PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1910 warehouse.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, rectangular-plan, flat-roofed brick commercial warehouse building with a raised concrete loading platform along the south (4th Street) elevation. The building has single, rectangular fenestration in segmental-arched openings; all windows have been replaced with plate glass. Each window opening has a rectangular transom above, with a raised brick sill and lintel. Above the transoms is a belt course of raised brick, tapering from top to bottom; above the belt course is a flat-topped parapet with a tablet defined by raised brick. The building has a non-historic continuous metal awning along the south (4th Street) elevation; it replaced a historic metal awning. There is a modern, one-story rooftop addition to the building, set back from the exterior walls.

RESEARCH

Marks Grain Company, a wholesale and retail feed, hay, and grain business, built this building in phases as its warehouse. At the time the first section was built, around 1910, at the northeast corner of 4th and Brazos Streets, the remainder of the block eastward on 4th Street was still residential: the 1900 Sanborn map shows a line of relatively large houses along the north side of E. 4th Street. Marks Grain Company was established by brothers Harry and Charles Marks before the turn of the 20th century. The 1909-10 city directory, issued just prior to their construction of this building, shows Marks Grain Company at 406 Congress Avenue and their warehouse at the southeast corner of 3rd and Brazos Streets, a block south of the current building. Around 1912, their business address changed to 200-04 E. 4th Street, indicating an expansion to the building. No residences remained to the east of the building along E. 4th Street. By 1920, according to the city directory of that year, the business address for Marks Grain Company was 200-08 E. 4th Street, indicating an additional, and final expansion of the warehouse.

Both Harry and Charles Marks died in 1924, within a few months of each other. The business continued out of this building, with James S. Howse as the manager, until around 1931. Lolla Marks, the widow of Harry Marks, is listed as the president of the company in the 1932-33 city directory, the last that the company is listed. Between 1924 and 1931, the Marks successors began leasing out space in this building: to George Reichardt, a merchandise broker, from 1924 to 1928, and then to Wayland Rivers, who operated both the Texas Tobacco Company and Checker Front Grocery Company out of this building.

The 1935 city directory shows that the space at the corner of 4th and Brazos was serving as a warehouse for the Patton Transfer Company, while the space further
east housed the Checker Front Grocery warehouse. This arrangement remained until around 1936 when the Blatz Beer warehouse occupied the middle space between Patton Transfer on the corner and Checker Front on the east end of the building. Patton Transfer moved their warehouse out of this building around 1940; the space on the corner was then occupied by Sunset Freight Lines, while a flour mill occupied the middle space, and Checker Front remained to the east. Waylon Rivers was no longer listed as the proprietor of Checker Front; the business was run by a manager, Edward Westling, who eventually came to lead the company.

Sunset Motor Lines occupied the corner space as a warehouse until around 1950, when the space became a warehouse for E.M. Scarbrough & Sons, a downtown department store. The middle space continued to have a flour mill around 1948, when it became the warehouse for another wholesale grocery company. A wholesale food products company is listed in the 1949 city directory as occupying the space shown as 401-03 Brazos Street, the first time that address appears. Checker Front Stores continued to maintain its warehouse and office in the east end of the building until around 1960. Since the mid-1950s, the building has housed a variety of small businesses and warehouses, including an auto garage on the Brazos Street side, an electrical supply warehouse, and as warehouse space for Cabaniss-Brown Furniture Company. One of the more distinctive later businesses to occupy the space was Gordon Fowler’s Caliente Chili, a manufacturer and wholesaler of chili spices in the late 1970s.

**Staff Comments**

The building is listed as 200-04 and 206 E. 4th Street, and as a Priority 1 for research in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey (1984).

Staff has evaluated this building for designation as a historic landmark and has determined that the building may meet the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code:

a. **Architecture.** The building is a vernacular brick warehouse building that still retains its integral form if not all of its original materials. The building exemplifies the distinguishing characteristics of a warehouse, including its concrete loading platform along 4th Street. Utilitarian buildings that reflect and be identified as serving a use significant in the history of the city may qualify for landmark designation.

b. **Historical association.** The building was constructed as a feed and grain warehouse, once a very important business in Austin; the company, Marks Grain Company, was one of the most prominent in the city, and operated here until it closed following the deaths of its proprietors (brothers) during the Depression. The building then became the office and warehouse of the Checker Front Grocery Stores, a franchise of self-serve supermarkets, from mid-1930s until around 1960. In mid-1970s, Gordon Fowler opened Caliente Chili, a manufacturer and distributor of chili and chili products, out of this building. The history of this building supports qualification under the criterion for historical association.
c. **Archaeology.** The building was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.

d. **Community value.** The building may possess a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, the neighborhood, or a particular demographic group. It is located along E. 4th Street, the spur line for the railroad, and represents the warehouses that used to line this street because of the proximity of the railroad. Very few of these rail-side warehouses remain in Austin.

e. **Landscape feature.** The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Strongly encourage rehabilitation and adaptive re-use. This is one of the very few remaining warehouse buildings in downtown Austin, and one of only two sites where the old loading platforms remain. Staff recognizes that the building has been modified with the replacement of original windows, doors, and awning, and the construction of a rooftop use, but urges the applicants to consider incorporation of this building into their development is feasible. If the Commission votes to release the permit, then staff recommends the completion of a documentation package consisting of HABS Level II drawings, photographs of all elevations, and a narrative history, for archiving at the Austin History Center prior to release of the permit.
200-12 E. 4\textsuperscript{th} Street/401-03 Brazos Street
ca. 1910
OCCUPANCY HISTORY
200-12 E. 4th Street/401-03 Brazos Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center
By City Historic Preservation Office
November, 2008

1987

200 E. 4th Street
Vacant

206 E. 4th Street
Vacant

401-03 Brazos Street
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1977

200 E. 4th Street
Vacant

206 E. 4th Street
Nunn Electric Supply Company
William L. Collie, manager

401 Brazos Street
Caliente Chili
Spices
Gordon Fowler, president

1967

200 E. 4th Street
Vacant

403 Brazos Street
Cabaniss-Brown Furniture Warehouse
Hiram S. Brown, president
NOTE: The store was at 201 E. 5th Street.

1957

200 E. 4th Street
Scarborough’s Warehouse

206 E. 4th Street
Checker Front Stores Offices and Warehouse
Groceries
Edward L. Westling, president and general manager

403 Brazos Street
Mueller & Benson Garage
Auto repairs
Dewey F. Mueller and James D. Benson, proprietors
1953

200 E. 4th Street
E.M Scarbrough & Sons Warehouse

204 E. 4th Street
Jo-Mil Stores, Inc.
Wholesale feed
John T. Parker, manager

206 E. 4th Street
Checker Front Stores Offices and Warehouse
Groceries
Edward L. Westling, general manager

401-03 Brazos Street
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1949

200 E. 4th Street
Sunset Motor Lines
The directory has no listing for Sunset Motor Lines.

204 E. 4th Street
Austin Distributing Company
Wholesale groceries
Coad Robinson, proprietor

206 E. 4th Street
Checker Front Stores Warehouse and Office
Edward L. Westling, manager

403 Brazos Street
J&R Distributing Company
Food products
Melvin A. Richard, proprietor

1944-45

200 E. 4th Street
Sunset Motor Lines
Joseph J. Moritz, branch manager

204 E. 4th Street
Liberty Mills
Arthur M. Scott, manager

206 E. 4th Street
Checker Front Stores Warehouse and Office
Edward Westling, manager

401-03 Brazos Street
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1941

200-02 E. 4th Street
Sunset Motor Lines
Joseph J. Moritz, agent

**204 E. 4th Street**
Liberty Mills
Flour mills
Frank Reynolds, manager

**206 E. 4th Street**
Checker Front Stores Warehouse and Office
Edward Westling, manager

**401-03 Brazos Street**
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1937

**200-02 E. 4th Street**
Patton’s Inc. Warehouse
NOTE: Patton Transfer Company was located at 116 E. 7th Street.

**204 E. 4th Street**
Blatz Beer Distributors
George Mezzetti, proprietor

**206 E. 4th Street**
Checker Front Stores Warehouse and Office
Edward Westling, manager

**401-03 Brazos Street**
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1935

**200-02 E. 4th Street**
Patton’s Inc. Warehouse
NOTE: Patton Transfer Company was located at 116 E. 7th Street.

**206 E. 4th Street**
Checker Front Stores Warehouse and Office
Wayland C. Rivers, president

**401-03 Brazos Street**
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1932-33

**200-02 E. 4th Street**
Marks Grain Company
Mrs. Lolla Marks, president

**206 E. 4th Street**
Texas Tobacco Company
Wayland C. and M. Leon Rivers, proprietors

Checker Front Stores Warehouse and Office
Wayland C. Rivers, president
401-03 Brazos Street
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1930-31
200-12 E. 4th Street
Marks Grain Company
J.S. Howse, manager

Texas Tobacco Company
D.S. Bassist, manager

Checker Front Stores Office
W.C. Rivers, manager

401-03 Brazos Street
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1929
200-12 E. 4th Street
Marks Grain Company
J.S. Howse, manager

George F. Reichardt & Company
Merchandise brokers
George F. Reichardt, proprietor

401-03 Brazos Street
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1927
200-12 E. 4th Street
Marks Grain Company
James S. Howse, manager

George F. Reichardt & Company
Merchandise brokers
George F. Reichardt, proprietor

401-03 Brazos Street
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1924
200-12 E. 4th Street
Marks Grain Company
Harrison L. and Charles J. Marks, proprietors

401-03 Brazos Street
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1922
200-08 E. 4th Street
Marks Grain Company
Grain, hay, and feed
Harrison L. and Charles J. Marks, proprietors

401-03 Brazos Street
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1920

**200-08 E. 4th Street**
Marks Grain Company
Grain, hay, and feed
Harry L. and Charles J. Marks, proprietors

**401-03 Brazos Street**
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1918

**200-04 E. 4th Street**
Marks Grain Company
Grain, hay, and feed
Harry L. and Charles J. Marks, proprietors

**401-03 Brazos Street**
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1916

**200-04 E. 4th Street**
Marks Grain Company
Grain, hay, and feed
Harry L. and Charles J. Marks, proprietors

**401-03 Brazos Street**
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1914

**200-04 E. 4th Street**
Marks Grain Company
Wholesale and retail grain, hay, and feed
Harry L. and Charles J. Marks, proprietors

**401-03 Brazos Street**
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1912-13

**200-04 E. 4th Street**
Marks Grain Company
Wholesale and retail grain, hay, and feed
Harry L. and Charles J. Marks, proprietors

**401-03 Brazos Street**
The addresses are not listed in the directory.

1910-11

**200 E. 4th Street**
Marks Grain Company
Wholesale and retail grain, hay, and feed
Harry L. and Charles J. Marks, proprietors

**NOTE:** 204 E. 4th Street was listed as the home of Edith Cooper, an African-American woman, with no occupation stated.

**401-03 Brazos Street**
The addresses are not listed in the directory.
The 200 block of E. 4th Street was residential.

Advertisement for the Marks Grain Company
Austin American, April 7, 1926
Obituary of Harry Marks, the owner of Marks Grain Company, the first business in this building.

*Austin American*, May 20, 1924

Funeral notice for Harry Marks

*Austin American*, May 21, 1924

Obituary of George F. Reichardt, who had a merchandise brokerage business in this building in the late 1920s.

*Austin Statesman*, May 2, 1938
Funeral notice for George F. Reichardt
Austin American, May 3, 1938

Funeral notice for Wayland C. Rivers
Austin American, January 28, 1959

Obituary of Edward Westling, the manager of the Checker Front Stores, who had their offices and warehouse in this building from the mid-1930s through the late 1950s.

Austin American-Statesman,
Biography of Edward Westling, the manager of Checker Front Stores
Central Texas Business and Professional Directory, 1952

September 23, 1996

ED. L. WESTLING. General Manager, Checker Front Stores, Austin. Mr. Westling has been general manager of the Checker Front Stores, a local grocery chain in Austin, since 1946. The stores were organized about 1927, the first one being located at 1917 E. 8th St., Austin; it was one of the first self-service stores in this section of the state, employing only a few people. At present, nine self-service stores are in operation in Austin, employing over 100 persons.

Mr. Westling was born on Nov. 21, 1907, in Manor, Texas, the son of Mr. and Mrs. O. C. Westling; his father was a merchant, operating a retail grocery and general merchandise store near Manor. He attended public school in Austin and Austin High School and later completed a course in business training. His first job was working with his father during his school days. In 1927 he began work for an Austin grocery store chain, working up through the ranks to general manager. In 1936 he assumed his present position with the Checker Front stores.

He was married on Sept. 3, 1931, to the former Frances Olsen of Brady, Texas; they have two children: Eddie H. and Robert.

Mr. Westling is a member of the Austin Chamber of Commerce, the Austin Country Club and is a past director of the local Kiwanis Club. Mrs. Westling is a member of the Kiwanis and is active in church work at the Geiseman Lutheran Church.

Hobbywise, Mr. Westling prefers fishing, also enjoys bowling and golf.
Advertisement for Checker Front Stores, Austin Statesman, January 10, 1936

Checker Front Stores sponsored a softball team
Austin American, April 8, 1937
Hanks Grain Company Warehouse (1910)
121 Brazos Street
Adaptive Use: Headquarters, Caliente Chile, Inc.
Preservationists: Ann Fowler and Gordon Fowler

This old warehouse in downtown Austin is a fine example of how an empty old building can be brought back to life and can contribute to the Austin economy. Used for many of its early years as the Hanks Grain Company Warehouse, the structure later served as a Cabaniss-Brown furniture warehouse. When Ann and Gordon Fowler, children of humorist-newspaper Wick Fowler, discovered it, it was in the trust department of a local bank, from which they now lease it. Some old tins were about its only occupants.

Today, the building is headquarters of fast-growing Caliente Chile, Inc., which was founded by Wick Fowler and his kids to make and market Two-Alarm Chili. Some 25 employees work there now, and tomato mix and bean mix have been added to the product line. From Wick's first chili cook off in Turner against H.C. Allen, some 80 chiliheads have developed across the U.S., and Two-Alarm Chili is sold widely.

Ann and Gordon Fowler had the building's Austin common brick walls cleaned. Floors are 2 by 3', honeycolored, with Indian design area rugs here and there. In foot ceilings, weathered wood look stain, hand-crafted simple desks, period artifacts and paintings, an old stove given them by Bob Odum, Mexico's retired chair hanging on a wall, a barber chair, etc. etc. contribute to the early Texas look of the interior.

Ann Fowler has worked in business since the beginning. Mrs. Gordon Fowler,

Shari, is a potter and a UT graduate student in art. Tom Hall, who will accept the award if the Fowlers are out of state, is vp for marketing. From Dallas, he is a marathon runner and is in the Guinness Book of Records for eating the most flour tortillas at one time. Jan Scott is an employee, also.

Water service permit (1930)
This permit corresponds to the same approximate time as Checker Front Stores moved their office and warehouse into 206 E. 4th Street, an addition to the east of the original building.

Sewer service permit to Mr. Marks (1930)

Building permit to repair the loading dock (1941)
The 1900 Sanborn map shows houses along the north side of E. 4th Street between Brazos and San Jacinto (bottom of map). There was a cotton warehouse across the alley to the north.

The 1935 Sanborn map shows the current building with addresses of 200-02 E. 4th Street and being used as a transfer and storage warehouse. City directories show that Patton’s Transfer used this building as a warehouse in the mid-1930s. At 204 E. 4th Street is a grocery warehouse, corresponding to the warehouse and office of Checker Front Stores, a grocery chain. Note the small attached outbuildings along the east (right) wall of the building. Note the
area shown as 403 Brazos Street, separated off from the 200-02 space at the corner, and listed as a storage building.

The 1961 Sanborn map shows the current building used as a transfer and storage warehouse, with the northern section of the building being used for auto repair, and the eastern part of the building as a grocery warehouse. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Scarbrough's maintained a warehouse here; there was an auto repair shop at 403 Brazos Street, and Checker Front Stores had their office and warehouse at 206 E. 4th Street.