



**CERTIFIED LOCAL
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE**

**LUBBOCK COUNTY
HISTORICAL COMMISSION**



**TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION**

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

Findings and Recommendations Regarding the National Register Nomination of the In Town Inn Motor Inn Complex

In March 2022 the Texas Historical Commission notified Lubbock County and the Certified Local Government Committee of a proposed nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the In Town Inn Motor Inn Complex at 1202 Main Street (northwest corner of Main and Avenue K). State statutes require Certified Local Governments and the County Commission to review and offer comments on any National Register nomination before it is considered for adoption by the Texas Historical Commission State Board of Review.

Pursuant to this statutory obligation, the Lubbock County Certified Local Government Committee met on April 12, 2022, and compiled the following comments and findings regarding this proposed nomination. The draft nomination reviewed by the CLG Committee is posted at the THC State Board of Review's website for public review and comment ahead of its planned meeting of May 21, 2022: <https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/Lubbock%2C%20In%20Town%20Inn%20NR%20SBR%20Draft.pdf>.

The nomination authors propose the In Town Inn is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A (associated with commerce significant to downtown Lubbock) and Criteria C (architecture that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a Motor Inn property type, in a downtown area) with a period of significance of 1964–1972.

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General Findings and Comments

Lubbock and Lubbock County are fortunate to have developers interested in adaptive reuse projects and applying various federal and state tax-credit programs for historic redevelopment. We are also fortunate that the 1964 In Town Inn (later the Civic Center Inn and Jim Kimmel Center) has survived over a half century with so much of its original integrity intact.

The CLG Committee concurs that the In Town Inn Motor Inn Complex is eligible for and worthy of listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and Criteria C as described in the nomination document. The nomination narrative is very well written, but we did find some technical errors and potential omissions.

The CLG Committee noted the following technical errors in the nomination document:

- a) On page 28, the narrative says that Mid-Continent Management Corporation operated the In Town Inn from its opening until the April 1976 sale. This appears to be an error. A 1971 article cites the sale of the hotel by Petrodynamics, Inc., of Amarillo to Pryor & Isaac (P&I) Investment Company of Pasadena, Tex.¹ At that time the original hotel manager Cody Briehn was replaced by Don Silver. There is no mention of First Lubbock Investment or Mid-Continent Management Corporation in regional newspapers after the 1964 opening.
- b) The 1971 sale points to a series of ownership changes over the years. A 1968 newspaper article says the hotel was owned by Petrodyne Industries, which was the prior name of Petrodynamics. (James F. Smith, the original project partner of First Lubbock Investment, was the chairman of Petrodyne/Petrodynamics in 1968.²) Lubbock County deed indexes indicate Pryor transferred the In Town Inn back to Petrodynamics in 1972. Subsequently Petrodynamics was acquired by Citrus County Land Bureau, which in turn was the seller in 1976 (confirmed by deed indexes). This information contradicts the statement on page eight of the narrative that First Lubbock Investment Company was the 1976 seller. These ownership changes are not necessarily germane to the National Register nomination other than accuracy of the historical record. More significant, likely, is the 1971 change of hotel managers and, presumably, subsequent turnover in the position through the 1970s.
- c) On page 17, the narrative refers to a recent contemporary name of the 1968 skyscraper on Broadway as the Wells Fargo Building. In the written context it should be referred to by its original name—the First National Bank–Pioneer Natural Gas Building (or First National-Pioneer Building). [In 2020 the current owners rebranded the building following the downsizing of the Wells Fargo branch inside, now referring to it as the McDougal Building or McDougal Plaza Downtown.]
- d) Maps 16 & 17 (pages 41 & 42) denote the downtown area using modern IH-27 as the eastern boundary of the downtown area. The boundary noted on Map 6 (page 31) is, in fact, more

¹ "In Town Inn Sold For \$1.5 Million," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, 2 July 1971. The article notes that Don Silver was named as the new hotel manager, replacing Coby Briehn.

² "Petrodyne Acquires Producing Oil Firm," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, 27 October 1968; "Firm Changes Name, Hikes Directorate," *Amarillo Globe-Times*, 19 November 1968.

accurate, as Avenue A/then US-87 was more effectively the eastern boundary of downtown. The construction of the interstate in the 1990s effectively eliminated nearly all signs of the business district that once ran between Avenue A and about Avenue D/modern IH-27.

The CLG Committee thought the impact of the 1970 Lubbock Tornado as it affected the In Town Inn was somewhat understated. Knowing its proximity to the highest damage areas of downtown, the CLG Committee was surprised at how well the structure fared in the storm. Nearly all buildings and residences north and west of the In Town Inn for at least five blocks were so substantially damaged as to require their demolition. One source not used in the nomination, *Lubbock Tornado: A Survey of Building Damage in an Urban Area* (1971), specifically noted that the In Town Inn's reinforced concrete structure had no structural damage, with the only issues (aside from the blown out glass noted in the nomination) being light glazing damage on the upper edge of the North Wing and the upper part of the south brick wall of the west parking area having been overturned.³ This is not insignificant considering the damage afflicted to other nearby buildings on the edge of the most substantial damage path, including the Great Plains Life Building (one block south), the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal Building (three blocks north-northwest), and the Lubbock Central Fire Station (five blocks north).

The narrative alludes to the City of Lubbock's subsequent interest after the tornado in developing the Memorial Civic Center (two blocks northwest) rather than commercial redevelopment of downtown Lubbock. These efforts helped revitalize northern downtown, but likely at some cost to existing hotels like the In Town Inn and the Hotel Lubbock (by then called the Pioneer Hotel), when meetings those hotels formerly hosted moved to newer options at the Civic Center, the Mahon Public Library, or other new businesses (like the new Hilton Hotel at 6th Street and Avenue Q, opened in late 1972 and co-owned by former In Town Inn manager Coby Briehn). The lack of regular business from meetings and a failure to properly maintain facilities contributed to a relatively quick decline of downtown. These direct impacts are almost as much a factor in changing the fortunes of downtown, including businesses such as the In Town Inn, as the opening of the South Plains Mall (July 1972) and suburban growth into Southwest Lubbock. While the narrative alludes to this in describing the 1972 development of the basement cocktail lounge and the 1976 sale, remodel, and renaming of the facility as the Civic Center Inn, we believe the effects of the Lubbock Tornado is somewhat understated.

The historical narrative does an excellent job of validating the In Town Inn under Criteria A and Criteria C at the local level of significance. However, the CLG Committee was disappointed to not see more included about the social and historical aspects of the property. Prime among these is the 1973 killing of Lubbock police detective Jack Stevens, as he attempted to stop a person of interest on the sidewalk as he left the In Town Inn Coffee Shop. Stevens was only the third Lubbock police officer killed in the line of duty and the first in almost twenty years.⁴ While this shootout has nothing materially to do with the hotel itself, it was a significant and impactful event to the community—at the time and even today.

³ N. F. Somes, R. D. Dikkers, and T. H. Boone, *Lubbock Tornado: A Survey of Building Damage in an Urban Area*, NBS [National Bureau of Standards] Technical Note 558 (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1971), 19.

⁴ Multiple articles, including the main headline "Detective Slain in Shootout," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, 10 February 1973.

The authors have overlooked an opportunity to give more attention and profile to the first manager, Coby Briehn, and the barber shop and coffee shop businesses. Briehn managed the In Town Inn for seven years and was a well-recognized and well-known member of the Lubbock hospitality community. The nomination alludes to this in a sentence listing his professional affiliations, but a paragraph describing Briehn's biography and career more in depth would bring more attention to the occupants and users of the In Town Inn, beyond its significance as an architectural example of motor inn hotels.

Similarly, the authors included little about the Coffee Shop⁵ and almost nothing about the Barber Shop. In preparing our comments, the CLG Committee was also disappointed to find almost nothing about the Coffee Shop specifically, other than classified ads and a mention of the first chef when it opened. It was a popular business in its day. It is also evident from newspaper research that, during the period of significance, the In Town Inn was a significant and frequent venue for local meetings and small political gatherings, activities that were catered by the Coffee Shop.⁶ A 1973 article about a possible expansion of the In Town Inn (not included in the application narrative) cites the importance of relocating the kitchen with a new restaurant to better serve the proposed banquet facilities.⁷ It is also evident from newspaper advertisements from 1964 to the mid-1970s that numerous third parties used the In Town Inn facilities to hawk their clothing or wares or to recruit employees for their businesses.

Unlike the Coffee Shop, there are numerous mentions of the In Town Inn Barber Shop, initially operated by longtime downtown barber Clifford Hardin and later by Manuel and Stella [Ochoa] Castro. Hardin was a leader in the local barber community, and Hardin, Stella Castro, and others were advertised by name and business for their certification to perform the Roffler Sculptur-Kut hairstyle popular at the time.⁸ While none of this social history contributes to the cited criteria of the nomination and the individuals named above are of only minor significance in local history, the CLG Committee felt the nomination misses an opportunity to highlight specific individuals and businesses associated with the In Town Inn during its period of significance.

⁵ The narrative consistently refers to this as the "coffeeshop," but the Winston Reeves photograph of the In Town Inn (Figure 2, page 44) clearly notes two lettered labels on the east and south faces as the separate words "COFFEE SHOP."

⁶ Coincidentally, this includes at least two meetings of the Lubbock County Historical Survey Committee in early 1967 (*Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, 6 January and 3 March 1967).

⁷ "Presidential Suites, New Restaurant Will Feature \$800,000 Addition to In Town Inn," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, 5 December 1971. Schmidt, Tisdell and Associates, presumably the next architectural firm of Howard Schmidt, had been employed to design the new structure that would have been built in the west-side parking lot. It is unclear why this facility was not constructed.

⁸ There is no specific article about Hardin at the In Town Inn aside from ads, although he appears in numerous articles about the local barber association, which he at one time was president of. The Castros took over the shop (purchased from Hardin?) after he retired in late 1971; "In Town Inn Barber Shop Under Ownership of Manuel and Stella Castro," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, 17 January 1972.

Recommendations to State Board of Review

The CLG Committee does not feel that the defects above make the nomination inadequate, nor does it necessarily disqualify it from moving forward. We recommend that the State Board of Review (SBR) advance the application in the nomination process. However, if the SBR chooses to seek corrections or inclusion of additional information, we hope the authors would consider our comments.