

## PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Christian Home Missionary Baptist Church

**AGENDA ITEM:** A

**OWNERS:** Christian Home Missionary Baptist Church

**HPO FILE NO.:** HP2023\_0055

**APPLICANTS:** Reverend Lucious L. Davis, Sr., Pastor

**DATE ACCEPTED:** 03/09/2023

**LOCATION:** 3432 Rosalie Street, Houston, TX 77004

**HAHC HEARING:** 05/18/2023

**SITE INFORMATION:** Lots 6, 7 and 8, Block 16, Houston City Street Railway Section 4, Third Ward, Brick veneer church constructed in 1957.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Protected Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Christian Home Missionary Baptist Church is located within Houston's historic Third Ward and has a history dating from the early 1900s. The congregation was founded in 1906 by Reverend Benjamin Leroy.

Construction on the congregation's current church building began in 1957. The red brick church is a simple but classic design which incorporates mid-century architectural elements. The cornerstone was placed, and the building was dedicated in a ceremony on April 13, 1958.

The Third Ward includes numerous historic resources, but many do not have landmark or protected landmark status. Due to its central location, the neighborhood is facing intense development pressures resulting in the displacement of long-time residents and demolition of historic buildings.

The Pastor and members of the congregation are seeking a Protected Landmark Designation for the property in Third Ward to recognize, record and preserve the history of this significant historic church.

The Christian Home Missionary Baptist Church meets criteria 1, 3, 6 and 8 for a City of Houston Landmark. The CHMBC meets criteria 1 for a City of Houston Protected Landmark.

## **HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:**

### *THIRD WARD*

In 1840 Houston's charter was amended and the town was divided into four wards, with each ward electing two representatives to the municipal government. The southeast ward, initially nicknamed the “Silk Stocking District” because of the absence of railroads, became Third Ward. Following the end of slavery in Texas on June 19, 1865, Houston experienced an influx of formerly enslaved African-Americans moving to the city. Many moved to Third Ward, Freedman’s Town and other neighborhoods on the outskirts of Fourth Ward, and to the Frost town area of Second Ward.

The boundaries of Third Ward have shifted over time. Initially, the area was primarily rooted downtown, at the corner of Main and Congress, extending southeast. At one point, Harrisburg (which is in current-day East End) was considered part of Third Ward. Today US-45 (Gulf Freeway) demarcates the northern boundary, with Almeda Road to the west, and Old Spanish Trail and Griggs to the east. Emancipation Park is a well-known historic landmark in the community.

Due to Jim Crow laws mandating racial segregation in public places, the African-American church functioned as the backbone of the community and served as a venue for educational, social and political activities. In 1872, Reverend Jack Yates of Antioch Baptist Church and Reverend Elias Dibble of Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church spearheaded the purchase of land in Third Ward for the purpose of memorializing Juneteenth, which marked the abolition of slavery in Texas. Located on Dowling Street and known as Emancipation Park, the park they created was the first established for African-Americans in Houston. It became a facility for social, political, recreational and educational purposes. Dowling Street (now Emancipation Boulevard), the western boundary of Washington Terrace, became the main artery of the Third Ward community. African-American residents built their own churches, schools, businesses and other institutions. Many of those institutions still thrive today, including Texas Southern University.

In the 1920s, Third Ward surpassed Fourth Ward in population density, and began to attract more black institutions, including Houston Negro Hospital (now Riverside General Hospital), Yates High School (the second black high school in Houston) and Houston Colored Junior College (the antecedent of Texas Southern University). Both Third Ward and Fifth Ward became the birthplace of Bayou City Blues and multiple music and entertainment venues were established in the Third Ward, including the El Dorado Ballroom.

After World War I, the African American community and Third Ward grew exponentially, with an increase in the population from 22,929 to 66,357 from 1910 to 1930 according to census records. Like most African American communities during segregation, Third Ward was like a separate city within Houston, with Dowling Street as its main thoroughfare. The street was lined with black-owned businesses, churches, fraternal offices, apartment buildings, single-family housing, theaters, restaurants and nightclubs. While many of Houston's wards declined during the mid-twentieth century, Third Ward prospered during this period. By the mid-1960s, Third Ward had supplanted Fifth Ward as the center of black business in the city.

There is a long and rich history of social activism in Third Ward, from sit-downs by black college students to protest discriminatory policies in 1960, to housing the Urban League and the NAACP's offices. The noteworthy African American newspapers, *The Defender* and *The Forward Times*, both began in the Third Ward. An important community center was founded in 1969 – S.H.A.P.E. Community Center – a historically visible and involved community organization that “has led the way toward justice, equal opportunity and institution building in the city, state, nation and world.” In addition, Third Ward has a rich cultural legacy. The Ensemble Theatre, the Houston Museum of Art and Culture, and Project Row Houses were all born out of Third Ward. In addition, Dowling Street (named after Confederate commander Richard Dowling) was renamed Emancipation Avenue in 2017.

Third Ward contains numerous historic resources, but many still do not have landmark or protected landmark status. Due to its attractive location, the neighborhood faces intense development pressure resulting in displacement of long-time residents and demolition of historic housing stock. However, several organizations, nonprofits, and civic and governmental partnerships have begun to revitalize the area with a focus on preserving the community's culture and historic housing.

### *History of Christian Home Missionary Baptist Church*

The Christian Home Missionary Baptist Church grew out of a small mission band organized in 1906 by the Reverend Benjamin Leroy and his wife, Josephine. The church was originally located in the Scott Street "bend", but in late 1906 moved to its present location, 3436 Rosalie Street. The congregation's first church building was built in 1908 and stood until 1957.

Rev. Benjamin Leroy served from 1908 until 1930. The church's second pastor, Reverend William Snow became ill and passed away after erecting a small sanctuary and leading the church for just two years. Mother Phyllis Addison was an interim church leader following Reverend Snow's death in 1932.

In 1932, Reverend Lucious Basil Tolson became the third pastor. Under his leadership the new church building was constructed and dedicated in the late fifties. Its cornerstone was laid in a ceremony on April 13, 1958. In the same year, Reverend Tolson passed way after twenty-six years of leadership. His funeral was held on October 27, 1958.

On December 23, 1958, Reverend Mitchell W. Moore was ordained the fourth pastor of Christian Home Missionary Baptist. One of his main objectives for the congregation was to ensure its financial security. The church purchased property in the front and rear of the church during his tenure. On June 10, 1971, a mortgage burning service was held to celebrate that the \$100,000 church building was paid in full. Pastor Moore announced his retirement on March 10, 1985 due to an illness. He passed away July 6, 1990 after serving for twenty-seven years, from 1958-1985. Reverend Allen Anderson, Jr. became interim pastor, and served for nine months, between 1985-1986.

On February 3, 1986, Christian Home welcomed its fifth pastor, the Reverend Delbert R. Jefferson. Under Rev. Jefferson's leadership the congregation witnessed significant growth. He spearheaded construction of the Fellowship Hall which was dedicated June 30, 1991. The \$182,000 hall was paid in full at the time of construction. Reverend Jefferson announced in September 2013 that he would retire in May 2014, after nearly thirty years of service. In May 2014, the congregation held his retirement celebration. Reverend Pete Hawkins served as interim pastor for seven months during 2014-2015 while a search was conducted for a new pastor.

In January 2015, Reverend Lucious L. Davis, Sr. was elected the sixth pastor. He took the pulpit the first Sunday in February and was officially installed pastor on April 12, 2015. Pastor Davis received his doctorate degree from Bethany Divinity College and Seminary in June of 2022. Among Pastor Davis' many accomplishments are the improvements, upgrades, and enhancements to the church building.

## *Church Timeline*

1906: Mission Band formed from Community Charity Group. Reverend Benjamin Leroy became  
Pastor, assisted by wife, Josephine

1908: Beginning of Christian Home Missionary Baptist Church

1908-1930: Reverend Benjamin Leroy, Pastor and wife, Josephine

1930-1932: Reverend William Snow, Pastor

1932: Mother Phyllis Addison, Interim Pastor

1932-1958: Reverend Lucious Basil (L.B.) Tolson, Pastor with wife Mattie and following her death, wife Hulda

1958-1985: Reverend Mitchell W. Moore, Pastor, with wife Iantha

1985-1986: Reverend Allen Anderson, Jr., Interim Pastor

2014-2015: Reverend Pete Hawkins, Interim Pastor, with wife Corine

2015-present: Reverend Lucious L. Davis, pastor, with wife Kimberly

## **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY:**

In 1957, construction began on the new Christian Home Missionary Baptist Church. The church was built alongside the congregation's original church, which had a unique design featuring symmetrical towers on each side of the façade. The original church building was erected in 1908 and was demolished after the new one was built.

The Christian Home Baptist Church is a simple, red brick structure. The building is a midcentury interpretation of the classic center steeple church found in early rural and urban America. It includes many of the common design elements of a center steeple church including a tiered central tower, spire, louvered belfry and pyramidal roof.

The midcentury design influence is exhibited in the building's horizontal orientation and low-slung appearance. The typical verticality of a tall, narrow church tower has been replaced by a low, wider tower and gables. A long, flat awning roof and wide stadium steps at the front of the building emphasize its horizontal lines. The church's 1991 addition, Fellowship Hall, contributes to its midcentury appearance. Fellowship Hall is a long, low rectangular building on the left side of the church, punctuated with several narrow windows.

Like most center steeple churches, the building's front entrance is centered within the church tower. The tower is located at the intersection of two, low-pitched front-gabled roofs. Three steps stretching the width of the building lead to the front entrance. A pair of plate glass doors at the center of the tower are the main entrance to the church. Simple, modern iron rails are situated beside the double doors. A single glass entry door is positioned on each side of the main entrance. Above the entryways, a long flat

awning roof provides coverage. The left edge of the building holds its marble cornerstone, about two feet above the stairs. On the right edge of the building, a large sign is recessed within a brick pediment shaped enclosure.

Directly above the front entrance and centered within the church tower is a large, square, louvered belfry. Above the belfry, an expanse of brick concludes in a gray pyramidal asphalt roof. A small square-shaped, two-tiered cupola sits atop the roof. Above the cupola is a triangular spire.

The construction of the adjoining Fellowship Hall building greatly expanded church capacity. On December 9, 1990, a ground breaking service was held for Fellowship Hall, and construction began in February 1991. On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1991, the dedication for Fellowship Hall was held. The hall includes five classrooms, a modern kitchen, spacious multi-purpose room which seats 200 people, a Pastor's study, utility room and rest room. It is a long, single-story structure with a midcentury design that complements the historic church building.

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

## APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

### Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation

(a) The HAHC, 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	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;  |  |  |





**EXHIBIT A**  
**CHRISTIAN HOME BAPTIST CHURCH**  
3436 ROSALIE STREET



**EXHIBIT B**  
**PHOTO, CHURCH FAÇADE DETAIL**

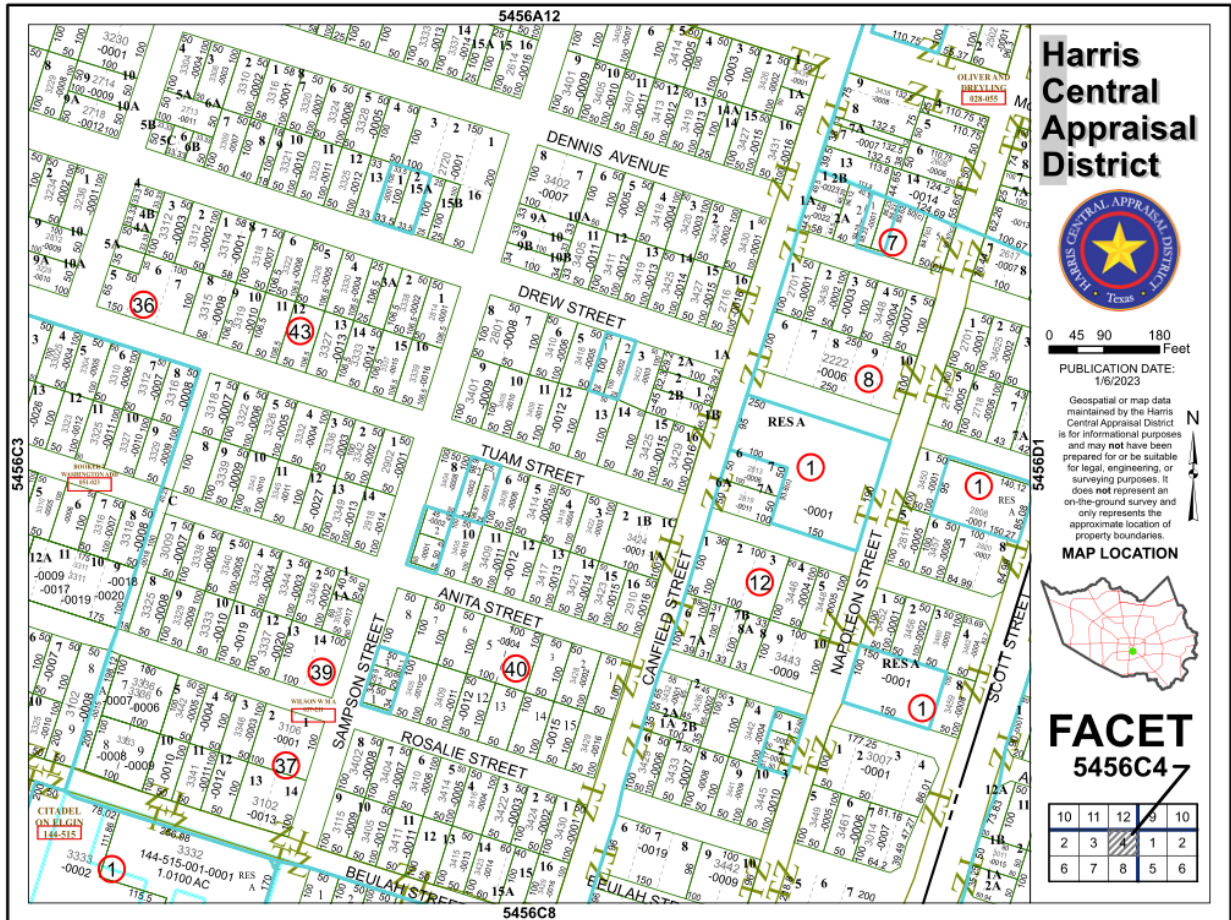


# CITY OF HOUSTON

Houston Archaeological & Historical Commission  
Department

Planning and Development

## EXHIBIT C HARRIS COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT FACET MAP



## EXHIBIT D

### CHURCH CONSTRUCTION PHOTO, 1957

