

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: H.E.B. Grocery (Waco Store # 1)
Other name/site number: NA
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 1726 Austin Avenue
City or town: Waco State: Texas County: McLennan
Not for publication: [ ] Vicinity: [ ]

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
[ ] national [ ] statewide [ ] local

Applicable National Register Criteria: [ ] A [ ] B [ ] C [ ] D

[Signature] Chief Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Signature of certifying official / Title Date 11/24/23
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting or other official Date
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
[ ] entered in the National Register
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register
[ ] other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

H.E.B. Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

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

**Category of Property**

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
2	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions:** Commerce/Trade: specialty store

**Current Functions:** Vacant/Not In Use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification:** Mid-Century Modern Nonresidential: one-part commercial block

**Principal Exterior Materials:** Concrete, Masonry, Glass, Other: Gravel and Tar

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheets 7-7 through 7-10)

H.E.B. Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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## 8. Statement of Significance

**Applicable National Register Criteria:** A, C

**Criteria Considerations:** NA

**Areas of Significance:** Commerce, Architecture (*both at local level of significance*)

**Period of Significance:** 1950-1962

**Significant Dates:** 1950

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

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

**Architect/Builder:** Phenix, Vance D.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets 8-11 through 8-20)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheets 9-21 through 9-22)

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

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. (*NPS #45748 PDIL Part 1 approved on 2/9/2022*)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

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

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property:** Less than one acre

### Coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 31.546456°N Longitude: -97.143004°W

**Verbal Boundary Description:** MANN SUB LOT B3 4 A5B5 6 7 BLOCK 3, Waco, McClennan, Texas (Property ID: 181299) as recorded in the McClennan Central Appraisal District. Data accessed January 15, 2025 (Map 3).

**Boundary Justification:** The boundary includes all property historically associated with the nominated resources.

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Peter Ellis with assistance from Texas Historical Commission staff  
Organization: Downtown Waco Grocery, LLC  
Street & number: 4300 W Waco Dr, Ste B2 #333  
City or Town: Waco State: TX Zip Code: 76710  
Email: peter@anthemwaco.com  
Telephone: 512-963-2128  
Date: 8/14/2024

## Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see continuation sheets MAP-23 through MAP-25)

**Additional items** (see continuation sheets FIGURE-26 through FIGURE-30)

**Photographs** (see continuation sheets PHOTO-31 through PHOTO-47)

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

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

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### Photo Log

Name of Property: HEB Store # 1  
City or Vicinity: Waco  
County: McLennan County  
State: TX  
Photographer: Colin Hulyk  
Date of Photographs: 12/19/2023 and 8/14/2024

*The photographs accurately depict the building as of November 2025.*

Photo 1 of 19

Exterior view of the southwest elevation

Photo 2 of 19

Exterior view of historic pylon signage

Photo 3 of 19

Exterior view of northwest elevation

Photo 4 of 19

Exterior view of northwest elevation with original awning and original showroom windows

Photo 5 of 19

Exterior view of 1971-addition garage bays

Photo 6 of 19

Exterior view of southeast elevation

Photo 7 of 19

Exterior view of southeast elevation and back alley

Photo 8 of 19

Exterior view of northeast elevation

Photo 9 of 19

Interior view of original grocery space looking northeast

Photo 10 of 19

Interior view of original grocery space looking east

Photo 11 of 19

Interior view of original grocery space looking north

Photo 12 of 19

Interior view of original grocery space looking west

Photo 13 of 19

Interior view of basement facing east

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Photo 14 of 19

Interior view of original HVAC equipment in basement facing east

Photo 15 of 19

Interior view of mezzanine level above original grocery space looking northeast

Photo 16 of 19

Interior view of garage addition looking southwest

Photo 17 of 19

Interior view of mezzanine addition looking southwest

Photo 18 of 19

Historic photo of modern ice cream fountain in grocery space looking north

Photo 19 of 19

Historic photo of modern cosmetics department of original grocery

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## Narrative Description

H.E.B. Grocery (Waco Store # 1) is a one-story mid-century supermarket of masonry and concrete construction with a flat roof, streamlined window wall storefront, and 60-foot steel pylon sign in Waco, McLennan County, Texas. The nominated boundary includes the original surface parking lot at the corner of 18<sup>th</sup> and an area of angled street parking stalls along Austin Avenue—each are counted as contributing structures because they are important features of the supermarket’s midcentury design.<sup>1</sup> A rectangular addition, built in 1971, extends from the store’s southwest elevation onto a portion of the surface parking lot. Houston architect Vance Phenix designed the nominated building as H.E.B.’s flagship grocery store in Waco. Completed in 1950, the building’s character-defining features are intact: exterior terrazzo surface along the primary elevation, original aluminum windows and doors, a tapered-edge awning, and 60-foot steel pylon advertising the supermarket. Although neon signage has been long removed, its green and red porcelain enamel surfaces are intact.

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## Setting and Site Description

H.E.B.<sup>2</sup> Grocery (Waco Store # 1) (hereafter H.E.B. Grocery) is on a corner lot at the intersection of 18<sup>th</sup> St and Austin Ave. one mile southwest of the McLennan County Courthouse and the city’s historic central business district. Its construction in 1950 corresponded with changing development patterns in the immediate blocks from residential to low-rise commercial. The 1905 Madison-Cooper House (NR 1982) on the northwest corner of 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Austin Ave. is a fine example of the large Victorian-era dwellings that once lined this street.<sup>3</sup> Mid-century institutional and commercial development is evidenced by the 1961 Waco-McLennan County Library<sup>4</sup> (1717 Austin Ave.) and one-story commercial blocks (built c.1950) at 1701 and 1700-1708 Austin Ave.

The nominated property is the legal boundary, a 0.88-acre lot, at the northwest corner of Austin Ave. and S. 18<sup>th</sup> Street. Blocks in this area are rotated nearly 90-degrees and the store’s front elevation faces northwest. The lot is bounded on the northeast side by an adjoining commercial property, on the southwest by 18<sup>th</sup> St, on the southeast by adjoining alleyway, and on the northwest by Austin Ave. 18<sup>th</sup> St is a heavily trafficked, one-way, three lane road that runs throughout much of Waco, but this portion of 18<sup>th</sup> St is an urban road lined with sidewalks on both sides. Austin Ave. runs through much of Waco’s central core and is a main thoroughfare of downtown Waco. Further south, Austin Ave. runs through an upscale residential area with historic homes, but this portion of Austin Ave is an urban area lined by sidewalks on both sides.

The supermarket faces Austin Ave. and occupies the northeastern half of the lot. A **surface parking lot** (Map 3) is at the nominated property’s southwest corner. Original to the design and a common feature of postwar supermarkets, shoppers accessed the lot from the driveways on Austin Ave. and 18<sup>th</sup> Street and parked in angled stalls, the style recommended by popular journals like *Progressive Grocer*.<sup>5</sup> The 1971 addition now covers nearly one-third of the rear (southeast) portion of this resource. Enough physical features remain intact, however, and the surface parking lot is considered a contributing structure. Also original to the property is a **section of angled parking** in front of Waco Store #1 on Austin Ave. This area of ten angled stalls is also considered a contributing structure. Ample sidewalks separate the parking areas from the grocery store. Terrazzo covers the exterior walkway underneath the store’s front canopy.

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<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, “Considering Parking Lots,” *Best Practices Review* 11 (April 2025): 3.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout its history, the grocery chain has formatted its name several ways: “H.E.B.,” “H-E-B,” and “HEB.” The authors will use “H.E.B.,” as the store used that version in Waco advertisements during the period this store operated.

<sup>3</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Madison-Cooper House, Waco, McLennan County, Texas, National Register #82004514. <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/82004514/82004514.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Designed by the firm Spicer, Bush, and Witt.

<sup>5</sup> See Section 8.

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## **H.E.B. Grocery (Waco Store #1)**

### **Exterior**

H.E.B. Grocery, built in 1950, is a one-story 120x155-foot rectangular building of concrete and steel construction with brick and glass curtain walls, a flat roof, and 60-foot-tall steel pylon over the store's entrance. A smaller, 51x102-foot rectangular addition to the building's southwest elevation was built in 1971, outside the period of significance. The property overall shows integrity of setting as it still has ample parking at the front and back of the building to support the original 1950 structure.

#### *Northwest (Primary) Elevation*

From the northwest elevation, the backside of the large, sixty-foot pylon sign is visible. The porcelain enamel of this back portion of the sign has been painted red. The upper portion of the northwest elevation is composed of stone blocks that extend across the façade of the building as shown in Photograph 3. The adjacent stone blocks are approximately three feet by four feet and have been painted white. Just below the stone façade, there is an original canopy that goes across the entire northwest elevation. This broad canopy overhang extends approximately 8 feet from the exterior of the building, providing covering for the sidewalk frontage. The border of the canopy is composed of porcelain enamel that is painted red, matching the back portion of the pylon sign. The underside of the canopy covering the sidewalk is covered in plaster that has been painted white. Below the canopy, large, showroom style, fixed windows extend the entire length of this elevation and provide ample visibility inside the interior space. At the far end of the building at the north corner, there is a smaller entrance that is original to the building. Also, along the sidewalk of this elevation, there is multi-colored, original terrazzo flooring that extends along the northwest elevation of the structure all the way to the main entrance of the building. There is integrated street parking available along this elevation of the building.

#### *Southwest Elevation*

The front of the large, sixty-foot-tall pylon sign is visible from the southwest elevation. This steel sign, which is encased by porcelain enamel, is divided into two main sections. The left section, which is asymmetric and has a portion missing, is painted red, and the right portion is painted light green. The porcelain enamel that encases the steel sign shows weathering in various sections and is also missing the lettering that once marketed the original grocery store. Below the pylon sign at this elevation sits the remainder of the canopy from the northwest elevation, which curves around the building. The canopy covers the main entrance, which has steel double doors with steel lining. The remainder of this elevation is divided into two main areas as shown by Photograph 1.

On the upper end of the left portion of this elevation, the façade is covered by the same stone blocks as the northwest elevation. About halfway down the height of this elevation, the stone block facade is interrupted by a series of original transom windows spanning the majority of this side of the building. The windows are currently covered with plywood that has been painted white and surrounded with a black border. Below the windows at this elevation the façade is composed of masonry that has been painted white. The right portion of this elevation is a smaller non-original addition to the building's southwest elevation that was built in 1971, outside the period of significance. This portion of the addition has a brick façade that has been painted white. It has a flat roof and six garage bays. There is integrated parking present at this elevation, which was a new feature characteristic of supermarkets constructed in this era. This notable parking lot was previously larger but a portion of it was infilled with the 1971 addition.

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### *Southeast Elevation*

The southeast elevation, as shown in Photograph 6, starts at the backside of the garage addition, which is composed of painted yellow CMU block. There is visible weathering in several areas on the CMU block. Further along the back alley, the remainder of the southeast elevation is the rear of the original building with a façade composed of two shades of brown masonry. The masonry is in fair condition. Approximately halfway down the height of this elevation, there are six sets of windows that are covered by safety bars.

### *Northeast Elevation*

As shown in Photograph 8, the northeast elevation at the backside of the building is composed of two shades of brown masonry. Approximately halfway down the height of the northeast elevation, there is a small canopy that extends over the back entrance of the building. The border of the canopy is composed of porcelain enamel that is painted red like the canopy at the northwest elevation. The underside of the canopy is covered by white plaster. There is a sculptural screen connecting the rear canopy to the ground. Newspaper articles from the 1950s identify this as a secondary shopper entrance that served the adjacent surface parking (which is not included in the boundary.) The artistic feature is a simple four by four square design that is covered in plaster and painted white. Next to the back entrance and sculptural screen, there is a masonry wall that features a corbelled design that angles out from the building. At the rear end of the building, there is additional integrated parking. The remainder of the northeast elevation is mostly obscured by an adjacent building.

## **Interior**

### *Original 1950 Structure*

After entering the main entrance of the building at Austin Ave and 18<sup>th</sup> St, the first-floor interior is a large, open space showroom. As shown in Photograph 10 this large open area has 8 structural columns clad in sheetrock that are visible and extend all the way to the approximately 13-foot-tall ceilings. From the front to the back of this main retail area, rows of four-foot flush-mount light fixtures line the space. These lights may have been modified over the years but are likely in their original location. Currently a brown carpet covers the floor in this main space and is protecting the original, showroom terrazzo flooring underneath. The ceiling in the main, showroom space is the original plaster hard lid, and still houses the original, 1950s state of the art PA and speaker system throughout. The walls in the main space are a painted drywall. Along both the wall facing 18<sup>th</sup> St and the far back wall of the front area, there is ledging about 8 feet off the ground that currently holds smaller pieces of furniture. It is uncertain if this ledge is original. In the back of the first floor there is a checkout area, and offices separated with added, non-original partition walls. Behind the checkout area there is a large, original safe.

There are 2 sets of stairs in the back of the offices that lead to the basement of the building. One set of stairs is closer to 17<sup>th</sup> St and the other set of stairs are in a loading area closer to 18<sup>th</sup> St. As shown in Photograph 13, the basement's walls, floors, and ceiling are all original and constructed of steel, reinforced concrete. Concrete, structural columns remain visible in the basement. As shown in Photograph 14, along one wall of the basement, a non-functioning, original and early Carrier refrigeration chiller is still present. Along this same wall of the basement in the back corner writing is present on the wall marking where various equipment and inventory were present for the original grocery that occupied the space. Examples of this small, lettering include "Produce Walk-In" and "Delicatessen Mkt". None of the original equipment is still present in this area. This area of the building was originally used primarily for baking, but even though the equipment is no longer present, the space remains in its same original layout.

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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As shown in Photograph 15, the larger, original portion of the building also has a mezzanine space above the rear portion of the property. This area has concrete floors, unpainted drywall, and HVAC mechanicals. Original window locations facing the back alley remain present. The space was originally used as a mechanical area and currently is used for that same purpose.

#### *1971 Addition*

The rectangular addition was built in 1971, outside of the property's period of significance (1950-1962). As shown in Photograph 16, the interior space of these garages still contains the concrete floors that were used for the previous tire service area. The concrete floors are painted red, but it is unknown if they were originally painted. The ceilings of the garages reach approximately 20 feet high and are made of painted sheet metal. The walls of the garage area are composed of painted concrete block. The remains of a pulley system are visible and hang from the ceiling of the garages. Also, non-functioning HVAC equipment is present and hangs from the ceiling of the garages. Drop-down 8-foot light fixtures hang from the ceiling and provide light to the space. A couple megaphone components hang in the space.

The rear half of the garage building has an entire mezzanine area that spans the length of the garages. As shown in Photograph 17, the walls of this area of the building are composed of CMU block and concrete flooring covers the space. There is a hoist present in this area of the building that was used to move equipment. Also, at the connection point of the garages to the original retail area, is a non-functioning, double-door elevator and shaft servicing the basement, first floor, and mezzanine. The concrete block walls and sheet metal ceilings in this area remain intact.

#### **Integrity**

H.E.B. Grocery retains integrity to convey its historical and architectural significance as a mid-century supermarket. The rectangular plan, window wall storefront, canopy and distinctive signage, parking lots and interior layout demonstrate the functional design components commonly found in the era's grocery stores. Of these features, most materials are intact. The large addition, set back in the parking lot, does not detract from the building's overall design and much of the surface lot remains to convey its contributing importance. Located at a busy intersection, the nominated building's setting retains its historic appearance with small-scale commercial buildings, the contemporaneous library, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses across the street. H.E.B. Grocery continues to retain its feeling and association of a mid-century supermarket .

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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### Statement of Significance

The 1950 H.E.B. Grocery (Waco Store #1) is a remarkably intact midcentury grocery store in Waco, McLennan County and may be the best preserved postwar modern H.E.B. in Texas. As the first Waco store opened by the successful San Antonio-based supermarket chain, the store was designed as a modern showcase and flagship for future stores in the area. Within ten years, H.E.B. operated nine grocery stores in the city, and in 1962, ceased retail operations out of the nominated store. Designed by Houston architect Vance Phenix, the building features a tall steel pylon sign above the main entrance. The neon signage has been long removed, but its green and red porcelain enamel surfaces are intact. Other character-defining features are the exterior terrazzo surface along the primary elevation, historic aluminum windows and doors, and a tapered-edge awning. The building is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Commerce and Criterion C in the area of Architecture, with a period of significance of 1950-1962.

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### City of Waco

The present-day City of Waco sits along the Brazos River with the Bosque River also traversing part of the city as well. Waco was originally inhabited by Native Americans at least as early as the 1500's. The three main tribes that lived in Waco were the Tonkawa's, Waco's, and the Tawakonis.<sup>6</sup> The Native Americans in this area cultivated primarily corn and vegetables and lived off fish, deer, and buffalo. Native Americans inhabited Waco until the 1850's when a United States resettlement policy caused them to move primarily to Oklahoma.<sup>7</sup>

The first non-native presence occurred when Spanish, French, and Mexicans explored Texas as early as 1541.<sup>8</sup> But it wasn't until much later in the 1820's that Mexico separated itself from other nations and became the main colonizing nation in Texas.<sup>9</sup> In 1836 Texas declared itself independent from Mexican rule and Euro-American settlement increased.<sup>10</sup> Texas became a state in 1845, and not long after, in 1849 the Village of Waco was founded.<sup>11</sup> Growth began along the Brazos River rapidly in the 1850's. Waco incorporated as the City of Waco in 1871.<sup>12</sup> Cotton production became a driving force of Waco's economy and helped birth the area that is now called downtown.<sup>13</sup> Further contributing to Waco's growth, Baylor University relocated to Waco in 1886.<sup>14</sup> Waco's population steadily began to grow and new homes and infrastructure were created to support the growth. The city continued to develop other industries at a rapid rate and became a distribution center in addition to a cotton producer. By the early 1900's around 10 banks existed, there were 163 factories, and several insurance companies.<sup>15</sup> These industries and growth all contributed to an expanding downtown area.

The City of Waco had a population of 20,000 by 1900 but it grew rapidly to 54,000 by 1930.<sup>16</sup> Waco had a significant role in World War I as Waco was selected as a training site for over 45,000 US troops spread over approximately 10,000 acres of land, showing its size and potential within the nation at large.<sup>17</sup> Like many areas around the country Waco struggled during the Great Depression and growth slowed. As prices for cotton dropped during this time period

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<sup>6</sup> Conger, Roger N, *Waco: A Basic History* (Waco: Waco, Texas, 1984): 1.

<sup>7</sup> Conger, Roger N, *Waco: A Basic History* (Waco: Waco, Texas, 1984): 3.

<sup>8</sup> Conger, Roger N, *Waco: A Basic History* (Waco: Waco, Texas, 1984): 3.

<sup>9</sup> Kelley, ed., *Handbook of Waco and McLennan County, Texas* (Waco: Waco, Texas, 1972), 23.

<sup>10</sup> Wallace, *Waco: Texas Crossroads* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor, 1983), 15.

<sup>11</sup> Wallace, *Waco: Texas Crossroads* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor, 1983), 18

<sup>12</sup> Conger, *Waco: A Basic History* (Waco: Waco, Texas, 1984), 24

<sup>13</sup> Handbook of Texas Online, Waco, TX, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/waco-tx>, accessed 7/24/24

<sup>14</sup> Kelley, ed., *Handbook of Waco and McLennan County, Texas* (Waco: Waco, Texas, 1972): 122

<sup>15</sup> Kelley, ed., *Handbook of Waco and McLennan County, Texas* (Waco: Waco, Texas, 1972): 148; 181

<sup>16</sup> Poage, W.R., *McLennan County—Before 1980*. Waco: Texian Press, 1981, 214

<sup>17</sup> Wallace, Patricia Ward, *Waco: Texas Crossroads* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor, 1983), 51-53

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Waco's economy struggled. Although World War II presented many challenges across the country, it did in part help invigorate the Waco economy. Waco grew greatly in industrialization in the war years. Many industries and businesses in Waco converted their operations to help manufacture war equipment and materials.<sup>18</sup> In 1940 just before the war the population was approximately 55,000 and it increased to 84,000 by 1952 fueled primarily by factory workers and military personnel.<sup>19</sup> Construction and development of both residential homes and commercial buildings increased after the war, including the construction of this post-war grocery in 1950.

In 1950, when H.E.B. opened its first Waco location, there were three main competitors in the area: Piggly Wiggly, A&P Supermarkets, and Safeway. Piggly Wiggly opened its first Waco location in 1918 and had five locations by the time H.E.B. opened its store on 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Austin Avenue.<sup>20</sup> Piggly Wiggly was the greatest threat to H.E.B. at the time it entered the Waco market. Safeway opened its first Waco location in 1930 and also had multiple Waco locations by 1950.<sup>21</sup> Lastly A&P entered the Waco market in 1941 and operated one location still in 1950.<sup>22</sup>

H.E.B. aggressively expanded into the Waco market, seeing an opportunity to serve the community with larger, modern supermarkets. H.E.B. had opened 6 stores by 1962, most of which were much larger than its competitors' locations that were mostly 10,000 square feet or less. H.E.B.'s new locations were at least 15,000 square feet and offered modern amenities like air conditioning and several checkout stands. In 1961, H.E.B. even purchased a property owned by Kroger, who briefly considered entering the Waco market.<sup>23</sup> Of these six original H.E.B. locations only one other location was purchased from another business, a small local grocer called Happy Snappy in 1951.

A&P Supermarkets was operating in the Waco area until the 1970's when 99 stores were closed in Central Texas, including all Waco locations.<sup>24</sup> Safeway was slowly growing in Waco in the 1960s and 1970s, opening a few new stores in this time period. Safeway even tried opening a larger 5<sup>th</sup> location of around 49,000 square feet in the early 1980s. However, by 1985 Safeway as a company was struggling and closed one Waco location.<sup>25</sup> In 1987 Safeway announced that it was selling most of its Dallas market to five larger national grocery chains, including H.E.B..<sup>26</sup> The local Waco stores weren't purchased by H.E.B., but another investment group, and soon thereafter Safeway closed all its Waco stores in 1988. Piggly Wiggly had maintained its market presence and continued to operate its stores through the 1960s and 1970s, albeit smaller sized locations than H.E.B. larger supermarkets. In the 1980's Piggly Wiggly started to struggle nationally. In 1985 Piggly Wiggly closed one of its Waco locations and the other four locations were struggling financially and had changed ownership groups multiple times.<sup>27</sup> In the next few years all locations closed. H.E.B. aggressive Waco expansion of several stores in a short period of time, larger square footage store model, and overall financial health as a company allowed it to outlast competition from other grocery chains.

A devastating tornado hit downtown Waco in 1953, destroying many commercial buildings and taking 114 lives, an historic event for the U.S. Growth of the Waco economy halted after this tragedy.<sup>28</sup> Several efforts were made to revitalize the Waco economy, including Urban Renewal in the late 1950's and early 1960's.<sup>29</sup> Ultimately, the nominated H.E.B's storefront operations were closed as the company relied on its other nine supermarkets. Attempts were made in the 1970's and 1980's for growth in Waco but with little success. A refocus on tourism in the 1990's saw

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<sup>18</sup> Handbook of Texas Online, Waco, TX, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/waco-tx>, accessed 7/24/24

<sup>19</sup> Poage, W.R., *McLennan County—Before 1980*. Waco: Texian Press, 1981, 214

<sup>20</sup> "Brookview Hills Residents Close to Grocery Now." *Waco Tribune Herald*. April 11, 1948

<sup>21</sup> "Formal Opening Friday Evening 7 to 9:30 PM." *The Waco Times-Herald*. May 3, 1935

<sup>22</sup> "An Important Announcement for the People of Waco." *The Waco Times-Herald*. April 2, 1941

<sup>23</sup> "HEB Opening at New Site on Thursday." *The Waco Times-Herald*. March 7, 1962

<sup>24</sup> "A&P to Close 99 Dallas Area Stores." *Waco Tribune-Herald*. March 21, 1975

<sup>25</sup> "Waco Safeways to Operate as Usual." *Waco Tribune Herald*. April 5, 1987

<sup>26</sup> "Economic Report Card." *Waco Tribune Herald*. June 19, 1988

<sup>27</sup> "Piggly Wiggly on Valley Mills Will Close Soon." *Tribune Herald*. December 9, 1987

<sup>28</sup> Conger, *Waco: A Basic History* (Waco: Waco, Texas, 1984), 30-31

<sup>29</sup> Wallace, Patricia Ward, *Waco: Texas Crossroads* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor, 1983), 73

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some modest growth with the creation of a zoo within the second largest municipal park in the nation, Dr. Pepper Museum, and Texas Sports Hall of Fame. Recently in the last 10-15 years, Waco has steadily begun growing again, and the area the subject property sits is now considered downtown. Although the nominated building was outside the historic central business district, it was still greatly affected by the devastation of the tornado in 1953. Restoration, faith, and family have all been integral components drawing many to even boost tourism of Waco, raising visitor numbers above other classic Texas landmarks like the Alamo, and ushering in a strong future for new families from across the country.

### **The Development of Supermarkets**

Throughout American history and up until the early 1900's, groceries were sold primarily by small businesses that focused on one type of item. Due to limitations in transportation and ability to keep goods cold, consumers needed to go to several stores to meet all their shopping needs. In the early 1900's and especially in the 1920's, some major innovations revolutionized grocery shopping in America and changed this market as a whole. Probably the most impactful invention was electric refrigeration. Grocers selling perishable goods could now store more product efficiently as electric refrigerators eliminated the need to use more primitive means such as large blocks of ice to keep goods cold. Also, consumers who could afford refrigerators in the 1920's could buy much more goods at one time since they could store purchased goods for more than one day's use.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, the arrival and use of cellophane impacted the sale of groceries in America. The shelf life of meat products and baked goods were greatly increased through cellophane.<sup>31</sup> Lastly, the increased opportunity for Americans to own automobiles allowed consumers to more easily transport groceries to their homes.<sup>32</sup>

The first grocery store that attempted to provide everything a consumer would need under one roof was Piggly Wiggly. This uniquely named store was founded by Clarence Saunders in 1916 in Memphis, Tennessee. Clarence was certainly ahead of his time as he endeavored to run this business model slightly before some of the previously mentioned innovations had become more widespread. Saunders' many innovative business practices greatly contributed to the growth of supermarkets across America.<sup>33</sup> Some of the innovative practices that Saunders pioneered were arranging the store in such a way that customers could browse the store and then come back to a single checkout area. Also, Saunders made sure every product in the store had a price tag, shopping baskets were provided to customers to allow for more products to be purchased, and uniformed attendants provided service to customers throughout the store. Piggly Wiggly rapidly grew throughout the 1920's. Aided by technological innovations and taking cues from Piggly Wiggly's business model, other more full-service grocery stores began to rapidly expand across America in the 1930's and 1940's.

The name "supermarket" was first used in the 1930's and it became more common in the years to follow.<sup>34</sup> Some of the key characteristics of early supermarkets were the technology that they utilized, self-service that was possible because of these technological advances, and the design of the stores that supported these changes. As mentioned earlier, supermarkets were able to offer all products a consumer needed under one roof through refrigeration of perishable items. Lighting on shelving displays made it easy for the consumer to pick out their groceries, and Clarence Saunders patented this new technology.<sup>35</sup> Clearly price-tagging items and making sure tags did not fall off goods also

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<sup>30</sup> Levinson, Marc, *The Great A & P and the Struggle for Small Business in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 125

<sup>31</sup> Levinson, Marc, *The Great A & P and the Struggle for Small Business in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 125

<sup>32</sup> Levinson, *The Great A&P*, 125

<sup>33</sup> Liebs, Chester H, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little Brown & Co, 1985) 119

<sup>34</sup> How We Wound Up With Supermarkets: A History of the Grocery Store, USA Today, <https://10best.usatoday.com/interests/food-culture/10-points-grocery-store-history-supermarkets-changed-how-we-shop/>, accessed 8/13/2024

<sup>35</sup> Tolbert, Lisa. *Beyond Piggly Wiggly*, The University of Georgia Press, 2023. p.66.

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improved the consumer experience. This improved price tagging system was also patented by Saunders.<sup>36</sup> Also, a key feature of supermarkets as they continued to evolve was that consumers could serve themselves and didn't need attendants to grab all the groceries for them. This was made possible by all of the technological advances mentioned. Lastly, supermarket floor spaces were large rectangular areas with multiple checkout stands to help the flow of traffic through the store.<sup>37</sup>

Supermarkets continued to expand in the 1940's and postwar groceries after World War II began constructing new locations rather than attempting to renovate or expand existing locations. Supermarkets continued to expand in the 1960's and 1970's. One notable change that occurred starting in the 1950's and 1960's was that more grocery stores were constructed outside of downtown areas and expanded into more suburban areas.

### H.E.B. Food Stores (1905-2025)

The H.E.B. grocery store chain was started by Florence Butt in 1905 in Kerrville, Kerr County, Texas. Following her husband's death, and with only \$60 in starting capital, she established a grocery store to support herself and her three young boys.<sup>38</sup> When the store first opened, she named it CC Butt Grocery Store. Her youngest son Howard Butt even began helping with grocery deliveries at the age of 10 with a small red wagon.<sup>39</sup> Howard assisted in managing the Kerrville store until he left for service in the Navy during World War I. After Howard came back from serving, he took over the business and began an expansion program for the business and opened up 2 new stores in the small towns of Center Point and Junction. Shortly thereafter he opened two new successful locations in Del Rio and Laredo.<sup>40</sup> A major mile marker for the business occurred in 1938 when it purchased 33 existing grocery stores in the Austin area.<sup>41</sup> In 1942 the first store was opened in San Antonio, and also significant for the business, this was the first location that was named H.E.B. for the public.<sup>42</sup>

In the 1950's H.E.B. first began adopting the supermarket model for its grocery stores and began including the butcher shop, fish market, bakery and pharmacy under one roof. In some instances, H.E.B. renovated and enlarged existing locations, and in other instances they constructed new, larger standalone buildings with parking lots and large showroom areas. The first of these new "supermarkets" were constructed in San Antonio, and very soon thereafter as H.E.B. expanded to Waco in 1950. During this time H.E.B. also adopted a new model where they would build a flagship location in cities that would service other locations throughout the city. H.E.B. first built a flagship style location in San Antonio that eventually helped provide baked goods to ten other locations. Soon thereafter, when HEB expanded to the Waco area, the first location was built as a flagship location with a large bakery in its basement that was built with the intention of serving all future H.E.B. locations in the Waco area. H.E.B. was notably the first supermarket to make and sell its own branded goods in Texas.<sup>43</sup> Kroger was the first supermarket chain to do this nationally,<sup>44</sup> but this grocery chain did not expand to Texas until the 1950's.<sup>45</sup>

As H.E.B. continued to grow and adjust its operations, in 1964 it built a large, new distribution center to centralize warehouses for all its different products.<sup>46</sup> In 1971, Howard's son Charles became president of H.E.B. and later

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<sup>36</sup> Tolbert, Lisa. *Beyond Piggly Wiggly*, The University of Georgia Press, 2023. p. 65.

<sup>37</sup> Tolbert, Lisa. *Beyond Piggly Wiggly*, The University of Georgia Press, 2023. p. 60.

<sup>38</sup> Handbook of Texas, H-E-B, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/h-e-b>, accessed 7/24/2024

<sup>39</sup> "Hard Work Key to His Success", Waco *The Waco News Tribune* April 18, 1950

<sup>40</sup> "Hard Work Key to His Success", Waco *The Waco News Tribune* April 18, 1950

<sup>41</sup> Our Story, <https://newsroom.heb.com/dfw/>, accessed July 24, 2024

<sup>42</sup> Our Story, <https://newsroom.heb.com/dfw/>, accessed July 24, 2024

<sup>43</sup> H-E-B Through the Years. <https://www.sanantoniomag.com/h-e-b-through-the-years/>. Accessed 5/21/2025

<sup>44</sup> Our History. <https://www.thekrogerco.com/about/history/>. Accessed 5/21/2025

<sup>45</sup> History of Kroger. <https://historydraft.com/story/kroger/timeline/837>. Accessed 5/21/2025

<sup>46</sup> Our Story, <https://newsroom.heb.com/dfw/>, accessed 7/24/2024

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Chairman and CEO. Up until the 1970's H.E.B. would lease space within its properties to third party pharmacies, but in 1978 it opened its first H.E.B. pharmacy. In 1989, H.E.B. moved its headquarters to San Antonio. In 1994, H.E.B. opened its first Central Market location which offers specialty goods and has an emphasis on healthy and fresh items.<sup>47</sup> Under Charles Butt's leadership the company grew from annual sales of \$250-million in 1971 to \$23-billion in 2015.<sup>48</sup> Since this time H.E.B. has continued to grow, expanding to the Houston area in 2001, acquiring Favor Delivery in 2018, and expanding to Dallas in 2021.<sup>49</sup>

## Property History

H.E.B. purchased the tract of land located at 1726 Austin Ave in the late 1940s to build its first supermarket in Waco. After an extensive design and construction process, "Waco Store #1" held its grand opening on April 18, 1950. Company executives attended the store's grand opening, including President and H.E.B. namesake Howard E. Butt, Vice President Howard E. Butt, Jr, and Treasurer Milton Clapp. Also, several district supervisors from San Antonio, Austin, and Corpus Christi worked at the store for its first week of operation to assist in serving the large crowds that came to buy groceries. This store contained an impressive 18,800 sf of floor space fully stocked with a "dazzling array of merchandise",<sup>50</sup> 8 checkout stands in the front of the store and four more checkout stands at the rear. This location boasted Waco's first self-service drug store fully stocked with not only medicines but a soda fountain, cosmetics, and candy.

This location operated as a supermarket from 1950 until 1962, when the company shifted its use to a production facility and gold stamp redemption center. Research did not identify a specific reason for this change, though it is possible that suburbanization, accelerated by the 1952 tornado that devastated downtown Waco, reduced the customer base at the nominated store. Records show that in the 1950s and 1960s, H.E.B. opened new Waco stores farther from the city center, including locations at 901 Elm St., 20th and Fort, Bosque Boulevard, Westview Village Center, and the Southgate Shopping Center.

In 1962, H.E.B. launched its Texas Gold Savings Stamp loyalty program, which operated out of the nominated building along with a production area that supplied H.E.B.-branded goods to the company's retail stores. Frequent shoppers earned stamps with each purchase and could redeem them for special merchandise at redemption centers such as this location.<sup>51</sup>

In 1969, H.E.B. sold the property to Hicks Rubber Company. Working with Bush & Dudley Architects, Hicks constructed a 12,500-square-foot addition of garages and work bays to support its tire and automotive service operations. After a two-year construction period, the company held its grand opening on October 25, 1971. The building at 1726 Austin Avenue functioned as a showroom, office space, and repair shop, marking a period of significant expansion and growth for Hicks Rubber Company. Hicks operated at this location from 1971 until 2001. In the early 2000s, as Waco's economy struggled, the building remained vacant for several years. In 2005, Sedberry Furniture purchased the property and operated multiple furniture businesses there until 2022, when it was acquired by the current ownership group.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Our Story, <https://newsroom.heb.com/dfw/>, accessed 7/24/2024

<sup>48</sup> H-E-B To Grant Stock to 55,000 Employees, <https://www.12newsnow.com/article/news/h-e-b-to-grant-stock-to-55000-employees/502-269275222>, accessed 7/24/2024

<sup>49</sup> Our Story, <https://newsroom.heb.com/dfw/>, accessed 7/24/2024

<sup>50</sup> "Public Is Invited to H.E.B.'s 'Largest and Finest' Store." *The Waco News-Tribune*. April 18, 1950

<sup>51</sup> Texas Gold Stamps Ad, *The Waco News Tribune*, June 30, 1960

<sup>52</sup> "Hicks Rubber Firm to Open New Waco Store on Monday", *Waco Tribune Herald*, Oct 24, 1971

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## Pioneering Supermarket for Expanding Grocery

The term “supermarket” was not commonly used in the United States until the 1930s. Supermarkets referred to larger grocery stores that provided all of a consumer’s needs under one roof. Previously a consumer would need to purchase meat, dairy, fruit and vegetables, and other home products from smaller, specialty stores.

Prior to the supermarket model, H.E.B. grocery stores were much smaller. In Austin one location was originally only 6,000 sf and did not expand until 1948 to a total of 10,000 sf. This location in Austin had much smaller signage that sat on top of an awning that stood over the entrance unlike the large 60-foot sign on the Waco 1950 store. This older H.E.B. location sat in a two-part commercial building and apparently only occupied the ground floor, differing from the stand-alone supermarkets that would be constructed in later years across Texas. This location only had about 20 linear feet of frontage at its front entrance and had smaller windows in the front unlike the large showroom-style windows of the 1950 Waco location.<sup>53</sup>

The subject property, which H.E.B. began construction in 1949 and was completed in 1950, was one of H.E.B.’s and the state’s first ever supermarket locations. As a result of this momentous growth point, H.E.B. went to great lengths to ensure this location was state of the art, and showcased all of the company’s best technology, resources, and business practices. Some of these technologies included a new PA system that communicated sales and other important announcements with H.E.B. customers. Also, the new Carrier air conditioning system provided heating and cooling to the store’s space, another new offering for this time period. Also, the checkout stands at the front and rear of the store provided customers convenience and a seamless shopping experience. The large bakery in the basement was unique for its time and drew upon the resources of this larger, growing grocery chain. An ice cream fountain and extensive cosmetics department showed some of the modern conveniences, as shown in Photographs 18 and 19 respectively.

H.E.B. President and cofounder Howard E. Butt said of this store at the grand opening ceremony, “There is not a store in the State of Texas superior to this one, and there are no more than one or two that can be compared with it in size, beauty, efficiency, and completeness.”<sup>54</sup> It should be noted that this statement was made when H.E.B. had 52 other locations throughout Texas. All of H.E.B.’s principal executives attended the store’s grand opening, including President Howard E. Butt, Vice President Howard E. Butt, Jr, and Treasurer Milton Clapp. Also, several district supervisors from San Antonio, Austin, and Corpus Christi worked at the store for its first week of operation to assist in serving the large crowds that came to buy groceries. At the time this was H.E.B.’s 53<sup>rd</sup> location and the newspaper article highlighting the grand opening noted that this was H.E.B.’s “largest and finest” store.<sup>55</sup>

Prominently marking the exterior of the store was a 60-foot steel, neon sign displaying H.E.B.’s logo at the top and bottom of the sign, making it highly visible across this part of the city. This store contained an impressive 18,800 sf of floor space fully stocked with a “dazzling array of merchandise,” eight checkout stands in the front of the store, and four more checkout stands at the rear consistent with the new supermarket layout.<sup>56</sup> The entire store was air-conditioned year-round, which was not common for commercial buildings in the early 1950’s and one of the first H.E.B. buildings that offered this state-of-the-art amenity.

H.E.B. opened its first flagship location in San Antonio, which had a bakery large enough to serve ten other locations in the greater San Antonio area. Shortly thereafter H.E.B. constructed this store in Waco with a large 7,680 sf basement that included a bakery, with the intention of similarly serving all future H.E.B. stores in the Waco area. This flagship model was a new business practice for H.E.B. and was used in Waco because of its success in San Antonio.

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<sup>53</sup> “HEB Opens Program of Enlargement.” *Austin American-Statesman*. May 21, 1948.

<sup>54</sup> “Public Is Invited to H.E.B.’s ‘Largest and Finest’ Store.” *The Waco News-Tribune*. April 18, 1950

<sup>55</sup> “Public Is Invited to H.E.B.’s ‘Largest and Finest’ Store.” *The Waco News-Tribune*. April 18, 1950

<sup>56</sup> “Public Is Invited to H.E.B.’s ‘Largest and Finest’ Store.” *The Waco News-Tribune*. April 18, 1950

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Bakery Manager Jess Runnels came in with over 20 years of experience and previously had run an establishment in Los Angeles catering to patrons from Hollywood and Beverly Hills, California to run this bakery. This flagship location also boasted Waco's first self-service drug store fully stocked with not only medicines but a soda fountain, cosmetics, and candy. H.E.B. recruited and hired Drug Store Manager I.F. Schiller, who had previously assisted in opening the first self-service drug store in the entire country in Spokane, Washington 22 years earlier.<sup>57</sup>

H.E.B.'s expansion to Waco and rapid growth over the subsequent decade had a significant impact on the city. This store alone employed over 100 people with competitively paying wages and professional, career-oriented jobs. By 1962 H.E.B. had nine locations, with each location providing new jobs to local Wacoans and more convenient grocery services for the growing population as well.<sup>58</sup> In contrast while Piggly Wiggly had six locations by 1950, it did not open any new locations in Waco during this time period and by the 1980s still only had six locations.<sup>59</sup> Safeway had two locations by 1950, and only opened up two new stores over the next 30 years.<sup>60</sup> H.E.B.'s rapid expansion impacted Waco by providing new jobs and affordable groceries. H.E.B. prided itself on providing a variety of convenient products at a reasonable price for the common man in Waco and as a result benefitted the entire community. Waco was a rapidly growing area, as its population had just increased by over approximately 50% in just the last 10 years.

### Criterion C: Architecture

#### *Post-War Supermarket Design*

Trade journals, notably *Progressive Grocer*, helped food merchants attract customers by showcasing the industry's latest design trends in store planning and modernization. In 1956, *Progressive* editors published a book on store planning and modernization called, *Modern Super Markets & Superettes* in which they urged food retailers to be scrupulous planners as grocery merchandising was constantly innovating. "Customer appeal," they said, should be designed "into a new building architecturally."<sup>61</sup> Eschewing novelty, postwar store planning demanded a "careful and comprehensive layout of the entire property...as well as the store building itself."<sup>62</sup>

An economically effective and attractive store started with the site. Considerations included a level lot (to prevent runaway grocery carts) on a site advantaged for the maximum flow of auto and pedestrian traffic and a 3-to-1 ratio of parking-to-store size.<sup>63</sup> *Progressive Grocer's* editors further stressed ease of parking over the quantity of stalls. They cautioned against "parking of cars like chocolates in a box" and promoted angled parking to prevent accidental damage between cars.<sup>64</sup>

Postwar modern grocery store storefronts were designed to be economical and streamlined while maximizing customer appeal. Facades featured clean, mostly undecorated surfaces accented by regional materials, such as the tile floors under the nominated store's canopies. Large, eye-catching signs provided individuality and attracted attention without costly ornamentation. Expansive window walls, paired with thoughtful interior lighting, created comfortable, inviting spaces by regulating temperature and enhancing visual appeal. These display windows also showcased orderly merchandise, using the products themselves as a dynamic and practical form of decoration to draw in passersby.

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<sup>57</sup> "Public Is Invited to H.E.B.'s 'Largest and Finest' Store." *The Waco News-Tribune*. April 18, 1950

<sup>58</sup> "HEB Opening at New Site on Thursday." *The Waco Times-Herald*. March 7, 1962

<sup>59</sup> "Piggly Wiggly on Valley Mills Will Close Soon." *Tribune-Herald*. December 9, 1987

<sup>60</sup> "Waco Safeways to Operate as Usual." *Tribune-Herald*. April 5, 1987.

<sup>61</sup> George E. Kline, et al., *Modern Super Markets & Superettes* (Butterwick Company, Inc.: New York, NY, 1956): i. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951001578514t&seq=20&q1=texas>

<sup>62</sup> Kline, i.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

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*Progressive Grocer* offered readers a variety of interior supermarket layouts, all guided by key objectives:

1. Get customers to circulate through the entire store;
2. Sell a high percentage of high-margin merchandise;
3. Establish a buying routine consistent with the housewife's habits and meal planning;
4. Make the shopping experience pleasant and satisfying, encouraging repeat visits.<sup>65</sup>

To achieve these goals, stores prioritized flexible merchandising and maximizing floor space. Grid-based layouts allowed for fast, efficient movement while helping to avoid shopping fatigue caused by harsh colors, congested aisles, or poor lighting and ventilation. Clerestory windows visually break up large spaces, making interiors feel more comfortable. Rectangular sales areas were common, with corner entrances and checkouts parallel to the storefront. Perishable departments were placed along the store perimeter, with high-demand sections like meat counters located farthest from the entrance to guide customers past other products first.<sup>66</sup>

*Waco Store #1*<sup>67</sup>

This property is an excellent example of an intact postwar modern grocery, retaining defining exterior features of the era. Structural glass, porcelain-enameled metal, and neon signage towers were hallmarks of mid-century supermarkets, which abandoned traditional display windows in favor of open storefronts with large expanses of structural glass. These broad retail windows allowed customers and passersby to see directly into the store, effectively turning supermarkets into "enclosed systems for automatic selling." This property clearly reflects that concept, as its large glass plates still allow oncoming traffic to view the interior.

Other standard features of mid-century groceries included long canopies along entrances and sidewalks, and this property retains its original porcelain-enameled canopy over the main entrance, extending along the Austin Avenue frontage. Stores of this period often incorporated modest design elements to distinguish themselves from competitors; the subject property preserves such a feature at the rear entrance, where customers once parked and entered the store. As grocery chains increased their investment in marketing and branding, large and dramatic signs became common. The property's 60-foot porcelain enameled pylon sign, installed by H.E.B. to establish its brand presence in Waco, reflects this widespread trend. Integrated parking, another postwar development as automobile ownership expanded, is also present at this property with surface parking lots and angled street stalls.

Vance D. Phenix was the architect responsible for designing the subject property. Phenix received his BS in Architecture from the University of Texas in 1922. For over ten years he served as the chief draftsman for John Staub in the earlier part of his career. Staub, a graduate of MIT, was known for designing upscale homes in the Houston area and helped found the South Texas chapter of the American Institute of Architects.<sup>68</sup> Phenix later went on to design the personal residence of H.E. Butt in Corpus Christi. After successfully designing the subject property, he later went on to design an alumni center for the University of Texas in 1953.<sup>69</sup>

Also, the interior of postwar supermarkets showed certain characteristics, and this property's size and design layout reflects the progression of these characteristics over time. During this period, supermarkets began installing heating and cooling systems for the comfort of their customers, and the nominated store was an early local example of providing central heating and cooling for its guests. In fact, the original Carrier system still sits in its original location

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<sup>65</sup> Kline, 21-25.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Tolbert, Lisa. *Beyond Piggly Wiggly*. The University of Georgia Press, 2023. p. 159.

<sup>68</sup> John Fanz Staub: Renowned Architect of Houston. <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/staub-john-fanz>. Accessed June 12, 2025.

<sup>69</sup> 1956 AIA Directory

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in the basement of the building. The size of the subject property's retail grocery space also reflects the progression of grocery store design. In the 1920s, Piggly Wiggly pioneered and experimented with unique store layouts and tested a wide range of store sizes, with some locations being smaller than 5,000 square feet and others exceeding 10,000 square feet. Founder Clarence Saunders embraced a "process of experimentation" and continually sought "store improvement ideas."<sup>70</sup> Piggly Wiggly also simplified store operations so that customers could serve themselves and help improve traffic flow through the store. Other grocery stores constructed in later years, such as Big Bear, experimented with much larger store layouts (some up to 50,000 square feet in "one huge store") and expanded their self-service areas beyond the earlier Piggly Wiggly models.<sup>71</sup> The subject property's size and layout reflect this broader progression. Its 20,000 square feet place it larger than many of the earlier Piggly Wiggly stores but smaller than the increasingly "super-sized" stores built by chains like Big Bear starting in the 1930s.

The subject property's use of checkout stands also points to its design significance. During this era, grocery stores began installing numerous checkout stands and placing them in multiple areas of the store. The creation of a "centralized checkout station" became essential to improving the flow of customers through the store, and this property included centralized checkout areas at both of its entrances.<sup>72</sup> A period article describing the design and layout of the subject property highlighted that the eight checkout stands at the front of the store and the four checkout stands at the rear allowed shoppers to experience the "fastest yet" checkout experience available at the time.<sup>73</sup>

Further pointing to this property's design significance and embodiment of postwar grocery trends, several grocery stores constructed in Waco after the subject property had modern characteristics and features similar to this building. In 1952, Safeway opened at 11th and Speight (demolished) with modern amenities of the time, including multiple checkout stands, air conditioning, and fluorescent lighting.<sup>74</sup> In 1957, another H.E.B. in Waco was constructed at a similar size of 20,000 square feet at Westview View Village Shopping Center<sup>75</sup> It also had several checkout stands and a large meat market stand, features that echoed the subject property. Later, in 1965, H.E.B. constructed another store that was a similar size of 15,000 square feet.<sup>76</sup> Though built fifteen years later and naturally incorporating more advanced modern features, this newer H.E.B. store still showed influence of the subject property, including expanded air conditioning to the sidewalks and updated self-service features in the checkout areas.

### Comparative Analysis

Overall, the subject property is the most intact mid-20<sup>th</sup> century modern grocery store structure in Waco. Most grocery store buildings constructed in Waco during this time period have either been torn down or have been modified from their original design. H.E.B. opened up another location in Waco in the 1950s at 901 Elm Ave. Now a public library, the Elm Street location retains its basic shape, canopy, and signage. The exterior, however, has been stuccoed and colorful postmodernist fins and glass block details added under the canopy and on its corner. **(Figure 6)** Built in 1960, the former H.E.B. supermarket has a significant addition to accommodating the church that now occupies the property. Several contemporaneous H.E.B. supermarkets were built as part of larger suburban shopping centers, like Westview Village and Fairgate on Bosque Blvd., that have undergone storefront alterations—replacement windows and wall cladding—and have canopies that obscure their original design. Lastly, also in the early 1950s, Safeway constructed a grocery store at 1102 Speight Ave, relatively close to the location of the subject property. This location was torn down about 15 years ago. In summary, the distinctive sign, intact awnings, and extant terrazzo flooring of the subject

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<sup>70</sup> Tolbert, Lisa. *Beyond Piggly Wiggly* The University of Georgia Press, 2023. p. 57.

<sup>71</sup> Tolbert, Lisa. *Beyond Piggly Wiggly* The University of Georgia Press, 2023. p. 229.

<sup>72</sup> Tolbert, Lisa. *Beyond Piggly Wiggly* The University of Georgia Press, 2023. p. 53

<sup>73</sup> "HEB Check is Fastest Yet." *The Waco News Tribune*. April 18, 1950

<sup>74</sup> "'Sneak Preview' Planned by South Waco Safeway Store." *Waco Tribune Herald*. April 13, 1952.

<sup>75</sup> "Waco Has Most Modern Market in HEB Chain." *The Waco Times-Herald*. June 18, 1957.

<sup>76</sup> "Eastgate Store is HEB's Most Modern Unit in Waco." *The Waco Times-Herald*. August 3, 1965.

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property all stand out and are different than the other mid-century modern grocery store buildings in Waco, all of which have either been torn down or have been modified.

**Conclusion**

The 1950 H.E.B. Grocery (Waco Store #1) stands as an exceptionally well-preserved example of a midcentury supermarket in Waco, McLennan County. As the company's first Waco location, opened by the growing San Antonio-based grocery chain, the store was conceived as a modern showpiece and a prototype for additional locations planned for the region. Within a decade, H.E.B. had expanded to nine stores in the city, but by 1962 the company ended retail operations at the nominated property. Designed by Houston architect Vance Phenix, the building is distinguished by a prominent steel pylon sign rising above the main entrance. Although the neon elements were removed long ago, the sign's original green and red porcelain enamel cladding remains. Additional character-defining features include the exterior terrazzo along the primary façade, the original aluminum windows and doors, and the tapered-edge awning. The property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the Area of Commerce and Criterion C in the Area of Architecture at the local level of significance with a period of significance spanning 1950 to 1962.

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H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

Maps

Map 1: McLennan County, Texas



Map 2: Waco, H.E.B. Grocery Store #1 31.546456° -97.143004°



H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

**Map 3:** Site map showing 1950 Waco Store #1 and 1971 addition (red) and two contributing parking areas in yellow and green (each considered a contributing structure). Source: Base map is McLennan CAD with author's alterations.





H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

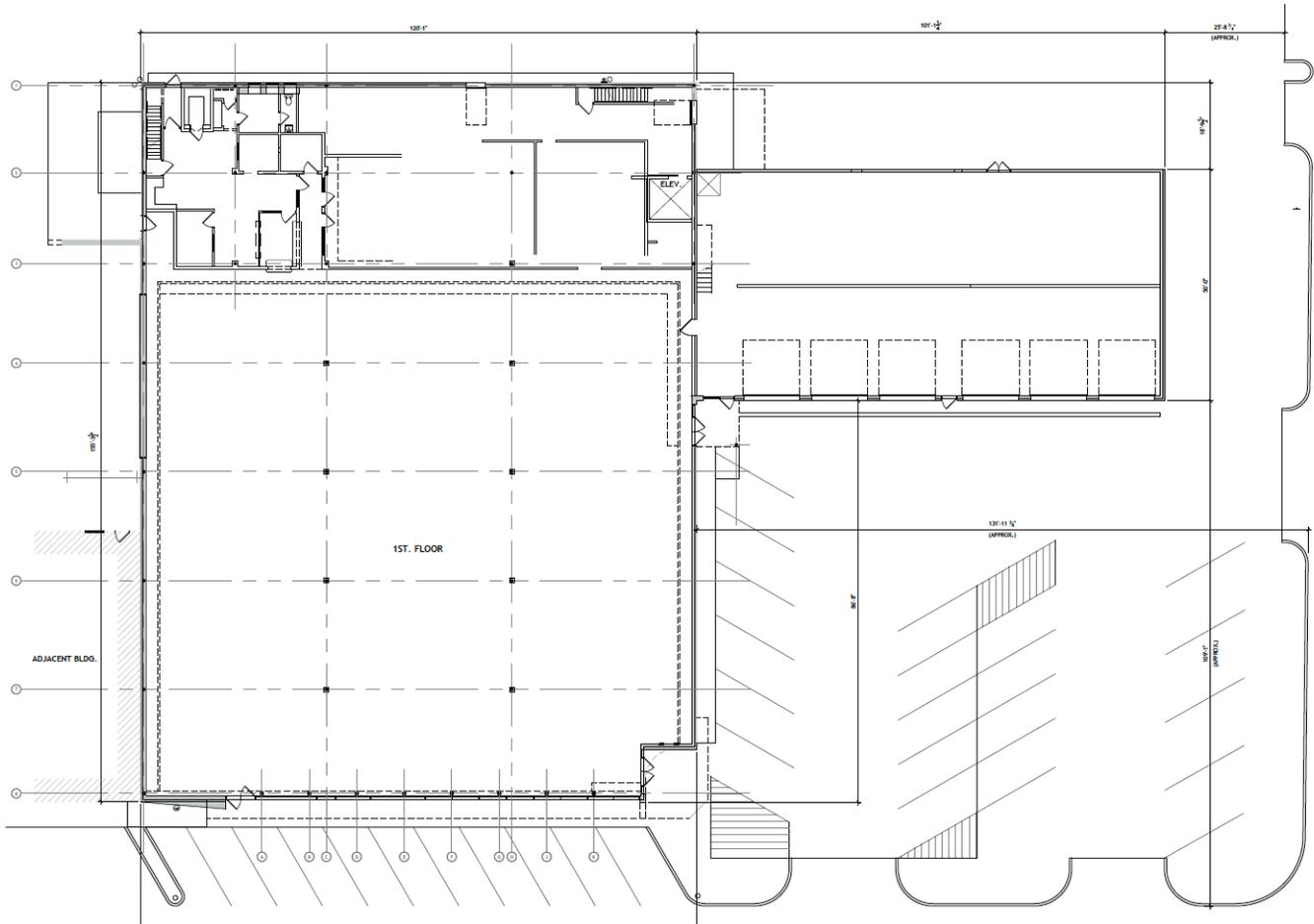
## Figures

**Figure 1:** News article highlighting grand opening with exterior photo and interior images of the fountain and cosmetic counters. Source: *Waco News Tribune* dated April 18, 1950.



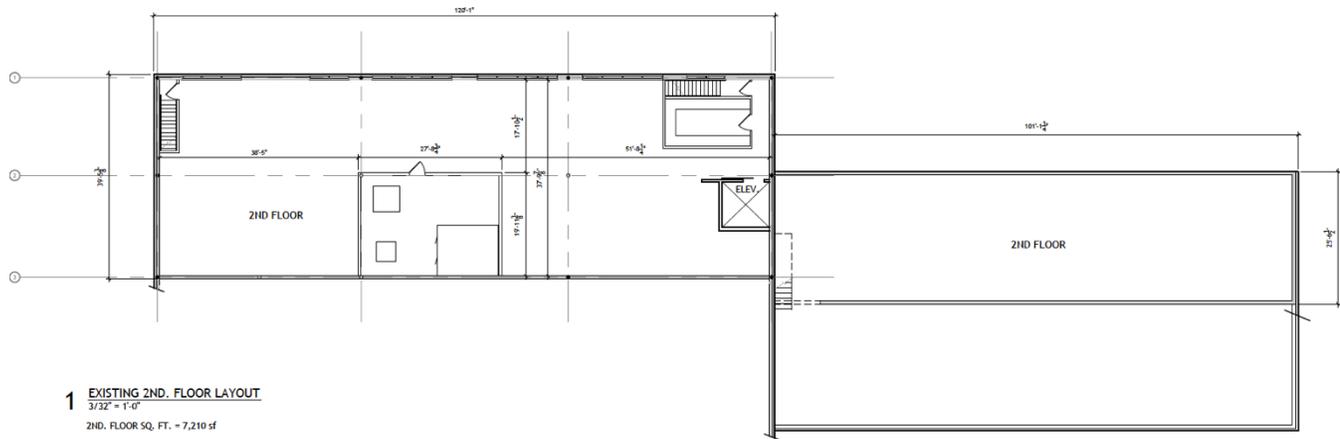
H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

Figure 2: Floor plan of 1<sup>st</sup> floor of H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1)

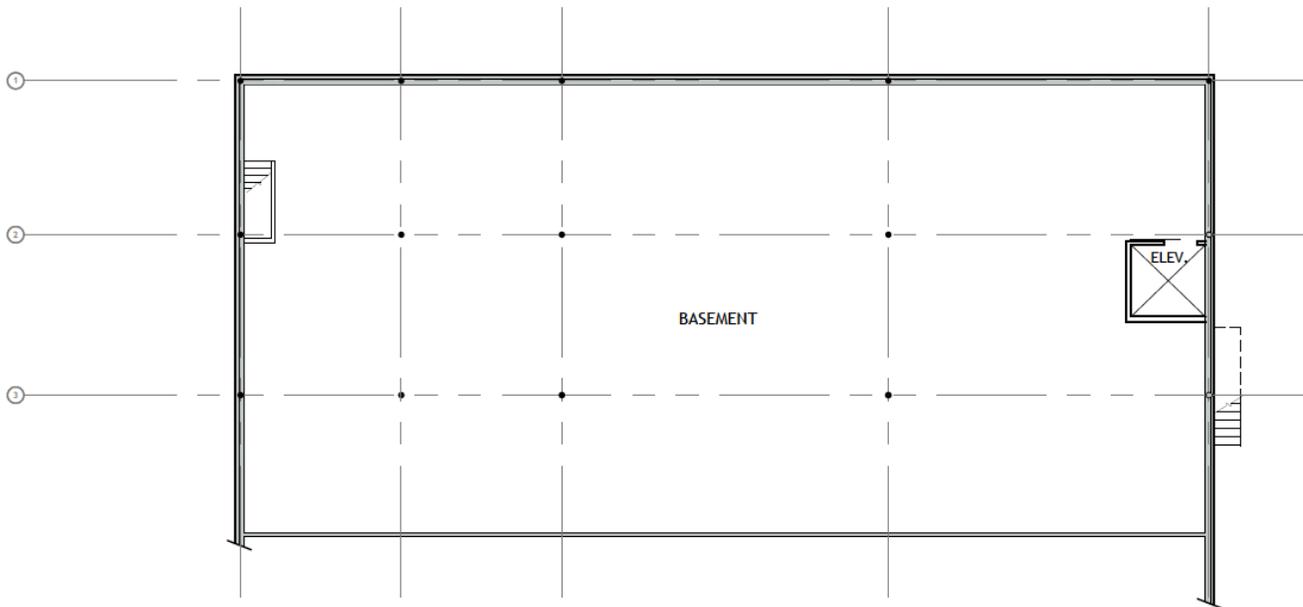


H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

**Figure 3:** Floor plan of Mezzanine of H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1)

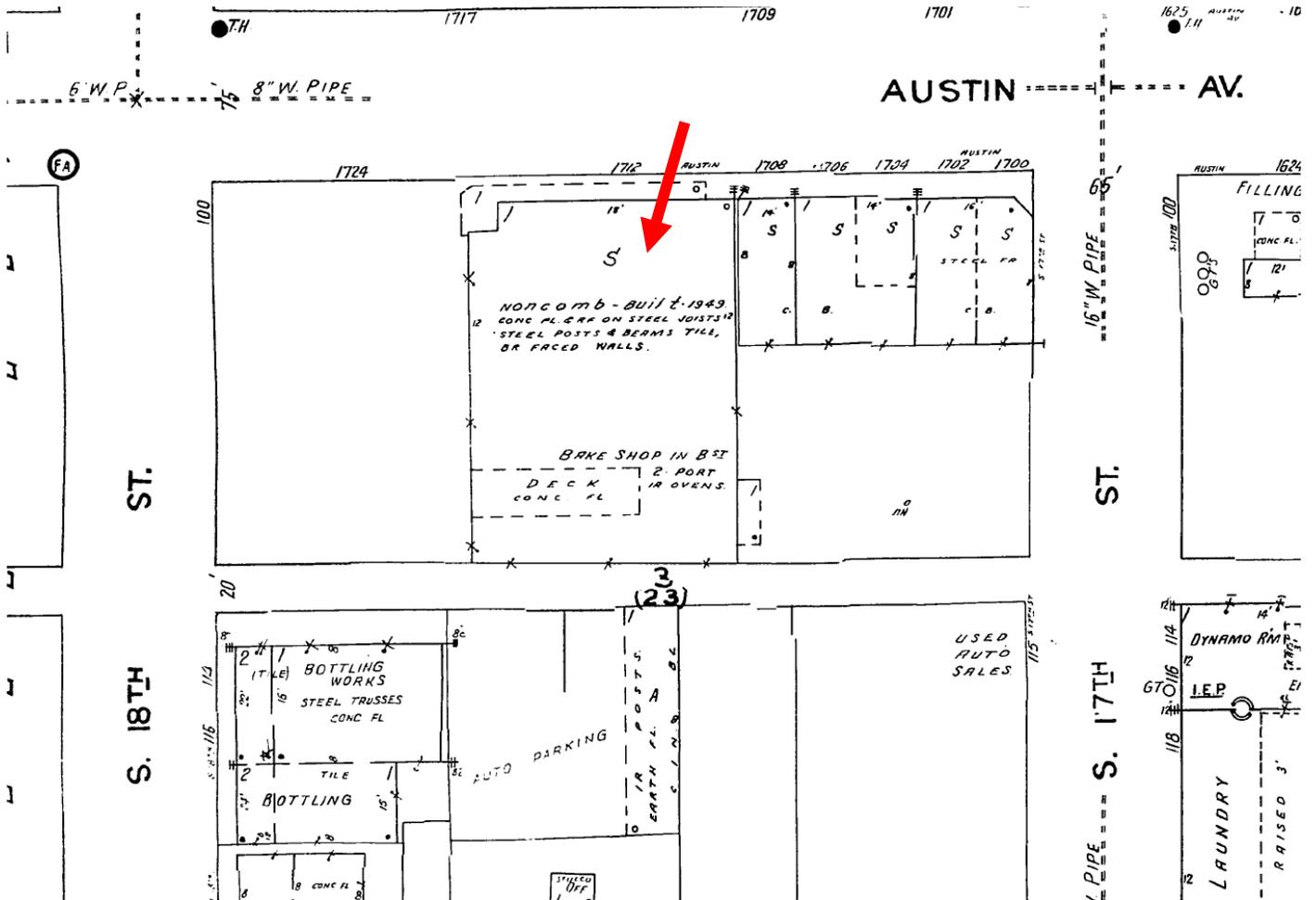


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**Figure 4:** Floor plan of Basement floor of H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1)



H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

Figure 5: Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Waco 1926-Sept. 1950 vol. 1, 1926-Aug. 1950, Sheet 13



H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Figure 6: Former H.E.B. supermarket, now public library at 901 Elm Avenue in Waco. Source: Google Streetview, July 2023.



H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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## Photographs

Name of Property: H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1)  
City or Vicinity: Waco  
County: McLennan County  
State: TX  
Photographer: Colin Hulyk  
Date of Photographs: 12/19/2023 and 8/14/2024



Exterior view of the southwest elevation, 1 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Exterior view of historic pylon signage, 2 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Exterior view of northwest elevation, 3 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Exterior view of northwest elevation with original awning and original showroom windows, 4 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Exterior view of 1971-addition garage bays, 5 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Exterior view of southeast elevation, 6 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Exterior view of southeast elevation and back alley, 7 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Exterior view of northeast elevation, 8 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Interior view of original grocery space looking northeast, 9 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Interior view of original grocery space looking east, 10 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Interior view of original grocery space looking north, 11 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

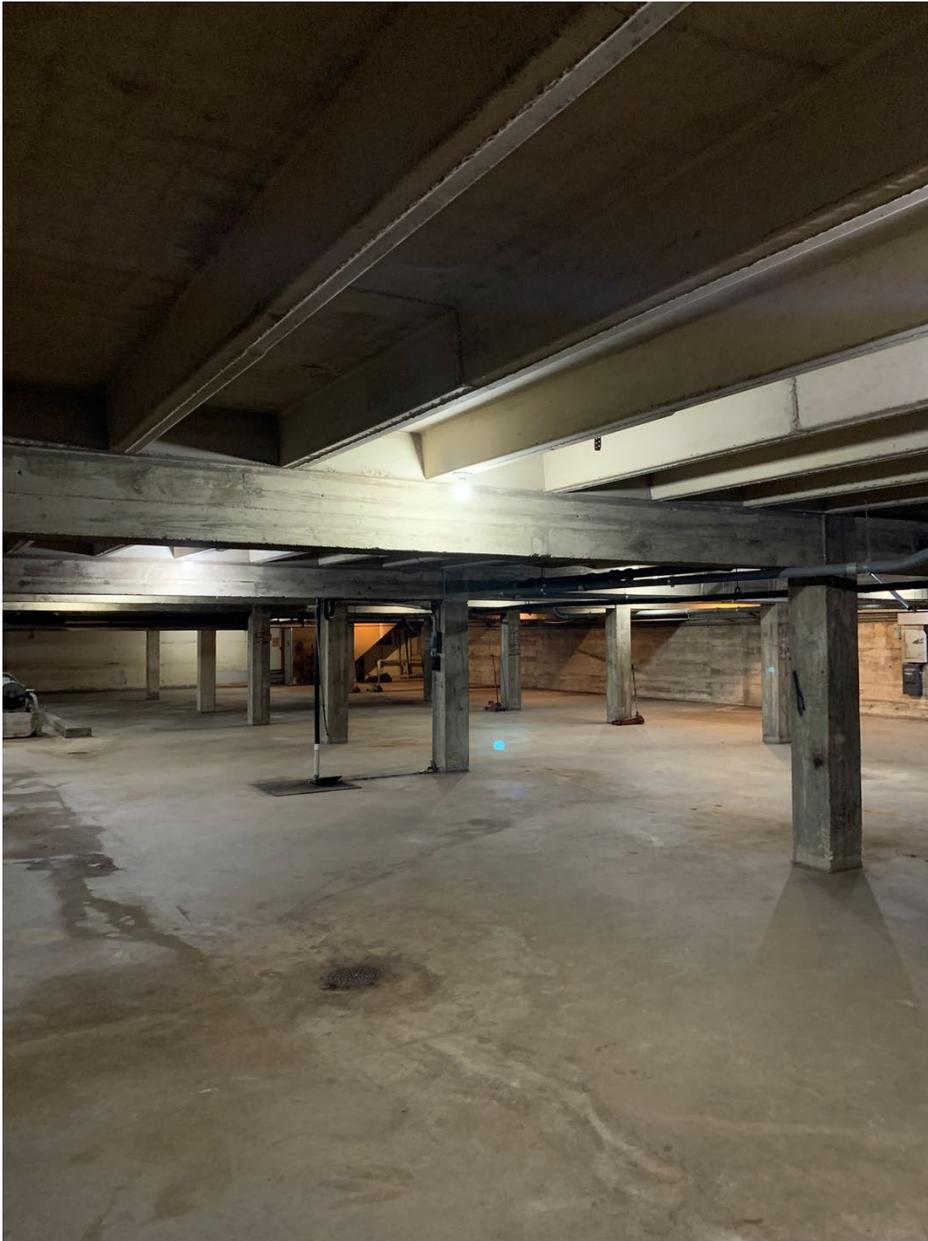
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Interior view of original grocery space looking west, 12 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Interior view of basement facing east, 13 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Interior view of original HVAC equipment in basement facing east, 14 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

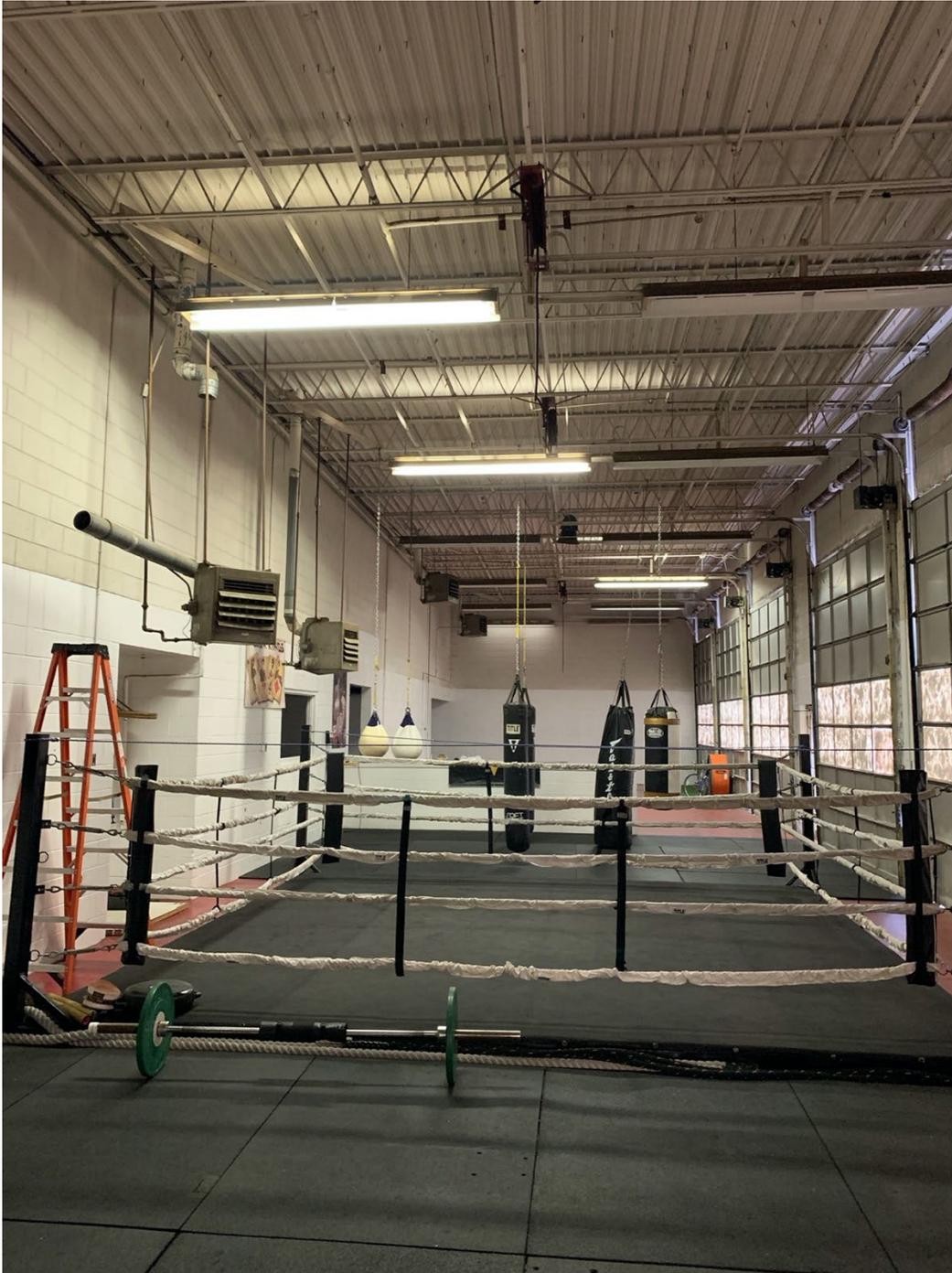
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Interior view of mezzanine level above original grocery space looking northeast, 15 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Interior view of garage addition looking southwest, 16 of 19

H.E.B Grocery (Waco Store # 1), Waco, McLennan County, Texas

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Interior view of mezzanine addition looking southwest, 17 of 19