

## PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** The LULAC Council 60 Clubhouse

**OWNERS:** C. 60, Inc. LLC

Ray Valdez, Chair

502 Avondale Street

Houston, TX 77006

**AGENDA ITEM:** B1

**HPO FILE No.:** 20PL181

**APPLICANTS:** Sehila Casper, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Houston Field Office

**DATE ACCEPTED:** 2/1/2020

**LOCATION:** 3004 Bagby Street Houston, Texas 77006

**HAHC HEARING:** 4/9/2020

**SITE INFORMATION:** Lot 3 and 4, Fairgrounds Subdivision, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The historic site includes one extant historic two-story, stucco single-family structure.

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

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

See Attached

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

See Attached

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

See Attached

## 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 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | (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;  |               |                      |                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | (2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;   |               |                      |                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | (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;  |               |                      |                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | (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;  |               |                      |                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | (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;   |               |                      |                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | (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;   |               |                      |                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;   |               |                      |                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.   |               |                      |                     |
| <b>AND</b>                          |                                     |  |               |                      |                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (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)). |               |                      |                     |





**National Trust for  
Historic Preservation**  
*Save the past. Enrich the future.*

## **PROTECTED LANDMARK APPLICATION FORM**

### **Site Information**

**Site Address:** 3004 Bagby Street Houston, Texas 77006

**General Description:** The LULAC Council 60 Clubhouse is an 1,837 sq. ft. two-story stucco-clad building located on a 2,700 sq. ft. lot

**Tax Account Number:** 013-325-000-003

**Subdivision:** Fairgrounds

**Lot:** 3 & 4

**Block:** 7

**Owner:** C. 60, Inc. LLC

Ray Valdez, Chair

502 Avondale Street

Houston, TX 77006

(206) 650-1065

raymond\_valdez@comcast.net

**Applicant:** Sehila Casper, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Houston Field Office

**SITE INFORMATION:** Lot 3 and 4, Fairgrounds Subdivision, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The historic site includes one extant historic two-story, stucco single-family structure.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL:** Protected Landmark Designation

### **SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY**

In 1955, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Council 60 purchased what would become known as the Council 60 Clubhouse. Located on Bagby Street in Midtown, it was Council 60's first permanent meeting facility and gave the group a home base from which to advocate for equal social, economic, and political rights for Mexican Americans in Houston. The organization, which is akin to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), tackling legalized forms of discrimination against Latinos during the formative 1950s and 60s. Sixty-five years later, its continued presence is a reminder of Houston's and our country's journey toward a more equitable society.

The LULAC Clubhouse reflects Houston's burgeoning Mexican American social and political movement in the Jim Crow era, specifically through challenging discrimination and exercising political rights and power in Houston and beyond. The Council 60 chapter was instrumental in

litigating *Hernandez vs. Texas* at the U.S. Supreme Court; was the first LULAC chapter to meet with a sitting U.S. President; and created significant national programs, including SER Jobs for Progress, and Little School of the 400, the forerunner to Project Head Start. As LULAC's national office in D.C. was not established until 1996, the Clubhouse was the *de facto* national headquarters for most of the 50s and 60s. The Clubhouse has a 2004 State of Texas Subject Marker (marker listing 13296) that recognizes the contributions of Council 60.

Since 2013, the building has sat vacant due to a growing backlog of deferred maintenance, yet the Clubhouse retains character-defining features and a high degree of historic and architectural integrity. The building recently underwent stabilization, and in 2020, will undergo rehabilitation following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

The building was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the Texas Historical Commission in August 2018, "under Criterion A in the areas of Social History and Ethnic History/Hispanic as the headquarter of LULAC Council 60, a highly influential LULAC chapter..."<sup>1</sup>

The historic LULAC Council 60 Clubhouse is located at 3004 Bagby Street and is nominated as a Houston Protected Landmark under Criteria 1, 3, and 8 for:

- Serving as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity to the city, state, and nation;
- Being identified with a group that contributed significantly to the cultural and historical development of the city, state, and nation;
- And for having value as a significant element of community sentiment and public pride.

LULAC Council 60's local and national impact as a prominent and successful Mexican American civil rights organization underscores this building's significance.

## **HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE**

### *LEAGUE OF UNITED LATIN AMERICAN CITIZENS (LULAC)*

LULAC was created in response to decades of anti-Mexican violence in the 1920s, at a time when "No Mexicans Allowed" signs and brutal lynching of persons of Mexican descent were commonplace in the Southwest. Today, LULAC's mission "is to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, housing, health and civil rights of the Hispanic population of the United States." LULAC is the oldest and largest Latino civil rights organization operating in the United States with over 1,000 councils, including 23 active councils in the greater Houston area. LULAC is identified in the National Park Service's 2013 *American Latino and the Making of the United States: A Theme Study* for the National Historic Landmark and National Register of Historic Places program where LULAC is noted as an influential civil rights organization serving America's Latino population.

Between 1865 and 1920, Mexicans were lynched in much larger numbers than African Americans in the Southwest, with Texas being the state in which there were the most documented brutal mob

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<sup>1</sup> Bonnie Tipton, email to Hannah Curry-Shearhouse, August 30, 2018.

violence and lynchings of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. In Texas, and in Houston, anyone of Mexican descent was subject to discriminatory Jim Crow laws and anti-Latino vigilantism. The Texas Rangers also terrorized Mexicans through state-sanctioned racial violence and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), which in Texas violently targeted Mexicans. In Houston, the KKK infiltrated City offices, including the police and fire departments and the office of the district attorney, which resulted in disproportionate targeting of people of Mexican descent.

Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans began to organize in the early 20th century to challenge the persistent discrimination, and to discuss political tactics against social and institutional oppression. Clubs and organizations formed throughout the state to seek equal protection, better living conditions, fair judicial systems, and just employment practices, especially in the Southwestern borderlands. On February 17, 1929, in Corpus Christi, TX, the Order Knights of America, Order Sons of America, and the Latin American League organizations met at the *Orden Fraternidad de Obrero y Obreras* Hall. It was then that they decided to merge, joining forces to create the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). The group comprised primarily middle-class individuals from rural communities. It included political organizers and small-business owners, all of whom struggled for inclusion and sought equal treatment for those of Mexican descent.

#### *LULAC IN HOUSTON*

Houston's Mexican community surged in numbers in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century following the 1910 Mexican Revolution. Over the next two decades, Mexican American *barrios* (Latino enclaves), like El Segundo Barrio, Magnolia Park, First and Fifth Wards, became thriving communities that began to shape the Houston social, cultural, and institutional environment. As historian Thomas H. Kreneck notes, the urban landscape of Houston was immensely transitioned by this new community:

Houston's Mexican American population became a truly viable urban community between 1910 and the Great Depression. In response to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution and attracted by new economic development in Houston during these years, large numbers of people of Mexican descent came to make Houston their home, extending the fledging Hispanic neighborhoods and creating new barrios where none had existed before.

By the mid-1930s, LULAC began to grow, forming chapters in cities throughout Texas. Seeing LULAC's success in Mexican American communities, Houstonian Latino leaders, Manuel Crespo and Mariano Hernandez proposed starting a new chapter here, and organized a meeting at the Crespo Funeral Home to pitch the idea.

Early concerns for Houston's Latino community included housing conditions, hiring practices, and equal protection. More meetings followed, and in November of 1934, a new LULAC chapter was founded and called Council 60 Magnolia. Members were working-class men and Latino leaders from Magnolia Park, a downtown suburb and home to Houston's largest Mexican American community, as well as individuals from *Segundo Barrio* (Second Ward), located near the ship channel. Mariano Hernandez, a Magnolia Park resident and produce vendor, served as Council 60's first elected Council President. Among others, founding members included Juvencio Rodriguez, Isidro Garcia, John H. Duhig, Manuel Crespo, and Mariano Hernandez.

## *LULAC MEETING LOCATIONS*

The original designated meeting location for Council 60 was an old filling station located on the corner of Navigation Boulevard and 74<sup>th</sup> Street. Other known meeting locations include the International Longshoremen's Association Union Hall at 76<sup>th</sup> and Avenue N, the Benito Juarez hall at 7310 Navigation Boulevard, the Milam Building, and the Harris County Courthouse, all of which were temporary solutions for the Council's meeting space. Council 60 also held special social occasions at *El Club Cultural Recreativo México Bello*, an upscale social club dedicated to celebrating Houston's Mexican American heritage located at 1209 Shearn Street in Houston.

As their influence began to grow and LULAC became more prominent in the community, the Council realized it needed to find a permanent home, and in turn, that funds would need to be raised for that purpose. In 1950, the Council kicked off a Clubhouse fund, and, in 1955, they purchased the building at 3004 Bagby Street. It was Council 60's first dedicated space, purchased by the Board of Trustees to host Council political activities related to promoting inclusion, equal education, and challenging discrimination. The seven Board of Trustees that purchased Council 60's new Clubhouse were Ernest Eguia, Gabriel Ramirez, Gilbert Gomez, Phil J. Montalbo, Sammie Alderete, Alfred J. Hernandez, Arnold Quintero, as well as Felix Tijerina. The 1955 Council 60 Legal Resolution for the Acquisition of the Clubhouse reads:

Whereas, a two story house at 3002-3004 Bagby Street in the City of Houston, described as Lots Three (3) and Four (4), being all of Block Seven (7) Fairgrounds Addition, an addition in Houston, Harris County, Texas, is for sale for the sum of \$10,500.00; and

Whereas, brother Felix Tijerina, a member of this Council and Texas Regional Governor of LULAC has offered to advance and loan the Council....

December 17, 1955, marked the grand opening of the new LULAC Council 60 Clubhouse. The event was a proud moment for the Mexican American community and was well attended by leading city and LULAC leaders including, Oscar Laurel, the LULAC national president.

From 1955 to 2013, the building served as the Council 60's headquarters. The Clubhouse served as the "think tank" for generations of legal and political Latino leaders who rose to local and national prominence through LULAC, founding significant national programs that continue today. Historian Thomas Kreneck explains that Clubhouse became "a center of Mexican American civic activity in Houston" and notes how momentous this was for Houston:

Having a clubhouse of its own represented a milestone in the development of the group, adding even more enthusiasm to its quest to have LULAC and Latin American issues more visible in Houston. Given the educational and employment programs that would soon emanate from Council No. 60, the new headquarters become one of the most historic buildings for the city's Hispanic population.

## LULAC COUNCIL 60 MILESTONES

Four national LULAC presidents came from Council 60: John Herrera (1952-1953), Felix Tijerina (1956-1960), Alfred J. Hernandez (1965-1967), and Roberto Ornelas (1968-1970) and many other council members have held national positions. Each of the Houston-based national presidents assisted in raising LULAC's stature nationally during the American Civil Rights Movement. Gatherings in the headquarters inspired a lasting legacy of national programs that continue to flourish today:

- **1960, Project Head Start:** Felix Tijerina, national president and chairman of LULAC's Educational Fund, conceptualized the "Little School of the 400" program, a pre-school program dedicated to educational advancement by teaching 400 basic English words to Spanish-speaking children in the late 1950s. In 1960, LULAC worked to transform the "Little School of the 400" program into Project Head Start under the Johnson Administration.
- **1966, SER Jobs for Progress:** Along with the American GI Forum, Council 60 piloted a job training and placement center located at the Clubhouse in 1965. It led to the federally funded work advancement program, SER (Service, Employment, Redevelopment) Jobs for Progress. In 1966, SER was initiated nationwide and is now the largest work placement program in the nation.
- **1968, LULAC Housing:** To increase affordable housing opportunities for the Mexican American population, LULAC national president Roberto Ornelas created the National LULAC Housing Commission, which partnered with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide homebuyer training and housing opportunities for seniors and low-income families. This program is still in place and is a key priority for LULAC nationally.

Council 60 and national LULAC president John J. Herrera (Houstonian) also helped win a United States Supreme Court case in 1954 to give Mexican Americans the right to serve on juries with a ruling making it unconstitutional to exclude Mexican Americans from juries. The landmark case *Pete Hernandez vs. Texas* was the first Latino civil rights case argued before the United Supreme Court.

President John F. Kennedy visited with Council 60 at a gala they hosted at the Rice Hotel in Houston, Texas, on the day before he was assassinated in November 1963. The event was attended by Vice President Johnson, Lady Bird Johnson, and Jackie Kennedy, who was unexpectedly asked by the President to address their hosts in Spanish. This was the first time that a sitting president had appeared at a Latino event and recognized the important voting potential of the Latino population.

Council 60 and national LULAC president Judge Alfred Hernandez helped lead the Albuquerque Walkout in 1966 to oppose discriminatory hiring practices, leading to the creation of a seven-man committee including Hernandez, who met with President Johnson that same year - a meeting seen as a momentous milestone for the Latino Civil Rights Movement. In addition, the Council hosted the first LULAC National Convention in 1937, here in Houston, and successfully advocated to have numerous Mexican American individuals hired in public roles to work for the City of Houston.

## LULAC COUNCIL 60 CLUBHOUSE

### *HISTORICAL CONTEXT*

The LULAC Council 60 Clubhouse in Houston, Harris County, Texas, is located one mile from downtown Houston an urban, mixed-use neighborhood comprising mostly early 20th-century architectural stock. Immediately adjacent is the Avondale East Historic District, an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century residential neighborhood with various architectural styles, including Colonial Revival, Neoclassical, Prairie, Craftsman-style homes, all of which are primarily two-story homes.

With the advent of the first electric streetcar line in Houston in 1891, means of faster and more efficient transportation allowed the city to expand further from the downtown commercial corridor. Developers and land speculators began to purchase large parcels of land in rural and underdeveloped areas. They built new neighborhoods like the Fairgrounds Addition in the South End, named after Texas' very first state fair. From 1870 through 1879, Houston was the host city for the successful economic venture known as the Agricultural, Mechanical, and Blood Stock Association's Grand State Fair of Texas. Following an economic downturn and a city-wide yellow fever epidemic, the State Fair moved to Dallas, and the land was sold for development.

The property, located south of downtown, was sold by the Fair Grounds Land & Investment Company to Henry L. Bennett in 1902 for \$250. Lots 3 and 4 on block 7 were sold to William H. Goetzmann in 1904 for a sum of \$500, and later to Citizens Home and Investment Company by C.M. Burke in 1908 for only \$5. In April 1909, Mr. and Mrs. B.F. Secor Sr. purchased the two lots for a total of \$4,960. B.F. Secor worked in stucco and construction for nearly 30 years. His residence at 3004 Bagby Street was used as Secor's business office for the B.F. Secor Company, specializing in concrete, plaster, stucco, brick, sidewalk installation, and tile work. It was also used as his daughter's, Katherine Secore's music teaching studio for private piano lessons. In 1921, Joe Secor, B.F.'s son, joined the company and the B.F. Secor Company became a family business. That same year, Secor died at the residence at the age of 55. Following his death, the property became a rental property and was described as a 4-room apartment with a screened porch, with modern appliances, with a garage.

### *ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION, EXTERIOR*

The building faces Bagby Street in Houston's Midtown on a triangular residential lot in a primarily residential neighborhood. The 1837-square-foot house-turned-Clubhouse was constructed in 1907 as a wood-framed American Foursquare home located on the Northwest corner of the lot. The two-story building was constructed as a single-family dwelling and is clad in stucco and rests on a brick pier foundation. It was originally constructed with wood siding, with the stucco finish most likely added during the 1920s. There is no documentation to confirm the date of this addition, though preservationists assume that B.F. Secor, who purchased the home in 1909 and used the home as his office, added the exterior finish as a part of his stucco business.

The Clubhouse is a modest building and vernacular in style and is covered in white stucco with accented sky-blue trim. It retains some of its most distinctive physical features, including a hipped roof that is covered with composition shingles, and features a wide overhanging eave. The front façade originally had symmetrical full-width galleries with square columns and three segmental-arched openings on the first and second floor, but the first floor was altered to a partial porch by

LULAC. There are two simple non-original wooden front doors on the front porch and one wooden and glass door in the center on the second story. The second-floor porch balcony has wooden rails and railings that are temporarily covered with plywood on the front façade.

Primarily, all of the remaining windows are historic wood-framed double-hung 1/1 window configuration. The north elevation has three wood 1/1 double-hung windows located on the second floor and a 1/1 window on the stairway. One of the porch's segmental-arched openings has been temporarily covered by plywood. Similarly, the south elevation has two 1/1 double-hung windows located on the second floor and a covered up segmental-arch on the second-story porch. The south elevation also has an exterior end chimney and a single wooden side door. The west elevation has a door on the second-story, metal stairs, and a small window that has been covered up with plywood. The two front hitching posts and a concrete stepping stoop remain.

#### *ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION, INTERIOR*

When LULAC Council 60 purchased the stucco single-family home in 1955, it was altered to a meeting and community space to be the Council's headquarters. Structural changes were made by volunteer LULACers and were led by Sammie Alderete, a Council 60 member and construction contractor. The LULAC Council 60 Clubhouse has undergone alterations since the date of construction in 1907. Yet, it retains good architectural and historic integrity to convey its significance as a LULAC Mexican American civil rights meeting space.

The original residential first floor is 941 square feet, and in 1955, the design was changed by LULAC to create a men's meeting space with two restrooms, wood wall paneling, cove lighting, and included the addition of a bar for strategy talks over drinks. Original window openings on the south elevation for both floors of the building were enclosed, and the exterior was infilled with stucco material.

The Council also modified the internal L-shaped stairway's orientation and added a secondary entry point to accommodate a separate space for the women's LULAC group, Ladies Council 22. The second-floor area is 896 square feet and was modified to have a women's meeting room, two small offices, and has one bathroom. The south wall has an infilled bay window which has been covered by plywood.

The first and second floors remain intact and have had few changes from the period of significance, dating from LULAC's use in 1955-1970 (the 50-year guideline). As LULAC themselves modified the home and continue to own the building, the Council 60 Clubhouse retains integrity of feeling, workmanship, materials, as well as location and setting.

#### *RESTORATION HISTORY*

Since 2013, the LULAC Clubhouse has sat empty and suffered severely from lack of funding and deferred maintenance, making it especially vulnerable when Hurricane Harvey hit Houston in August 2017. While the building envelope was already failing and had a large hole in the roof, further damage was incurred to when excessive rainwaters penetrated the walls, floors, roof, and fenestration. The building suffered both above and below grade moisture and created significant structural distress.

On January 30, 2018, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Council 60 Clubhouse as its newest Texas project. This designation came with a disaster recovery grant to support the Clubhouse's emergency stabilization efforts. To begin stabilizing the structure and understand the general condition of the building, consultants were hired to produce documents to prioritize and guide repair work. An Existing Conditions Assessment Report by Kerry Goetzler Associates, Structural Evaluation Report by Sparks Engineering, Hazardous Materials Report by QC Laboratories, and a Determination of Eligibility by SWCA were completed in 2018. Based on the recommendations, in January 2019, the LULAC Council 60 Clubhouse underwent much-needed emergency stabilization from 2018-2019.

The exterior end chimney on the south elevation was temporarily removed in 2019 due to safety hazards. The foundation has been repaired by replacing decayed beams, adding CMU block piers, and joists with appropriate substitute materials at various locations. The roof has been replaced and strengthened with attic joists and rafters. Compatible gutters and downspouts have been added. Areas where there is missing stucco, now have a temporary protective barrier. Additionally, broken windows and doors now have temporary coverings installed.

In 2020, The National Trust partnered with Houston's three-dimensional (3D) laser scanning experts, Reality IMT to conduct a 3D laser scan of the exterior of the building and digitally record the Clubhouse. The current owners plan to rehabilitate the Clubhouse using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

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**PHOTOS**



Image courtesy of the National Trust for Historic Preservation



**Emergency Stabilization of the LULAC Council 60 Clubhouse, 2019.**

South elevation of the building, showing before repair work (bottom right), during (top right), and after stabilization (left). Stabilization was fully documented and followed the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties guidelines.

*Image courtesy of the National Trust for Historic Preservation*



**LULAC Council 60 Board of Trustees, 1955.**

Signing of the 1955 Council 60 Legal Resolution for the Acquisition of the Clubhouse.

Image courtesy of the Family of Ernest Eguia

JANUARY 1956



**Newly Purchased Clubhouse, 1956.**

Image courtesy of LULAC, "LULAC News" Newsletter



## **Lulac Activities**

### **A NEW HOUSE CLUB FOR LULAC**

LULAC Council No. 60 of Houston, Texas recently bought a home which is to be remodeled into a private club house for all Houston Lulackers. The above photograph shows three of the Houston Lulackers hammering away at their new club house. The respected person in the foreground is Mike Zepeda; others unidentified.

### **LULAC Activities, 1955.**

“A New House Club for LULAC: LULAC Council No. 60 of Houston, Texas recently bought a home which is to be remodeled into a private club house for all Houston Lulackers. The above photograph shows three of the Houston Lulackers hammering away at their new club house...”

Image courtesy of LULAC, “LULAC News” Newsletter

## **\$20,000 Home for Houston Council No. 60**



The professional plumbers contributed their work. Shown is Joe Hernandez.

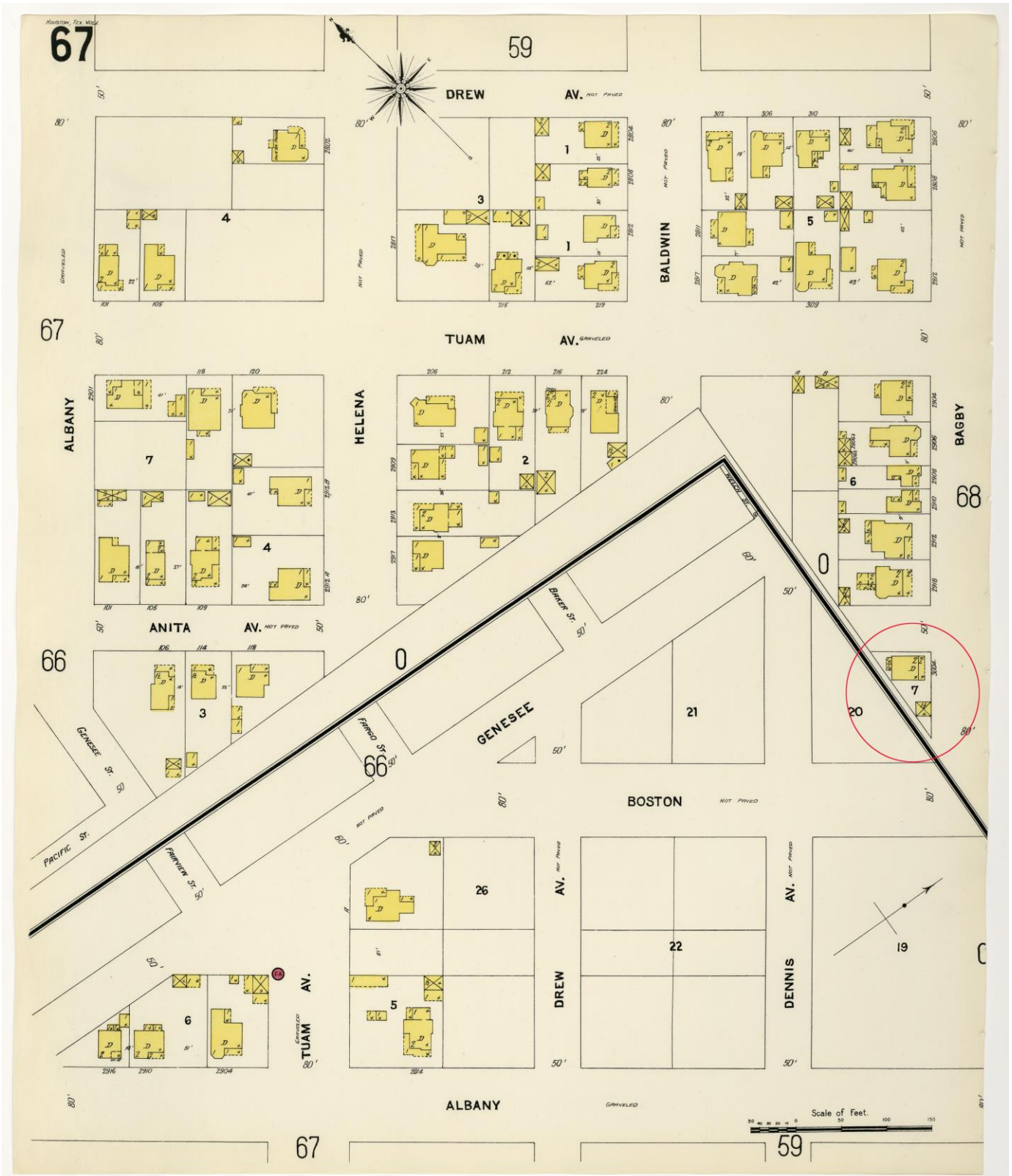


Then the masterpiece was finished. Shown are, l. to r., Alex Polanco, Rudy Redolfo, Bennie Martinez, Gabe Ramirez, and Gilbert Gomez.

### **Home for Houston Council No. 60, 1955.**

Clipping from the LULAC national newsletter showcasing the newly purchased Clubhouse. Image on the right shows the group celebrating their new “masterpiece” at the Clubhouse’s bar.

Image courtesy of LULAC, “LULAC News” Newsletter



Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

1921 Sanborn Map (Volume 1, Sheet 67) showing 3004 Bagby Street outlined in red. Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

Gene B. Preuss, PhD  
9735 Truscon Dr.  
Houston, TX 77080

Roman McAllen  
Historic Preservation Officer  
Planning and Development Department, City of Houston  
611 Walker, 6th Floor  
Houston, TX 77002

Dear Mr. McAllen,

I'm writing in support of the application to designate the LULAC Council 60 Clubhouse at 3004 Bagby Street as a Protected Landmark by the Houston Archeological and Historical Commission at its April 23, 2020, meeting. Despite the building's long and storied history, it remains largely overlooked and unknown. I hope to shed some light on the building's significance and historical contribution to Houston and the city's Mexican American community.

The building first came to my attention in 2014 when William V. Flores, then-president at the University of Houston-Downtown, asked me if I knew anything about an old building in Midtown that had a LULAC sign.

Of course, I knew about LULAC, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the oldest extant Hispanic civil rights organizations in the United States. It was formed when several older self-help organizations joined together in Corpus Christi in 1929. During Depression-Era Texas it helped address the needs of the growing Mexican American community and Mexican immigrants fleeing the political unrest and violence of the Mexican Revolution. Like other ethnic communities across the nation, these mutual-aid societies strengthened and supported their communities before the rise of the welfare state. Anyone traveling across Texas might see clubhouses for German, Polish, Czech, or other societies, in the early part of the twentieth century. Many of these organizations still exist, and their meeting halls still stand.

In 1934, LULAC Council 60 became the first chapter in Houston. At the time, Houston's Mexican American community, which had existed since before Houston was Houston, had expanded tremendously. Over the years, the community endured discrimination and segregation, lack of political representation, and poverty. Yet by 1937, Houston's LULAC hosted the organization's national conference, and continued to grow in importance.

After World War II, LULAC flourished in Texas as Mexican American veterans returning from World War II, used the organization to fight segregation and discrimination. LULAC Council 60 members, like Houston attorney John J. Herrera and local restaurateur Felix Tijerina, involved the chapter in incidents that gained national, and even international, attention. For example, when Medal of Honor recipient Macario Garcia was denied service in a Richmond café soon after returning from service. In 1949, a Three Rivers, Texas, funeral home denied the widow of Private Felix Longoria's from holding a wake for his remains because the funeral home owner feared local whites would be opposed. Herrera was on the legal team that argued the civil rights

case concerning Mexican Americans being denied service on juries (*Hernandez v. Texas*, 1954). Tijerina was a strong advocate and underwrote efforts to create LULAC's Little Schools of the 400 program to teach Spanish-speaking children enough basic English so they could progress in Texas public schools. The program was adopted state-wide, and greatly influenced the creation of the federal Project Head Start program by the Johnson Administration in the 1960s.

In 1955, seven members of Council 60, with financial assistance from Tijerina, purchased a house at the corner of Anita and Bagby for the chapter's clubhouse. The area was once part of Mrs. Obedience Fort Smith's headright, and later the site of the State fair of Texas. By the 1880s, it became known as the Fairgrounds Addition when the city annexed the property. In 1909, contractor Benjamin Franklin Secor, a home remodeler, purchased the house from the Citizens Home & Investment Company. The Secors were a prominent family, and their daughter Katherine Secor was an accomplished pianist who taught in the house, and whose activities often appeared in the society column.

In the Clubhouse, LULAC officers and members worked and supported efforts in the era of civil rights, working against the poll tax, getting better jobs for the Hispanic community, and fighting discrimination. They developed programs such as SER Jobs for Progress. The keystone event of the era was hosting President John F. Kennedy at the LULAC State Director's Ball at Rice Hotel's Crystal Ballroom on the evening of November 22, 1963.

On May 3, 2015, Ernest Eguia, the last surviving member of the original trustees passed away. He passed along the responsibilities of the Clubhouse, now unused and in serious need of repair. Several members of LULAC Council 60, and others, formed C 60, Inc., a non-profit group to restore the Clubhouse. I joined the Board in the hopes of helping to preserve the rich history of LULAC and Houston's – and the nation's – Mexican American community. In 2017, we partnered with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and they helped secure a \$140,000 rehabilitation grant from American Express that funded the current rehabilitation efforts. Recently, we received a grant from the Houston Endowment that will allow us to make even further progress and are in consideration of a preservation grant from the Texas Historical Commission. We are working at developing other grants and conducting local fundraising efforts to move the project toward completion.

I trust the HAHC Commission will recognize the historical significance the building represents. There are few sites that preserve and commemorate the contributions of the Mexican American community across the state, and naming the LULAC Council 60 Clubhouse a Protected Landmark will help further Houston's historic legacy.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gene B. Preuss', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gene B. Preuss, PhD  
281/217-9846  
Gene.Preuss@gmail.com



**C 60, Inc.**  
**3004 Bagby Street, Houston, Texas 77006**

Mr. Roman McAllen  
Historic Preservation Officer  
City of Houston Planning and Development Department  
611 Walker, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Houston Texas 77002

Dear Mr. McAllen,

I want to lend my support to the LULAC Historic Council 60 application to be designated a Protected Landmark. As the former President of Historic Council 60, incorporator of C 60, Inc. a 501c3 nonprofit formed for the benefit of Historic Council 60, and its current Chairman, I have studied the history of the Council and the role the Clubhouse played in making Historic Council 60 a national leader in the Mexican American Civil rights movement. Council 60 was organized in 1934 in Houston Texas and was involved in numerous landmark civil rights, judicial rights and education lawsuits that were of national importance.

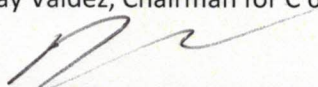
Our application will draw your attention to the many accomplishment of LULAC Historic Council 60 and to the fact that they were the first LULAC Council in the country to establish a dedicated building to house the day-to-day operations of the Council. Established in 1955, the Clubhouse on Bagby Street was the base of operations for three past LULAC National Presidents and was in continuous use until 2013. Those Council's achievements since 1955 are the following:

- The establishment of the Little School of 400, a preparatory early learning education program for Spanish Speaking students that was later used as the model for the Head Start Program which operates nationally today.
- SER/Jobs for Progress is an employment program targeted to underserved communities to provide vocational training, job placement and GED and High School completion courses.
- The Clubhouse served as the planning and operational base for arranging for President John F. Kennedy to visit the LULAC Governors Convention at the Historic Rice Hotel in Houston, Texas on November 21, 1963. It was the first time in history that a sitting US President acknowledged any Hispanic/Latino Organization. It is remembered as "The Birth of the Hispanic Political Experience.

Houston has long been known as a Developers City where little consideration has been paid to saving or preserving the City's architectural history. The LULAC Historic Council 60 Clubhouse represents the struggles and victories of the Latino community. The lessons learned and the lessons taught are preserved within the walls of this modest structure. It remains an iconic monument to the substantial contributions to the City of Houston and the United States.

Thank you for your Consideration.

Ray Valdez, Chairman for C 60, Inc.



Past President LULAC Historic Council 60