



Photos by Gerald Moonhead

Above: The Schudy Clinic (MacKie &amp; Kamrath, 1956). Below: Hard Rock Cafe on Kirby (Tigerman Fugman McCurry, 1986).

## R.I.P. Schudy Clinic, Kirby Hard Rock



In the condominium race-for-the-sky taking place along Kirby Drive, Houston has recently lost two signature buildings, one an early modern gem and the other a post-modern curiosity.

West of Kirby, the diminutive Schudy Clinic at 2615 Cameron is gone. MacKie & Kamrath designed the building for its orthopedic surgeon owner in 1956. True to Karl Kamrath's trademark Taliesen style, the clinic sported dramatic horizontal roof overhangs, butted glass corner windows, geometric wood detailing, and deeply scored horizontal brick coursing—a full range of “organic” Wrightian entities.

As a small consolation, while the building itself has given way to an empty lot, it survives in two-dimensional form in the MacKie & Kamrath Collection in the Architectural Archives, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, at the

Julia Ideson branch of the Houston Public Library.

Barely a block away from where the Schudy Clinic once stood, the demolition derby has also eliminated the Hard Rock Cafe at 2801 Kirby. The Hard Rock said goodbye this past winter, in its 20th year. It had been among the earliest of the restaurants built following Hard Rock founders Isaac Tigrett's and Peter Morton's 1982 decision to franchise the food-meets-rock-and-roll concept. The Houston Hard Rock was opened by Morton in 1986, and for him the Tigerman Fugman McCurry firm of Chicago, teamed with local architect of record Ray Bailey Architects, produced a colonnaded, Deep South rotunda facing the street.

While the building itself didn't impress everyone—in the *Houston Architectural Guide* it's described as “almost non-descript”—it did provide the background for a truly memorable piece of public art. That art, the *Save the Planet* pylon, capped by a 1963 Thunderbird that rose high above the traffic passing along Kirby, was designed by former Ant Farm guys Doug Michaels (memorialized in *Cite 59* following his June 2004 death), Hudson Marquez, and Chip Lord.

The fate of the Kirby Hard Rock may well have been sealed when Bayou Place opened its own Hard Rock Cafe. The older Hard Rock was closed, then the space was used to house various new restaurants, none of which managed to flourish. Now the building is gone completely, and the only memento of this lost piece of architecture might be an old T-shirt showing the rakishly tilted Thunderbird on a pylon and reading “Hard Rock Cafe-Houston.” — *Barry Moore*

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