Re-Evaluation of Proposed Leopard Street Historic District
for Individual Section 4(f) Evaluation

Corpus Christi Harbor Bridge Project
Nueces County, Texas

CSJ 0101-06-095
Task 1
April 2013

Submitted To
Texas Department of Transportation
Environmental Affairs Division, Historical Studies Branch

Prepared By
Lila Knight, Principal Investigator
Knight & Associates
P.O. Box 1990
Kyle, TX 78640
512-268-0729
RE-EVALUATION OF PROPOSED LEOPARD STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

for Individual Section 4(f) Evaluation

Corpus Christi Harbor Bridge Project
Nueces County, Texas

CSJ 0101-06-095
Task 1

Submitted To
Texas Department of Transportation
Environmental Affairs Division, Historical Studies Branch
Contract No. 572-XX-SH001
Work Authorization 572-03-SH001

Prepared by Knight & Associates
Lila Knight, Principal Investigator
P.O. Box 1990
Kyle, Texas 78640
April 2013
Table of Contents

Revised Scope of Work .................................................4
Historic Context .......................................................6
Evaluation ..............................................................16
Recommendations .....................................................52

Cover Photograph – View of Leopard Street facing southeast
Source – Knight & Associates
The Historical Studies Branch of the Environmental Division of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) issued a work authorization to Knight & Associates to prepare an individual section 4(f) analysis on the proposed Leopard Street historic district in Corpus Christi, Texas. TxDOT is proposing to replace the existing Corpus Christi Harbor Bridge and to improve the approach roadway along US Highway 181 and State Highway 286.

In July and August of 2012, Mead & Hunt performed a reconnaissance-level survey of historic-age resources within a variable APE between 150 and 300 feet from the four project alternatives. The technical experts documented 851 historic-age resources and evaluated 8 potential historic districts. The documentation of historic districts was limited by the time constraints of the project. Only limited photographic streetscape documentation and contextual research was conducted for the proposed Leopard Street historic district. Mead & Hunt issued a final report of their findings, “Historic Resources Survey Report: Corpus Christi Harbor Bridge Reconnaissance Survey,” in December of 2012. Mead & Hunt found the “Green Alternative would result in a direct impact and Adverse Effect to the proposed historic district as a whole and two contributing resources within the district (725 Waco Street and 711 Waco Street) with the proposed right-of-way acquisition and displacement of buildings.” The Orange, Red and West Alternatives would have not result in the removal or alteration of any contributing resources of the proposed historic district.
Due to the limited documentation of the proposed Leopard Street historic district, Knight & Associates traveled to Corpus Christi to gain additional understanding of the area. The Technical Expert disagreed with the findings of Mead & Hunt with respect to the NRHP eligibility of the proposed Leopard Street District. After consultation with the staff of the Environmental Affairs Division, the scope of work of the work authorization was changed to conduct an intensive survey of the Leopard Street historic district for a final recommendation for NRHP evaluation. This report contains those findings.

Knight & Associates were also limited by the time constraints of the project. Each building within the boundaries of the proposed historic district were photographed. The Technical Expert examined a range of dates of city directories to establish what types of businesses occupied the buildings. Secondary sources were consulted, as well as Sanborn maps and back issues of the *Corpus Christi Times* and *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*. Time constraints did not allow for in-depth research in Corpus Christi with respect to deed research, but the Nueces County Central Appraisal District (CAD) Records and the Nueces County Tax-Assessor Collector records were consulted online.

Some errors were discovered in the addresses used in the reconnaissance level report by Mead & Hunt. The addresses used by the Nueces County CAD are noted in the report, but the addresses used in the Mead & Hunt report are retained throughout to lessen any confusion.
“UPTOWN” CORPUS CHRISTI:  
A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEOPARD STREET

Leopard Street was once a vital part of Corpus Christi’s burgeoning commercial growth, particularly during the late 1920s through the World War II era. It began as a local shopping area for the Hispanic neighborhoods to the south in the early 1900s and 1910s. Following the opening of the port and the construction of the Nixon Building in 1926 and 1927, Leopard Street became consolidated into the overall downtown retail shopping area. Following the return of veterans from World War II and the opening of the suburbs, Leopard Street became more integrated with both Anglo and Hispanic businesses coexisting. But the establishment of modern shopping centers in the 1950s eventually destroyed both the downtown and uptown shopping districts.

EARLY HISTORY OF LEOPARD STREET 1875-1925

Corpus Christi was first established as a small trading post and eventually became named as the county seat of Nueces County in 1846. The population stood at approximately 1,200 in 1860 on the eve of the Civil War. But lacking a port, it remained a small town until railroad access allowed it to develop into a regional agricultural market in the 1870s and 1880s.

The earliest depiction of Leopard Street is August Koch bird’s eye map of Corpus Christi in 1887. It depicts Leopard Street lined primarily with housing, but with some businesses and boarding houses. The street extends 2 blocks past Staples Street (Staples Street was originally known as Black Street), but farms are depicted in the blocks beyond Staples Street.

The earliest Sanborn maps from the 1880s only depict the downtown area. Leopard Street is indicated on the 1900 edition of the Sanborns, extending only 2 blocks to Tancahua. It is lined with wooden dwellings and one church. By 1909, it extends to Black/Staples Street. There are no brick buildings indicated along the street. Residences dominate the street, although there are some businesses indicated, primarily fruit stands and small groceries.

In 1914, Leopard Street extends past San Ranking Street. The population of the town is now 17,000. The first brick building is now located in the 900 block of Leopard. And the character of the street is beginning to change with fewer dwellings in the 900 to 1100 blocks and more businesses. Immigration from the Mexican Revolution of 1910 swelled the Hispanic population in Corpus Christi with distinct, segregated areas of the city established by the early 1920s.

The Fourth Ward School for “Mexicans” is located on Mestina Street between Artesian and Carrizo streets. By 1919, the Sanborn maps indicate Leopard Street now extends from Broadway to Alameda. The street was characterized by small, wooden shops primarily occupied by Hispanic businesses from Carrizo Street (900 block) to Alameda Street. There was a diverse range of businesses, including grocers, meat markets, bakeries, undertakers, barbers, cafes, tailors, and auto repair shops. The side streets were lined primarily with small wooden dwellings. Interspersed among these predominantly Hispanic businesses, however, is a growing list of Jewish merchants such as Adolph Henke, Asher Cohen, Joseph Simon, Grossman Brothers, and Braslau (from city directories). Russian Jewish immigrants began arriving in Corpus Christi in the 1910s and set up shop on Leopard Street. The Grossman Brothers constructed one of the earliest brick buildings between Carrizo and Staples streets. Located on the north side of the 1000 block of Leopard at the intersection with Artesian, it appears on the 1919 Sanborn maps as an 8 storefront building.
Figure 1: 1919 Sanborn map of project area.
A disastrous hurricane struck Corpus Christi on September 14, 1919 resulting in hundreds of deaths and millions of dollars in property damage. Only three buildings were left standing on the North Beach area. The downtown area below the bluff was inundated from a tidal surge, but the smaller, wooden buildings in the Uptown area sustained heavy wind damage. An ad for the Bluff Drug Store at 914 Leopard stated “not damaged in any way.” Yet, this drug store was in one of the few brick buildings along Leopard Street. The main tent camp for refuges was also established on the higher ground along Leopard Street. Every highway to Corpus Christi had been washed out. Following the hurricane, it was primarily the more prosperous merchants who were able to rebuild right away. Frank Braslau opened a new dry goods store at 918 Leopard in 1922.

Commercial Development of Leopard Street, 1926-1956: “Uptown” Corpus Christi

In 1926, Corpus Christi finally received the deep water port it had wanted for so long. For years, Corpus Christi had competed with other Texas cities along the coast for such an inland port, but its multiple railroad access, high point on the tideline, and its place as a regional agricultural market gave the city the edge it needed. Construction began January of 1925 on a 200-foot wide channel that extended from the Gulf of Mexico through the jetties of Aransas Bay to a point on the shoreline of Corpus Christi Bay. Downtown stores sprouted up with a new S.H. Kress Co. Store (1925), a Ritz Theater (1929), a Lichtenstein’s Store (1930), and a Wards building (1934) along Chaparral Street. Between 1920 and 1930, the population of Corpus Christi almost tripled from 10,522 to 27,741.

The construction of the Nixon Building (1926-1927; designed by Adams & Adams) on the bluffs at Leopard and Upper Broadway began the physical transformation of Leopard Street from a local neighborhood shopping area to the “uptown” extension of the downtown retail regional market. Developed by Maston Nixon in partnership with H.L. Kokernot of San Antonio, this multi-story office building was designed to accommodate the many business needs precipitated by the opening of the port. The newspaper covered the announcement and development of the building for months. Nixon negotiated the widening of Leopard Street for 3 blocks west from Upper Broadway as part of his building permit to provide sufficient space around the base of the building. The city extended the widening of the street in 1928. According to one article in the local paper:

“Leopard Street is keyed to a high pitch in real movement, with several buildings planned and underway and about 30 recent lot sales made for the express purpose of building and still farther extending the business district of that street.”

Others soon followed the Nixon Building at Upper Broadway and Leopard including the Corpus Christi Trust Company, Perkins Brothers Department Store, and the Plaza Hotel (1929).

With the Nixon Building on the bluff at the intersection of Leopard and Upper Broadway serving as an anchor between Downtown and Uptown, the next few years brought a fevered building boom along both Leopard Street and the downtown area. Articles appear frequently with headlines such as “Nearly 2 Million in Real Estate Deals Last 5 Days,” and “Millions in Building Now Under Way.” Merchants began taking out full page advertisements enticing shoppers to “Shop on Leopard: Where Quality Awaits the Economic Buyer” or “Shop Uptown: Rents are Lower - Values are Higher” and “Buy ‘On the Hill’ No Traffic Tangles - Park Where you wish.”

The Braslau Brothers, owners of a small dry goods store, expanded their business into a specialized furniture store in 1926 in the 900 block. A two-story, stone faced building in an exuberant Spanish baroque style was constructed in the 1100 block the same year. John Grant hired Leo Diehlmann of San Antonio to construct a one-story, 7 storefront building with “brick and tile mosaic designs” in 1929 at the corner of Leopard and Waco (burned May 1957). Even the Grossman Brothers remodeled their storefront. By 1928, new masonry construction extended 6 blocks from the Nixon Building to Staples Street. An advertisement for the Leopard Street shopping district was painfully blunt:

“The record of continued growth and progress of the Leopard Street Business Section ‘On the Hill’ reveals an interesting history - a record that the city has a right to be proud of. It is impressive and merited by many new and modern buildings which have replaced the small unsightful store buildings that remain mere history in the eyes of Corpus Christi today. The many modern business firms have brought about excellent and useful service - and even more, economy that is emphasized by the comparatively low rent that the ‘hill’ has brought to the favor of the buying public.”

The 1929 City Directory reflects the ethnic change in the character of the business owners along Leopard Street. Except for a couple of barbers, a few restaurants and a couple of well established grocers, all of the Hispanic businesses have been pushed west of Waco. As new buildings are constructed in this block, they are occupied by Anglo businesses. Although the birth of LULAC on February 19, 1929, took place in Corpus Christi (at Obreros Hall, located at Lipan and Carrizo streets), this was an organization whose efforts were aimed across the state. Moreover, as the unemployment effects of the Depression began to be felt during the early 1930s, there was a repatriation of Hispanics, both forced and voluntary.

By 1930, the population of Corpus Christi was 27,742. But even this would double by the next decade. Although the city felt the effects of the Depression in the early 1930s, the economy was quickly bolstered by the discovery of two large oil fields. The resulting construction of refineries along the north end of the Corpus Christi port supplied new employment. Photographs from the period reveal a crowded shopping district along Leopard Street, lined with cars and shoppers. It was particularly crowded on the weekends when farmers and people from area towns would come in to shop. There continued to be a presence from Hispanic businesses interspersed with the other merchants throughout the period.

Figure 3: View of Leopard Street c.1930

Corpus Christi continued its building boom during the 1930s. An article in the *Corpus Christi Times* in 1936 described the extent of commercial construction between 1926 and 1936 in both the Downtown and Uptown areas. Over $5 million had been invested in the construction of over 75 commercial buildings with another $3.5 million in new residential and apartment construction. Within the Uptown area, over a dozen new buildings costing between $25,000 and $100,000 had been constructed. Braslau's constructed a new two-story building in the 1000 block of Leopard in 1938. The south side of the 1110 block of Leopard also witnessed new construction during the 1930s.

Yet another shopping area also opened in the 1930s. The Six Points retail area, located at the convergence of Ayers Staples and Alamedia Streets, became the center of Moderne and Streamlined architecture. The Tower Theater, built in 1937, was a prime example (demolished), as well as the Six Points Bowling Center (1939). The area began to decline in the late 1950s, much like Leopard Street.6

By 1940, the population mushroomed to 57,301 as a result of the city's selection as the site of the Naval Air Station (1940-1941). The new facility also spurred the development of suburbs. By the 1940s, residents of Corpus Christi were flocking to the new suburbs being constructed to the south, such as the Alameda Place Subdivision (1940). Eventually, the construction of new shopping centers would serve the needs of the suburbanites and result in the slow demise of Downtown and Uptown. It was a formula that was repeated in towns everywhere.

Returning Hispanic veterans from World War II began demanding their place in society after fighting for their country. Dr. Hector P. Garcia established the American GI Forum in 1948 in Corpus Christi to promote the rights of veterans. Following World War II, prominent Hispanics in Corpus Christi began establishing businesses. Joe "Popo" Alvarez, a well-known baseball player, bought the Lamar Shoe Store at 918 Leopard Street in 1948, and Ralph Galvan Jr. purchased E.O. Maley's drug store. Advertisements for businesses along Agnes, Leopard and Staples streets began appearing in the 1940s including Loa's Shoe Shop, Juan Gonzalez Funeral Home, Gomez Pharmacy, and Estrada Motor Sales. The Shields Club, a billiards club located at 1102 Leopard, was also operated by a Hispanic businessman. These businesses often hosted meetings of organizations such as the local LULAC Council No. 1.7 The Mexican Chamber of Commerce, established in 1939, first met at the Shields Club but eventually had their own offices on the second floor of the building at 1110 Leopard Street.8 Their presence firmly established that the promotion of Hispanic owned businesses would be supported in the area.

---

8. Ibid, p. 50.
The suburban development of Corpus Christi to the south following World War II resulted in the eventual abandonment of downtown and uptown as popular shopping areas. This was a slow process, and a number of events precipitated the slow decline of the centralized shopping areas. Parkdale Plaza Shopping Center (demolished 2009), the city's first and largest suburban shopping center, opened in 1957. Many of Corpus Christi's most popular stores opened branches there including Lichtenstein's (1957). Grossman's Department Store (1962) and Braslau's Furniture Store (1962) opened stores across the street from the new shopping center, applying for a contentious zoning application in 1957. The Montgomery Ward's (1934) closed in 1960, moving to the shopping centers of the suburbs. Two of the largest retail stores continued efforts to remain vital in the area. In 1955, Lichtenstein's bought out the Perkins Brothers store (renaming it Lichtenstein's Uptown) and Braslau's undertook an enormous expansion in 1957. But with the continuing suburban development in Corpus Christi, both the Downtown and Uptown shopping areas continued to suffer as the large department stores relocated to the modern shopping centers as a more convenient location for residents.

The City of Corpus Christi embraced the modernism of life in the 1950s. The city built an award winning city hall in 1952 designed by Richard S. Colley (Progressive Architecture, February 1952; demolished 1988) and the Memorial Coliseum in 1954 (demolished 2010). The Harbor Bridge, constructed between 1956 and 1959, also won awards for his dramatic design. Harland Bartholomew & Associates were hired in 1952 to undertake a comprehensive plan for the city which mushroomed in size through an aggressive annexation plan. The firm also did a plan for the University of Corpus Christi in 1952 and for the development of North Beach in 1958.

Braslau's remodeled and expanded their store in 1957, the last major investment in Leopard Street. By the 1950s, the Braslau brothers owned the entire 1000 block of Leopard, renting whatever they did not use for their furniture store. In 1957, they added a new aluminum exterior to their building to expand their store into the adjacent building. They had also added warehouse space at the rear of the block in 1950. According to Sam Braslau; “We are glad that we were in a position to take the lead in developing Leopard Street and are confident that it will continue to grow in importance as one of the city’s major shopping districts.” Braslau’s made one more expansion effort in 1964 as it incorporated the adjacent Grande Theater into its facade. But even Braslau’s, who had expressed such optimism in the future of Leopard Street, opened a store in the suburbs in 1962, eventually opening two other branches. The Leopard Street location became a discount outlet by the 1970s and the store finally closed its doors on Leopard Street in 2006.

The newspaper article on the Braslau expansion hints that they may be living in the past: “The two brothers have always had the utmost faith in Leopard Street as a business area, contradicting what many local merchants have predicted about the street as a business location.” And both the Downtown and Uptown shopping districts were facing a slow decline with the growth of the suburbs. According to Israel Goltzman, owner of a rental property in the 600 block of Waco Street, “We had few vacancies until about 1960 when the whole area seemed to start going down.” There are indications as early as 1962 that Leopard Street was no longer as popular a shopping district. Advertisements in the Corpus Christi Times by Henry Grossman for the sale of the Grossman’s building at Leopard and Artesian in 1961 apparently went without a buyer, as he ran an ad for the lease of the building throughout 1962.

Figure 5: Ad for Braslau’s Furniture Company, c. 1950.
Source: Braslau’s homepage, history: www.braslaus.net/history.html
The City of Corpus Christi inadvertently hastened the demise of Leopard Street by adopting a policy to reserve the downtown area, and especially the beach front, for the promotion of tourist activities to attract people to Corpus Christi. Harland Bartholomew & Associates prepared a new comprehensive plan for the city in 1967 that recommended all city, county and school governmental functions be provided in one large “government center” located on the bluffs. After negotiating with the other branches of government on the proposal, they decided to purchase 28 city blocks in the Uptown area that included several blocks along the south side of Leopard Street. A bond election was finally held in December of 1970, just a few months after Hurricane Celia devastated the town. The election failed. The wind damage from Hurricane Celia caused more than $2 billion in damage to buildings in Corpus Christi.

But the various governments continued to move on their own to the “Uptown” area in the hopes that this would revitalize business in the area. According to the City’s “South Central Area Development Plan,” this would “promote the Uptown Office Area as the city’s premier location for mid- to high-rise office development.” During the late 1970s and 1980s, a new county courthouse, city hall and public library would be built in the area just south of Leopard Street. In the Downtown area, Lichtenstein’s occupied a Moderne Building constructed in 1941. But the store was sold to Frost Brothers in 1972 and closed its doors in 1982 (demolition permit now pending). The school district also established new administrative offices on Leopard Street.

Nueces County constructed a new county courthouse and jail complex in 1977 which wraps around the southern and eastern sides of the proposed historic district. This complex of high-rise buildings and parking lots occupies 6 blocks adjacent to Leopard Street. The Brutalist style of the Nueces County Courthouse looms 11 stories over the old “Uptown” area with two adjacent 6-story buildings. Less than a decade later, the City of Corpus Christi built a new City Hall in 1988 on 4 blocks to the west of the intersection of Leopard and Staples Street. The Postmodernist City Hall rises six stories and fronts on Staples Street (although the address is 1201 Leopard). The citizens of Corpus Christi voted a sales tax to support the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) in 1985. In 1995, the RTA constructed the Staples Street Transfer Station as a major hub that replaced a string of bus stops along Staples Street. Located across from City Hall at the corner of Staples and Mestina streets, it is designed in the Spanish Revival style. The RTA purchased 2 blocks of vacant buildings in 2011 and 2012 for the construction of a two-story Customer Services Center. Gignac and Associates are the architects for the 8,000 square foot buildings.

Despite the city’s efforts at revitalization, most of the buildings are vacant today or occupied by bail bonds companies due to the location of the nearby jail. With the decline in value of the buildings, several buildings have been acquired by non-profits to serve the homeless, resulting in a large population of vagrants in the area that has further discouraged revitalization efforts. An Uptown Neighborhood Initiative was established in 2010 to attempt to preserve the neighborhood. Composed of volunteers, they began clean ups of vacant lots, but the group has not met on a regular basis since June of 2012.

(Chapter: “Life on the Hill: Entrepreneurial Strategies in 1940s Corpus Christi” by Mary Ann Villarreal)


“Visions of Unity Danced in His Head” Corpus Christi Caller-Times (December 11, 2005).

“Braslau’s Grows from 5,000 to 50,000 Feet Since ’22,” Corpus Christi Caller Times (May 6, 1957) special section.

“Frank B. Came From Russia in 1913,” Corpus Christi Caller Times (May 6, 1957) special section.

“RTA to demolish blighted buildings across from City Hall to Make Room for Proposed Customer Service Center,” Corpus Christi Caller Times, March 11, 2013.
EVALUATION OF THE NRHP ELIGIBILITY OF
LEOPARD STREET
Figure 19 shows a map of the Leopard Street Commercial District, while Table 7 presents contributing and noncontributing properties in the district.

Map 1: Proposed Leopard Street Commercial District Map Prepared by Mead & Hunt.  
Map 2: Re-Evaluation of the Proposed Leopard Street Commercial District.
Source: Google Earth, Knight & Associates
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource No.</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Name of Building</th>
<th>Contributing Status Mead &amp; Hunt</th>
<th>Within APE</th>
<th>Reassessment of Contributing Status</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>NRHP Eligible on Individual Basis</th>
<th>APE Address Within</th>
<th>Contributing Status APE</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>366</td>
<td>725 Waco</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>c.1930</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>725 Waco</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NC No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>367</td>
<td>711 Waco</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>c.1940</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>711 Waco</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NC No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>373</td>
<td>709 Waco</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>c.1928</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>709 Waco</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NC No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>377</td>
<td>1122 Leopard</td>
<td>Henry Grossman Department Store</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1122 Leopard</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NC No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>378</td>
<td>1101 Leopard</td>
<td>Rental property owned by Grossman Brothers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1101 Leopard</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NC No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>379</td>
<td>1102 Leopard</td>
<td>Rental property built by Braslau Brothers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1102 Leopard</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NC No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380</td>
<td>1016 Leonard</td>
<td>Rental property by Braslau's Furniture Store</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1016 Leonard</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NC No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>381</td>
<td>1024 Leonard</td>
<td>Rental property by Braslau Brothers</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1024 Leonard</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NC No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>382</td>
<td>1019-1021 Leopard</td>
<td>Rental property by Braslau Brothers</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1019-1021 Leopard</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NC No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>383</td>
<td>1101 Leopard</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1101 Leopard</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NC No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>384</td>
<td>1117-1129 Leopard</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1117-1129 Leopard</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NC No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource No.</td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Within APE</td>
<td>Contributing Status Mead &amp; Hunt</td>
<td>Reassessment of Contributing Status</td>
<td>NRHP Eligible on Individual Basis</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Name of Building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1023 Mestina</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>c.1925</td>
<td>Goltzman Building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1000 block Mestina</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Included as part of 1001 Leopard</td>
<td>See 1001 Leopard</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Attached to Braslau’s Furniture Store (warehouse)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>615 Waco</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>c.1922</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>617 Waco</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>c.1922</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>1119 Antelope</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not included</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>c.2000</td>
<td>Solis Furniture Store</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>1115 Antelope</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Solis Furniture Store</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>1115-rear Antelope</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not included</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Warehouse for Solis Furniture Store</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation of the NRHP Eligibility of Leopard Street

Leopard Street is significant for its association with the commercial development of Corpus Christi from 1926 through 1957. The year 1926 marked the opening of the port and the construction of the Nixon Building on the Bluff, which served as a link between the downtown and uptown shopping districts. These events precipitated an enormous building boom. In addition, Leopard Street played a role in the establishment of post-World War II Hispanic businesses in Corpus Christi. The year 1957 represents the last major investment in Leopard Street with the expansion of Braslau’s Furniture Store, as well as the opening of the Parkdale Plaza Shopping Center. No historic-age buildings were constructed along Leopard Street after 1957.

According to the NPS National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria For Evaluation, a historic district possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development. A district derives its importance from being a unified entity. The identity of a district results from the inter-relationship of its resources, which can convey a visual sense of the overall historic environment or be an arrangement of historically or functionally related properties. A district must be significant, as well as be an identifiable entity. It can comprise both features that lack individual distinction and individually distinctive features that serve as focal points. It may even be considered eligible if all of the components lack individual distinction, provided that the grouping achieves significance as a whole within its historic context. In either case, the majority of the components that add to the district’s historic character, even if they are individually undistinguished, must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole.¹

The NPS guidance for evaluating the essential physical features and historic integrity of historic districts requires that for a district to retain integrity as a whole, the majority of the components that make up the district’s historic character must possess integrity. In addition, the relationships among the district’s components must be substantially unchanged since the period of significance. When evaluating the impact of intrusions upon the district’s integrity, one should take into consideration the relative numbers, size, scale, design, and location of the components that do not contribute to the significance. A district is not eligible if it contains so many alterations or new intrusions that it no longer conveys the sense of a historic environment. A component of a district cannot contribute to the significance if it has been substantially altered since the period of the district’s significance.²

As described below, Leopard Street severely lacks a sufficient level of historic integrity, both in its individual resources and in its overall concentration of historic-age resources, to convey its significance of a once vibrant business district. Only seven of the 18 historic-age resources within the proposed district boundaries retain a sufficient level of historic integrity to contribute to convey the significance of the district. Moreover, the district as a whole no longer retains a sufficient level of integrity of setting and feeling to convey its historic character. The area is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a potential historic district under either Criteria A or C. The significance and historic integrity of individual buildings are evaluated in the following pages.

This proposed NRHP historic district is composed of parts of 4 blocks and is irregularly bounded by Antelope Street on the north, Artesian Street on the east, Mestina Street on the South, and Staples Street on the west. Leopard Street bisects the potential district from east to west, and Waco Street bisects it from north to south.

Leopard and Waco are the primary streets among which most of the historic-age resources are located. These two streets represent the core of the proposed district.

¹. p. 5.
². p. 46.
Leopard Street

The proposed boundaries of the historic district extend along the 1100 block and portions of the 1000 block of Leopard Street. Both the north and south sides of the 1100 block of Leopard are still intact, with buildings lining both sides of the street. Yet, the buildings have suffered such extensive alterations, particularly along the ground floors, that they no longer convey the sense of the historic streetscape. This block in particular has suffered an extensive loss of integrity of design, materials and workmanship.

Both sides of the 1000 block of Leopard have vacant lots where historic-age buildings recently stood. The north side of the block only retains one building, a theater at 1016 Leopard, with any remaining integrity. The south side of the block is dominated by the Braslau’s Furniture Store from the 1950s. This building retains the highest level of historic integrity of any remaining building within the proposed historic district, although it dates from the last few years of the period of significance. Determined noncontributing in the previous study, the building is most likely individually NRHP eligible. Yet it’s modern design is a striking juxtaposition to the late 1920s and 1930s designs of the remaining buildings within the area.

Moreover, both the 1000 and 1100 blocks of Leopard are surrounded to the east, south and west by high-rise, contemporary buildings that loom above the lower scaled, one and two-story historic-age buildings. The 1988 Corpus Christi City Hall and the 1977 Nueces County Courthouse Complex dominate the skyline above the historic-age buildings. Modern intrusions to the north and northwest include multiple cell phone towers and convenience stores that are readily visible from each of the blocks. Although there is a sufficient integrity of location and association along Leopard Street, the area lacks any historic integrity of setting or feeling due to the many intrusions by contemporary buildings, multiple vacant lots, and the lack of contributing buildings. Leopard Street no longer contains the required concentration of contributing buildings nor the continuity of buildings to constitute a historic district as required by NPS.
Figure 6: North side of 1100 block, Leopard Street, Sanborn map, 1959.
Figure 7: Intersection of 1100 block of Leopard at Staples
Camera facing northeast

Figure 8: Intersection of 1100 block of Leopard at Staples
Camera facing northeast
Figure 9: North side of 1100 block of Leopard
Camera facing northwest
Figure 10: South side of 1100 block, Leopard Street, Sanborn map, 1959.
Figure 11: Intersection of Leopard and Staples at south side of 1100 block
View facing south
Figure 12: South side of 1100 block of Leopard
View facing southeast

Figure 13: South side of 1100 block of Leopard
View facing southeast
Figure 14: South side of 1100 block of Leopard
View facing southeast

Figure 15: Intersection of Leopard and Waco at south side of 1100 block of Leopard
View facing southeast
Figure 16: North side of 1000 block, Leopard Street, Sanborn map, 1959.
Figure 17: North side of 1000 block of Leopard
View facing northeast

Figure 18: North side of 1000 block of Leopard
View facing northwest
Figure 19: Vacant lot on north side of 1000 block of Leopard at intersection with Artesian
View facing north
Figure 20: South side of 1000 block, Leopard Street, Sanborn map, 1959.
Figure 21: South side of 1000 block - Braslau’s Furniture Store Building
View facing southeast
Waco Street

There are only four extant buildings along the west side of the 700 block of Waco. All of these buildings have received numerous alterations, including storefront alterations, window replacements and new materials added. Based upon the layout of buildings elsewhere, the building at 725 Waco probably originally had storefronts that addressed primarily Antelope Street rather than Waco. A large vacant lot between 709 and 711 Waco is the site of two demolished buildings. The eastern side of the 700 block of Waco (not included within the proposed historic district) is characterized by vacant lots. There is a historic-age building at the eastern corner of Waco and Leopard (1024 Leopard, facing Leopard Street), but it has been so altered that it no longer is recognizable as historic. This block no longer retains a sufficient level of integrity of materials, workmanship, setting, or feeling to convey its significance.

Only three buildings out of a total of five from the historic period survive in the 600 block of Waco. The proposed boundaries for the historic district only include the remaining buildings. The buildings at 617 and 615 Waco do retain a sufficient level of integrity of design, materials and workmanship. But the overall streetscape lacks integrity of setting and feeling as it is characterized by vacant lots and new infill. On the east side of the 600 block is a vacant lot (included within the boundaries) where the John Grant Building once stood. At the southern end of the 600 block, the building at 1023 Mestina (included within the boundaries) lacks a sufficient level of integrity to contribute to a historic district. At the southern end of the west side of the block is new infill, including a large metal storage facility and a large Spanish Revival bus station constructed in 1995. The 600 block of Waco lacks a sufficient level of integrity of setting, feeling and association to convey its integrity. As only two buildings along the block retain a sufficient level of integrity to be considered contributing, the area lacks a concentration or continuity of buildings for consideration as a historic district.
Figure 22: 700 block of Waco Street, Sanborn map, 1959.
Figure 23: West side of 700 block of Waco Street
View facing southeast

Figure 24: West side of 700 block of Waco Street
View facing northwest
Figure 25: South side of Waco Street, Sanborn map, 1959.
Figure 26: East side of 700 block of Waco Street
View facing southeast

Figure 27: West side of 600 block of Waco Street
View facing southeast
Figure 28: West side of 600 block of Waco Street
View facing northwest
Figure 29: East side of 600 block of Waco
View facing southeast
Figure 30: South end of west Side of 600 block of Waco
View facing southwest

Figure 31: Close-up of RTA Bus Transfer Station located on 600 block of Waco
View facing southwest
Antelope, Artesian, Mestina and Staples streets constitute the outside borders of the proposed district. Only Antelope and Mestina streets contain any historic-age properties.

**Antelope Street**

Antelope Street, located one block to the north of Leopard, is adjacent to the frontage of Interstate 37. The 1100 block features two large vacant lots, one of which is occupied by a cell phone tower. Although the side of a historic-age building runs along the eastern edge of the block, the only other building along Antelope Street is a heavily remodeled building with a secondary structure at the rear. This block lacks any integrity of feeling, setting, association, design, materials, or workmanship.

**Artesian Street**

Artesian Street represents the border of the district along the eastern side of the 1000 block of Leopard (Braslau’s Furniture Store). This side of the building faces a landscaped parking lot that occupies the entire block to the east utilized by the Nueces County Courthouse Complex. Although this parking lot is not within the boundaries of the proposed historic district, it faces onto Leopard Street and its construction resulted in the demolition of historic-age buildings. The loss of the historic fabric along Leopard Street has contributed to the lack of historic integrity within the proposed historic district.

The block of Artesian Street to the north between Leopard and Antelope was not included within the proposed historic district because it includes primarily vacant lots and modern buildings.
Figure 32: View of 700 block of Antelope
Camera facing southeast
Figure 33: Northwest corner of proposed historic district (Staples at Antelope Street)
   View facing west

Figure 34: View to the northeast from Antelope Street
Figure 35: Northeast corner of proposed historic district (Antelope at Waco Street)
View facing east

Figure 36: View of 600 block of Artesian across from Breslau's Furniture Store
View facing east
Mestina Street

Mestina Street, located one block to the south of Leopard, is characterized by massive parking lots from the Nueces County Courthouse, the Nueces County Courthouse and Jail Complex, and continuous bus traffic from the RTA's Staples Street Transfer Station at the corner. Only two historic-age buildings survive along the north side of the block between Waco and Artesian streets. The building on the western corner (1023 Mestina) has been extensively remodeled with all of its storefronts infilled with modern materials and new windows. Only a small sliver of original brick materials survive across the top of the building. It is surrounded to the north by a vacant lot and to the east by a large parking lot. The other building is located at the center of the block (1000 Mestina) and is the rear elevation of the warehouse associated with the Braslau's Furniture Store. Corrugated metal sheds at the eastern corner are also part of this Furniture Store complex. This block lacks any integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, setting, and association.
Figure 37: North side of 1000 block of Mestina Street
View facing northeast

Figure 38: North side of 1000 block of Mestina Street
View facing west
Figure 39: South Side of Mestina Street
Nueces County Courthouse and Jail Complex
View facing southeast
Staples Street

Staples Street comprises the western boundary of the proposed district along between Antelope and extends just south past the intersection with Leopard Street. The only historic-age resources along Staples Street are the side elevations of 1122 Leopard and 1117-1129 Leopard. A modern cell phone tower is located within the proposed district at the corner of Staples and Antelope Streets.

Staples Street, south of Leopard, has been widened to accommodate the traffic to City Hall and the bus traffic served by the Staples Street Transfer Station. Other than the side elevations of the two historic-age buildings, Staples Street is an entirely contemporary street. A Valero convenience store is sited at the northwest corner of Leopard and Staples, directly across from 1122 Leopard. The Corpus Christi City Hall dominates a four block site at the southwest corner of Leopard and Staples directly across from 1117-1129 Leopard. Although not within the proposed boundaries of the historic district, the RTA Bus Transfer Station is clearly visible along Staples Street.
Figure 40: Intersection of Staples at Leonard Street
View facing northwest

Figure 41: 600 Block of Staples
View facing southeast
In 2012, Mead & Hunt surveyed a portion of the Leopard Street area as part of the reconnaissance level survey for the Corpus Christi Harbor Bridge. Their initial reconnaissance survey recommendations included a potentially NRHP eligible Leopard Street Commercial District under only Criterion A:

“The majority of these buildings have diminished physical integrity; however, as a grouping they represent an important phase in the commercial growth and expansion of Corpus Christi that resulted from the opening of the Port in 1926. In addition, this concentration of buildings maintains an association with the Hispanic community within Corpus Christi. Although the Hispanic community was already established in the surrounding area prior to 1926, the opening of the port brought jobs and an increased population to the area, which resulted in commercial development along Leopard Street. Leopard Street was an important economic and social center for the Hispanic community. This concentration of buildings maintains integrity of location and association with commercial development along Leopard Street and the Hispanic community. Although the setting has been compromised by IH 37, the highway is not visible from within the district and the district maintains the degree of integrity necessary to qualify under Criterion A,” (for Commerce and Ethnic Heritage).

Mead & Hunt determined that the proposed historic district was not eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion C as:

“District has diminished integrity in terms of workmanship, design, and materials. The most intact buildings include the Melba Theater at 1016 Leopard Street, a one-story commercial building that may have been an auto showroom at 1102 Leopard Street, a two-story commercial block at 1110 Leopard Street, and a one-story commercial block at 1116-1120 Leopard Street. Each of these buildings has a marginal degree of integrity due to replacement storefronts, removed or replacement windows, and non-historic wall materials; second stories are generally intact except for some replacement windows... All other commercial buildings within the boundaries have a low degree of integrity due to altered storefronts, replacement windows, altered original exterior wall materials, additions, or slip covers over original storefronts. The cohesiveness of the grouping has been further compromised by vacant lots. Overall, the grouping does not retain cohesiveness nor does it include a large enough percentage of intact buildings to anchor those with lesser degrees of integrity.”

Integrity of location and association alone are not sufficient to support NRHP eligibility under Criterion A. As outlined in the NPS National Register Bulletin 15: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria For Evaluation*, feeling and association alone are never sufficient to support eligibility of a property for the National Register as they depend on individual perceptions. And location, the actual site where a property was constructed, is a primary consideration for even considering eligibility. For consideration under Criterion A, the individual resources, as well as the district as a whole, must retain a minimal amount of each of the aspects of integrity, including design, materials, workmanship, setting and feeling (in addition to location and association) in order to convey the district’s historic identity.

Currently, there is no longer a sense of continuity of historic-age resources as the streetscape of historic buildings in the proposed historic district is interrupted by vacant lots, noncontributing buildings that have been heavily altered, and contemporary high-rise buildings looming overhead. Nor is there a concentration of historic-age resources with a sufficient level of integrity to convey the design, materials and workmanship from the period of significance to convey the importance of Leopard Street as the vital shopping district it once was.

---

3. p. 45.
For years, the Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) has been purchasing property in the area of its Staples Street Transfer Station. As of 2012, it owned all of the buildings in the southern 1100 (Block 40) and 1000 blocks (Block 33) of Leopard except for 1023 Mestina, including 1117-1129 Leopard, 1101 Leopard, 617 Waco, 615 Waco, 1019-1021 Leopard, 1001 Leopard, and 1000 Mestina. In March of 2013, the RTA Board approved a contract in the amount of $825,160 with Fulton Coastcon/DLP Group Inc. for the demolition of all of the remaining buildings in Blocks 40 and 33 (except for 1023 Mestina). Work is scheduled to begin April 1, 2013, and should be completed by August of 2013. The RTA will be constructing a two-story Customer Services Building with associated parking on the lots. According to the president of the Uptown Neighborhood Initiative, “all of the buildings at that location are in disrepair and a brand new facility will just add ambience . . . what a good thing.”4

Although the planned demolition work is not yet completed, it will further impact the historic integrity of the remaining buildings along the northern side of Leopard Street through the replacement of historic-age buildings with inappropriate modern infill. Leopard Street lacks the required continuity of historic-age resources as its streets are ravaged by vacant lots and historic buildings unrecognizable from the period of significance. The once vibrant “Uptown” shopping district of Leopard Street, lined with stores and theaters along seven blocks, no longer contains a sufficient concentration of historic-age resources to convey the significance of the street as an important shopping district. Currently, there are only 10 historic-age buildings left along Leopard Street between Artesean and Staples streets, of which only four retain a sufficient level of historic integrity. After the planned demolitions by the RTA, there will only be two buildings left along the northern two blocks of Leopard Street with a sufficient level of historic integrity to convey the historic significance of the Uptown shopping district that once spanned multiple blocks.

Figure 42: Leopard Street
View facing southeast
Figure 43: Leopard Street at the eastern boundary of the proposed district
View facing

Figure 44: Leopard Street at the western boundary of the proposed district
Corpus Christi City Hall (intersection of Leopard and Staples)
View facing
Resource Number from 2012 Survey: Not included

2012 Survey Address: Not included

Nueces County CAD Address: 1119 Antelope (southeast corner of Antelope at Staples Street)

Property Type/Subtype: Communications infrastructure

Materials: Metal

Architectural Style/Type: Cell tower

Date: c.2000

NRHP Eligibility: Noncontributing/Not individually eligible (less than 50 years of age)

History:

This cell phone tower occupies a lot previously occupied by three historic-age brick buildings, one which faces Staples Street, and the two which other faced Antelope Street. The tower was constructed less than 10 years ago.

Description/Historic Integrity:

Not applicable.

Significance:

None
Figure 45: 1119 Antelope
Camera facing southeast
2012 Survey Address: 1115 Antelope
Nueces County CAD Address: 1115 Antelope
Property Type/Subtype: Commercial
Materials: Stucco with flagstone applied to front elevation
Architectural Style/Type: One-Part Commercial Block
Date: 1956
NRHP Eligibility: Noncontributing/Not individually eligible

Note: There is also a separate warehouse building (stucco) in the rear at 1115-R Antelope. This building dates from the same time and is also not eligible for listing in the NRHP.

History:
City directories list no businesses at this address from 1944 until 1965 when Solis Furniture Store is listed. It appears that in the 1910s and 1920s, a residence occupies the site. Sanborn map notation gives a date of 1956 for the construction of the building and its warehouse.

Description/Historic Integrity:
This one-story, one-part commercial block building is constructed of stucco and has been heavily remodeled in recent years. The entire front elevation is now faced with flagstone and the storefront has multiple rows of narrow, fixed windows divided into two panes. There are two recessed entries. The canopy is of recent construction, as is the wooden frieze at the top of the building.

Due to the extensive alterations to the ground floor storefronts and the canopy, the building no longer retains any integrity of design, materials or workmanship. Surrounded by vacant lots to the west which were once occupied by stores, the integrity of setting has been eroded. The loss of so many aspects of its historic integrity has contributed to the loss of feeling and association.

Significance:
The building dates from the later development of Leopard Street and is not associated with any significant businesses. The building does not retain any historic integrity to convey its sense of history or sense of place.
Figure 46: 1115 Antelope
View facing south

Figure 47: Building at rear of 1115 Antelope
View facing south

Page 59
Resource Number from 2012 Survey: 366

2012 Survey Address: 725 Waco

Nueces County CAD Address: Not listed (only personal property)

Property Type/Subtype: Commercial

Materials: Masonry with permastone facing

Architectural Style/Type: One-Part Commercial Block

Date: c.1930

NRHP Eligibility: Noncontributing/Not individually eligible

Description/Historic Integrity:

This one-story, one-part commercial block building faces both Waco Street and Antelope Streets. The Waco Street elevation has three storefronts that retain their transoms but have been altered with the infilling of store windows and the replacement of doors. The awning is also missing on this elevation. The Antelope elevation once had six storefronts but all but one has been infilled as it is now used for storage. A curved parapet crowns the Waco Street elevation and a pyramidal parapet is set on the Antelope elevation. Originally constructed of masonry, the exterior has since been re-clad with permastone. The date of this alteration is not known, but it is not noted on the 1965 Sanborn map.

While the building retains its overall integrity of design in that it retains the massing and rhythm of the facade, it has lost integrity of materials and workmanship through the re-cladding of the exterior of the building and the replacement of storefront elements. Both Waco and Antelope streets have suffered a loss of setting and feeling due to the loss of buildings, the number of vacant lots, and the lack of buildings that retain historic integrity.

Significance:

The building is not associated with a significant business and no longer retains a sufficient level of historic integrity of materials, workmanship, setting, and feeling to convey its significance as contributing to the commercial development of the Leopard Street area.
Figure 48: 725 Waco
View facing west
Figure 49: 725 Waco
Detail of exterior
Camera facing west
Figure 50: 725 Waco
Detail of exterior
Camera facing west
Resource Number from 2012 Survey: 367

2012 Survey Address: 711 Waco
Nueces County CAD Address: 719 Waco
Property Type/Subtype: Commercial
Materials: Stucco and brick
Architectural Style/Type: Two-Part Commercial Block
Date: c.1940
NRHP Eligibility: Noncontributing/Not individually eligible

History:

Residences occupied this site until the construction of this building in the 1910s and early 1920s. Subsequently, a service station was on the site. La India Bakery, a Hispanic bakery, occupied the building from 1944 through 1965, with the upper floor being utilized as a hotel.

Description/Historic Integrity:

This two-part commercial building is constructed of concrete tile covered with stucco. The ground floor storefront has been altered by the infilling of the majority of the storefront and the windows with brick across the facade. New doors have also been installed and a new fabric canopy awning runs across the front of the building replacing the original wood. The upper part of the facade retains the stucco exterior and terminates in a slightly curved parapet. Five modern vinyl windows are symmetrically placed across the facade, but the dimensions of the original window openings have been altered (they are now smaller). All of the windows on the side elevations have also been replaced.

The storefronts of the bottom floor lacks all integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. The overall design and materials of the upper floor are intact, but workmanship is lacking due to the installation of modern windows which also impact integrity of design due to their altered size. The building lacks an overall integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling, sufficient to convey any historic significance.

Significance:

No individual significance for La India Bakery was found to exist. The building lacks a sufficient level of historic integrity to convey any significance to the commercial development of the Leopard Street area.
Figure 51: 711 Waco
View facing west
2012 Survey Address: 709 Waco
Nueces County CAD Address: 709 Waco
Property Type/Subtype: Commercial
Materials: Concrete tile with brick facing
Architectural Style/Type: One-Part Commercial Block
Date: c.1928
NRHP Eligibility: Contributing/Not individually eligible

History:
The site was occupied by residences until the construction of this building around 1928. The first tenant was Allen Second Hand Furniture Store in 1928. Following the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, it became the site of the Delta Club. By 1960, the building was used as storage and it was vacant by 1965.

Description/Historic Integrity:
The building retains its original brick exterior, although it has been painted. The storefront bays are outlined with decorative brickwork and the shaped parapet incorporates an ornamental urn and decorative cast stone tiles. The storefront bays have been modernized in recent years with the infilling of the bays, the replacement of the transom windows, removal of the awning, and the installation of new doors. A two-story addition on the rear of the building is only visible because of the large vacant lot next door.

Although the building has received extensive alterations to the storefronts, the building retains a sense of its overall design in the massing and rhythm of the facade. In addition, the building still has a sense of its materials and workmanship, although they have been painted which obscures their original intent somewhat. The building has lost integrity of setting and feeling due to the loss of surrounding buildings, vacant lots, and the lack of contributing buildings.

Significance:
The building retains a sufficient level of historic integrity, but is not associated with any significant business. Its date of construction and location contributed to the commercial development of Leopard Street. It was also associated with the rise of saloons or bars along Waco Street after the repeal of Prohibition which was one of many factors in the demise of Leopard Street. Although not individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, it retains a minimal amount of its overall integrity of design, materials and workmanship to contribute to a proposed historic district.
Figure 52: 709 Waco
View facing southwest
2012 Survey Address: 617 Waco

Nueces County CAD Address: 617 Waco

Property Type/Subtype: Commercial

Materials: Concrete tile faced with brick and glazed tile

Architectural Style/Type: One-Part Commercial Block

Date: c.1922

NRHP Eligibility: Contributing/Not individually eligible

History:

The city directories that were sampled in 1922 and 1929 lists this building as vacant, which indicates that it was in existence. Following the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, this building housed a series of bars including Alberta's Cafe (1937), the White Elephant Bar (1944) and, finally, the Crystal Club (1951-1960). The building was vacant by 1965. The Nueces CAD gives 1949 as a date for the building which may reflect the date of the alterations to the storefronts on the ground floor.

Description/Historic Integrity:

This building has a very simple design with an upper parapet of buff brick with two rectangular recessed panels that define the storefronts below. The surrounding brickwork defines the two storefronts and a centralized doorway. Glazed tile, a curved metal awning, and design changes to the storefronts were later additions to the building, but probably historic-age modifications from the late 1940s. The storefronts were altered at this time with new rectangular windows flanking the doorways, indicating the building was no longer being used as a store needing display. The south storefront has glass block windows but the north storefront is currently boarded. Each retains the original transoms.

The building retains its integrity of design, materials, workmanship and association as alterations are from the period of significance. There is a lack of integrity of setting and feeling due to a lack of contributing buildings, vacant lots, and contemporary intrusions.

Significance:

The building retains a sufficient level of historic integrity, but is not associated with any individual significant business. Its date of construction and location contributed to the commercial development of Leopard Street. It was also associated with the rise of bars along Waco Street after the repeal of Prohibition which was one of many factors in the demise of Leopard Street. Although not individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, it retains a sufficient level of historic integrity of design, materials and workmanship to contribute to a proposed historic district.
Figure 53: 617 Waco
View facing west
Resource Number from 2012 Survey: None

2012 Survey Address: 615 Waco

Nueces County CAD Address: 615 Waco

Property Type/Subtype: Commercial

Materials: Concrete tile faced with brick

Architectural Style/Type: Two-Part Commercial Block

Date: c.1922

NRHP Eligibility: Contributing/Not individually eligible

History:

A mattress company is listed at this building in the early 1920s. The Nueces CAD gives 1934 as a date for the building which may reflect the date of the alterations to the storefronts on the ground floor. Following the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, the building was occupied by a series of bars including the Anahuac Club (1937), the Tivoli Club (1944) and Dick’s Club (1951). Following the closure of Dick’s club by the City of Corpus Christi due to problems with prostitution and violence, Silco Leather occupied the building in the 1960s.

Description/Historic Integrity:

This two-story building has two storefronts on the bottom floor which were altered during the historic period (c.1934). The configuration of the storefronts is very similar to 617 Waco. Rectangular windows flank the doorways, indicating the building was no longer being used as a store needing display. These windows are now bored, as are the doors and transoms. The exterior of the ground floor has been clad in a granite-type material. The upper floor retains its original brickwork. Two colors of brick, buff and red, are used for a decorative effect. A two-colored stringcourse outlines the windows of the second floor as well as the coping of the parapet. The windows are probably replacements and consist of decorative glass block. The building has shaped parapets at either end of the building.

The building retains a sufficient level of design, materials and workmanship as alterations are from the period of significance. There is a lack of setting and feeling due to the intrusion of new construction surrounding the building, vacant lots, and a lack of contributing buildings in the area.

Significance:

The building retains a sufficient level of historic integrity, but is not associated with any individual significant business. Its date of construction and location contributed to the commercial development of Leopard Street. It was also associated with the rise of bars along Waco Street after the repeal of Prohibition which was one of many factors in the demise of Leopard Street as a shopping district. Although not individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, it retains a sufficient level of historic integrity of design, materials and workmanship to contribute to a proposed historic district.
Figure 54: 615 Waco
View facing west
The Goltzman Building was constructed by W.L. Dinn (the small cast stone name plate in the building has the initials “W.D. & A.”). Israel Goltzman purchased the building in 1945 as an investment property. Goltzman was the president of Alamo Loan & Jewelry. Over the years, a variety of tenants occupied the building including a grocery store, barber shop, tackle company and storage operation. One of the longest tenants was a cleaner. The Texas Cleaners once occupied several of the storefronts in the 1930s (probably 602-606 Waco, based on advertisements). The earliest mention found is 1936. Goltzman had difficulty renting the building in the 1960s and tried to sell it in 1964. He renovated the building in 1976 during the construction of the Nueces County Courthouse complex across the street in anticipation of a new rental market. It was sold in 1996 by Goltzman & Sons. Dismas Charities Properties Inc. acquired the property in 2008.

Description/Historic Integrity:

This one-story, one-part commercial building primarily faces Waco Street with six bays or storefronts. Another three bays face the secondary street of Mestina. All of the storefronts have been enclosed with modern materials and small tinted windows, altering the original design intent of the historic building. Vestiges of the original materials are visible in the brick piers that once separated the original storefronts. The original canopy has been replaced with a new soffit that slightly overhangs the sidewalk. The only historic fabric remaining in the building is the brick parapet that crowns the building. This simple parapet is punctuated with small cast stone decorative tiles. A small cast stone name plate in the center of the Waco elevation has the initials “W.D. & A.” The parapet is shaped at the corner and at the center of the Waco Street elevation.

The building has been heavily remodeled and no longer reflects its original 1920s design of rows of storefronts. The building is now isolated on a corner surrounded by vacant lots, parking lots, modern high-rise buildings, and a large bus transfer station. The building lacks all historic integrity of design, setting, feeling, and association. Due to the amount of new materials added to the building, the integrity of materials and workmanship have also heavily suffered.

Significance:

The building was utilized as rental space for various storefronts one block south of Leopard Street. No significant businesses are known to have occupied the building. While the building contributed to the overall commercial development of the Uptown shopping district, it retains little of its historic integrity to convey any of its historic character. Additional research would be required to determine the significance of Israel Goltzman, but the building does not retain a sufficient level of integrity to convey significance.

Bibliography

Figure 55: 1023 Mestina
View facing northeast

Figure 56: 1023 Mestina
View facing northeast
Resource Number from 2012 Survey: None

2012 Survey Address: 1000 Mestina

Nueces County CAD Address: 1001 Leopard

Property Type/Subtype: Warehouse

Materials: Concrete

Architectural Style/Type: None

Date: 1950

NRHP Eligibility: See 1001 Leopard

Significance:

This building served as the warehouse for Braslau’s Furniture Store and is physically attached to 1001 Leopard. It is considered as part of that building and is discussed within that context. See 1001 Leopard for additional information.
Figure 57: 1000 Mestina
View facing northeast

Figure 58: 1000 Mestina
View facing west
2012 Survey Address: 1122 Leopard

Nueces County CAD Address: 1122 Leopard

Property Type/Subtype: Commercial

Materials: Stucco over brick

Architectural Style/Type: One-Part Commercial Block

Date: 1928; 1931

NRHP Eligibility: Noncontributing/Not individually eligible

History:

Henry Grossman was one of the Grossman Brothers who owned the entire northern side of the 1000 block of Leopard and also operated Grossman Brothers Department Store at 1002-1006 Leopard (demolished). His store had previously been located at the other end of the block at 1104 Leopard, but according to advertisements in October of 1931, he was being “forced to move.” According to a newspaper article in January of 1932, he purchased the building at 1122 Leopard, formerly occupied by the Guaranty Store, and renovated it “to suit the needs of his business.” By the 1940s, Henry Grossman was handling the real estate investments of the Grossman family and was a director of the City National Bank in Corpus Christi. In 1941, Joseph’s Economy Store occupied the building (expanded to Joseph’s Economy Store & Pawn Shop by 1946). This business continued to occupy the building throughout the 1960s, but changed its name to “Joseph’s Economy Loan & Jewelry Company.”

Description/Historic Integrity:

The building was originally constructed of concrete frame with tile curtain wall and presumably had a brick facing on at least the Leopard Street elevation. The front elevation once consisted of two storefronts but was remodeled by Grossman to integrate the elevation into one storefront. A recessed entry included a centralized display window that projected outwards from the two entries on either side. Large display windows flanked this centralized window. These have now been boarded up and covered with stucco. The only indication they were once display windows are the encaustic tile kickplates that still remain. Some of the tiles on the interior sidewalk contain the name, “The Henry Grossman Department Store.” Due to its corner location on Waco Street, this elevation also received ornamental urns that define the concrete piers and at one time had additional display windows that are now entirely infilled with a stucco wall.

The upper part of the building is now entirely covered with painted stucco, and it is not known what type of materials or detailing may have been within this upper part of the building. Only ornamental urns, now painted, remain. The side elevation has been entirely covered with stucco and painted, including all but one of the windows. An awning, which wrapped around the corner of the building, no longer exists.

The only remaining original materials on the building are the encaustic tile remains within the sidewalk to the entry, the one remaining display window, and the ornamental urns on the top of the building. The building lacks all integrity of design, materials and workmanship. In addition, it lacks integrity of setting and feeling due to the intrusion of new construction at the corner and the lack of contributing buildings within the surrounding blocks.
Significance:

Constructed in 1928, this building was remodeled in 1931 to serve as the Henry Grossman Department Store. The Grossman Brothers had a large presence on Leopard Street as merchants during the 1920s and 1930s. Jewish immigrants from Russia, the Grossman brothers were well known within their community. The building and its owner made significant contributions to the development of Leopard Street. The building, however, retains almost none of its historic integrity from the period of significance. It retains no integrity of design, materials or workmanship. The integrity of setting and feeling have been heavily compromised by the lack of contributing buildings in the immediate area and the construction of both a high-rise city hall and modern gas station visible from the corner location of this building.

The building was identified as a Phase II property (“potentially historical property”) by the City of Corpus Christi in its Preservation Plan of 1992. According to the Preservation Plan, this category of property would require an automatic 30-day stay on a demolition request pending a review of its historical significance by the Landmark Commission unless the “public health, safety or welfare is threatened.” The Preservation Plan outlines 11 areas of the city as potential districts, but Leopard Street is not identified as one of them.

Bibliography

Removal Sale Advertisement, Corpus Christi Times (October 8, 1931) 5.


2. p. 21.
Figure 59: 1122 Leopard
View facing northwest

Figure 60: 1122 Leopard
Detail
Resource Number from 2012 Survey: 378

2012 Survey Address: 1116-1120 Leopard

Nueces County CAD Address: 1116-1120 Leopard

Property Type/Subtype: Commercial

Materials: Masonry

Architectural Style/Type: One-Part Commercial Block

Date: c.1928

NRHP Eligibility: Noncontributing/Not individually eligible

History:

Very little is known about the history of this building, although it was occupied by a number of businesses over the years. None of the businesses resided in the building for more than a few years. By 1929, the Model Shoe Store was located at 1118 with the Success Cafe at 1120 (1116 was vacant). In 1937, there is no listing for 1116. The Rio Grande Grocery was located at 118 and the Lamar Cafe at 1120. In 1941, the building was occupied by Mission Finance Company (1116), Mercedes Groceries (1118) and Fenix Cafe (1120). Following World War II in 1946, the building's occupants included Amada Variety Shop (1116), Green Liquors (1118), and Texas Salvage Store (1120). By 1951, two of the storefronts were vacant (116 and 118) with Bell Finance the only renter (1120). Bell Finance remained in the building through 1965. The other two storefronts were occupied by a number of renters, primarily bakeries and cafes.

Description/Historic Integrity:

The very simple design of this three storefront building includes a brick faced building with piers surmounted by ornamental urns. The storefronts have been altered with modern aluminum windows and doors. The transoms have been infilled and the awning is no longer in existence. The upper part of the wall has been painted, but the brick is still somewhat visible.

The overall design of the building is still apparent, although there has been loss of integrity of design, materials and workmanship in the storefronts through remodeling. There has been a loss of setting and feeling due to the lack of contributing buildings along Leopard Street and high-rise buildings visible from the street.

Significance:

There are no known significant businesses associated with the building although it was occupied by a series of Hispanic businesses from the late 1930s on. The construction of the building did contribute to the overall development of Leopard Street as a shopping district. This building retains little of its historic integrity of design, materials, and workmanship in the storefronts and only the overall design of its upper parapet. With a loss of setting and feeling, the building does not retain a sufficient level of its overall historic integrity to be contributing to a proposed historic district under Criterion A.
Figure 61: 1116-1120 Leopard
View facing north

Figure 62: 1116-1120 Leopard
Detail, entrance
Camera facing north
2012 Survey Address: 1110 Leopard

Nueces County CAD Address: No listing for this property

Property Type/Subtype: Commercial

Materials: Masonry

Architectural Style/Type: Two-Part Commercial Block

Date: c.1928

NRHP Eligibility: Contributing/Individually eligible under Criterion A in the area of ethnic heritage and commerce

History:

The property includes four storefronts covering addresses from 1108 through 1114. By 1929, the building included Garza’s Grocery No. 1 (1108), the Guarantee Store (1110-1112) and a small restaurant.

A series of small grocery stores occupied the storefront at 1108 from the date of construction through the early 1950s, including Garza’s (1929), San Ferris (1937), A & H Grocery (1946), and the Modern Grocery (1951). The center storefront at 1110-1112 was occupied by a series of dry goods stores including the Guarantee Store (1929), The Fair (1937), The Eagle Store (1941), Alamo Loan and Clothing Store (1946), Pan-American Dry Goods (1951), and the National Outlet Store (1956). A restaurant owned by Fred Smith initially occupied the storefront at 1114 in 1929 (known to be the owner of the Texas Cafe). The Shields Club, which is described as a billiards club, occupied the storefront at 1114 from approximately 1941 through at least 1946, after which it moved upstairs. The Leopard Recreation Club subsequently occupied the storefront at 1114 from 1946 through 1965.

The second floor was first occupied by the American Order of Otters in 1929, a fraternal order established in 1910 in Pennsylvania as a sports and recreation club. Little is known about the organization, but it does not appear to have any particular association with Hispanic culture. By 1941, however, the second floor is occupied by the Mexican Chamber of Commerce which continued to meet in the building throughout the 1940s. The Shields Billiard Club occupied the upstairs space from 1946 until the early 1960s. According to secondary sources, the Mexican Chamber of Commerce held meetings at the Shields Club. The upstairs is vacant by 1956, but by 1961 La Terraza Hall, a dance venue occupies the space through at least 1965.
Description/Historic Integrity:

This two-story masonry building was constructed c.1928 and projects over the sidewalk with an open loggia. The upper story features classical detailing with nine symmetrically disposed arched windows decorated with cast stone. A brick stringcourse passes through the base of the arches and above the centermost windows is a frieze of dentils. The windows have been replaced with aluminum windows. The projecting side elevations retain their original double-hung, wooden windows. The lower floor is very different in character with a four-bay open arcade with scalloped arches that are now encased in orange tile with the white tile used to outline the edges of the arcade. Remnants of the white tile also appear around the edges of the storefronts, but a more modern tile has been applied to the altered storefronts.

Although the windows of the upper floor have been replaced, the upper portion of the building retains integrity of design and the majority of the integrity of its materials and workmanship. The storefronts have been altered, but because they are set back within the open loggia, they are not as an important element of the overall design of the exterior.

Significance:

The building is significant for its association with the Mexican Chamber of Commerce and Hispanic social clubs (Shields Club) during the 1940s and is potentially eligible under Criterion A in the area of ethnic heritage and commerce. The building also contributed to the commercial development of Leopard Street as a shopping district and retains a minimally sufficient level of integrity to convey its significance.
Figure 63: 1110 Leopard
View facing northwest

Figure 64: 1110 Leopard
Detail, entrance
Camera facing north
Resource Number from 2012 Survey: 380

2012 Survey Address: 1102 Leopard

Nueces County CAD Address: 1102 Leopard

Property Type/Subtype: Commercial

Materials: Tile and stone

Architectural Style/Type: Spanish Revival

Date: 1926

NRHP Eligibility: Noncontributing/Not individually eligible

History:

Known originally as the Sagarino Building, this building was constructed by John Sagarino, an Italian immigrant from an area near Naples. He was a farmer outside of Corpus Christi, but his property formed part of the Saxet oil field first discovered in the early 1920s.⁴

A newspaper article from 1926 announces the opening of a business in the new building, the Fenix Cafe, with Fred Smith as the proprietor. The upstairs is described as a “dance pavilion,” which implies an open-air space. Perhaps a victim of the Depression, the Fenix Cafe is no longer listed at this address in city directories by 1929. Fred Smith later operated the Texas Cafe in the building at 1110 Leopard. Fenix Cafes appear in other buildings at later times. It is not known if it is the same business or not.

From approximately 1937 through 1956, Morris Five & Dime Store occupied most of the building (1100-1102). Other businesses that occupied the address at 1106 included the Texas Cafe (1937) and Maria's Beauty Shop (1956-61). The Parisian occupied 1104-1106 from 1946 through 1956. After 1960, the building was occupied primarily by City Loan & Jewelry, Bonilla Furniture & Appliance Co. and the Tractor Supply Company. It was vacant for many years during the late 1960s and mid-1970s. As no business is ever listed as being in the second floor, it may have just been rented for special occasions.

According to a tenant in 2005, the Gonzalez family purchased the building in 1974 and renamed it La Terraza Ballroom. They extensively remodeled it, including the tile work on the ground floor. He also states that in 1956 the upstairs had been rented by Florencio Gonzalez and called Terraza Hall. He claimed it to be the birthplace of LULAC and the Mexican American Chamber of Commerce. LULAC, however, first met at Obreros Hall at Lipan and Carrizo streets in 1929.⁵ City directories indicate it is actually the building next door at 1110 Leopard where these events took place.

---

⁵ www.lulac.org.
Description/Historic Integrity:

This building was designed by Morris Levy & Associates of San Antonio in an exuberant Spanish Revival style. The ground floor is now encased in brown tile with no storefront bays. A corner entrance to the building with a recessed entry is surmounted by a second floor window with decorative stone window surround. The second floor is faced with stone and features rows of windows of varying size and types. All of the windows have been replaced with modern windows. The windows on the Leopard Street elevation are grouped into three bays by projecting piers. These groupings once corresponded with the storefronts on the ground floor below. The center bay of windows are above decorative stone panels with eagles flanking a shield. As no historic photographs survive of the building, it can not be known with certainty whether or not these panels were below all of the windows on the upper floor. The Waco Street elevation contains five bays of vinyl windows of varying width. An egg and dart stringcourse separates the windows from a wide frieze of geometrical patterning, capped by a scalloped coping, that crowns the building.

Historic photographs of the building have not been found, but according to Sanborn maps, the entire building had a stone facing. A newspaper photograph from the 1960s of just the detail of the windows with the stone panels shows a tripartite window, not the two-pane window in place today. The ground floor is entirely covered with modern brown tile applied in the 1970s. This encasement of the ground floor entirely obscures the design of the original storefronts. The ground floor has absolutely no integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, setting, or association. The upper floor retains its stone decorative detailing, but all of the windows have been replaced with various types of contemporary windows. It is not known if any of the stone panels under the windows have been removed or not, making the original design intention for this building difficult to understand.

Significance:

The building was once architecturally distinctive, but today lacks the vast majority of its character defining features. Although the building contributed to the commercial development of the Leopard Street shopping district, the building lacks sufficient historic integrity to convey this significance due to the extreme alterations to its ground floor and additional alterations to the upper level.

The building was constructed by an Italian merchant or investor, which was atypical along Leopard Street. Little is known about him. Although some claim LULAC held its first meetings in this building in 1929, this is not substantiated by the organization’s own historians. The building lacks sufficient association with historic events for individual eligibility under Criterion A. The building lacks integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association for individual eligibility under Criterion C due to the extensive alterations that have obscured and altered its character defining features.

Bibliography:


“Visions of Unity Danced in His Head” Corpus Christi Caller-Times (December 11, 2005).
Figure 65: 1102 Leopard
View facing northwest

Figure 66: 1102 Leopard
View facing northwest
Figure 67: 1102 Leopard
Detail, exterior
2012 Survey Address: 1024 Leopard
Nueces County CAD Address: 1024 Leopard
Property Type/Subtype: Commercial
Materials: Masonry
Architectural Style/Type: One-Part Commercial Block
Date: c.1928
NRHP Eligibility: Noncontributing/Not individually eligible

History:

This building was constructed by the Grossman Brothers who owned the entire north side of the 1000 block of Leopard. The Grossman Brothers Department Store (operated by Ed and Simon Grossman) was located at the corner of Leopard and Artesian (c.1918; demolished). It was constructed as rental property. The Nueces Drug Store was the primary tenant of the building from its opening and throughout the 1930s. Afterwards, the Economical Drug Company occupied the main space until the 1960s.

Edward Grossman arrived in the United States in 1906 from Russia to escape the oppression of Jews by the government. He arrived in Corpus Christi in 1911 and began operating a store in 1916 in the 1000 block of Chaparral following the arrival of his brother, Simon. Henry arrived later. All of the brothers were involved in the business which eventually included seven stores. By the 1960s, Grossman Brothers, Inc. operated seven stores in several coastal cities under the “Famous Department Store” name. The company was sold in 1965. The brothers played an influential role in the Jewish community in Corpus Christi. Simon Grossman was named Corpus Christi’s Outstanding Jewish Citizen in 1953 and Edward Grossman was the founder and President of Temple Beth El. The location of the primary Grossman Department Store on Leopard Street is now a vacant lot at the corner of Leopard and Artesian Street.

Description/Historic Integrity:

The building was extensively remodeled in 2010 in an attempt to revitalize Leopard Street. This one-story commercial building now has an exterior of orange-colored stucco over brick. A monumental shed-roofed canopy with shingles extends over the sidewalk. There are three storefronts with modern glass and entries. The building lacks all historic integrity of design, materials, workmanship, association, setting, and feeling. It is difficult to even perceive that this is, in fact, a historic-age building. The building retains only integrity of location.

Significance:

The building is associated with the Grossman Brothers, important Jewish merchants who significantly contributed to the development of Leopard Street during the period of significance. The building, however, lacks any historic integrity and is no longer able to convey this significance in any way. The Grossman Brothers had extensive real estate holdings and this is not the most significant property associated with their contributions.

Bibliography

“Grossman Dies at Age of 85; Funeral is set,” Corpus Christi Times (August 28, 1972) 1.
“Grossman Brothers Have Anniversary,” Corpus Christi Times (October 7, 1937) 2.
“Store Extends 1000 Block Leopard from Artesian to Waco.” Corpus Christi Times (August 7, 1929) 8.
“Two Grossman Brothers Sell Interests,” Corpus Christi Times (March 30, 1965) 12-B.
Figure 68: 1024 Leopard
View facing northwest
History:

The Melba Theater was built by Henry and Ed Grossman and designed by the local architectural firm of Hardy & Curran. The theater was managed by two men, Harper and Wans, who also operated the Palace, Aldine, Grande and Chaparral theaters in Corpus. The Grande Theater was located directly across the street from the Melba Theater. Although the local newspaper gave the opening of the theater a great review and claimed 3,000 people attended the formal opening, little is said about it subsequently. The theater had a segregated balcony area, although documentation as to when the theater opened this area is not available. The theater also played Spanish-speaking movies one day a week, which was not uncommon. There was one small storefront on the east side of the theater occupied by various businesses over the years including the Plaza Cafe (1929), Superior Ice Cream (1937), and the Starr Shoe Shop (1946-1951). From 1956 on, there were no businesses listed in the city directories.

Nat Hardy (1888-1960) and Claude Lee Curran (1889-?) practiced but a short time in Corpus Christi beginning about 1927. The firm ceased to exist sometime after 1931. Hardy became a developer in partnership with John Zerr and developed the East Cliff subdivisions of Corpus Christi. In addition to the Melba Theater, Hardy & Curran also designed the “R&R Theater” in Corpus Christi. This is probably a reference to the Ritz Theater, which was operated by the R&R Company. It was designed by Scott Dunne, a St. Louis architect, and the firm probably served as the local supervising architects. But their best known work is the Sherman Building (1930), listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2010. The other buildings designed by the firm include: an addition to the Nixon Building; the 1928 addition to the Nueces Hotel (demolished); Henne Brothers Store; the Peel Funeral Home; Corpus Christi High School; a hotel in Alice; and a school in Edna.

Historic Integrity:

This theater is missing a number of its original elements. A projecting neon sign from the center of the building extended down to above the rectangular decorative panel. The central arched entrance featured a decorative round window inset within the lunette which was surrounded by exposed electric light bulbs. A projecting awning, which served as a marquis, also no longer exists. The ticket booth was located within this centralized entrance with the entrance into the theater inside the west bay. The design of the original storefront on the east side has been infilled with plywood and new tile work. Modern aluminum and tile displays for movie posters have also been added to the facade. The design of the windows on the upper two exterior bays has been lost. These were originally two sets of windows, with the lower windows featuring a projecting balcony. The upper windows were shaded by large projecting red tile awnings. The building has suffered a loss of integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting, and feeling.
Significance:

The Melba Theater is the only surviving theater of two which once existed along Leopard Street. Theaters such as this contributed to the development of the commercial district by providing entertainment for shoppers. The building retains a sufficient level of integrity to convey this significance to the district as a contributing resource. It does not, however, retain a sufficient level of historic integrity of materials, workmanship, setting, and feeling to be individually eligible to the NRHP under Criterion A. The Melba Theater is not a good representative example of theater design in Corpus Christi due to the loss of its character defining features. The Ritz Theater downtown, currently undergoing restoration, is more significant in the history of theater design in Corpus and retains a greater level of integrity. Nor is the Melba Theater the best example of the work of its architects, Hardy & Curran, whose work is better represented by the NRHP listed Sherman Building.

Bibliography


“Three Thousand Persons in Attendance at Formal Opening of Melba Theater,” Corpus Christi Times (October 1, 1927).

“Store Extends 1000 Block Leopard from Artesian to Waco.” Corpus Christi Times (August 7, 1929) 8.
Figure 69: 1016 Leopard
View facing north

Figure 70: 1016 Leopard
Detail, camera facing north
Resource Number from 2012 Survey: None

2012 Survey Address: 1117-1129 Leopard

Nueces County CAD Address: 1121 Leopard

Property Type/Subtype: Commercial

Materials: Stucco over masonry block

Architectural Style/Type: Aztec style/One-Part Commercial Block

Date: 1929

NRHP Eligibility: Noncontributing/Not individually eligible

History:

The Aztec Building was constructed by Hardy & Curran, local Corpus Christi architects, for the local developers Nixon-Kokernot. Maston Nixon and H.L. Kokernot developed the Nixon Building, located at Leopard and Upper Broadway. The building contained nine storefronts with two facing onto Staples Street. Most of these were small businesses, such as cafes, barbers, used clothing stores, and billiard parlors, that never lasted more than a few years. Two businesses, however, appeared to be stable tenants. Beacon Printing occupied 1113 Leopard from approximately 1937 through the 1940s. The Galvan Drug Store occupied the corner storefront at Staples from the opening of the building throughout the 1940s. The 1951 city directory lists Wahlberg Drug Store, indicating Galvan Drug had either closed or moved. By 1956, most of the stores are vacant except for a finance company. The building remains vacant throughout the 1950s and 1960s except for one pawn shop.

The building is slated for demolition in April of 2013 by the Corpus Christi Regional Transit Authority.

Description/Historic Integrity:

The building is composed of a row seven storefront bays facing Leopard Street which are delineated by projecting piers that protrude above the roof line. These piers are decorated with decorative tiles at their base, which also originally lined the kick plates of the storefront windows. The tops of the piers also have a line of decorative tiles and are topped with stepped back caps. A frieze of decorative tile adorns the top of each bay. Each end of the facade is terminated by a pedimented storefront. Below the geometric detailing of the pediment is an inset panel which once also contained decorative tile. Thick blocks form a coping that runs along the entire top of the building, including the pediments. The building also included two storefronts facing Waco Street.

The building once had an awning that ran the entire length of Leopard Street with one small awning protecting the entrance to the store on Waco Street. These are no longer extant. No historic photographs of the building were found, but it appears that the surface of the wall facing Leopard is original. Although the windows are boarded, it is apparent that the majority of the storefronts have been heavily altered with new window openings, new door openings, and original decorative tiling removed. All of the transom windows, which contributed to the overall rhythm of the design of the facade, have either been removed or boarded. Within the three end bays (two facing Leopard and one facing Waco), all of the inset panels of decorative tiles have been painted over. The western end bay on Leopard and the entire Waco street elevation have been heavily altered. This part of the building has received a new coat of thick stucco that is different in character from the rest of the building. All of the decorative tile below the line of the frieze has been stuccoed over and is no longer visible. All of the bays have either been heavily altered or infilled, destroying the original design for this part of the building. By painting this end of the building a different color, it has destroyed the overall design of the building as a whole.
The decorative tile work is an essential element of the Aztec style of this building. The removal of the tile work within the kick plates has destroyed the dynamic visual element that tied together the long row of storefronts. The painting of the tile work within the end bays, the alterations to the storefronts, and the loss of the awning has further contributed to the loss of integrity of design, materials and workmanship. The building no longer retains any integrity of setting or feeling due to the many alterations, the lack of adjacent contributing buildings, and the intrusion of new commercial and high-rise buildings.

Significance:

The Aztec Building, constructed by an important developer and designed by a local architectural firm, is significant in the commercial development of Leopard Street. The building, however, lacks a sufficient degree of its historic integrity to convey its significance and it no longer contributes to the historic environment of a historic district. It suffers from a lack of integrity of design, materials and workmanship. Its overall integrity of design has been damaged by the alterations of its storefronts that are essential to the rhythm and design of the facade. The integrity of setting and feeling have been heavily compromised by the lack of contributing buildings in the immediate area and the construction of both a high-rise city hall and modern gas station visible from the corner location of this building.

Bibliography

“25 Years A Go: Aztec Building Noted for Design,” Corpus Christi Caller-Times (September 26, 1954) 20F.
Figure 73: 1117-1129 Leopard
View facing southeast

Figure 74: 1117-1129 Leopard
Detail, exterior
Camera facing south
**Resource Number from 2012 Survey: None**

**2012 Survey Address:** 1101 Leopard  
**Nueces County CAD Address:** 1101-1111 Leopard  
**Property Type/Subtype:** Commercial  
**Materials:** Stucco and tile over masonry block  
**Architectural Style/Type:** One-Part Commercial Block  
**Date:** c.1935  
**NRHP Eligibility:** Noncontributing/Not individually eligible  

**History:**

The Alamo Service Station was located on the corner of Leopard and Waco streets until the construction of this building (c.1925-c.1934). The building contained nine storefronts that contained a number of various businesses over the years. Over the years, these businesses included small cafes, watch repair, a photography studio, a beauty parlor, liquor stores, and shoe repair shops. None of the tenants stayed for any length of time.

A physician, A.F. Portelo, occupied the corner storefront in 1951, but was gone by 1956. The building was mostly vacant by 1956 and entirely vacant by 1965.

The building is slated for demolition in April of 2013 by the Corpus Christi Regional Transit Authority.

**Description/Historic Integrity:**

This building extends along half a block of Leopard Street and wraps around to Waco Street. The storefronts of the building were defined by piers topped by volutes which ended within the upper part of the facade. Above each pier, the parapet was shaped to further define the bays of the storefronts. Ornamental urns decorate the top of the parapet. An awning once ran all along Leopard Street and wrapped around to Waco Street. Only the corner store at Leopard and Waco still retains an awning. All of the transoms have been infilled. The exterior is brick, but the painting of the exterior has obscured the decorative brickwork and tile work in the upper part of the parapet. Although the storefronts along Leopard Street appear to be boarded, this covering is actually a wooden slip-casing structurally applied to the front of the building. There is no longer a definition of the long row of storefronts that once existed. Only the corner store at Leopard and Waco retains any historic character of a storefront. Its windows and doors have been replaced. It is not known what date the black and white tile covering this storefront was installed.

The building lacks integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling and association. The slip-casing of the Leopard Street elevation with wood has obscured the original design, materials and workmanship of the building. Painting of the exterior brickwork has further obscured elements of the building’s materials and workmanship. The integrity of setting and feeling have been heavily compromised by the lack of contributing buildings in the immediate area and the construction of both a high-rise city hall and modern gas station visible from the corner location of this building.

**Significance:**

No significant businesses were found to be tenants within the building, nor is it associated with any important people, merchants, developers, or architects. The construction of the building once contributed to the overall commercial development of Leopard Street. It lacks, however, a sufficient level of historic integrity to convey its significance.
Figure 75: 1101 Leopard
View facing southeast

Figure 76: 1101 Leopard
View facing southeast
Figure 77: 1101 Leopard
View facing west
Figure 78: 1101 Leopard
View facing southeast

Figure 79: 1101 Leopard
View facing southeast
2012 Survey Address: 1019-1021 Leopard

Nueces County CAD Address: 1013-1015 Leopard

Physical Addresses on Building: 1015-1021-1023 Leopard

Property Type/Subtype: One-Part Commercial Block

Materials: Brick

Architectural Style/Type: Modern

Date: 1956

NRHP Eligibility: Contributing/Not individually eligible

History:

This building is sited on a portion of the former corner lot of the John Grant Building (1929) which burned in May, 1957. Historic photographs dated 1961 clearly indicate this building adjacent to the vacant Grande Theater (Corpus Christi Public Library). Braslau acquired most of Block 33, and probably constructed this building as well, evidenced by the corrugated metal frieze and canopy that matches the design of the Braslau Furniture Store. Newspaper articles note that buildings in the block not used by the furniture store are rented by the Braslaus. The building is slated for demolition in April of 2013.

Description/Historic Integrity:

This one-story building contains three small store fronts and is located at the western end of the Braslau’s Furniture Store Building. It is faced with red brick and each store front includes an aluminum framed doorway and an asymmetrical, single sidelight. The westernmost storefront has been altered to include additional windows. The building retains its original aluminum canopy. An accordion aluminum frieze over the canopy references the distinctive exterior design of Braslau’s.

The building retains a high level of historic integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association. The only alterations to the building’s exterior are in the replacement of the door on the eastern end and the addition of windows to the storefront on the western end. Integrity of setting and feeling has been impacted by extensive alterations to surrounding buildings and the construction of nearby high-rise buildings.

The building is slated for demolition in April of 2013 by the Corpus Christi Regional Transit Authority.

Significance:

The building retains its integrity of design, materials, and workmanship although its integrity of setting and feeling has suffered due to a lack of contributing buildings, vacant lots and the intrusion of new construction. The building did contribute to the commercial development of Leopard Street during the last year of the period of significance and would contribute to a potential historic district.

Although the building is associated with the Braslau Company, it is not part of the furniture store complex on this block and was utilized only as rental property. There are no businesses of note that were associated with the property and it is not individually eligible for listing under Criterion A. The building retains its historic integrity, but is not a particularly outstanding or even representative example of its style or method of construction. Therefore, it is not eligible for listing under Criterion C.
Figure 80: 1019-1021 Leopard
View facing south
**Resource Number from 2012 Survey:**

2012 Survey Address: 1001 Leopard (also: 1000 Mestina)

Nueces County CAD Address: 1001 Leopard (also: 1000 Mestina)

**Property Type/Subtype:** Commercial

**Materials:** Aluminum and granite

**Architectural Style/Type:** Modern

**Date:** 1938; 1952; 1957, 1964

**NRHP Eligibility:** Contributing/Individually eligible under Criteria A and C

**History:**

Braslau's Furniture store has become a local shopping institution in Corpus Christi. As Russian Jewish immigrants, the Braslau Brothers sold goods door to door before opening their own dry goods store on Leopard Street in 1922 (918 Leopard). By 1926, they expanded their store by adding furniture. In 1938, they acquired the site at 1001 Leopard and constructed a two-story brick building in which they only sold furniture. They continued to operate the dry goods store for a year after they moved to the new location. Over the course of the next 15 years, the company would acquire the vast majority of the property on the block as they continued to expand their store.

The warehouse behind the building was constructed in 1952. In 1957, Braslau's expanded their facility into the adjacent store building. A new aluminum exterior and plate glass windows brought the disparate styles of the two exteriors together into one modernized design. In 1964, the store expanded again, incorporating the building of the Grande Theater (closed c.1961). This building continued in operation until 2006 when it closed.

In 1962, however, Braslau's opened their first suburban location across the street from Parkdale Plaza Shopping Center. They began planning for their new location in 1957, the year Parkdale opened, but encountered difficulties in re-zoning their property.

The building is slated for demolition in April of 2013 by the Corpus Christi Regional Transit Authority.

**Description/Historic Integrity:**

The building has an upper story of accordion-shaped aluminum. The large display windows of the storefronts are original, as are the granite exterior that surrounds them. The sidewalks retain the original terrazzo insets with the Braslau's logo. The building also retains its original signage, both attached to the building and painted on the western side elevation. The only alterations to the building have been the application of stucco on the side elevation over the original brickwork of the 1938 building. It is not known at what date this was applied.

**Significance:**

Braslau's Furniture Store is significant as the store of a significant Jewish immigrant merchant who made significant contributions to the development of Leopard Street over its entire period of development. It retains its integrity and is eligible for NRHP listing under Criterion A in the areas of ethnic history and commerce. It would also be contributing to a historic district under Criterion A. The building is also eligible under Criterion C as a good representative example of the modern style of store design from the 1950s.

**Bibliography**

"Braslau's Grows from 5,000 to 50,000 Feet Since '22," Corpus Christi Caller Times (May 6, 1957) special section.

“Frank B. Came From Russia in 1913,” Corpus Christi Caller Times (May 6, 1957) special section.
Figure 81: 1001 Leopard (also: 1000 Mestina)
View facing southeast

Figure 82: 1001 Leopard (also: 1000 Mestina)
View facing south
Figure 83: 1001 Leopard (also: 1000 Mestina)
View facing southeast
Figure 84: 1001 Leopard (also: 1000 Mestina)
Detail