland House was designed by architect Addison McElroy for the River Oaks Corporation. McElroy built many houses in River Oaks and around Houston and later designed and renovated churches throughout Texas. The residence at 3251 Ella Lee Lane was built as a speculative house in 1931 and purchased from the River Oaks Corporation by the McFarland family in 1934. The home is designed in the Neoclassical style and is reminiscent of many of the houses in New Orleans. Ira McFarland worked for Texaco and his wife, Minnette, was active in volunteering with numerous Houston organizations. After her husband's death, Minnette remained in the house until the 1970s.

The Ira and Minnette McFarland House meets criteria 1, 4, and 6 for Landmark Designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The house at 3251 Ella Lee Lane was built as a speculative home by the River Oaks Corporation. The company ran a quarter-page sized ad in both the *Houston Chronicle* and the *Houston Post* in November, 1931. The advertisement featured a rendering of the home and the following text:

“Say what you will, the architecture of old New Orleans is an ideal type for our Gulf Coast. And this new home in River Oaks is an excellent adaptation of New Orleans architecture to the River Oaks environment. It faces north, with upstairs and downstairs porches front and rear. Those in the rear, facing south, are screened, so that the upper porch may be used for sleeping and the lower porch for a summer sitting room. All three bedrooms and dining and living rooms have a southern exposure. The architect has shown a marked skill in his handling of the unique entrance portico and stair hall. A two-car garage has a servant's room with bath on the second floor.

This new home in River Oaks will be open to visitors at 4 o'clock this afternoon. If you should be unable to find it, inquire for directions at the River Oaks office, located at River Oaks' southern entrance at Westheimer Road.”

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The house, while well-advertised, took several years to sell. Ira McFarland purchased the home in 1934. A November 5, 1934 newspaper article entitled “Homes in River Oaks Net \$27,000” in the *Daily Court Review* details McFarland’s purchase:

“One residence fronting Ellalee (sic) Lane near the intersection of River Oaks Boulevard was purchased by Ira McFarland for a consideration of \$11,000.”

After Ira McFarland died, his wife Minnette McFarland remained in the house until the 1970s.

### *Ira and Minnette McFarland*

Ira “Ike” McFarland was born in Bradford, Pennsylvania, on August 8, 1879. He began his career for Texaco in Beaumont in 1902 as a telegraph operator. From there, he rose through the ranks as an accountant, paymaster, auditor and general auditor, before being named the comptroller of the company in 1913. He finished his career in 1944 as the Comptroller of Texaco.

Ira McFarland died on April 7, 1964. He was still living in the house at Ella Lee at that time. He was a Presbyterian and a member of the Texaco Quarter Century Club, Texaco Country Club, Houston Club and a charter member of the Houston Country Club.

Minnette “Minnie” W. McFarland was born January 29, 1892 and died April 27, 1979. She was an active volunteer with the Houston Grand Opera and other Houston organizations. The McFarlands had no children.

### *Subsequent Owners*

Frank Briscoe purchased the home in the 1970s. It later belonged to William and Meg Daniel, Edward and Cecilia Knyphausen, and Jacob Stolt-Nielsen. The current owners purchased the home in 1998.

### *Addison McElroy*

William Addison McElroy was born on October 5, 1897 in Missouri, the son of a Presbyterian preacher. He lived in Missouri, Oklahoma and Kentucky before his family settled in Texas. He graduated from Burney Military Academy and Austin College before pursuing a degree at the Rice Institute. He was a graduate of the Rice Institute’s School of Architecture in 1922. He went straight to work in Houston designing homes and churches. In 1926, he designed homes for developer George T. Broun; many of these were in River Oaks, including 2148 Inwood Drive. He also developed homes on his own in River Oaks and Southampton, among other subdivisions. The latter part of his career was mainly spent designing or renovating Presbyterian churches in small towns across Texas.

In addition to 3251 Ella Lee Lane, McElroy designed the following homes in River Oaks:

- 3244 Chevy Chase (demolished)
- 3708 Chevy Chase (demolished)
- 2233 Chilton Road, 1930 (developed by McElroy)
- 3235 Ella Lee Lane
- 3245 Ella Lee Lane (demolished)
- 3263 Ella Lee Lane
- 3238 Huntington (demolished)
- 2148 Inwood Drive
- 2511 Inwood Drive
- 3219 Locke Lane
- 2114 Pelham Drive
- 2131 Pelham Drive (demolished)
- 3218 Reba Drive
- 3239 Reba Drive
- 3244 Reba Drive (demolished)
- 2136 Stanmore Drive (demolished)
- 2414 Stanmore Drive (demolished)

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- 2418 Stanmore Drive
- 2428 Stanmore Drive (demolished)
- 2508 Stanmore Drive (demolished)
- 2514 Stanmore Drive
- 2156 Troon Road
- 3648 Wickersham

Among the other notable buildings McElroy designed in Houston were:

- 1812 South Blvd, 1930 (demolished)
- Houston Little Theatre, 703 Chelsea Blvd., 1930 (demolished)
- 1933 Norfolk Street, 1933

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

3251 Ella Lee Lane features 4,419 square feet sited facing north on a 9,620 square foot lot. The home is designed in the Neoclassical style and what was termed the “New Orleans” style, because it was reminiscent of the Greek Revival mansions located in and around New Orleans.

The house is a solid rectangular mass topped with a side gabled roof. A two-story front portico with full height square columns and a front gabled roof projects from the center of the mass, forming the entry. A decorative fanlight surrounded by horizontally placed wood siding decorates the front gable. A wide entablature of decorative wood runs around the home under the roofline, which projects slightly over the façade.

The house is faced in brick, and is unique in that it features horizontal brick beltlines spaced about 18 inches apart. These beltlines run the height of the house. The brick has been painted.

The entrance of the home is placed in the center and is inset from the main mass of the home. Double, solid wood front entry doors are topped with a glass transom and flanked by oval windows. On the second story above the front doors, wood and glass French doors open on to a balcony. The balcony railing is made of decorative iron. The French doors are flanked by two 6-over-6 wood sash windows.

To either side of the entry bay on the first-story are French doors of glass and wood with decorative iron balconets. Each door has working wood shutters. Above the doors on the second story façade are 6-over-6 wood sash windows with working wood shutters.

The home is in excellent condition.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Houston City Directories, various publishers

“McFarland, Texaco Vet, Dies Age 84,” *Houston Chronicle*, April 8, 1964.

River Oaks Scrapbooks, River Oaks Collection, Houston Public Library.

Texas General Contractors’ Association Bulletin

Various resources from Ancestry.com

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



**EXHIBIT A**

**PHOTO**

IRA AND MINNETTE MCFARLAND HOUSE  
3251 ELLA LEE LANE



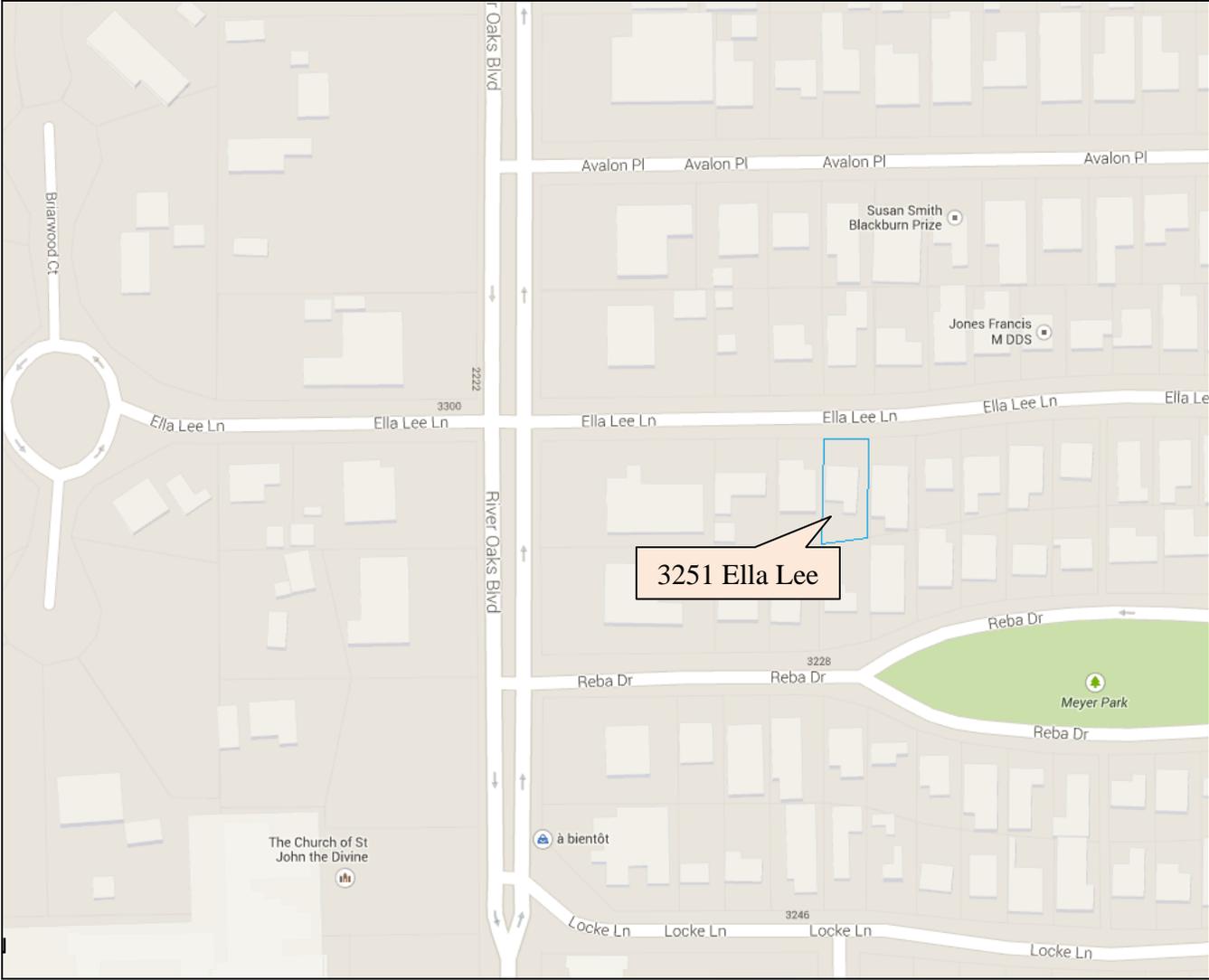
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## EXHIBIT B SITE MAP

IRA AND MINNETTE MCFARLAND HOUSE  
3251 ELLA LEE LANE

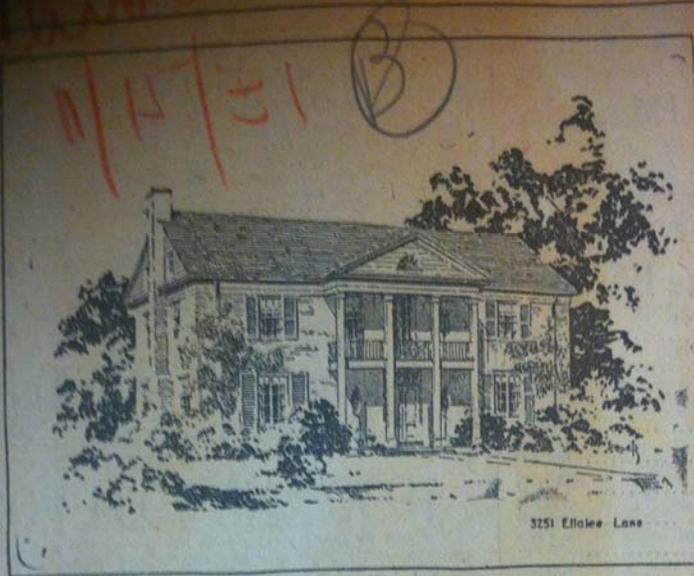


## EXHIBIT C

### NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT

IRA AND MINNETTE MCFARLAND HOUSE

3251 ELLA LEE LANE



3251 Ella Lee Lane

3251 ELLALEE LANE IN RIVER OAKS

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## River Oaks Corporation

*River Oaks presents the Boudreaux String Quartet in a concert of chamber music from Radio Station KTRH at 1 o'clock this afternoon.*

