

PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Hidalgo Park Quiosco

OWNER: City of Houston Parks and Recreation Dept.

APPLICANT: City of Houston Parks and Recreation Dept.

LOCATION: Hidalgo Park, 7000 Avenue Q – Magnolia Park

AGENDA ITEM: B.4

HPO FILE NO: 16PL133

DATE ACCEPTED: 12-28-2015

HAHC HEARING: 06-16-2016

SITE INFORMATION: Hidalgo Park, Block 185, S.M. Williams Addition, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The approximately twelve acre park includes a quiosco (kiosk), a baseball field, a Parque Amistad, and a community-built action adventure playground. The cast-concrete quiosco is the subject of this designation.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Protected Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

Since its founding overlooking the Turning Basin, Hidalgo Park has been at the center of the East End's cultural and civic life. The City of Houston acquired the park property when the City of Magnolia Park was annexed in 1926. Hidalgo Park was acquired by the City of Houston Parks & Recreation Department in 1927. Neighborhood residents raised money to purchase the park's original land and sponsored the creation of its unique quiosco (kiosk) in 1934. The quiosco was commissioned by the Mexican-American community of Magnolia Park under the leadership of local physician A. G. Gonzales. Built at a cost of \$2,300, it was dedicated on September 16, 1934, the anniversary of Mexico's independence from Spain. The structure was designed and constructed by Houston resident and Mexican native Vidal Lozano (1888-1936). Lozano was employed as an iron works molder and pipe fitter and the Hidalgo Park Quiosco is the only known public example of his artwork.

The high-set quiosco is constructed entirely of molded concrete: It has a stone base, writhing tree trunk and branch vertical supports, and a conical thatched roof. The eight columns supporting the roof resemble tree trunks, each with a different bark texture. The hand railings appear to be made from branches fastened together to encircle the structure. The ceiling was designed to look like wood shingles, and the roof has a thatch-like covering. A unique parquet design showing various wood finishes is apparent on the stage floor, and a flag pole atop the roof resembles a tree branch. An inscription on one of the quiosco steps reads 'Houston Mexicans To Their City. V. Lozano.' A common structure in public urban areas of Mexico, the gazebo-like quiosco continues to serve the Magnolia Park community as a venue for Mexican-American presentations, entertainment, and celebrations.

The Hidalgo Park Quiosco is a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, and meets Criteria 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8 for Protected Landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Magnolia Park

Magnolia Park, so named for the abundance of magnolia trees in the area, is one of Houston's oldest Hispanic neighborhoods in eastern Harris County. The community was laid out in 1890 on a 1,374 acre site owned by John Thomas Brady. In 1909, the community became an independent municipality and the Magnolia Park Land Company divided the park into two residential subdivisions covering two square miles: Magnolia Park (1909) and Central Park (1912). The subdivisions were incorporated together in 1913 as the City of Magnolia Park. Magnolia Park was annexed by the City of Houston on October 18, 1926. Mayor Oscar Holcombe presided over the ambitious scheme of annexations, making Houston one of the country's largest cities by initiating a series of large annexations. During Holcombe's eleven terms as mayor, Houston's size grew 1,000 percent.

Though Magnolia Park was home to residents of European descent in its early history, immigrants of Mexican descent began arriving in 1911 to escape the conflict of the Mexican Revolution. Since then, Mexican-Americans have played a large role in the city's history and establishing Magnolia Park as one of the city's first Mexican-American communities. Male settlers found work in labor intensive fields: laying railroad tracks, dredging and widening Buffalo Bayou, loading cotton on ships and railroads, and constructing the Houston Ship Channel. Mexican-American women found work in jute mills making gunnysack material for cotton bales. Residents established their homes at the townsite, and created a thriving cultural life through events, clubs, theatrical groups, and fraternal organizations.

The greatest population growth, perhaps surpassing that in El Segundo Barrio, occurred in Magnolia Park. During the early years of the 1920s, it remained a fledgling barrio of unpaved streets and homes which lacked water, light, and gas service. Streets of clay or gravel stretched away from paved boulevards. However, by the time the Magnolia Park suburb was incorporated in 1926, Magnolia Park was well on its way to containing "the largest of the local Mexican settlements," as a local newspaper article put it. Magnolia Park had developed a business district on Navigation Boulevard that included offices, drug stores, grocery stores, and a Spanish talkie theater. Principal industries that contributed to Magnolia Park's growth included agriculture, cotton, lumber, textiles, and oil. In fact, by 1926, the Houston area was one of the world's largest producers of petroleum with thirteen oil refineries located in Houston, most located on the ship channels. Houston was rapidly developing into a great industrial center with extensive rail and water transportation facilities, along with cheap and abundant fuel. By this time, the pattern of today's major barrios in Houston had taken form and future immigrants into the city came to live within these settlements.

Hispanics in Houston

While some Mexican families lived in Houston during the late nineteenth-century, economic opportunities stemming from the Houston Ship Channel and other industries, coupled with the turbulent political conditions following the Mexican Revolution, drew large numbers of Mexicans to Houston in the twentieth-century. Most settled in the city close to their work and Catholic churches, including the historic Immaculate Conception Church (which predated the arrival of Mexicans), Our Lady of Guadalupe Church (1912), and Heart of Mary Catholic Church (1926). Between 1900 and 1950, the number of Mexican-Americans in Houston grew from 500 to 40,000,

with the number more than doubling from 6,000 in 1920 to 14,500 in 1930. By the late 1929, Magnolia Park was the largest Mexican-American settlement in Houston. Cultural organizations continued to flourish including the Escuela Mexicana Hidalgo (1930), Club Femenino-Chapultepec, and a branch of the League of United Latin American Citizens (1934). In the years before World War II, youth gangs became active in the East End, an area from El Segundo Barrio to Magnolia Park. The local population grew during the early 1940s as war-related job attracted Mexican-Americans to Houston doubling from 20,000 in 1940 to 40,000 in 1950. While the middle class expanded under the programs of President Johnson's Great Society in the 1960s, most Mexican-Americans in Magnolia Park remained poor. Despite area activism in the 1970s, approximately 20 percent of Magnolia Park residents were below the poverty level in 1978. By 1990, the working class neighborhood had a population of 14,000 people.

Hidalgo Park Quiosco

Hidalgo Park was acquired by the City of Houston Parks & Recreation Department in 1927. Mexican-American citizens fundraised to purchase the small piece of property facing Buffalo Bayou and gifted it to the City of Houston as a public park. The construction of unique quiosco was commissioned by the Mexican-American community of Magnolia Park under the leadership of local physician A. G. Gonzales. Built at a cost of \$2,300, it was dedicated on September 16, 1934, the anniversary of Mexico's independence from Spain. The structure was designed and constructed by Houston resident and Mexican native Vidal Lozano (1888-1936). Lozano was employed as an iron works molder and pipe fitter, and the Hidalgo Park Quiosco is the only known public example of his artwork.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

Created in the style of "faux bois" (false wood) or "el trabajo rustico" (rustic work), the high-set 15' by 25' quiosco is constructed of an iron frame covered entirely with hand-molded textured concrete, giving it the appearance of having been built from raw and processed tree products. The eight columns supporting the roof resemble tree trunks, each with a different bark texture. The hand railings appear to be made from branches fastened together to encircle the structure. The ceiling was designed to look like wood shingles, and the roof has a thatch-like covering. A unique parquet design showing various wood finishes is apparent on the stage floor, and a flag pole atop the roof resembles a tree branch. The quiosco remains in excellent condition and continues to be a source of Mexican-American community pride.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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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 the Historic Preservation Office, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION

The HAHC shall review each application for designation of a protected landmark that is included in an application for designation of a landmark at the same time and in the same manner as it reviews and considers the application for a landmark. The HAHC and the Planning Commission, in making recommendations with respect to a protected landmark designation, and the City Council, in making a designation, shall consider whether the building, structure, site, or area meets at least three of the criteria in Section 33-224, or one of the criteria in Section 33-229, as follows:

S	NA		S - satisfies	NA - not applicable
Meets at least three of the following (Sec. 33-224(a):				
☒	☐	(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;		
☒	☐	(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;		
☐	☒	(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;		

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- ☒ ☐ (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;
- ☒ ☐ (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;
- ☐ ☒ (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;
- ☒ ☐ (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.

AND

- ☐ ☒ (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)).

OR

- ☐ ☒ The property was constructed before 1905 (Sec. 33-229(a)(2));

OR

- ☐ ☒ The property is listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places or designated as a "contributing structure" in an historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Sec. 33-229(a)(3));

OR

- ☒ ☐ The property is recognized by the State of Texas as a Recorded State Historical Landmark (Sec. 33-229(a)(4)).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Protected Landmark Designation of the Hidalgo Park Quiosco at Hidalgo Park, 7000 Avenue Q.

HAHC RECOMMENDATION

The Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommends to City Council the Protected Landmark Designation of the Hidalgo Park Quiosco, 7000 Avenue Q.

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EXHIBIT A HIDALGO PARK QUIOSCO



Planning and Development Department