PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Rutherford B. H. Yates House
OWNER: Rutherford B. H. Yates Museum, Inc.
APPLICANT: Same as Owner
LOCATION: 1314 Andrews Street – Freedmen's Town National Register Historic District
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: IV
HPO FILE NO.: 07PL45
DATE ACCEPTED: June-27-07
HAHC HEARING: July-25-07
PC HEARING: Aug-2-07

SITE INFORMATION:

Lot 8, Block 22, Castanie Addition, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic one-story wood frame house on pier and beam foundation.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Protected Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Rutherford B. H. Yates House is located at 1314 Andrews Street in the Freedmen's Town National Register Historic District. Rutherford B. H. Yates was the son of well-renowned Houstonian John "Jack" Yates, a freed slave who was the first pastor of Antioch Baptist Church and Bethel Baptist Church as well as an advocate of property ownership and education for Houston's African-American population. Rutherford Yates owned and operated a printing press business in Freedmen's Town and was one of the most prominent members of the African-American community in Houston. Rutherford Yates was also a teacher and published writer. Yates' home represents one of the last reminders of the once thriving Freedmen's Town neighborhood and houses the Rutherford B. H. Yates Museum, which seeks to save and promote the significant history of Freedmen's Town.

The Rutherford B. H. Yates House was designated as a City of Houston Landmark in 1996. The house meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8, as well as being a contributing building to the Freedmen's Town National Register Historic District and a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark for Protected Landmark Designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

After Emancipation, the area immediately southwest of downtown Houston known as Freedmen's Town became a thriving center of black social, cultural, religious and commercial activity, and continued as such in the first three decades of the twentieth century. More than 95% of Houston's first black businesses were located in the area. By the second decade of the twentieth century, Freedmen's Town encompassed an area bounded by Buffalo Bayou, Sutton Street, Taft Street and Prairie Street downtown. Today those boundaries have been reduced to Taft, Heiner, West Dallas and West Gray Streets. The Rutherford Yates House is located within this smaller boundary area, which is slightly south of the original settlement, which had been located on the southern banks of Buffalo Bayou.

Rutherford B. H. Yates, an African American printer and teacher, was one of the most prominent individuals of the Freedmen's Town community. His father was John "Jack" Henry Yates, a former enslaved drayman who later became a community leader, educator, and pastor of Bethel Baptist Church and Antioch Baptist Church in the Fourth Ward. After his mother's death in 1887, Rutherford was raised by two white missionaries and attended Houston Academy, a school established by his father, and Bishop College in Marshall, Texas. He graduated in 1906 with an A.B. degree in printing.

While in Marshall, he met and married Erie D. Sherrod, who became a teacher and taught school in Huffsmith, Texas, for a while. They were the parents of three children, Johnnie Mae, Olee, and Rutherford B.H. Jr. After teaching for two years in Dallas, Rutherford and Erie returned to Houston in 1908 and moved into his father's home.

Yates was employed as a printer for Western Star Publishing, Webster Printing, and McKinney & Burke. He also taught at Houston Academy in 1918. In 1922, he and his brother Paul established the Yates Printing Company, one of Houston's first black-owned printing businesses. Together, they published "The Life and Efforts of Jack Yates," a book about their father. Rutherford contributed to the printing industry by training a number of Houston printers, including many of the printers who worked in the pressrooms of the Houston Post and the Houston Chronicle. Rutherford died in 1944, and Erie in 1971.

Rutherford's father, Reverend Jack Yates, purchased Lots 8, 9 and 10 in Block 22 of the Castanie Addition of Fourth Ward for his homestead in 1869 and 1870. Yates built a two-story home for his family on Lot 9 in 1870, which was later moved to Sam Houston Park which is a Landmark and Protected Landmark of the city of Houston. The adjacent Lot 10 remained vacant until St. James Methodist Episcopal church was built on the site after 1907. Lot 8, which was located on the east side of the Yates home, was the site of a small one-story frame residence constructed prior to 1907. Jack Yates had originally purchased Lot 8 from a man named Mr. I. Farmer in December of 1869 for $25. The property remained in the Yates family and was eventually sold to Pinkie and Rutherford Yates for $10 "and the further consideration of love and affection" along with adjacent Lot 7. Rutherford became the sole owner of Lot 8, after his sister Pinkie Henderson deeded it to him in order to pay off a debt. Rutherford and Erie secured a loan to build their home at 1314 Andrews. On August 13, 1912, they signed a mechanic's and materials lien and deed of trust. The home cost $1210 to build and was completed the following year. The Yates' were able to pay their loan in full on July 28, 1922.

The Rutherford B. H. Yates House had the distinction in 2001 of being the first residential structure in Freedmen's Town to receive a historical marker from the Texas Historical Commission. It was listed as a contributing property of high significance when Freedmen's Town received its designation as a National Register Historic District in 1985.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

The Yates' Queen Anne styled cottage has a hipped-roof and features a wide front porch with rails and spindles. Three of the Edwardian-style windows still have the original hand-rolled glass, as well as transoms over the doors (some of the original transoms were lost during restoration). The interior of the home has cedar walls and floors as well as interior woodwork and columns of cypress and red pine lumber. Ninety-five percent of the wood is original. Square nails can be found in the foundation beams. The kitchen and bathroom still have the original wainscoting, and the inside bathroom has the original multi-paned windows. A dish safe, four-burner wood stove, and an "ice box" would have been located in the home as well.

Because of the Jim Crow laws in existence during that period, people of color were not permitted to lodge in hotels and inns, so many families in Freedmen's Town provided lodging to visiting business and religious leaders. The homes where this community support was provided can be recognized by two entry doors from the front porch, and the Yates house includes this architectural feature.

From 1969 to 1975, Alfred Nash, who was trained as a printer by Rutherford, lived in the home. Godfrey Whiting, a relative of the Yates family, lived there from 1976-1982. From 1982 to 1987, the Darryl Patterson family operated a community center at this location, which offered services such as food, clothing, shelter, transportation, literacy programs, classes, drug rehabilitation, and even sponsored a Boy Scout troop. The home fell into a state of disrepair after being abandoned for several years and was put on the city's demolition list. In

1995, the home was purchased by Catherine Roberts in response to requests by Rutherford's daughter, Olee Yates McCullough, who had lived in the home as a girl. Roberts decided to restore it for use as a museum devoted to the history of the community and of African-American participation in the printing industry of Houston. Together, she and Olee Yates McCullough co-founded the Rutherford B. H. Yates Museum, Inc., a 501(c)3 organization, for the purpose of restoring the Yates house as well as acquiring and restoring other important Freedmen's Town properties. The house was designated as a City of Houston Landmark in 1996. Restoration of the house began that same year and was largely completed in 2003. Eighty-five percent of the original structure was saved and restored, which insured that the restoration met the United States Department of the Interior guidelines for historic preservation. The home now houses the museum's historical archaeology laboratory, archaeological artifacts, photographs, maps, historical documents and exhibits, all of which tell the story of Freedmen's Town. It is open for tours by appointment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Harris County Deed Records.

Houston City Directories, 1870-1987.

National Register of historic Places Freedmen's Town Historic District Report, 1985.

United States Census 1880, Harris County, Texas.

Sanborn Maps, 1896, 1907, 1924.

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.

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. 33-229(a)(1):

☑ ☐ (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).

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);

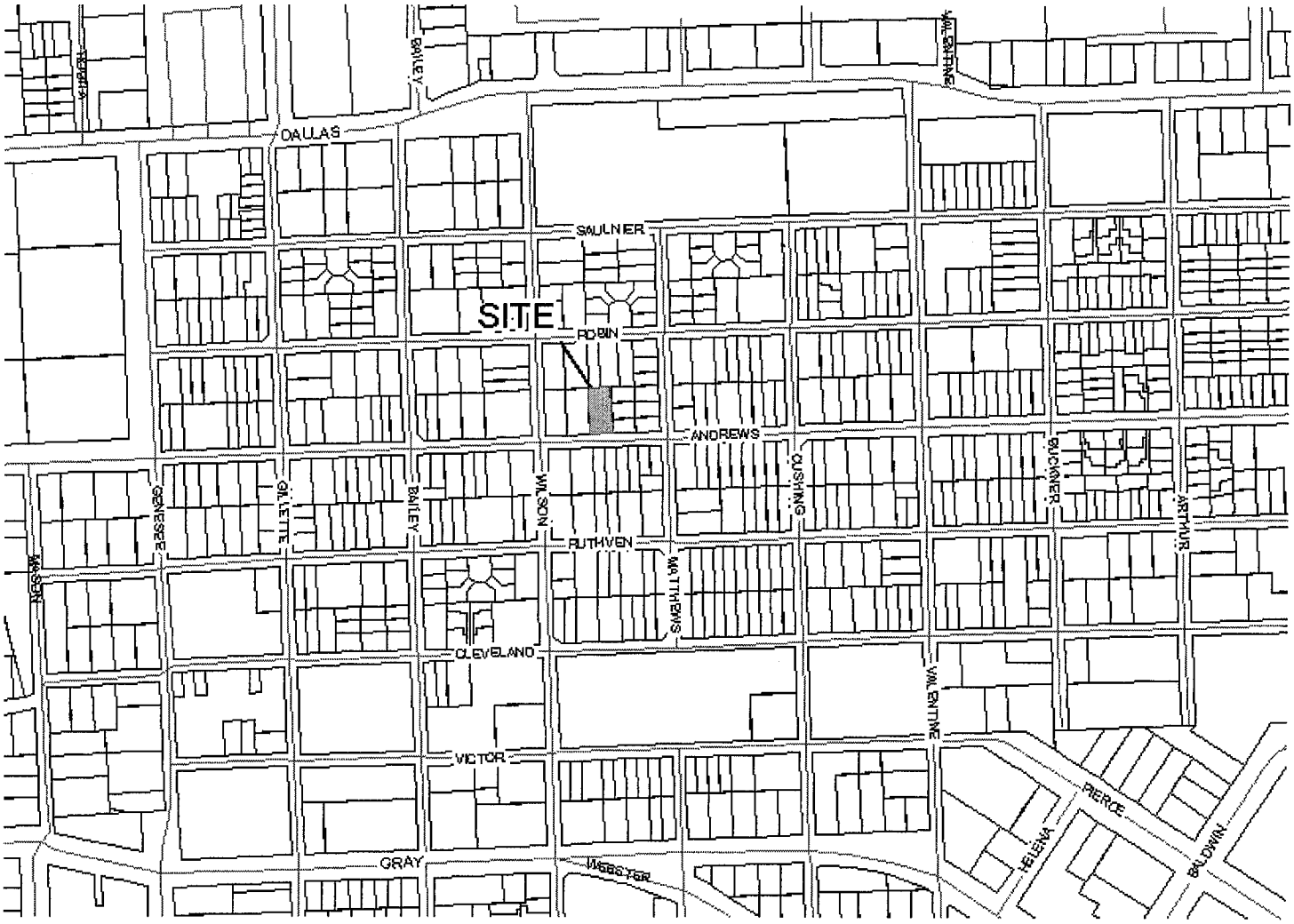
OR

☑ ☐ 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 the Houston Planning Commission the Protected Landmark Designation of the Rutherford B. H. Yates Sr., House at 1314 Andrews Street, a Landmark of the city of Houston.

SITE LOCATION MAP
RUTHERFORD B. H. YATES SR., HOUSE
1314 ANDREWS STREET
NOT TO SCALE