

# SBR Draft

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### 1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Knapp Building (1940)

Other name/site number: Knapp, Inc., 1230 Houston Avenue, Joe Goss Refinishing Service, Industrial Printers, Inc.

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

### 2. Location

Street & number: 1230 Houston Avenue

City or town: Houston

State: Texas

County: Harris

Not for publication:

Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

_____ State Historic Preservation Officer		_____
<b>Signature of certifying official / Title</b>		<b>Date</b>
Texas Historical Commission _____		
<b>State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government</b>		

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_

<b>Signature of commenting or other official</b>	<b>Date</b>
_____	
<b>State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register.
- \_\_\_ removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

### Category of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions:** COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store

**Current Functions:** RECREATION AND CULTURE: Art Gallery

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification:** MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne

**Principal Exterior Materials:** BRICK, METAL, WOOD

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheets xx-xx)

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

## 8. Statement of Significance

**Applicable National Register Criteria:** C

**Criteria Considerations:** NA

**Areas of Significance:** Architecture (*local*)

**Period of Significance:** 1940

**Significant Dates:** 1940

**Significant Person** (only if criterion b is marked): NA

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if criterion d is marked): NA

**Architect/Builder:** Montalbano Sr., Joseph Frank (builder)

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets xx-xx)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheet xx-xx)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. Part 1 approved on August 26, 2022.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

**Historic Resources Survey Number** (if assigned): NA

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property:** Less than one acre (approximately 0.1147 acres)

### Coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 29.769897°N Longitude: -95.372118°W

**Verbal Boundary Description:** TR 7 BLK P EVANS, Houston, Harris County, Texas (Account # 0131590000020) as recorded in the Harris Central Appraisal District. Data accessed July 27, 2023 (Map 4).

**Boundary Justification:** The boundary follows the legal parcel and includes all property historically associated with the nominated resource.

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Laura Carrera, AIA  
Organization: Urbano Architects, LLC  
Street & number: 1224 Houston Avenue, Suite 102  
City or Town: Houston State: TX Zip Code: 77007  
Email: [LC@urbanoarchitects.com](mailto:LC@urbanoarchitects.com)  
Telephone: 646-830-3009  
Date: 6/14/2023

## Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see continuation sheets xx-xx)

**Figures** (see continuation sheets xx-xx)

**Photographs** (see continuation sheets xx-xx)

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

## Photograph Log

Name of Property: Knapp Building (1940)

City or Vicinity: Houston

County: Harris

State: Texas

Photographer: Urbano Architects (Laura Carrera and Jamison Wicks) and Gerald Moorhead

Date: February and June 2023

*All photographs accurately depict property conditions. No changes nor significant deterioration has occurred since the photos were taken in February and June 2023.*

**Photo 1:** Primary (west) elevation facing Houston Avenue. June 8, 2023.

**Photo 2:** Primary (west) elevation showing vertical brick stripes. February 17, 2023.

**Photo 3:** Primary (west) elevation showing metal awnings and display windows and entrances. February 17, 2023.

**Photo 4:** North elevation facing Dart Street. June 8, 2023.

**Photo 5:** Rear (east) elevation with adjacent building at 1224 Houston Avenue at left. June 11, 2023.

**Photo 6:** Rear (east) elevation. June 11, 2023.

**Photo 7:** South elevation with adjacent building at 1224 Houston Avenue at right. June 8, 2023.

**Photo 8:** South elevation showing previous connection to adjacent building. June 8, 2023.

**Photo 9:** Interior view of lobby looking south. June 8, 2023.

**Photo 10:** Interior view looking east. June 8, 2023.

**Photo 11:** Interior view of lobby looking Northeast. June 8, 2023.

**Photo 12:** Interior view looking east. June 8, 2023.

**Photo 13:** Interior view looking southeast. June 8, 2023

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

## Narrative Description

Knapp Building (1940) located at 1230 Houston Avenue in Houston, Texas, serves as an excellent intact example of a small scale 1940s automobile dealership.<sup>1</sup> Designed in the Moderne architectural style, the building served as the first home of Knapp, Inc. (also known as Knapp Chevrolet), one of the oldest family-operated car dealerships in Houston still in business today. The building was constructed in early 1940 by Joseph (Joe) Frank Montalbano Sr., owner of Montalbano Lumber. Knapp's occupancy was short-lived due to rapid success, relocating to its new location by December 1941. The building features a tan brick veneer exterior with horizontal string courses of black brick at the frieze visible on the primary and side elevations. The primary elevation is symmetrical with a raised streamlined parapet at center and metal coping. A brick square defined by vertical bands of black brick is positioned above the center bay windows. Other character defining features include curved metal awnings, flat roof, and a mix of large original and replacement display windows and replacement doors. The original historic floor plan is largely intact as are the concrete floors. Finishes include newly painted gypsum and painted wood trim. In late 2022 a rehabilitation approved by the Texas Historical Commission was carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The building retains a high level of historic integrity.

---

## Location and Setting (Maps 1-5)

The Knapp Building (1940) faces west onto Houston Avenue. Located on an approximately 0.1147 acre commercial lot at the corner of Houston Avenue and Dart Street, the property is approximately a half-mile northeast of downtown Houston. The one-story commercial building is approximately 2,646 square feet in size and 15'-6" in height. A two-story metal building, constructed in the 1990s, is located approximately 5'-9" south of the Knapp Building (1940) and was once connected via a metal corridor at the south façade that has since been removed. Other noteworthy buildings in the vicinity include a one-story masonry commercial building north across Dart Street, as well as three-story townhomes bordering the east of the property. The Knapp Building faces Montalbano Lumber across the street at 1309 Houston Avenue, a family-owned and operated business existing at this location since 1900.<sup>2</sup> The other nearby development includes a mix of commercial, religious, and residential construction. National Register-listed properties in the vicinity include the Old Sixth Ward Historic District (NRHP 1978), Downtown Houston Post Office, Processing, and Distribution Center (NRHP 2018), and the Jefferson Davis Hospital (NHRP 2005).

## Exterior

### *General (Figures 7, 18, Photos 1-8)*

The Knapp Building (1940) is a single-story commercial building composed of tan brick veneer with three horizontal stringcourses or bands of black brick at the frieze visible on the primary (west) and side (north and south) elevations providing a strong horizontal emphasis. The primary elevation is symmetrical with a raised streamlined parapet at center and metal coping. All original fenestrations are intact, and doors and windows are a mix of original and

---

<sup>1</sup> The historic name Knapp Building (1940) was selected because it best reflects the property's importance and distinguishes it from the current Knapp Chevrolet dealership at 815 Houston Avenue built in 1941.

<sup>2</sup> As early as 1935, Joe Frank Montalbano Sr. of the Montalbano Lumber was owner of the property prior to the construction of Knapp Building. In 1940, Joe led the construction of the Knapp Building with materials supplied by his lumber company. Knapp Chevrolet continues to operate as a family-owned and operated car dealership, located only five blocks south. This location opened its doors in December 1941 as a 40,000 square foot building designed in the Moderne architectural style. Today, the 1941 Knapp Chevrolet building is still present at 815 Houston Avenue with various degrees of alterations and is now approximately 57,000 square feet in size. See Section 8. Harris County Tax Appraisal and Building Assessment Records for 1228 Houston Avenue, Houston, Texas 77007. Harris County Archives. (later tax records changed the address to Knapp Chevrolet Showroom; *Houston Post* Historical Archives. Newspapers.com. Rice University Fondren Library. Accessed January 2022. "New Building for Houston Avenue" 14 April 1940: 47; "Knapp Inc.; Authorized Chevrolet Dealer, to Open its New Building Today". *Houston Post*. (1941, December 1). p. 19

replacements. There is one door located at the rear of the building facing east, for parking lot access. The building's roof flat structure appears to date to 1940 and consists of wood frame and shiplap construction. In 2022, all previous modified bitumen roofing layers were removed and a new 60 mil TPO roofing system with rigid insulation was installed over the existing wood deck and shiplap. The 2,646 square-foot building measures 49 feet wide by 54 feet deep and the building height is predominantly 13'-10" with the center bay at the front facade reaching 15'-6" feet in height.

### *Primary (West) Elevation (Photos 1-3)*

The primary (west) elevation is symmetrical with a raised streamlined parapet at center and metal coping. A brick square defined by vertical bands of black brick is positioned above the center windows. The center square can be interpreted as resembling 1940s streamline vehicle designs, particularly vehicle grills (Figure 5, Photos 1-2).<sup>3</sup> The primary elevation closely resembles 1940 historic photographs when the building first opened (Figure 1). Four large display windows are symmetrically positioned. By early 2022, the original wood display windows and wood doors were missing or in poor condition and were sealed with plywood and graffiti. During the rehabilitation, the large display windows were restored and consist of original and replicated wood frames with new glazing to resemble the 1940's design (Figures 1-2). Brick sills are arranged in rowlock. The two single entrance doors were missing and replaced in their original openings, each with a new wood and glass door and wood-framed transom. Each entry is sheltered by a new curved stainless-steel awning that extends about three feet and match the profile of the original awnings. All brick veneer appears original and was gently cleaned to remove extensive soiling with minor repointing.

### *North Elevation (Photo 4)*

The north elevation faces Dart Street. The three horizontal black brick string courses extend along this elevation. The large wood-framed display window at the corner of Houston Avenue, was restored with new glazing in the middle to replicate the 1940 design (Figure 2). At the northeast corner is a new large two-over-four wood window in an original opening that drops to the sidewalk level, giving the appearance of what was once a large overhead vehicular door. There are two small wood-framed windows at the center of this elevation with extended brick sills arranged in rowlock. Prior to the rehabilitation, the left upper window was missing its glazing and sealed with plywood. The right one was infilled with brick and was missing its brick sill. Today, upper windows have been restored with new glazing and reconstructed parts when missing to match the originals. Three matching concrete vents that consist of three evenly spaced openings and are located at the lower portion of the elevation.

### *South Elevation (Photos 7-8)*

The south elevation faces the 1990s metal building and a parking lot. The three horizontal black brick string courses extend along this elevation. Four upper wood windows are symmetrically distributed. Identical to those on the north elevation, the wood-framed windows were recently restored with new glazing and have extended brick sills arranged in rowlock. There are three concrete vents at the lower portion of the elevation matching the north elevation. The adjacent metal building at 1224 Houston Avenue was once connected to the Knapp Building via a one-story metal corridor constructed by 2002. The metal corridor was demolished in 2022 and the masonry opening that once faced the corridor has been infilled with reclaimed tan brick veneer matching the original brick.

---

<sup>3</sup> "Only Chevrolet has The Ride Royal," *Houston Post*, 1940, March 31, 1940, p. 17.

## *Rear (East) Elevation (Photos 5-6)*

The rear (east) elevation faces the parking lot and is largely devoid of ornament. There are three different types of wood-framed windows, irregularly spaced, all with extended brick sills arranged in rowlock. There are three upper windows, one of which sits directly over the rear wood and glass door. There are two medium-sized single-hung wood windows at center and one larger single-hung wood window next to the door. The door and all windows were restored with needed repairs, new glazing, and painted white during the rehabilitation. There are four concrete vents located at the lower portion of the elevation that match the ones on the north and south elevations. Electrical equipment is mounted at the building's northeast corner. A gutter and two downspouts are visible. The rear lot consists of a new permeable true grid paver system with limited parking and a new curb-cut on Dart Street.

## **Interior (Figures 8, 17, Photos 9-13)**

The original floor plan is mostly intact, and the interior consists of a large open space with two main areas distinguished by two ceiling types. The west half near Houston Avenue is characterized by a newly painted gypsum ceiling, small round recessed lighting, and white-painted wood trim of minimalist style. The rear two thirds consist of unpainted and exposed original vertical wood joists displaying the wood deck above with back-finish track lighting. Exposed ductwork is painted white throughout. A predominant exposed wood beam at the center that runs from the front to the rear of the building and is supported by two T-shaped wood columns. The concrete floors are polished and appear original. The perimeter walls consist of white painted gypsum over what appears to be original structural shiplap, with the exception of the newly reconstructed perimeter wall where the metal corridor once connected to 1224 Houston Avenue. This portion was reconstructed with salvaged historic ship lap and wood stud framing to match the original. An open-style small kitchenette, two ADA-compliant single-use restrooms, storage, and a mechanical/electrical closet are concentrated at the rear.

## **Alterations**

It is unknown when the historic "Knapp, Inc Chevrolet" signage was removed from the building, however, several advertisements from the *Houston Post* and *Houston Chronicle* indicate that Knapp Chevrolet did not use the 1230 Houston Avenue address starting January 1942 (Figure 2). From 1943 through 1964, the building served as a repair shop under the business of Joe Goss Refinishing Service, and though no known alterations occurred during this time, it is likely that the original historic signage was no longer present.

Starting in the late 1960s through 2002, the building housed Industrial Printers, Inc. In 1990, Fred Barry, owner of the company, filed a permit to construct a two-story metal warehouse approximately 5'-9" southeast of the Knapp Building. A metal connecting corridor was constructed in 2002. The Estate Land Company (Wiese Properties) owned the building from 2002 through 2021 and toward the end of their ownership, the building's windows and doors appeared sealed with plywood or infilled with brick and exterior facades had layers of paint and graffiti (Figure 18).

In 2022, Urbano Architects prepared drawings for the rehabilitation of the Knapp Building and 1224 Houston Avenue and the work was completed in the same year. The goal was to bring the exterior back to its original 1940 appearance. The masonry was gently cleaned to remove the extensive layers of paint, graffiti, soiling and vegetation. Most of the original wood windows and doors were reconstructed by a local carpenter to match originals (Figures 1-2, Photos 1-8).<sup>4</sup> The two metal awnings above the main entry doors and metal coping were replaced with stainless-steel to match originals. The scope of work also entailed a new roofing over existing wood decking and a new parking lot with

---

<sup>4</sup> One original rear window was located in the attic allowing a local carpenter to replicate all wood frames based on the existing profiles. Photos of these were included in Part 2/B and 3/C state and federal tax credit applications.



permeable true grid paver system. The non-historic 2002 metal corridor was demolished, and the opening has been infilled with reclaimed tan brick veneer matching the original. The interior work included the removal of all non-original gypsum partitions, gypsum ceilings and gypsum acoustical ceiling panels constructed in circa 2014 for a previous tenant, Station Theater. The work also included MEP upgrades, such as new ADA-compliant restrooms, new lighting, code-compliant electrical panel, new HVAC system, storage closet, and small kitchenette.

## **Integrity**

The Knapp Building (1940) retains a high level of historic integrity. The building remains in its original location at the corner of Houston Avenue and Dart Street facing Montalbano Lumber. The original setting has been somewhat compromised by the intrusion of non-historic commercial construction, but many historic residential, commercial, religious, and light industrial properties are intact nearby. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is visible in the intact Moderne character defining features including the tan brick veneer exterior with horizontal stringcourses of black brick at the frieze, horizontal emphasis, symmetrical primary elevation with a raised streamlined parapet, metal coping, raised brick square defined by vertical bands of black brick, curved metal awnings, and flat roof. While many of the doors and windows as well as the metal awnings and coping had to be replaced, they match the original 1940 design and do not detract from the overall historic character. Integrity of design is also visible in the largely intact historic open floor plan and concrete floors. New finishes and the addition of kitchenette and bathroom spaces are purposeful for the continued use of the building. All these aspects combined allow the Knapp Building to convey the feeling of a small scale 1940s Moderne automobile dealership. It is no longer associated with Knapp Chevrolet.

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

## Statement of Significance

The Knapp Building (1940) is located at 1230 Houston Avenue in Houston, Texas. The building was originally constructed in 1940 as an automobile dealership for Knapp, Inc. (also known as Knapp Chevrolet), a local business still active today. Joseph (Joe) Frank Montalbano Sr., owner of Montalbano Lumber, served as the builder. Knapp's occupancy was short-lived due to rapid success, relocating to its new location by December 1941. The property was later purchased and used by Joe Goss Refinishing Service and Industrial Printers, Inc. In late 2022, the building was rehabilitated into an art gallery. The Knapp Building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent intact local example of a small 1940s Moderne automobile dealership. It serves as a rare extant example in Houston, and as one of only a few pre-1951 commercial buildings remaining along Houston Avenue. The property also appears to be a unique surviving example of 1940s Moderne commercial construction by Montalbano Lumber. The period of significance is 1940, the build date.

---

## Brief Overview of Houston's First Ward and Houston Avenue

Established in 1840, the First Ward in Houston was one of the original four wards, providing neighborhood representation in city government. It quickly developed into a working-class community due to its proximity to the downtown port and the Houston and Texas Central Railroad, attracting immigrants and experiencing robust economic activity. The area featured popular architectural styles of the time, such as Victorian cottages and Craftsman bungalows. William Robinson Baker, born in 1820, moved to Texas in 1837 and worked as a bookkeeper. He served as Harris County clerk for 16 years and held various influential positions, including mayor of Houston, president of the City Bank of Houston, and president of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad. Baker played a significant role in developing early neighborhoods like the First Ward and the Sixth Ward, owning, or holding mortgages on much of the land in the area. The First Ward still retains some late 19th and early 20th-century buildings, and efforts have been made to preserve the remaining historic housing stock, resulting in the designation of the High First Ward Historic Local District in 2014.<sup>5</sup>

Houston Avenue, originally planned as the main commercial corridor of the First Ward, played a seminal role in connecting the neighborhood to downtown Houston. It featured a mix of commercial buildings and Victorian homes, as well as schools, and fire stations. However, by the 1950s, the avenue experienced a decline, and many original structures were demolished. The construction of the Interstate Highway System further impacted the area's desirability, leading to disinvestment and population decline. Today, Houston Avenue remains an important route but has lost much of its pre-1950s fabric.

Based on a survey conducted in 2022 by Urbano Architects, the Knapp Building stands out among the few remaining commercial buildings constructed prior to 1951 facing Houston Avenue (Figure 16). The survey focused on buildings that were constructed pre-1896 through 1951 extant along Houston Avenue between Washington Avenue and White Oak Bayou, a 0.7 mile distance that once represented First Ward's main commercial corridor. In 1951, there were 136 buildings that faced Houston Avenue. In 2022, only 13 buildings constructed pre-1896 through 1951 are still present. The survey concluded that less than 10 percent of the historic fabric constructed pre-1896 through 1951 remains today.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission Report. (2021, August 26) Protected Landmark Designation Application for the J.F. Kessler Building. P. 2 Courtesy of Preservation Houston

<sup>6</sup> Survey of Pre-1986-1951 Buildings Present Facing Houston Avenue. March 2022 by Urbano Architects.

## History of the Knapp Building

### *1220 Houston Avenue, Prior to 1940*

Prior to construction of the Knapp Building (1940), there was a two-story Victorian house and a detached two-story apartment (Map 5). The home may have once belonged to the Fisk Family and the address was 1220 Houston Avenue.<sup>7</sup> According to the Harris County Tax Assessor Archives, the address of the property changed to 1228 Houston Avenue by at least 1935, and in 1940, the address was changed again to 1230 Houston Avenue (Figure 3).<sup>8</sup>

As early as March 1935 through at least 1942, Joseph (Joe) Frank Montalbano, Sr. was the owner of the property at 1230 Houston Avenue. Joe was the second-generation owner of the Montalbano Lumber located across the street. The Montalbano Lumber is one of the oldest family-operated Houston lumber companies still in business today and remain in operation at 1309 Houston Avenue.

### *Knapp, Inc., April 1940 – December 1941*

Knapp, Inc. was a Chevrolet dealership founded in 1940 and first opened its doors for business at the Knapp Building. According to Knapp Chevrolet representatives, their first customer was photographed in front of the Knapp Building (Figure 1). Knapp Chevrolet is one of the oldest family-operated car dealerships in Houston still present today. Prior to conducting business in Houston, F. E. Knapp had successfully operated dealerships in Harlingen, Brownsville, and Mercedes in the Rio Grande Valley.<sup>9</sup> Knapp served as president of the dealership at the time and J.M. Richardson, served as vice president and first manager of the Houston office.<sup>10</sup> Knapp, Inc. announced during an interview that they had spent over 45 days looking unsuccessfully for vacant buildings, and it is likely that Joe Montalbano, known for his speedy construction methods based on various advertisements of the time, saw the opportunity to build his first commercial project for Knapp, Inc.

According to several newspaper articles, the building at 1230 Houston Avenue was completed as a temporary location for auto sales and a showroom (Figures 4-6). Various advertisements promoted the 1230 Houston Avenue location showcasing new Chevrolet vehicles with a mention of another unidentifiable building east on Dart Street that served as the parts and services department.<sup>11</sup> By May 1940, only a month after opening the Knapp Building (1940), company advertisements indicated a car sales lot at 2005 Washington Avenue and by June 1940, another car sales lot at 1502 Jacinto. It appears that when Knapp, Inc. occupied 1230 Houston Avenue, from April 1940 through December 1941, the subject property operated in coordinaton with the 2005 Washington and 1502 San Jacinto car lots.<sup>12</sup>

On December 15, 1940, Knapp, Inc. purchased the property at 815 Houston Avenue to construct a new Knapp Chevrolet building with sales and service departments. The construction contract was announced in the *Houston Post* to be awarded to Rambo General Contractor.<sup>13</sup> In December 1941, Knapp, Inc. announced that they completed the construction of a new 40,000 SF building and officially moved out of the Knapp Building at 1230 Houston Avenue.<sup>14</sup> Today, Knapp Chevrolet Houston continues to operate at the 815 Houston Avenue location. It was recognized with a

---

<sup>7</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1924 vol. 2, Sheet 215. Houston Public Library online, Texas Digital Sanborn Maps

<sup>8</sup> [Building and Land Assessment Cards], Harris County Tax Assessor – Collector: Harris County Archives, Houston, Texas.

<sup>9</sup> “New Dealer in Chevrolet Autos Opens”. *Houston Chronicle* (1940, April 14). P.60

<sup>10</sup> “New Building for Houston Avenue”. *Houston Post*. (1940, April 14). p. 14

<sup>11</sup> “New Chevrolet Dealer, Knapp Inc., Opened Here” *Houston Post*. (1940, April 14). p. 14

<sup>12</sup> “Chevrolet Master De Luxe Sport Sedan” *Houston Post*. (1940, September 20). p. 37; “New Chevrolet Trucks” *Houston Chronicle*. (1941, March 16). p. 13; “Knapp, Inc Authorized Chevrolet Dealer 100 Used Cars” *Houston Chronicle*. (1940, August 23). p. 34

<sup>13</sup> “Rambo Gets Knapp Chevrolet Contract” *Houston Post*. (1941, MNay 4). p. 49

<sup>14</sup> “Knapp Inc.; Authorized Chevrolet Dealer, to Open its New Building Today,” *Houston Post*, December 1, 1941, p. 19

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

“Texas Treasure Business Award,” a program of the Texas Historical Commission awarded with the assistance of the Harris County Historical Commission.

### *Joe Goss Refinishing Service, 1943 -1964*

From 1943 through 1964, the Knapp Building was home to Joe Goss Refinishing Service, later also referenced as Goss Appliance Refinishing Shop and Goss Refinishing Service. Limited information on this period was located but the business first opened its doors at 1230 Houston Avenue offering refrigerator refinishing services on porcelain and baked enamel finishes. Soon after, the business advertised refinishing services of all types of appliances, quickly expanding their refinishing offerings to include a wide variety of home appliances, and furniture. The business also bought and sold radios, appliances, and a variety of home and office furniture. Joe Goss and his son, William H. Goss, Sr. owned and operated the business for about thirty years in Houston, occupying the Knapp Building for most of that time. Joe Goss, was born in 1892 and died in 1974 at 82 years old, leaving behind a large family including five children, sixteen grandchildren, fifteen great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.<sup>15</sup>

### *Industrial Printers, Inc., Late 1960s – 2002*

From the late 1960s through 2002, Knapp Building served as home for Industrial Printers, Inc., a well-known print shop serving Houston businesses and politicians. The business was owned and operated by Fred Barry, a successful businessman who received various accolades and recognitions from local organizations, as well as Houston City Council and the State of Texas Senate upon his retirement. Mayor Kathryn Whitmire even proclaimed May 31, 1991 as Industrial Printers Day. Fred was born in Grand Island, Nebraska in August 1926. After serving in the Navy in World War II, he relocated to Houston and established Industrial Printers, Inc. in 1947 with two partners, including Navy-veteran Zach Marvin Hicks. Fred became sole owner of the business and by 1990, the success of Industrial Printers, Inc., led to an expansion of the business to the two-story metal building to the south of the Knapp Building. Industrial Printers, Inc. closed for business in 2002 and Fred Barry sold Knapp Building as well as the adjacent property at 1224 Houston Avenue to the Estate Land Company (Wiese Properties).<sup>16</sup>

### *Estate Land Company (Wiese Properties), 2002 – Late 2021*

The Estate Land Company (Wiese Properties) owned the building between November 2002 through December 2021. During this time, the building was leased to the Texas Art Asylum (2010-2013) and Station Theater (2013 – 2022). According to their website, the Texas Art Asylum is a “part craft store, part thrift store, part salvage yard for reuse, repurposing or upcycling” and in 2010, they were featured as “the Ultimate Business of the Week” by the *Houston Chronicle* for having collected 20,000 pounds of reusable materials.<sup>17</sup> Station Theater is a popular venue in the neighborhood offering comedy performances as well as classes and workshops in improvisation, sketch, and stand-up. By late 2021, the building had fallen into disrepair with extensive graffiti, paint, soiling, and vegetation throughout its brick facades (Figure 18).

---

<sup>15</sup> “Rent or Lease” *Houston Chronicle*. (1942, January 12). p. 14; “Refrigerator Refinishing” *Houston Chronicle*. (1942, December 25). p. 21; “Westinghouse” *Houston Chronicle*. (1943, October 25). p. 15; “Refrigerator Repairing” *Houston Chronicle*. (1950, June 30). p. 53; “Joe Goss Refinishing Service” *Houston Chronicle*. (1958, August 29). p. 12; “Joe Goss Refinishing Service” *Houston Post*. (1961, January 29). p. 37; “Brick Building” *Houston Chronicle*. (1964, January 22). p. 46; “Goss” *Houston Chronicle*. (1974, January 17). p. 52.

<sup>16</sup> “Fred L. Barry Obituary”. *Houston Chronicle*. (2008, December 6). P.8; “Barry” *Houston Chronicle*. (2008, December 7). p. 44; “Industrial Printers Inc” *Houston Chronicle*. (1969, January 12). p. 221; “Industrial Printers, Inc.” *Houston Chronicle*. (1970, January 13). p. 6; “Kidney Foundation” *Houston Chronicle*. (1979, June 13). p. 129; “Zach Marvin Hicks” *Houston Chronicle*. (2016, March 13). p. 38; “GHBA Associate of the Year Award Recipients” *Houston Post*. (1991, November 10). p. 179.

<sup>17</sup> “Texas Art Asylum”. *Houston Chronicle*. (2011, May 19 P.189.).

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

## *Houston Dart, LLC, Late 2021 – Present*

In December 2021, the properties at 1230 and 1224 Houston Avenue were purchased by Houston Dart, LLC, with plans of reuse for retail and offices. The development was led by Andres Utting and Jon Deal who hired Urbano Architects for the subsequent rehabilitation. TDC Realty, LLC managed the construction. Following completion, Mont Art House, a local art gallery, moved into the Knapp Building, and the 1224 Houston Avenue building serves as offices.

## **Montalbano Lumber**

Montalbano Lumber located at 1309 Houston Avenue was founded in 1900 by Francesco (Frank) Montalbano. Frank was originally from Palermo, Italy and briefly worked in east Texas at a saw mill before relocating to Houston. The company is one of the oldest family-operated Houston lumber companies still in business today and there has been much coverage in the *Houston Post* and *Houston Chronicle* about their accomplishments. Around 1929, Joseph (Joe) Frank Montalbano, Sr. Frank's son, became owner and together with his wife Sadie, operated the company for over 61 years. Joe lived at 1606 Goliad Street, a few blocks from Knapp Building.<sup>18</sup>

By 1935, Harris County Tax Appraisal and Building Assessment Records indicate that Joe Montalbano was owner of 1228 Houston Avenue (subject property), located directly across the street from the Montalbano Lumber. By the late 1930's, there were a series of advertisements by Montalbano Lumber offering construction and financing services for residential buildings. In 1938, he built a two-story apartment building with tan brick veneer similar to the Knapp Building, at 4304 Pease still present today.<sup>19</sup>

By 1940, Joe Montalbano was referenced in the *Houston Post* as the builder of various residences around Houston. The company advertised an assortment of construction materials including lumber, paint, plumbing, electrical supplies, roofing and hardware. In 1940 alone, Montalbano Lumber was credited with constructing five residences, four of which are still present today, including 5539 Truett Street, 1976 West Dallas Street, 2 Estelle Street, and 104 N. Eastwood Street. 106 Eastwood appears to have been demolished.<sup>20</sup> The residences at 5539 Truett Street and 1976 West Dallas Street appear to have a similar tan brick veneer like the Knapp Building. The buildings constructed by Montalbano Lumber during the late 1930s and 1940s were mainly Craftsman residences. Apart from the Clubhouse for the Sacred Heart Society of Little York Catholic Church at 816 Whitney, designed in the Craftsman style (1940, demolished), the Knapp Building was the only other commercial building the company built during that time. The property was an outlier and appears to be a unique surviving example of Moderne commercial construction by Montalbano Lumber. When Knapp, Inc. relocated there were a series of advertisements to lease the building by Joe Montalbano through 1943 when the building became Joe Goss Refinishing Service.

Joe's three sons, Frank, Michael and John, eventually took over the business when Joe retired in the 1990's. Several newspaper articles by the *Houston Post* and *Houston Chronicle* have highlighted Joe and the company throughout the years. In 1978, the *Houston Post* featured a long article about the Montalbano Lumber as "the oldest lumber yard in Houston" and in 1990, Joe was referenced as the "distinguished lumber company czar" by the *Houston Chronicle*.<sup>21</sup> Today, Montalbano Lumber is known locally as an established retail company that provides a variety of construction supplies, such as lumber, paint, plumbing, hardware, electrical, concrete products, and much more.

---

<sup>18</sup> "Brothers". *Houston Post*. (1935, October 6). P.59.

<sup>19</sup> "Brick Being Built". *Houston Post*. (1938, April 24) P. 25

<sup>20</sup> The house number at 5539 Truett currently appears as 5543.

<sup>21</sup> "Oldest Lumber Firm" *Houston Post*. (1978, September 14). P. 59.

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

## Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Automobile Dealerships in Houston

According to architectural historian Stephen Fox, the major lineup of Houston auto dealerships were located downtown in the Milam Street auto row starting as early as 1926.<sup>22</sup> Some relevant examples included Houston's Packard dealer designed by Alfred C. Finn, A. C. Burton Motor Co. designed by Joseph Finger, and Hargis Chevrolet by designed by Hedrick & Gottlieb. The J. S. Tamborello Building at 1903-05 Milam, designed by the Russell Brown Company, is the only surviving example constructed in 1930.

In Midtown, there were three known auto dealerships constructed during the 1940s and early 1950s that are still present today with moderate-to-high degrees of alterations. These include Central Houston Cadillac at 2520 Main Street, Reef Restaurant at 2600 Travis Street, and the Ensemble Theatre at 3535 Main Street. The Kirby Drive corridor was a suburban auto dealers' row in the 1950s and the only known surviving dealership is Helfman River Oaks Chrysler/Jeep at 4807 Kirby, which has been substantially altered.

When Knapp, Inc. opened its doors in 1940, there were six prominent Chevrolet dealerships in Houston including Dow Motor Co. at Milam, Walker, and Louisiana Streets, South Main Chevrolet Company at 2300 South Main Street, Downtown Chevrolet Co. at McKinney and Austin Streets, Bob Robertson at 302 Broadway Street (Harrisburg Boulevard), and Pollard Chevrolet Company at Caroline and Bell Streets.<sup>23</sup> All these Chevrolet dealerships have been demolished. Apart from the Knapp Chevrolet buildings at 1230 Houston Avenue and 815 Houston Avenue, no other comparable surviving small 1940s Chevrolet dealerships have been identified in Houston.

## Moderne Architecture

Moderne architecture, also called Art Moderne or Streamline Moderne emerged the 1930s. The smooth streamline appearance served as a reaction to the heavily decorated and extravagant Art Deco precedents of the 1920s and early 1930s, and reflected the impacts of the Great Depression on construction and design. According to Jay C. Henry's *Architecture in Texas: 1895-1945*, Moderne architecture was "a total rejection of historicism and the search for a radically new building culture based on modern functions, modern technology, and a heroic liberation from ornament."<sup>24</sup> Moderne design was characterized by a strong horizontal emphasis, curved surfaces such as corners, walls, and cylindrical projections, and modest ornament usually in the form of stringcourses and trim further underscoring horizontality. Moderne buildings featured flat roofs, raised parapets, round porthole-like windows, and glass block windows.<sup>25</sup> "This concept coupled with Europe and America's fascination with aerodynamics of motion as seen in trains, ocean liners and cars was transferred to art works, everyday objects such as clocks, radios, furniture and other items, and to commercial buildings by the early 1930s."<sup>26</sup> The style was most commonly applied to commercial and residential construction.

The Knapp Building serves as an excellent intact example of a small scale 1940s Moderne automobile dealership. Character defining features of the Moderne style visible in the design of the Knapp Building include the tan brick veneer exterior with long horizontal stringcourses of black brick at the frieze, horizontal emphasis, symmetrical primary elevation with a raised streamlined parapet, metal coping, raised brick square defined by vertical bands of black brick, curved metal awnings, and flat roof. The center square can be interpreted as resembling 1940s streamline vehicle designs, particularly vehicle grills (Figure 5, Photos 1-2).<sup>27</sup> The absence of more curved surfaces, cylindrical

---

<sup>22</sup> "Shelor Motor Company Building and the Milam Street Auto Row: A History by Stephen Fox" *Rice Design Alliance*. (2018, October 23).

<sup>23</sup> "Chevrolet's First Again! Eye It, Try It, Buy It!" *Houston Chronicle*. (1940, April 14 P.8.).

<sup>24</sup> Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas: 1895-1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993) 194.

<sup>25</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992) 241-246.

<sup>26</sup> Marcel Quimby, "Heights Theater, Houston, Harris County, Texas," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 2017, page 16.

<sup>27</sup> "Only Chevrolet has The Ride Royal," *Houston Post*, 1940, March 31, 1940, p. 17.

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

projections, glass block windows, and round windows highlight that the Knapp Building was a more modest example of Moderne design.

According to three surveys conducted in 1978, 2005 and 2022, few small scale Moderne buildings similar to the Knapp Building remain present in Houston today. In 1978, Yolita Schmidt identified various Moderne buildings throughout Houston dating from the 1930s to 1940s. This work was published as “A Houston Guide: The Moderne Style in Architecture” for the Houston Public Library’s project CITY: Our Urban Past, Present and Future. In 2005, David Bush and Jim Parsons documented Art Moderne buildings present, altered, and demolished in *Houston Deco: Modernistic Architecture of the Texas Coast*. Upon review of both documents and to identify buildings of similar style and scale to Knapp Building, Urbano Architects prepared a 2022 survey of small-scale Moderne buildings in Houston constructed between 1930-1949. The survey only identified seven small-scale Moderne-style commercial buildings still present in Houston consisting of less than 7,000 square-feet (Figures 9-15). Five out of these seven buildings are one-story and smaller than 3,000 square-feet, including Knapp Building. When compared to extant similar examples, the Knapp Building stands out as having a high level of historic integrity. The survey also identified five small-scale Moderne buildings present today that have been significantly altered. The rest of the small-scale buildings identified in the 1978 and 2005 surveys by Schmidt, and Bush and Parsons, have been demolished.

## **Conclusion**

The property is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance. The period of significance is 1940, the build date.

## **Bibliography**

Bush, David & Parsons, Jim. (2005). *Houston Deco: Modernistic Architecture of the Texas Coast*.

Chapman, Betty. "Houston's First Ward: Providing Food from Farm to Counter." *Houston History*, vol. 8, 1. Accessed August 2021.

City of Houston Protected Landmark Nomination Report for 1714 Houston Avenue. First Ward, Baker NSBB and Houston Avenue History. Accessed August 2021.

City of Houston Protected Landmark Nomination Report for 1610 Hickory Street. Baker NSBB History. Accessed August 2021.

Henry, Jay C. *Architecture in Texas: 1895-1945*. University of Texas Press. Accessed March 2022.

Harris County Tax Appraisal and Building Assessment Records for 1228 Houston Avenue, Houston, Texas 77007. Harris County Archives. Accessed January 2022.

Montalbano Lumber Website. "*Helping Build Houston for Over a Century*". Accessed in March 2022.

*Houston Chronicle* Historical Archive (1905-2016). Houston Public Library, Houston and Texas Resources. Accessed January 2022.

\_\_\_\_\_, "J. F. Montalbano" 14 April, 1935: 36.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Man Shot By Policeman Is Being Guarded" 8 January, 1930: 9

\_\_\_\_\_, "Christian Window" 23 October 1935: 16.

\_\_\_\_\_, "New Dealer in Chevrolet Autos Opens" 14 April 1940: 60.

\_\_\_\_\_, "New Chevrolet Trucks" 18 February 1941: 4.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Refrigerator Repairing" 30 June, 1950: 53.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Joe Goss Refinishing Service" 29 August 1958: 12.

\_\_\_\_\_, "[Looking for] Experienced Painters' Helper" 3 November 1961: 38.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Brick Building: 1230 Houston Ave [Rentals]" 22 January 1964: 46.

\_\_\_\_\_, "J. Montalbano Honored by Lumbe Group" 11 December, 1966: 59

\_\_\_\_\_, "Joe Goss [Obituary]" 17 January 1974: 52.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Frank J. Montalbano" 3 October, 2004: 41.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Lumber Manager Loved Job" 5 October, 2004: 37.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Montalbano, translator and businesswoman; Sadie Montalbano" 7 January, 2008: 16.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Sadie Montalbano, business owner" 13 January, 2008: 28.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Fred L. Barry [Obituary]" 6 December 2008: 8.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Texas Art Asylum" 19 May 2011: 189.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Lumber Business Built to Last" 7 April, 2012: 42.

*Houston Post* Historical Archives. *Newspapers.com*. Rice University Fondren Library. Accessed January 2022.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Mrs. Lena Montalbano" 21 May, 1917: 6.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Brothers" 6 October, 1935: 59.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Duplex by J.F. Montalbano" 8 November, 1936: 28.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Brick Being Built" 245 April, 1938: 25.



Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

- \_\_\_\_, "Duplex Planned" 4 June, 1939: 24.
- \_\_\_\_, "Joe Pamuk Jr [Obituary]" 1 May, 1931: 25.
- \_\_\_\_, "Montalbano Lumber Company Expands" 18 September, 1938: 31.
- \_\_\_\_, "Only Chevrolet has THE RIDE ROYAL" 31 March, 1940: 17.
- \_\_\_\_, "New Chevrolet Dealer, Knapp Inch., Opened Here" 14 April 1940: 14.
- \_\_\_\_, "New Building for Houston Avenue" 14 April 1940: 47.
- \_\_\_\_, "Now Serving Houston! Knapp, Inc" 21 April 1940: 2.
- \_\_\_\_, "New Building for Houston Avenue" 14 April 1940: 47.
- \_\_\_\_, "First Showing Today New 1941 Chevrolet" 21 September 1940: 5.
- \_\_\_\_, "Rambo Gets Knapp Chevrolet Contract" 4 May 1941: 49.
- \_\_\_\_, "Knapp Inc.; Authorized Chevrolet Dealer, to Open its New Building Today" 12 December 1941: 19.
- \_\_\_\_, "Lumberman Buys Ten-Acre Tract" 2 November, 1941: 26.
- \_\_\_\_, "Joe Goss [Obituary]" 18 January 1958: 49.
- \_\_\_\_, "Joseph J. Montalbano Sr. [Obituary]" 8 April 1966: 39.
- \_\_\_\_, "Oldest Lumber Firm" 17 September, 1978: 59.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1896, Sheet 53. Houston Public Library online, Texas Digital Sanborn Maps.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1924 vol. 2, Sheet 215. Houston Public Library online, Texas Digital Sanborn Maps.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1924-Feb. 1951 vol. 2, 1924-Dec. 1950, Sheet 215. Houston Public Library online, Texas Digital Sanborn Maps.

Schmidt, Yolita. (1978). *A Houston Guide: The Moderne Style in Architecture*.

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

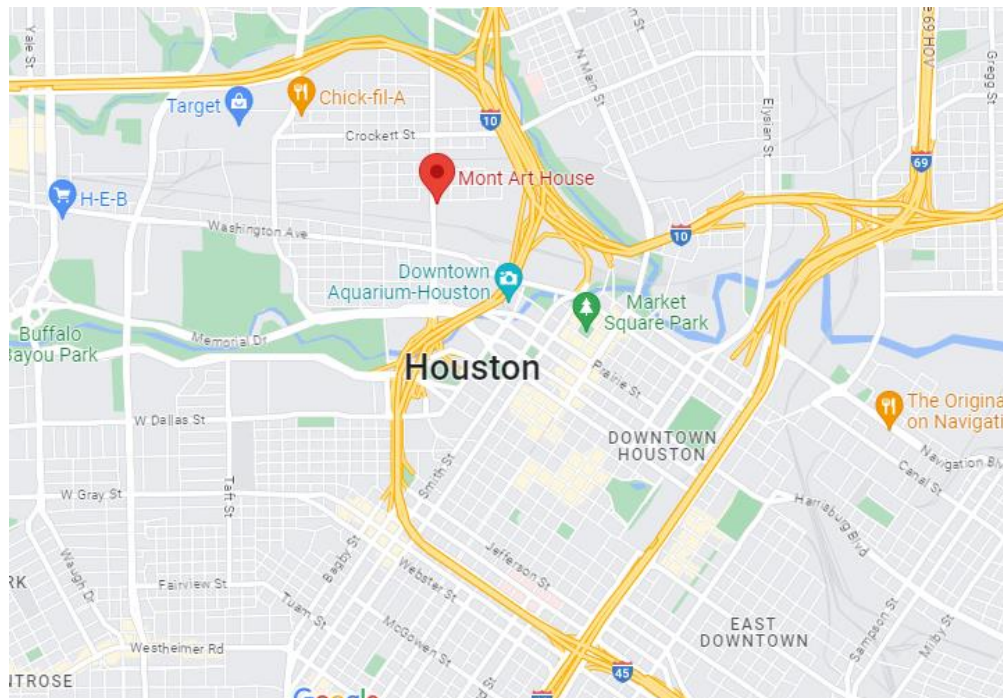
---

## Maps

**Map 1:** Harris County, Texas



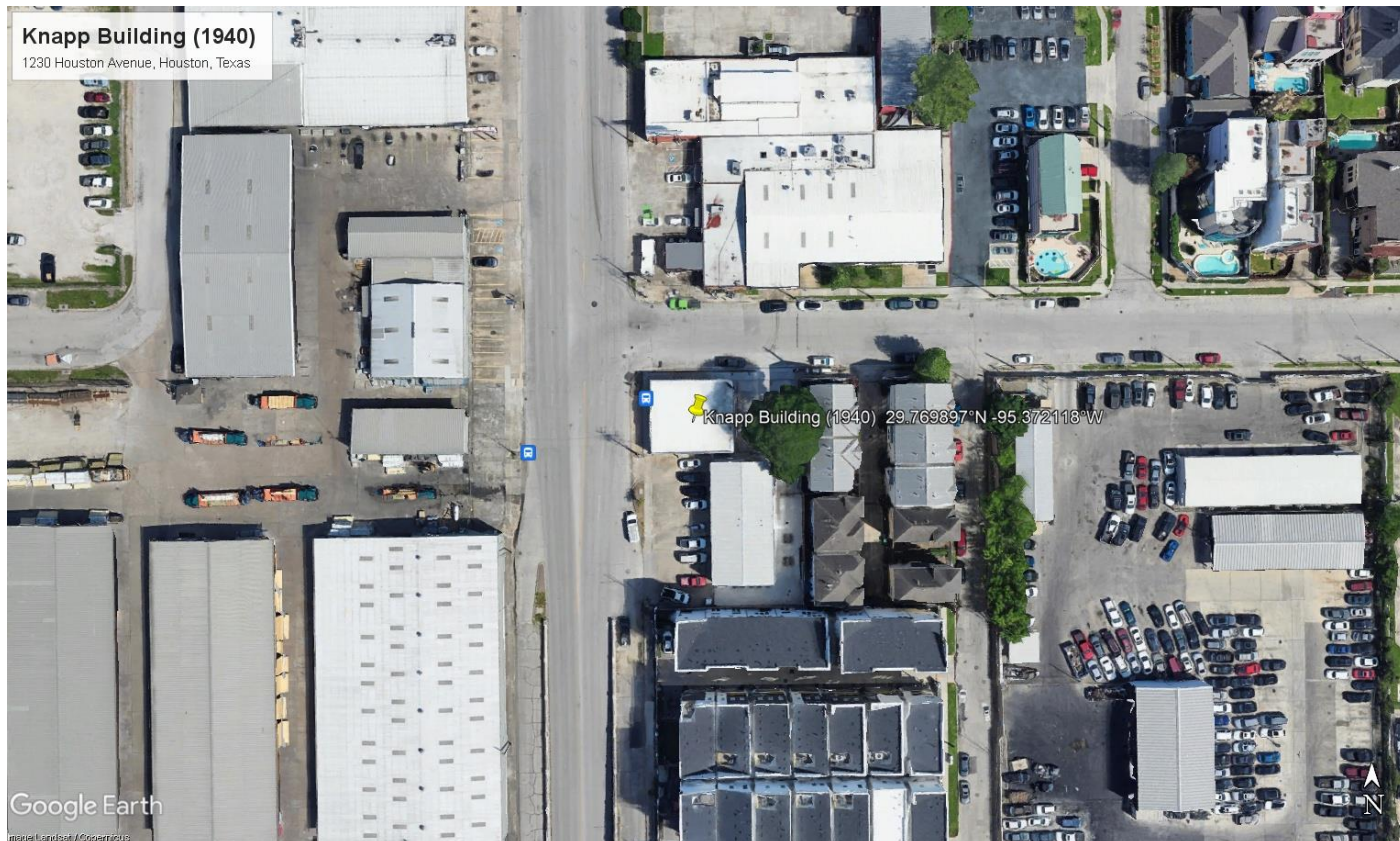
**Map 2:** Google Earth, Location of Knapp Building (1940) and Downtown Houston, accessed June 22, 2023



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Map 3:** Google Earth Map, accessed November 5, 2023.

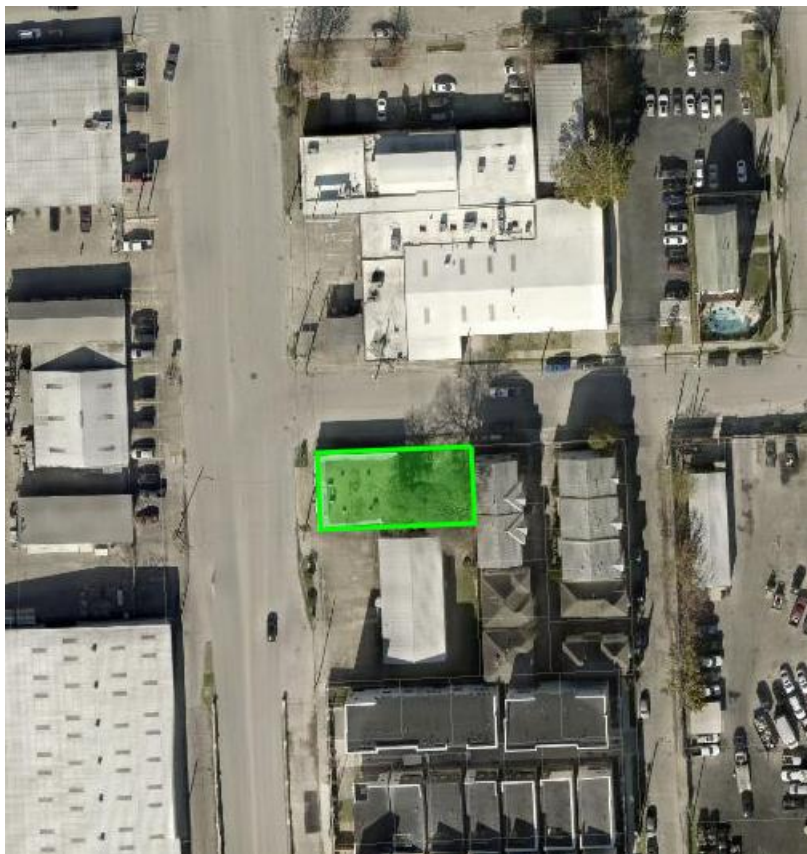


# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

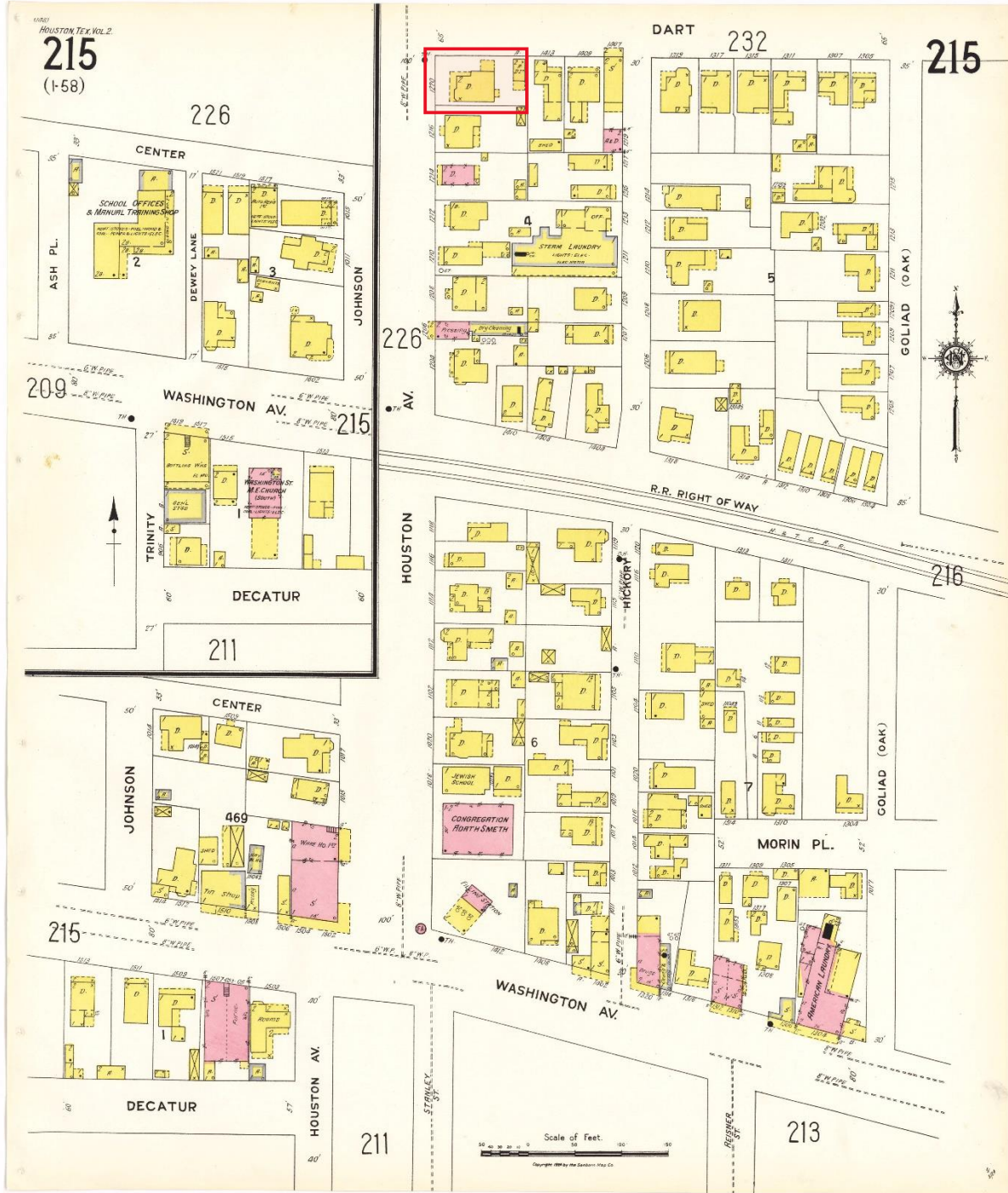
**Map 4:** Harris Central Appraisal District Map showing boundary. TR 7 BLK P EVANS, Houston, Harris County, Texas (Account # 013159000020) as recorded in the Harris Central Appraisal District. Data accessed July 27, 2023. The boundary follows the legal parcel and includes all property historically associated with the nominated resource.



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Map 5:** Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1924-Feb. 1951 vol. 2, 1924-Dec. 1950, Sheet 215. University of Texas Libraries. Future site of Knapp Building outlined in red.



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

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

## Figures

**Figure 1:** Photograph of Knapp Building (1940) circa early 1940's. According to Knapp Chevrolet, this is the first Knapp Chevrolet Houston customer. Courtesy of Knapp Chevrolet.



Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 2: "New Building for Houston Avenue," *Houston Post*, April 14, 1940: 47.

THE HOUSTON POST: SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 1940

## Upkeep Cost of Material Is Vital

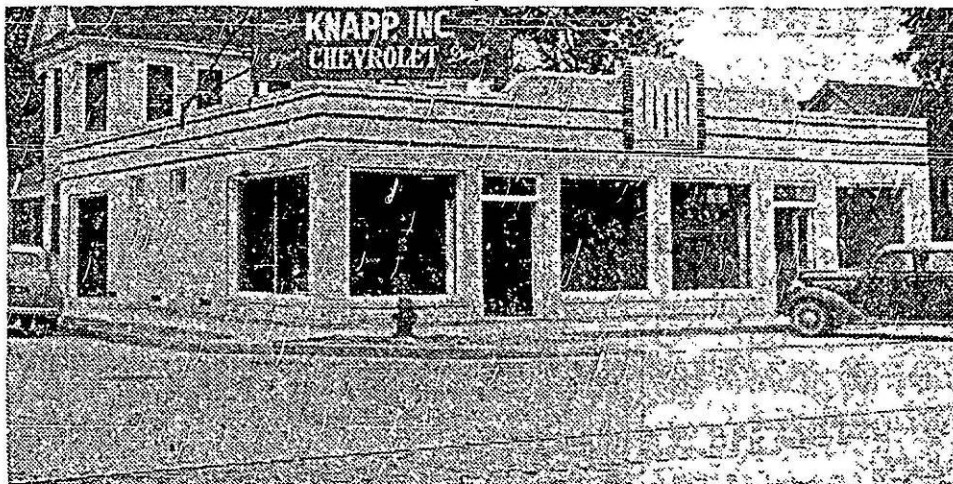
In selecting material for building a home there are two types of costs to be considered: The original cost and the relative cost of upkeep.

In the medium- and low-priced fields, particularly, great care must be used in selecting material which has both the lowest original cost and the lowest upkeep cost.

Differences in local conditions make it impossible to issue recommendations which are applicable in every section of the country.

In some parts of the country the cost of wood construction is so low that, regardless of the cost of upkeep of wooden houses, it is more sensible to use frame construction. In certain other parts of the country the architect and builder may recommend the use of some type of material for which upkeep costs are lower than those for wood construction.

## NEW BUILDING FOR HOUSTON AVENUE

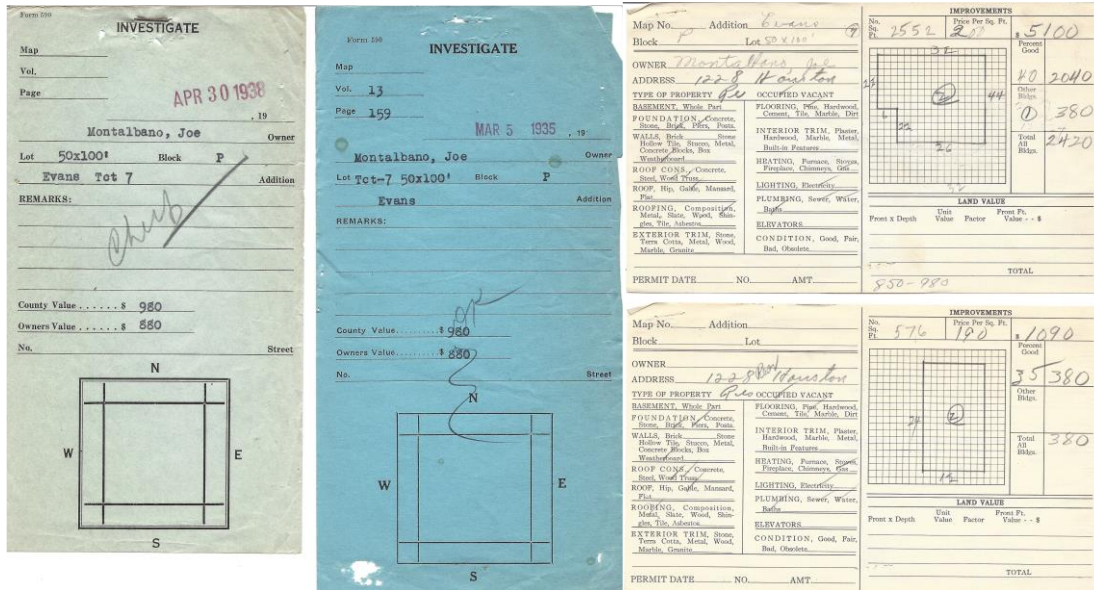


This new brick store building at 1228 Houston avenue will be the home of Knapp, Inc., new Houston Chevrolet agency. The store, 48 by 50 feet, was completed during the past week by J. Montalbano Sr., the owner. Material for the new store was furnished by the Montalbano Lumber company, 1309 Houston avenue. The Montalbano Lumber company carries a complete line of lumber, building materials of all kinds, including sash, doors, hardware, lime, brick and cement, and will furnish estimates on both residential and commercial structures. An advisory department for home builders includes a plan room, in which pictures, plans, drawings and specifications for homes of all types are available for the prospective home builder.

# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Figure 3:** Harris County Tax Appraisal and Building Assessment Records for 1228 Houston Avenue, Houston, Texas 77007. Harris County Archives. (later tax records changed the address to Knapp Building (1940).





# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 4: "Only Chevrolet has THE RIDE ROYAL," *Houston Post*, March 31, 1940: 17.

## Only Chevrolet has "THE RIDE ROYAL"



—because only Chevrolet has all these modern features which make it possible!

### "CHEVROLET'S First Again!"

LEADER IN SALES  
8 OUT OF THE LAST 9 YEARS

The 1940 Chevrolet gives higher quality at low cost! . . . Low Prices . . . Low Operating Costs . . . Low Upkeep.

No other motor car can match its all-round dollar value



**Chevrolet's PERFECTED KNEE-ACTION**  
*20" Spindle-Top Lever and Steer-20 Low Sway Bar*

is assembled in an integral unit complete in itself, to assure perfect balance and, therefore, perfect springing, steering and braking in each individual car.



**Chevrolet's STABILIZED FRONT END**

with radiator, hood, headlights and fenders firmly and securely bound together in a rigid framework of structural steel, gives true front-end stability.



**Chevrolet's AUTOMATIC RIDE STABILIZER**

attached to the front end of the chassis frame, and linked to the lower Knee-Action member, imparts genuine steadiness on curves and steep turns!



**Chevrolet's SCIENTIFICALLY BALANCED SPRINGS**

with double-acting shock absorbers, and with spring action varying automatically according to load and deflection, assure uniform riding smoothness at all times.



**Chevrolet's BALANCED WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION** in this LONGEST OF ALL LOWEST-PRICED CARS

gives that scientific distribution of weight over front and rear springs so essential to a smooth, level ride.



**Chevrolet's RIGID ALL-STEEL BODY and BOX-GIRDER FRAME**

the strongest and most rigid body and frame construction known to modern automotive engineering—adds that final degree of comfort and safety which spells today's finest ride . . . "Chevrolet's Ride Royal!"

**POLLARD CHEVROLET CO.**  
Corolla or Bell      Preston 3226

**DOWNTOWN CHEVROLET CO.**  
McKinney at Austin      Preston 1285

**BOB ROBERTSON**  
382 Broadway (Harrisburg)      Wayide 7124

**DOW MOTOR CO.**  
Milam, Walker and Louisiana      Fairfax 3299


**SOUTH MAIN CHEVROLET, INC.**  
2300 South Main Street      Fairfax 3248

**KNAPP, INC.**  
1220 Houston Ave.

# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 5: "New Chevrolet Trucks," *Houston Post*, March 16, 1941: 13.



## NEW CHEVROLET TRUCKS

**1<sup>st</sup>** IN DESIGN  
**1<sup>st</sup>** IN POWER  
**1<sup>st</sup>** IN FEATURES  
**1<sup>st</sup>** IN STEERING EASE  
*and in SALES*  
among all low-priced trucks

Truck buyers everywhere agree that Chevrolet trucks are first in value among all low-priced trucks.... That's why they buy more Chevrolet trucks, year after year, than any other make.

**WORLD'S LEADING TRUCK BUILDER**

<b>DOW MOTOR CO.</b> Milam, Walker and Louisiana, Fairfax 3393	<b>KNAPP, INC.</b> 1250 Houston Avenue, Capitol 9891	<b>DOWNTOWN CHEVROLET CO.</b> McKinney at Austin, Preston 1205
<b>SOUTH MAIN CHEVROLET, INC.</b> 2300 South Main Street, Fairfax 3361	<b>POLLARD CHEVROLET CO.</b> Caroline at Bell, Preston 3326	<b>BOB ROBERTSON</b> 302 Broadway (Harrisburg), Wayside 7134

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 6: "Now Serving Houston! Knapp, Inc.," *Houston Post*, April 21, 1940: 2.



**Now Serving  
Houston!**  
**KNAPP, Inc.**



**1230 Houston Ave.**  
TEMPORARY LOCATION

**Houston's Newest  
Chevrolet Dealer**

To properly sell and service Chevrolets in Houston we have tried to build the kind of an organization you like to do business with. Every department head has had years of experience in the business. They want to give you the best in courtesy, attention and service. Our service men are factory trained.

We are in need of used cars, and because of this fact, we are in position to make you a surprising offer for your present car in trade on the new 1940 Chevrolet. We can make deliveries right from the sales floor . . . no waiting . . . no delay.

**These Salesmen are Ready to Serve You**  
H. V. GUDGER · JIMMIE ROGERS · IKE BEGGS  
CHARLIE PHILLIPS · A. P. SULLIVAN  
VIRGIL L. MEALER · ELMER MEYER

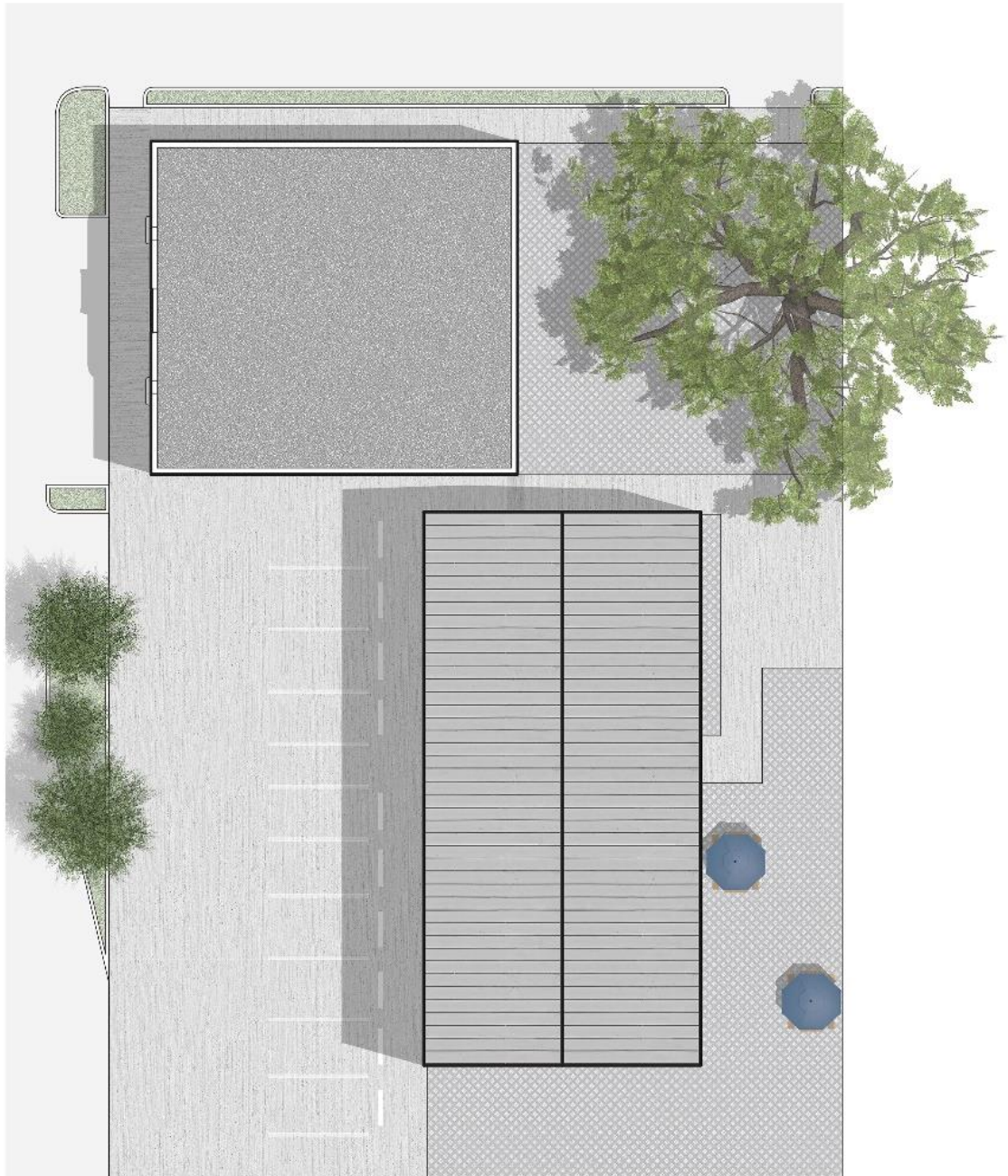
**CHEVROLET'S, First Again IN 1940!**

# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

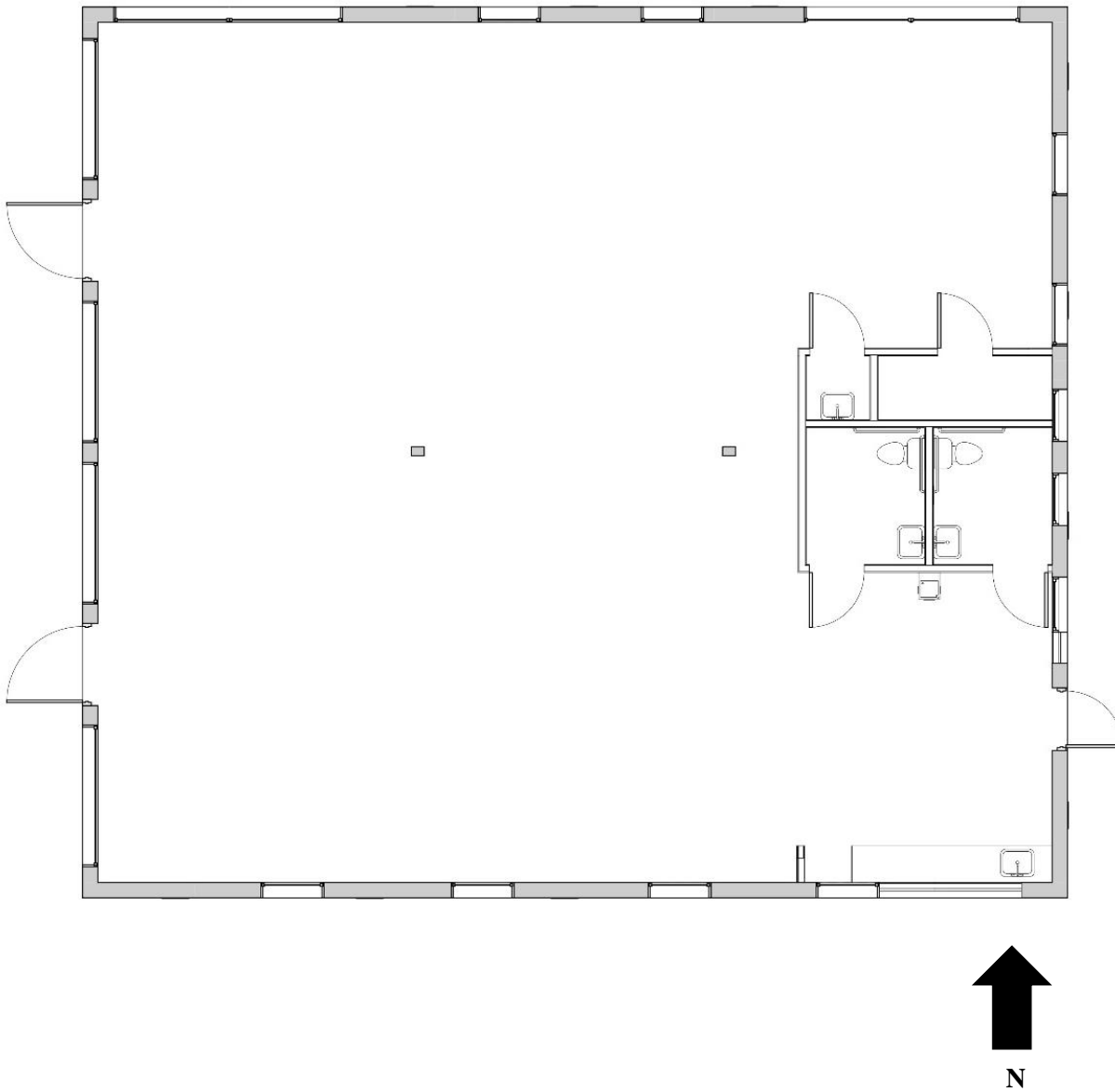
**Figure 7:** Existing Site Plan. Urbano Architects, 2022.



Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Figure 8:** Existing Floor Plan. Urbano Architects, 2022.



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

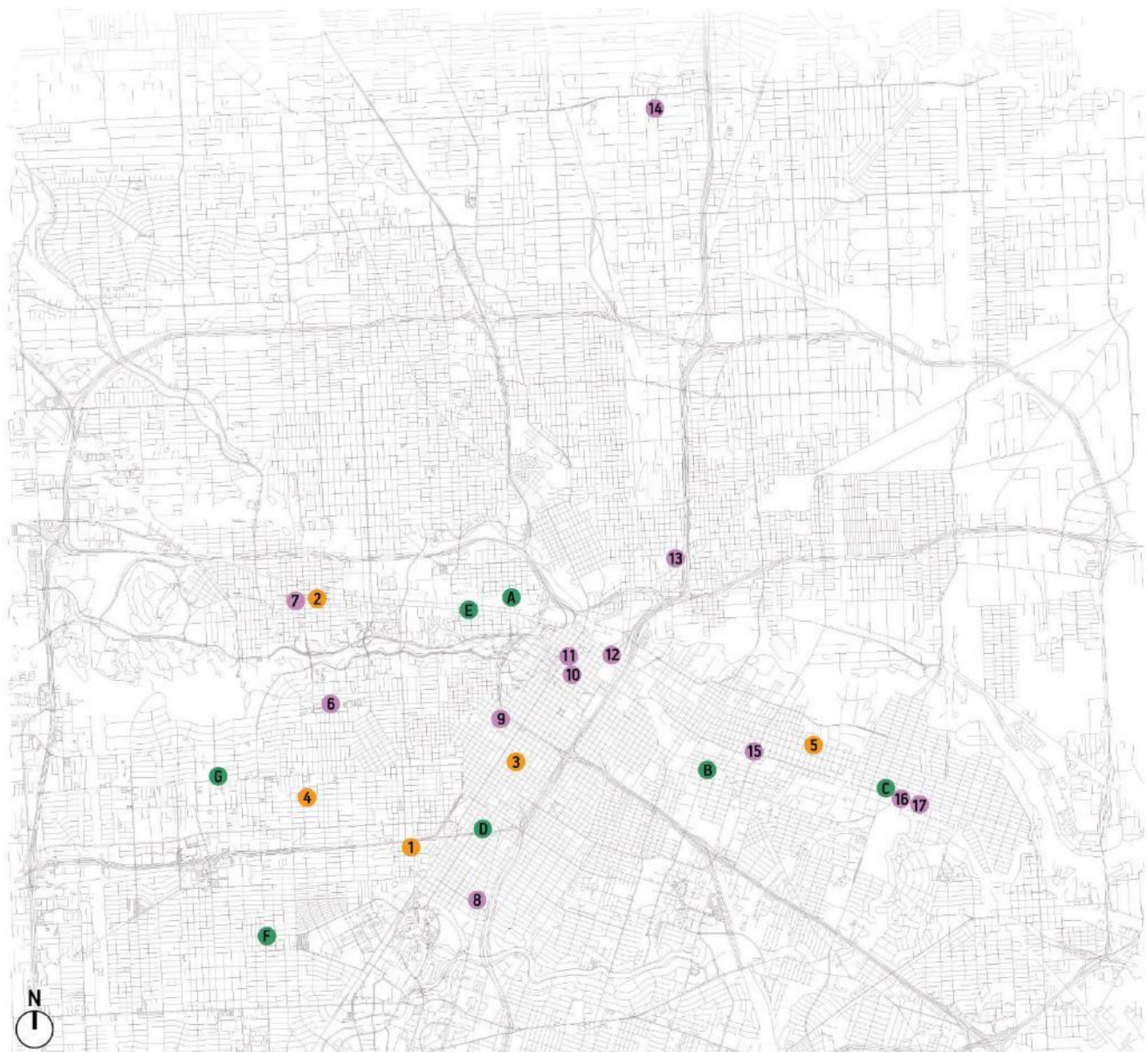
**Figure 9:** Small-Scale Moderne Building Survey in Houston, Texas. Urbano Architects, March 2022.

**CRITERIA**

Style: Art Moderne  
 Typology: Commercial  
 Construction: 1930-1949  
 Scale: < 7,000 SF (Approx)

**LEGEND**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <span style="color: green;">●</span> Present Today (2022)   | <span style="color: orange;">●</span> Altered (With Moderate to Significant Alterations) | <span style="color: purple;">●</span> Demolished                 |
| <span style="color: green;">A</span> 1230 Houston Avenue    | <span style="color: orange;">6</span> 2501 River Oaks Boulevard                          | <span style="color: purple;">6</span> 1927 W. Gray Street        |
| <span style="color: green;">B</span> 4120 McKinney Street   | <span style="color: orange;">1</span> 4704 Montrose Boulevard                            | <span style="color: purple;">7</span> 4901 Washington Avenue     |
| <span style="color: green;">C</span> 210 Wayside Avenue     | <span style="color: orange;">2</span> 4520 Washington Avenue                             | <span style="color: purple;">8</span> 5210-5216 Almeda Road      |
| <span style="color: green;">D</span> 4201 Austin Street     | <span style="color: orange;">3</span> 2715 Fannin Street                                 | <span style="color: purple;">9</span> 2120 Milam Street          |
| <span style="color: green;">E</span> 2101 Washington Avenue | <span style="color: orange;">4</span> 2815 S. Shepherd Drive                             | <span style="color: purple;">10</span> 1114 Capitol Avenue       |
| <span style="color: green;">F</span> 6117 Kirby Drive       | <span style="color: orange;">5</span> 5602 Canal Street                                  | <span style="color: purple;">11</span> 517 Main Street           |
|   |  | <span style="color: purple;">12</span> 1619 Franklin Street      |
|   |  | <span style="color: purple;">13</span> 2917 Lyons Avenue         |
|   |  | <span style="color: purple;">14</span> 9111 Jensen Drive         |
|   |  | <span style="color: purple;">15</span> 4819 Harrisburg Boulevard |
|   |  | <span style="color: purple;">16</span> 6929 Harrisburg Boulevard |
|   |  | <span style="color: purple;">17</span> 7205 Harrisburg Boulevard |



Most buildings in this document were previously identified on the following earlier surveys: The Moderne Style of Architecture: A Houston Guide by Yolita Schmidt (1978) and Houston Deco: Modernistic Architecture of the Texas Coast by David Bush and Jim Parsons (2008)

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Figure 10:** Small-Scale Moderne Building Survey in Houston, Texas. Urbano Architects, March 2022.

## PRESENT

The following buildings still present today with limited alterations.



**A.** 1230 Houston Ave, Formerly Knapp Chevrolet Showroom  
1940, Single-Story, <3,000 SF



**B.** 4120 McKinney St, Formerly St. Albritton's Eats  
1945, Single Story, <3,000 SF



**C.** 210 Wayside Ave, Formerly Rettig's Heap-o-Cream  
1947, Single-Story, <3,000 SF



**D.** 4201 Austin St, Formerly Gardiner Clinic  
c.1930-1940 Single-Story, <3,000 SF



**E.** 2101 Washington Ave. Formerly Humble Oil & Refining Co.  
1930, Single-Story, <3,000 SF



**F.** 6117 Kirby Dr, Formerly University State Bank  
1930, Two-Story, <7,000 SF

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Figure 11:** Small-Scale Moderne Building Survey in Houston, Texas. Urbano Architects, March 2022.

## PRESENT



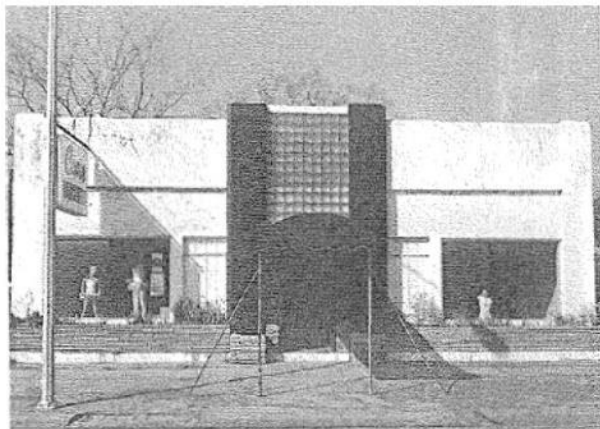
G. 2501 River Oaks Blvd.  
1949, Single-Story, <7,000 SF



Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Figure 12:** Small-Scale Moderne Building Survey in Houston, Texas. Urbano Architects, March 2022.

## ALTERED



1. 4704 Montrose Blvd, Formerly Bennies Restaurant  
1941



1. 4704 Montrose Blvd, Formerly Bennies Restaurant  
2022



2. 4520 Washington Ave, Formerly Houston Fire Station No. 11,  
1937



2. 4520 Washington Ave, Formerly Houston Fire Station No. 11,  
2022



3. 2715 Fannin St, Formerly Office of Hugh C. Welch, M.D.  
1940



3. 2715 Fannin St, Formerly Office of Hugh C. Welch, M.D.  
2022

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Figure 13:** Small-Scale Moderne Building Survey in Houston, Texas. Urbano Architects, March 2022.

## ALTERED



4. 2815 S. Shepherd Dr, Formerly Monarch Cleaners/Launders  
1939



4. 2815 S. Shepherd Dr, Formerly Monarch Cleaners/Launders  
2022



5. 5602 Canal St, Formerly Pappa's Cleaners  
1947



5. 5602 Canal St, Formerly Pappa's Cleaners  
2022

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Figure 14:** Small-Scale Moderne Building Survey in Houston, Texas. Urbano Architects, March 2022.

## DEMOLISHED



6. 1927 W Gray Avenue, Formerly Golden Girl Restaurant  
1940. Photo by Yolita Schmidt.



7. 4901 Washington Ave, Formerly Weiner's Dry Goods Store  
1946. Photo by Yolita Schmidt.



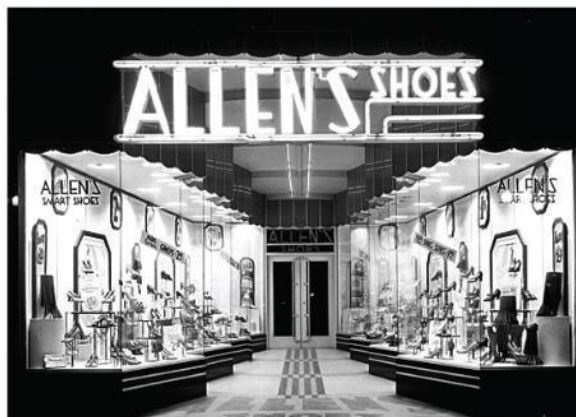
8. 5210-5216 Alameda Rd, Formerly Minimax Grocery Store No.2  
1938. Photo by Jim Parsons.



9. 2120 Milam St, Formerly Thompson Nash  
1948. Photo by Yolita Schmidt.



10. 1114 Capitol Ave, Formerly Houston Building and Loan  
Association. 1937, Photo by Bob Bailey Studio

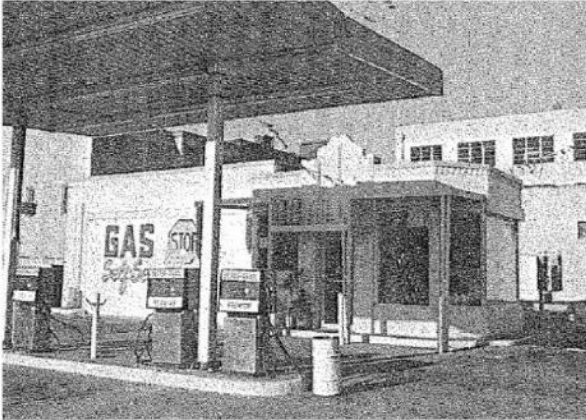


11. 517 Main St, Formerly Allen's Shoes in Binz Building  
facade 1934. Photo by Bob Bailey Studio.

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Figure 15:** Small-Scale Moderne Building Survey in Houston, Texas. Urbano Architects, March 2022.

## DEMOLISHED



**12.** 1619 Franklin St, Formerly Shell Service Station  
Photo by Yolita Schmidt.



**13.** 2917 Lyons Ave, Formerly Butler-Grimes Notions Co.  
1936. Photo courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center



**14.** 9111 Jensen Dr, Formerly Gates Tire Center  
1949. Photo by Yolita Schmidt.



**15.** 4819 Harrisburg Blvd, Formerly Sterling Laundry & Cleaning Co. 1935. Photo by David Bush.



**16.** 6929 Harrisburg Blvd, Formerly Boulevard Funeral Home  
1936. Photo by Yolita Schmidt.

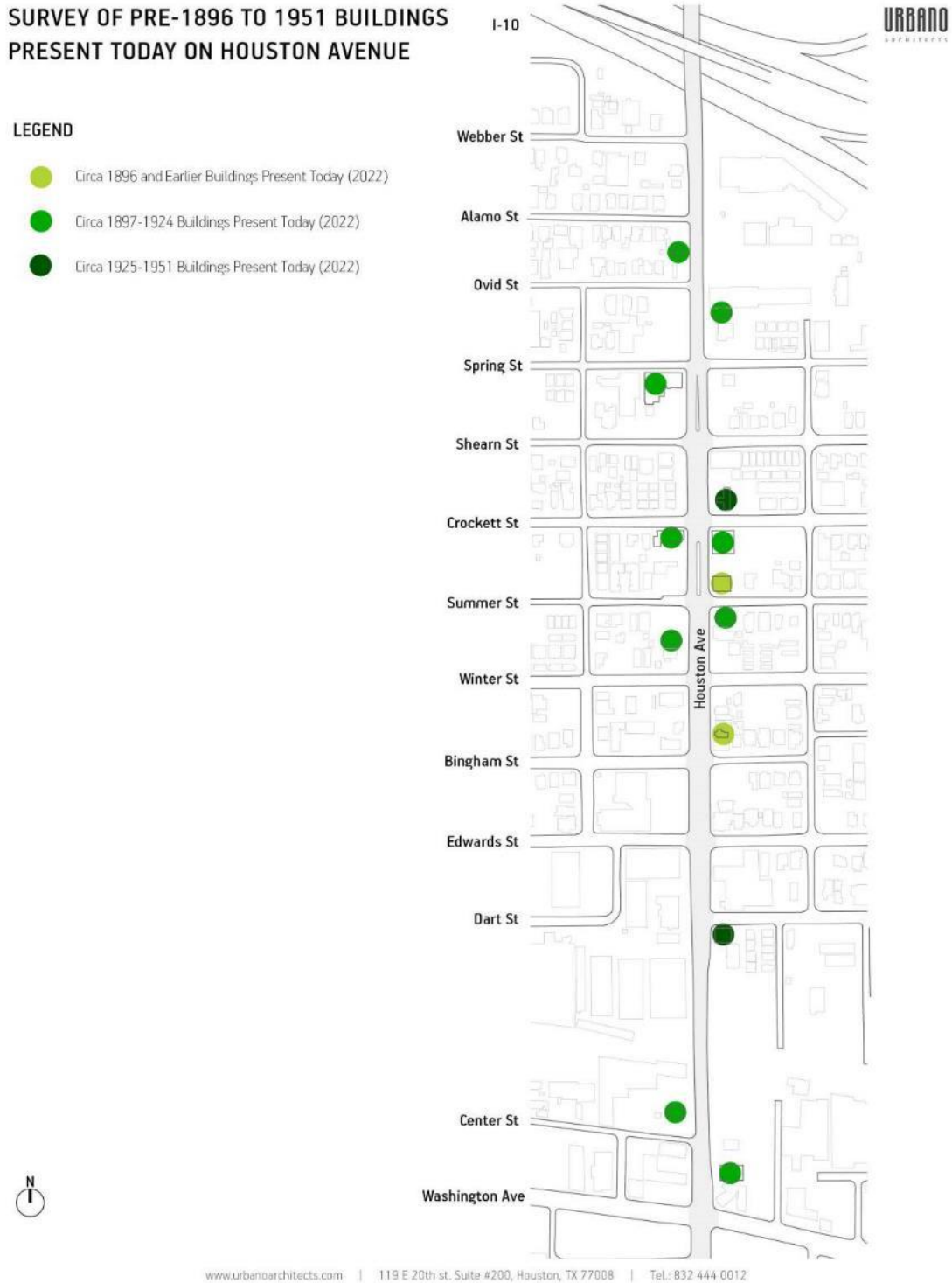


**17.** 7205 Harrisburg Blvd, Formerly El Chicano Nite Club  
1939. Photo by Yolita Schmidt.

# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

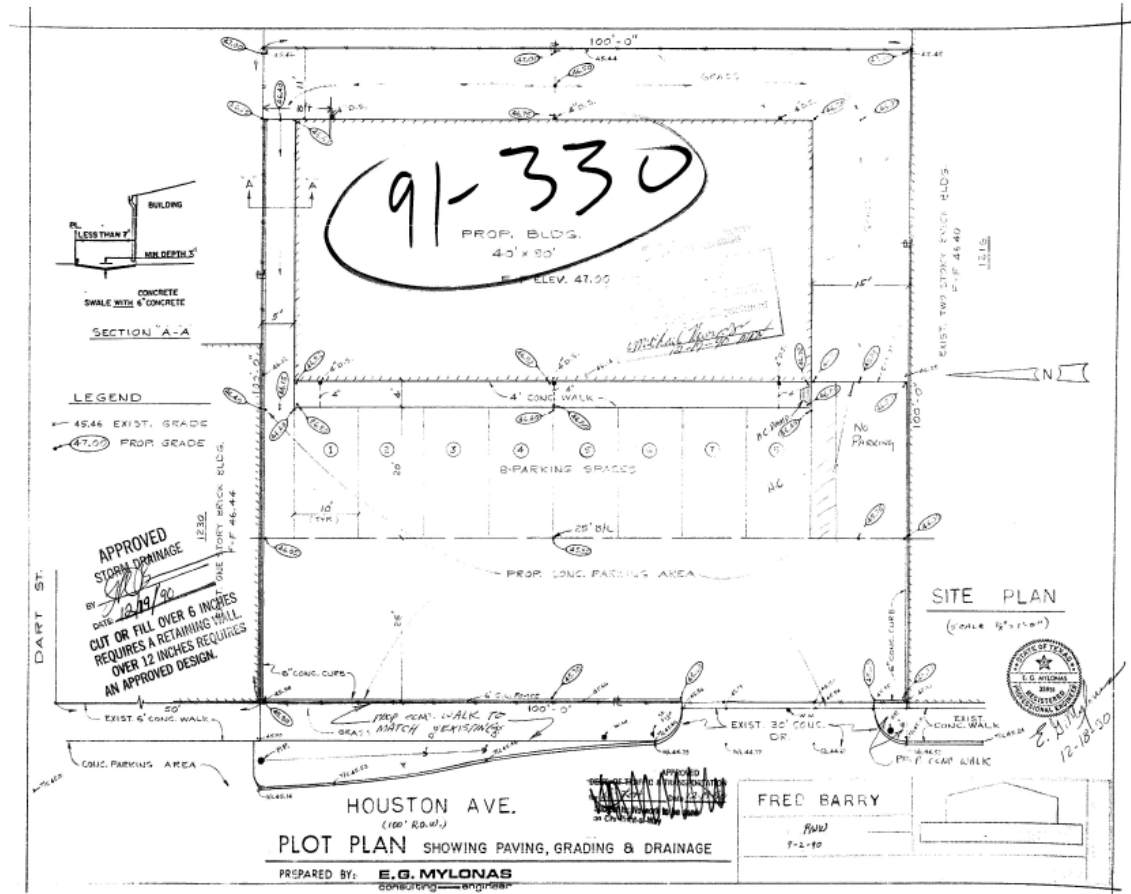
**Figure 16:** Survey of Pre-1896-1951 Buildings Present Facing Houston Avenue. Urbano Architects, March 2022.



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 17: 1990 Plot Plan Showing Addition to Knapp Building (1940) by Previous Owner Fred Barry.



Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Figure 18:** Knapp Building C. 2021 Prior to Rehabilitation.



Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

## Photographs

**Photo 1:** Primary (west) elevation facing Houston Avenue. June 8, 2023.





# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Photo 2:** Primary (west) elevation showing vertical brick stripes. February 17, 2023.



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Photo 3:** Primary (west) elevation showing metal awnings and display windows and entrances. February 17, 2023.



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Photo 4:** North elevation facing Dart Street. June 8, 2023.



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Photo 5:** Rear (east) elevation with adjacent building at 1224 Houston Avenue at left. June 11, 2023.



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Photo 6:** Rear (east) elevation. June 11, 2023.



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Photo 7:** South elevation with adjacent building at 1224 Houston Avenue at right. June 8, 2023.



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Photo 8:** South elevation showing previous connection to adjacent building. June 8, 2023.



Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Photo 9:** Interior view of lobby looking south. June 8, 2023.





# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Photo 10:** Interior view looking east. June 8, 2023.



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Photo 11:** Interior view of lobby looking Northeast. June 8, 2023.



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

---

**Photo 12:** Interior view looking east. June 8, 2023.



# SBR Draft

Knapp Building (1940), Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Photo 13:** Interior view looking southeast. June 8, 2023.

