

SBR Draft

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns
Other name/site number: Kensington Apartments
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 3300 Manor Road
City or town: Austin State: Texas County: Travis
Not for publication: Vicinity: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

State Historic Preservation Officer	
Signature of certifying official / Title	Date
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

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis 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	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	total

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: DOMESTIC: hotel, multiple dwelling

Current Functions: DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification: MODERN MOVEMENT

Principal Exterior Materials: BRICK, STONE, METAL

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7-6 through 7-11)

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input type="checkbox"/>	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: COMMERCE (*local level of significance*)

Period of Significance: 1968-73

Significant Dates: 1968

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

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

Architect/Builder: NA

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-12 through 8-21)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheets 9-22 through 9-24)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. (*Part 1 approved 10-6-2019*)
- 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

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 2.7 acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. 30.287584° -97.702516°

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated boundary is the legal parcel as recorded by the City of Austin with Property ID 20764, legally described as LOT 1-2 *LESS 9435 SF RESUB OF PART OF OLT 36 DIVISION C. The Travis Central Appraisal District website was accessed on September 2, 2022. (See Maps 2 and 5 below)

Boundary Justification: The boundary is the historic and current legal boundary of the Lexington Apartments and Motor Inn. The boundary includes all resources constructed as part of the motel and apartment complex.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Cindy Hamilton (President) / Michael LaFlash (Senior Project Manager) / Erin Ward (Project Manager)

Organization: Heritage Consulting Group

Street & number: 15 W Highland Avenue #1

City or Town: Philadelphia

State: PA

Zip Code: 19118

Email: chamilton@heritage-consulting.com

Telephone: 215-248-1260

Date: October 14, 2021

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets Map-25 through Map-28)

Additional items (see continuation sheets Figure-29 through Figure-41)

Photographs (see continuation sheets Photo-42 through Photo-60)

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns

City or Vicinity: Austin

County: Travis

State: Texas

Photographer: Erin Ward

Date Photographed: January 2021

Photo 1: Exterior View, South Elevation, Looking
Northeast.

Photo 2: Exterior View, South Elevation of Office
Building, Looking Northeast

Photo 3: Exterior View, East Elevation, Looking Northwest

Photo 4: Exterior View, East Elevation, Looking Southwest

Photo 5: Exterior View, East Elevation, Looking North

Photo 6: Exterior View, East Elevation, Looking West

Photo 7: Exterior View, West Elevation, Looking Northeast

Photo 8: Exterior View, Courtyard, Looking North

Photo 9: Exterior View, Courtyard, Looking Southeast

Photo 10: Exterior View, Office Building, Second Floor,
Looking West

Photo 11: Interior View, Unit 109, Looking Northwest

Photo 12: Interior View, Unit 109, Looking Southwest

Photo 13: Interior View, Unit 109, Looking West

Photo 14: Interior View, Unit 109, Looking West

Photo 15: Interior View, Unit 241, Looking Northeast

Photo 16: Interior View, Unit 241, Looking Southwest

Photo 17: Interior View, Office Building, First Floor,
Looking East

Photo 18: Interior View, Office Building, First Floor,
Looking West

Photo 19: Interior View, Office Building, First Floor,
Looking North

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, DC.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Narrative Description

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns (now Kensington Apartments) is on an approximately 2.7-acre site at 3300 Manor Road in East Austin, Travis County off Airport Boulevard. The site includes two contributing resources: the motel and an office building. The motel, which now houses apartments, was constructed in 1968 and is a two-story, narrow U-shaped brick and stone building with a cross-gable roof. The west arm extends beyond the intersecting section, further north than the east arm. The office is a two-story, free-standing, rectangular plan building of tan brick and flagstone with standing seam and metal siding on the second floor. Located at the south end of the motel, the office creates a rectangular courtyard within. The buildings feature typical elements of the Motor Inn design in that they are: larger than the typical motor courts; comprised of two stories; and, organized around a courtyard. The remainder of the site largely consists of paved parking areas. The complex is situated within a mixed residential and commercial setting located adjacent to the Mueller neighborhood, formerly the Robert Mueller Municipal Airport grounds.

Setting and Site

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns is located in a mixed residential and commercial neighborhood northeast of downtown Austin. To the north of the site is Southwest Greenway Park, with bike paths, picnic areas, and trails. To the south, along Manor Road are primarily commercial enterprises, including restaurants and retail shops. Industrial complexes are peppered throughout the south side of Manor Road. Northwest of the site are postwar suburbs characterized by one- to two-story single-family houses.

The nominated boundary is a triangular 2.7-acre site bounded by Anchor Lane to the northeast, Manor Road to the south, and unrelated properties to the west (Map 1-2). Within the site, the apartment building and office building encompass approximately 1 acre of the total parcel. Although the apartment building and office building are not interconnected, they are physically connected by first and second story walkways (Map 3). The courtyard is rectangular in shape with a grassy lawn on its northern half and a paved and landscaped portion on its southern half. Within the paved area of the courtyard is a raised plant bed, organic in shape, sited on the location of a former pool. The shape of the bed mimics the original pool's layout with pool depths inset in the concrete, lining the perimeter of the bed. On the east end of the site is a grassy water-runoff feature. The remainder of the site is encompassed by a paved parking area with landscaped buffers separating the site from Manor Road.

The subject site is located adjacent the former Robert Mueller Municipal Airport, which was the sole commercial airport in Austin until it closed in 1999. The airport area to the west of Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns has since been significantly redeveloped into residential, retail, and office space. Historic elements remain, including the air traffic control tower, original highways, and circulation patterns around the airport as well as the subject building.

Motel Building (Resource 1)

Exterior

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inn is an irregular U-shaped, two-story building with a central courtyard. The former motel consists of two rectangular north-south running arms, located at the east and west side of the building. The arms are connected at north by an intersecting east-west running section, resulting in the building's cross-gable roof. The west arm extends beyond the intersecting section, further north than the east arm. The gable-roofed structure features a back-to-back unit layout with entrances accessed on either the parking lot sides or at the courtyard. Canopied first- and second-story walkways extend the perimeter of the building with the exception of the south elevation. The rectangular east and west arms of the building intersect with the north section creating a cross-gable roof. Lexington Apartments

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

and Motor Inns follows typical Motor Inn design with its complex two-story structure overlooking the courtyard. The overall design of the building is largely uniform featuring identical elevations.

Public Circulation – Public circulation is entirely located at the exterior of the building. The first floor is accessed directly from the parking lot or in the courtyard. The second floor is accessed from the parking lot and courtyard by exterior stairs. The building contains eight nearly identical staircases located at the southeast, southwest, and northeast corners of the primary building block, the north elevation of the west arm, and at all four corners of the central courtyard. At the second-floor level, the building features an elevated concrete walkway with a simple circular-designed metal railing.

South Elevation – The window-less South Elevation of the motel building is the primary elevation and fronts Manor Road. This elevation consists of the two terminating façades of the east and west arms of the building. These elevations are ornamented with alternating columns of tan brick and standing seam metal siding flanking a central flagstone veneer. The flagstone also partially wraps the base of these elevations and is featured across the majority of the South Elevation, creating a stark perpendicular contrast to the brick and metal columns on the exteriors. These elevations are connected to the office building by two elevated walkways at its southeast and southwest corners.

East Elevation – The 11-unit-wide East Elevation is comprised mainly of tan brick and features vertical siding surrounding the single light metal casement windows along the individual unit entrances. The northern end of the elevation features the standing seam metal siding and flagstone similar to the primary elevation. The units are entered by single-leaf metal doors. Running along the perimeter of the second story is an elevated covered walkway. This concrete path follows the footprint of the walkway below and provides access to all units. The elevated walkway features a metal railing with simple circular design. The second story of the building is accessed by a simple metal stair at the southeast corner of the elevation.

West Elevation – The West Elevation is consistent with the East Elevation in design, layout, materiality, and unit count. The second story of this elevation is accessed by metal stair at the southwest corner of the elevation. At the northern end of the elevation is the terminating façade of the north section of the building. This façade is nearly identical in appearance to the south elevations.

North Elevation – The North Elevation is consistent with the East and West elevations in design and materiality. The North Elevation of the building is intersected on its west end by the west arm of the former motel. To the east of this intersection the building is eight units wide. The second story of this elevation is accessed by metal stair at the east end of the elevation. The terminating façade of the west arm is nearly identical in appearance to the South Elevations. The terminating façade provides access to the second story and walkways through an additional metal stair. The extension of this arm beyond the North Elevation is four units wide. The fenestration, entryways, walkways, and materials are identical to those of the North, East, and West elevations. West of the intersection is one unit wide also with consistent fenestration, entryways, walkways, and materials.

East and West Courtyard Elevations - The East and West Courtyard Elevations are consistent with the East and West elevations in design, layout, materiality, and unit count. The second story of the building is accessed by metal stairs on the north end of the elevations. These elevations overlook the landscaped courtyard area.

North Courtyard Elevation - The North Courtyard Elevation is consistent with the East and West Elevations in design and materiality. This elevation is five units wide and overlooks the landscaped courtyard area.

Interior:

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

The subject property contains 148 units, set back-to-back at both the first and second floor levels. The building features three-unit types: one-bedrooms, efficiency studios, and small efficiency studios. In total there are 84 one-bedroom units, 56 efficiency studios, and 8 small efficiency studios in the complex. The one-bedroom units are nearly identical in layout and finishes. The efficiency and small efficiency studios are also nearly identical in layout and finishes with the small efficiency units being slightly smaller in living space.

One Bedroom Units – The layout of the one-bedroom units is consistent throughout the building though some of the floorplans are mirrored. The entrance to these units leads to the living area. This space is open to a galley kitchen. A demising wall separates the living and kitchen areas from the bedroom and bathroom area. A single-leaf wood door leads into the bedroom which is located on the exterior side of the unit. A bathroom and closet are located at the interior side of the bedroom. Both are accessed by single-leaf wood doors. The finishes in these spaces are consistent throughout, including gypsum board walls with a heavy textured skim coat; wood baseboard; gypsum board ceilings with a heavy textured skim coat; carpet or linoleum tile floors; and, tile wainscot in bathrooms. Some living and bedroom areas feature simple wood wainscotting.

Efficiency and Small Efficiency Studios – The layout of the efficiency and small efficiency studios is consistent throughout the building though some of the floorplans are mirrored. The entrance to these units leads to the living area/ bedroom space. This space is open to a galley kitchen on one side and an enclosed full bathroom on the other. The finishes in these spaces are consistent with the one-bedroom units and include: gypsum board walls with a heavy textured skim coat; wood baseboards; gypsum board ceilings with a heavy textured skim coat; carpet or linoleum tile flooring; and, tile wainscot in bathrooms. Some living and bedroom areas feature simple wood wainscotting.

Office Building (Resource 2)

Exterior:

The office building is a free-standing, rectangular two-story building located at the south end of the courtyard between the two arms of the former motel building. The flat-roofed structure features canopied first and second story walkways that run the perimeter of the building. The office building is physically connected to the apartment building by these walkways.

South Elevation – The South Elevation of the office building is the primary elevation of the building. Matching the design of the larger motel building, the first story of this elevation is constructed of tan brick with a flagstone band around the bottom. The second story features vertical siding and a canopied porch. The second story porch maintains the same metal railing with circular design that is found throughout the complex. There are two stacked entrances on this elevation. The centrally located metal and glass single-leaf door on the first floor is flanked by two metal framed sidelights. The second story entrance consists of a two-leaf metal framed, glass sliding door. The fenestration on this elevation is consistent with the apartment building and features metal casement windows on either side of the first and second floor entryways.

East Elevation – The window-less East Elevation is constructed entirely of brick. This elevation features a metal stair that provides access to the second floor and the walkway on the southeast corner of the building.

West Elevation – The West Elevation is also constructed entirely of brick. A single metal casement window is located on the west end of the second story. This elevation features a metal stair that provides access to the second floor and the walkway on the southwest corner of the building.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

North Elevation - The first story of the North Elevation is constructed of tan brick. The second story features vertical siding and an uncovered porch that overlooks the courtyard. The second story porch maintains the same metal railing with circular design found throughout the former motel. The west end of the first story features a two-leaf metal framed glass sliding door. To the west of the doorway are two metal casement windows. The second story features a single-leaf metal door in the east end with a metal casement window on the west end. The first floor features a metal framed canopied area that runs from the east corner to the first-floor entrance.

Interior:

The first floor of the office building contains a small entry lobby and desk area, various offices, and a storage area. The second floor contains a one-bedroom apartment unit. The main entrance on the south elevation leads to the lobby and registration desk. This space features terrazzo tile floors, wood paneled walls, and a textured plaster gypsum board ceiling. On the east and west walls of this space are single-leaf wood doors that lead to office spaces with consistent wall and ceiling finishes and ceramic tile floors. The storage area at the rear of the first-floor features gypsum board walls with a heavy textured skim coat, gypsum board ceilings with a similar heavy textured skim coat, and ceramic tile floors.

The second floor can be accessed externally from the North or South Elevation and internally from a centrally located stair. The single-leaf door on the South Elevation leads to a small hall and living area. To the east of the hallway is a bathroom. The semi-open floor plan features a kitchen on the north side of the space. The carpeted stairway leads down to the first-floor office space. To the west of the living area is a bedroom and second bathroom. The finishes on this floor are consistent with the units in the apartment building.

Alterations: Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns served as a motel until the 1990s. The change in use to long-term apartments rentals required limited alterations. The exterior remains largely intact and representative of what it looked like at the time of construction. At the interior of the motel building, renovations were limited to the alteration of finishes, and rarely altered the existing floor plans. Interior upgrades were in keeping with the paired back style of the mid-century motel. At the interior of the office building, historic terrazzo floor remains in the primary lobby space. Although the pool in the courtyard was infilled to create a landscape feature, it retains its shape and location. The feature reads as a pool in its organic shape and is further indicated as such by the water depth markers that remain intact.

Integrity: Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns retains integrity to convey its historic use as a courtyard motel. The complex remained in continuous use as a motel from its construction in 1968 until the 1990s when it was converted to apartments. Although the building's use shifted, there have been limited alterations and the building's character defining features remain intact. The exteriors of the buildings are representative of what they looked like at the time of construction. At the interior, alterations were largely limited to updates of interior finishes. The site is also intact, retaining its courtyard and the landscape feature representative of the original pool.

National Register Bulletin 15 describes integrity as the capability of a resource to convey its significance, and evaluates integrity based on a set of seven aspects detailing a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance.

Specific to the seven aspects of integrity:

Location: Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns remains in its original location. As such, the building retains integrity of location.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Setting: Historically, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns was purposefully located just 0.25 miles west of the primary public entrance to the Robert Mueller Municipal Airport, which served as the city's main airport for the majority of the twentieth century. The airport site was bounded by Interstate 35 to the north, 51st Street to the east, Manor Road to the south, and Airport Boulevard to the west with its main entrance on Manor Road and Berkman Drive. When the subject building was constructed in 1968, the area surrounding the airport was predominantly either residential or undeveloped. Historic aerials indicate that there were some scattered businesses around the airport's perimeter, north of I-35, but most commercial enterprises were located at the corner of Manor Road and Airport Boulevard near the subject property.

After the airport was demolished in 2002, the city-initiated plans to redevelop the area into a mixed-use neighborhood known as Mueller, retaining association with the former airport. Plans were finalized in 2006 and the area ultimately included 4,600 residences, medical facilities, 4 million square feet of office space, 550,000 square feet of retail space, and 140 acres of parks.¹ The first families moved into the new residences in late 2007. Even with this extensive redevelopment, the general building patterns around the airport stayed the same. The original footprint of the airport is still denoted by the same highways, and the circulation patterns around the airport's perimeter and the Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns are original.

Historically, commercial enterprises were either situated along I-35 or at the intersection of Manor Road and Airport Boulevard. Although many of the businesses and the buildings that originally housed them no longer exist, the area immediately west of the former airport remains predominantly commercial. The most significant portion of the municipal airport that still exists is the control tower, which was built as part of the airport's 1961 expansion. The 84-foot structure was designed by well-known Austin-based architects Arthur Fehr and Charles Granger and is noted for its mid-century modern style. The control tower has been preserved in its original location and was recommended for local historic designation in 2018.²

Despite continued commercial development of the area, the neighborhood remains a mixed commercial and residential area northeast of downtown Austin. As such, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns retains integrity of setting.

Feeling and Association: For the purposes of this nomination, integrity of feeling and association are similar. The building has remained in continual use as a motel for nearly 30 years and has shifted to focusing on long-term apartment rentals. Exterior and interior alterations have been minimal and do not take away from the building's appearance. As such, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns retains integrity of both feeling and association.

Design: The buildings feature typical elements of post-World War II motor inn design as they are larger than typical motor courts of the era, are comprised of two stories, and are organized around a courtyard. Additionally, as a long-term stay facility, the individual units featured kitchenettes. Although research did not identify if every room contained a kitchenette, the subject building's shift to apartment use maintained this feature. The complex's two-story structure is clad in a combination of tan brick, flagstone, and standing seam metal siding indicative of a mid-century motel. The exterior remains intact and is largely representative of what it looked like at the time of construction. At the interior, alterations were typically limited to unit upgrades of both appliances and finishes. The interior floorplan and separations of public and private spaces remains intact. As such, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns retains integrity of design.

Materials and Workmanship: Like integrity of feeling and association, for the purposes of this nomination integrity of materials and workmanship are similar. Minimal alterations have occurred since the building's completion in 1968,

¹ C.J. Hughes, "End of the Runway: New Homes Are Rising," *The New York Times*, March 12, 2006.

² Ben Wear, "Tower Could Be Preserved," *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX), February 28, 2018.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

leaving the historic appearance intact. At the time of construction, the materiality of the building was limited to brick, flagstone and standing seam metal cladding and metal casement windows at the exterior. These materials remain today. As a motel, the workmanship of the building's design is utilitarian, as was necessary to keep maintenance at a minimum. The overall workmanship of the building has not been altered, and its original appearance remains. As such, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns retains integrity of both materials and design.

Overall, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns retains integrity and remains recognizable to a contemporary from its period of significance.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Statement of Significance

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns is a late postwar example of roadside lodging and reflects the industry's experimentation with new lodging models that included short-term and long-term rentals. At a local level, the property is distinct for its location away from major north-south roads and highways such as Congress Avenue and Interstate 35, heavily travelled thoroughfares that boasted dozens of competing motor courts, motels, and motor inns through 20th century. The nominated building was constructed in 1968 as part of small Texas-based chain of motels, run by Tennessee-native Zolon Wilkins, Sr. Wilkins grew the motel chain from about 7 properties in 1967 to 15 in the 1970s. Austin was the largest city with a Lexington-brand motel. Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns was built just outside the entrance to Austin Municipal Airport, also known as Robert Mueller Municipal Airport (1930-1999), and now serves as a reminder that the former airport precipitated independent commercial development to serve air travelers. The building's construction, in fact, was done at a time when significant increases in commercial air travel resulted in a shift in transportation preferences with thousands of individuals flying in and out of the municipal airport in the 1960s. Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns accommodated this new form of traveler offering both short- and long-term stays. The former Mueller airport site has since been extensively developed, and Lexington is one of the few buildings or structures associated with the airport and the related nearby businesses that once served air travelers. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for the period of significance, 1968-1973.

Property History

Prior to the construction of the subject building, the property was undeveloped. Although roadways, including Manor Road and Airport Boulevard, were developed prior to the 1960s, residential and commercial development in the area was sparse. At that time, the primary industry of Austin's northeast section was the municipal airport.

In 1968, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns opened their Austin location at the intersection of Manor Road and Anchor Lane.³ The building's construction followed the opening of the new airport terminal in 1961, which was accessed from Manor Road. Upon opening, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns immediately began advertising their location "nearest" the airport, which sparked an approximately 30-year relationship between the two industries.⁴

The surrounding neighborhood was redeveloped following the opening of the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport in 1999, resulting in the closing of the municipal airport, but Lexington has remained relatively undisturbed since construction. Prior to 1984, the subject building was sold and rebranded the Kensington Motor Lodge and Apartments. In the late-1990s, it again changed names to the Kensington Suite & Apartments.⁵ During this time, the building's use shifted from motel and long-term stay to affordable housing, which it remains in use as today.

Early History of Roadside Lodging

The marriage of the hotel and the automobile resulted in the motel, a form of lodging that became a phenomenon in mid-20th century American culture that is still prominent and recognizable today. A variety of motel types evolved over decades of development, and in the years following World War II, motels developed into a common component of the larger hospitality industry. This evolution directly paralleled the growth of the automobile as an everyday component of American society, as well as the development and routine maintenance of the American road system. Historians John

³ "Lexington has Grown," *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX), Feb. 25, 1968.

⁴ "Now Renting," *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX), Aug. 12, 1968.

⁵ Austin, Texas City Directories, 1980-1999.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Jakle, Keith Sculle, and Jefferson Rogers expertly detail the motel's evolution in their book, *The Motel in America*. The trio explained:

Changing motel morphology was characterized by evolution rather than revolution. The growth of automobile travel and the demand for new automobile-convenient lodging facilities along American highways prompted the trend toward larger and more luxurious facilities in order to capture more and more of the traditional hotel trade. Older, obsolete motels continued to serve less affluent travelers or lent themselves to ready re-cycling as low-cost weekly or monthly apartment rental, especially for low-income migrants.⁶

In their book, the authors explain the progression, or “morphology,” as they call it, paying specific attention to both building type and building arrangement within the overall site. The three indicate that motel's earliest iterations were auto camps and tourist homes, shortly followed by the cabin camp, cottage court, motor court, motor inn, and highway hotel. Motels across the country toyed with the overall application of each design model, resulting in the many unique roadside attractions that dominated the American landscape.

The auto camp of the western United States was the earliest model of roadside lodging for motorists. Initial auto camps were often the result of people setting up camp, or squatting, on private property.⁷ At first, the camps were free, though the advent of transient long-term residents resulted in the implementation of fees at the camps. The monetization of auto camps brought developers and investors into the fold, which quickly led to enhancements within the type.⁸ Tourist homes then became popular, and, unlike auto camps, were private homes that travelers could rent by the night, providing a more welcoming atmosphere than other roadside lodging. The houses were often situated adjacent highways or near downtown centers along major roads and were located via lawn signage.⁹ Another option for travelers was the cabin camp, a group of individual cabins available for nightly rent and the first true motel style lodging. Cabin camps featured a variety of layouts, incorporating elements of the auto camp and tourist home. Many, particularly those in the early years, however, were only seasonally operated. As the industry grew, cabin camps also added additional services, including gas and food.¹⁰ Later, the cottage court enhanced the cabin camp model. Cottage courts consisted of a group of rentable cottages splayed throughout a larger site. The cottages were often arranged geometrically around a centralized open space, the court. After 1930, attached garages became a popular design feature to the individual cottages and resulted in landscaped lawns in spaces not used for parking.¹¹

Post-World War II Roadside Lodging

Motor Court: Though the motor court predates World War II, the type became almost synonymous with the word motel in the Post-War Period. The motor court was planned similarly to cottage courts, though the one-story structures often existed as a single, elongated building with a covered front porch that stretched its entirety. The building, which could be constructed in a variety of shapes including a single-row, L-shaped, and U-shaped, fronted a large courtyard, that was reminiscent of an outdoor lobby. Travelers could stay for the night and easily park in the organized lot around the courtyard. In addition, by the 1950s and 1960s, swimming pools became common fixtures in the courtyard as motels tried to gain more business by expanding their offerings.

⁶ John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America*, Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, MD, 1996, p. 55.

¹² Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Motor Inn: When the motor inn was introduced in the 1950s, it was billed as a larger and more luxurious version of the motor court, complete with a second and potentially third story as well as expanded room features. Additionally, the motor inn was often designed to highlight the pool area as a defining feature. Motor inns were generally located in metropolitan areas, often near airports or highway junctions to promote ease of travel.

By the time the motor inn entered the fold, hospitality chains had recognized roadside lodging's potential and were increasingly more active in motel construction. With increased capital required to construct and operate motels, the single owner, mom-and-pop approach that had been common before the war became a less financially viable option. As a result, motor inns took on a more generic brand design approach, in which individual locations were constructed in a common, recognizable style.¹² Both national and regional chains, such as Holiday Inn, Howard Johnson's and Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns all designed similar complexes.

Highway Hotel: The highway hotel was initially developed in the 1920s and 1930s, during the early years of automobile traveling. The concept was reimagined in the 1960s, however, blending the successful roadside motel concept with the high-rise downtown hotel. The typical highway hotel, therefore, was a box or cylindrically shaped high-rise structure, surrounded by parking. The buildings were designed similarly to the modern hotel, complete with public spaces at the first floor and private rooms accessed by a centralized corridor at the upper floors.¹³

The evolution of motel styles accurately depicts the ever-changing philosophies of the industry in the mid-20th century period. What originally began as people setting up camp on private property evolved into multiple story motels that offered enhanced accommodations as owners realized the market potential of the motel. These developments also highlight the success of the lodging type as advertised to automotive travelers, who appreciated the growing access to comfortable roadside lodging over the decades. By the 1960s and 1970s, the business model had also evolved, and entrepreneurs incorporated long-term boarding options in addition to the traditional nightly and weekly rates.¹⁴ This long-term stay concept became prominent in some regional markets at that time, and the growth and success of Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns in Texas is an excellent example of this new business model.

While many older motels struggled to survive into the late-20th century, the long-term stay concept foreshadowed the future use of many motels in the later portions of the 20th century. As Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers explained, many motels would later become low-cost weekly or monthly apartment rentals because their design was easily adaptable to longer term housing.¹⁵ This was especially true for motor inns located on the outskirts of cities. The history of Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns in Austin, Texas serves as an excellent representation of the motor inn's development within the overall industry: from straightforward nightly lodging, to enhanced long-term stays, and, eventually, to housing rentals.

¹² Ibid.

¹⁴ "For a Day or Lifetime, Lexington Apts. Ready," *The Irving Daily News* (Irving, TX), February 25, 1968.

¹⁴ "For a Day or Lifetime, Lexington Apts. Ready," *The Irving Daily News* (Irving, TX), February 25, 1968.

¹⁵ Jakle et. al, *The Motel in America*, p. 55.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Motel Development in Austin, Texas

Since the 1800s, Congress Avenue has been the primary north-south roadway in and out of downtown, and as Austin expanded in the first half of the 20th century, it became increasingly commercial. Both the 1922 and 1935 Sanborn Maps, however, show that South Congress Avenue, south of the river, was only sparsely developed.¹⁶ This would drastically change over the next decades as the growth of the automobile industry was becoming increasingly prominent in American society. After 1935, auto repair shops were common along major roads, and there were a much higher concentration of garages at residences throughout the city.¹⁷ In addition, between 1935 and 1962, the next year Sanborn maps were produced, S. Congress became the capital's primary hub for motels. At least 10 motels of various types, styles, and sizes were constructed on both the east and west sides of the avenue during that period.

The Terrace Motor Hotel, originally constructed in 1951, was perhaps the biggest and most diverse of the S. Congress group.¹⁸ The original portion of the motel was situated to the south of the intersection of S. Congress and Academy Drive and consisted of a combination of the cottage court and motor court types. The Terrace Motor Hotel later expanded north along S. Congress to include five annex developments, and in total the company controlled 310-units in a wide variety of motel types.¹⁹ The Terrace Motor Hotel was demolished in 2016.²⁰ The Austin Motel is a second example and remains extant in its original location on S. Congress, directly across from the Terrace Motor Hotel. The Austin Motel opened in 1938 under the direction of the Eck family, and Leonard Eck holds the distinction of opening Austin's first business south of the Colorado in 1889.²¹ The Austin Motel was designed in the Motor Court type with three rows of buildings set back on its parcel. An office, restaurant, gas station, and the motel pool served as the primary visual component along S. Congress.²²

In the 1950s, the construction and development of the interstate highway system forever altered the landscape of the United States. Eisenhower's Interstate Highway Act of 1956, which appropriated "\$25 billion for the construction of over 40,000 miles of interstate highways," resulted in a new transportation network that made automobile travel between cities and states more efficient.²³ In Austin, the development of Interstate 35 on the city's eastern edge resulted in the realignment of the former US 79-81, originally known as East Avenue. The opening of I-35 in 1959 effectively shifted Austin's downtown core further to the east. In doing so, businesses along the centrally located Guadalupe Street, Lamar Boulevard, and Congress Avenue were negatively impacted by the loss of travelers that otherwise passed by daily.²⁴ Additionally, the interstate was constructed near the airport. Businesses began to open along Airport Boulevard and Manor Road to service travelers, another sign of the eastward shift in Austin's commercial development.

Like the development of roadside motels along S. Congress in the first half of the 20th century, motel development shifted to I-35, in the second half of the century. By that time, motels had evolved from the standard cottage and motor court type to the larger motor inn, which maximized the unit-count by increasing the overall height. The Villa Capri Hotel, which

¹⁶ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps, Austin, TX, 1922-1935.

¹⁷ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps, Austin, TX, 1935.

¹⁸ Terrace Motor Lodge, Demolition and Relocation Permits, Austin, Texas Historic Landmark Commission, Jan. 25, 2016.

¹⁹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps, Austin, TX, 1935, Revised 1962.

²⁰ Terrace Motor Lodge, Demolition and Relocation Permits, Austin, Texas Historic Landmark Commission, Jan. 25, 2016.

²¹ "History of the Austin Motel," *AustinMotel.com*, accessed March 1, 2021, <https://austinmotel.com/culture/history/>.

²² Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps, Austin, TX, 1935, Revised 1962.

²³ Joshua Long, *Weird City: Sense of Place and Creative Resistance in Austin, Texas* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2010), 623.

²⁴ Anderson, "Rehabilitation Models for the Treatment of Historic Motels and Motor Courts," p. 30-31.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

opened in 1958, was located to the west of I-35, on E. 24th Street. The Motor Inn Villa Capri consisted of two separate groupings of two-story row-shaped buildings that outlined central courtyards with swimming pools.²⁵ The Villa Capri was demolished c. 1987 as the University of Texas at Austin expanded their campus facilities east.

In 1968, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, a Texas-based chain of motels, opened a motor inn motel on Manor Road, directly adjacent the airport.²⁶ Lexington's Austin location illustrates the growth of the motor inn type in the late mid-20th century period. The earliest motels had begun as basic lodging for those traveling by car. With time, they evolved to offer more services to consumers, including those traveling by means of transport other than the automobile. As the closest lodging to the airport, Lexington catered directly to visitors traveling by air, not just motorists. Further, it promoted long-term stays, offering its guests both a comfortable home and a quick stay depending on their needs. It also had two-stories and larger rooms, providing more space, and mirroring the larger evolution motel design.

At the end of the 20th century, chain hotels and motels took the place of "Mom and Pop" cottage courts and motor courts. Brand names, such as Motel 6, Residence Inn, and Marriott continued to construct highway hotels along the I-35 corridor. Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns remains an excellent example of a local motel that showcases the evolution of the hotel type in Austin. Additionally, it is important in the history of the Robert Mueller Municipal Airport, a signifier of the commercial development in North Austin towards the end of the 20th century.

Robert Mueller Municipal Airport and Commercial Development

Unlike most other Austin motels, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns was in northeast Austin, long Airport Boulevard rather than on S. Congress Avenue or on I-35 closer to downtown. At the time of construction in 1968, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns was the closest motel to the former Robert Mueller Municipal Airport, Austin's commercial airport in the 20th century. Therefore, the airport played a direct role in the motel's location and significance.

The airport opened in 1930 after the city's Chamber of Commerce purchased what was considered to be the "only large level tract anywhere near Austin that could have been used for an Airport."²⁷ The airport was named in honor of City Councilor Robert Mueller, the first Austin city councilmember to die while holding office.²⁸ At that time, the airport contained only one runway and did not offer a commercial flight until 1935, when Braniff Airways began offering flights to Chicago and New York, among other major cities.²⁹ Historic aerial imagery indicates that the airport remained limited to only two runways into the 1950s. The same images also show that the airport was accessed further north within the city along Airport Boulevard.³⁰

In the mid-century, the population of Austin was increasing, which resulted in residential development adjacent the airport. At that same time, the growing number of flights in and out of Austin, as well as advancements in aircrafts themselves, necessitated the expansion of the airport.³¹ In May 1961, the "new" terminal and control tower at the municipal airport opened in a dedication ceremony headlined by then Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson. The terminal and tower were designed in the Modern Movement in architecture by notable Austin-based architects Arthur Fehr and

²⁵ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps, Austin, TX, 1935, Revised 1962.

²⁶ "Lexington has Grown," *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX), Feb. 25, 1968.

²⁷ "The Munny Airport," *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX), April 5, 1930.

²⁸ "History of the Airport," Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, accessed May 10, 2021, <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/history-airport>.

²⁹ "Austin is Only 7 Hours Away from Chicago," *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX), June 21, 1935.

³⁰ 1952 aerial images accessed May 10, 2021, *HistoricAerials.com*, <https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>.

³¹ Ben Wear, "Tower Could Be Preserved," *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX), Feb. 28, 2018.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Charles Granger.³² The introduction of the new terminal also resulted in a new primary entrance to the airport off of Manor Road. Concurrent with the construction of the terminal and control tower, the airport also expanded its runway system.³³

The 1961 expansion of the airport foreshadowed the increased activity in air travel that followed in the later parts of the decade. By that point in time, jet aircrafts were no longer solely used for military purposes, and were being applied to both private and commercial uses. Despite the new terminal and heavy fanfare of it and its award-winning modern design, for much of the 1960s, the airport remained a regional one. At the beginning of the decade, Continental Airlines maintained roundtrip flights to Los Angeles out of the airport. These flights, however, were pulled by 1963. Similar short-lived flights to Chicago and Kansas City also took place in the early-1960s. In 1966, the frustration around the lack of direct flights to major cities outside of Texas was noticeable. The municipal airport's then director of aviation, Vance Murphy, voiced this frustration to *The Austin American-Statesman*: "If a person wants to fly through here from the East Coast, he has to go to Houston and change over. Then, if he wants to go on West, he has to go to Dallas and make another changeover."³⁴

In 1966, Braniff International Airlines and Trans-Texas Airways (T-TA) were the only two airlines servicing Austin. The city's Chamber of Commerce actively sought to expand the services provided, particularly, by Braniff, which resulted in the announcement Braniff would start to fly their Boeing 727 jets out of the airport that year; a similar announcement was made from T-TA about their use of the Douglas DC-9.³⁵ Austin's introduction to the jet age, which was begun with Fehr and Granger's modern terminal and control tower, was furthered by Braniff's opening of direct service from the Texas capital to the nation's capital in 1968.³⁶ That same year, more than 460,000 travelers were estimated to pass through the airport, compared to 106,000 in 1955, illustrating the immense growth of Austin's airlines during the 1960s.³⁷ Colonel Vance Murphy, base commander of Bergstrom Air Force Base between 1953 and 1958, described aviation as "a vital growing highway that's helping to pump economic strength into our country and into our community."³⁸

As the airport expanded, the area immediately surrounding it also saw increased development. Although historic aerial images indicate that expansion into northeast Austin was largely residential, between 1964 and 1973 industrial and commercial development along Airport Boulevard and Manor Road illustrate the increased activity around the airport. Alongside Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, additional development associated with the airport included the 1965 construction of the Trinity Testing Laboratories of Austin, Inc. building at 3601 Manor Road, directly across the street from the airport's entrance, and the construction of a warehouse on Anchor Lane c. 1966. The Trinity Testing Laboratory building was designed for the construction testing services company who conducted some business at Robert Mueller Municipal Airport, as well as Bergstrom Air Force Base, and the University of Texas at Austin, though it was not as closely tied to the airport as Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns. The building is extant, but the Trinity Testing Laboratory is no longer in operation at that location.

Few businesses were present around the airport perimeter, although those that did exist were mostly concentrated along Airport Boulevard and Manor Road. A shopping center at 3124 Manor Road, just west of Lexington Apartments and

³² "Administrative History," Austin (Tex.), Aviation Department, Austin Historic Center, accessed May 10, 2021, <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/aushc/00544/ahc-00544.html>.

³³ 1964 aerial images accessed May 10, 2021, *HistoricAerials.com*, <https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>.

³⁴ "Friday Chamber Meeting Seeks Better Air Service," *The Austin American-Statesman*, March 16, 1966.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ "Flight to Washington, Citizens to Help Braniff Celebrate," *The Austin American-Statesman*, March 16, 1968.

³⁷ Bob Inderman, "Rotary Speaker Says Aviation's A Big Business," *Austin American-Statesman*, (Austin, TX) July 17, 1968.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Motor Inns, hosted a rotating assortment of stores as leased commercial space.³⁹ In 1963, a 7-Eleven at 2213 Airport Boulevard opened and later a Stop N Go Market opened at 3842 Airport Boulevard, providing conveniences to guests, travelers, and locals. But like most of the other businesses in the area, they were general operations, not specific to the area nor directly tied to the airport. Other new stores in the area catered to the nation's emphasis on automobile travel, and in the 1960s the property at 2204 Airport Boulevard was a Sinclair Service Station. The same location became a rental car service in the 1970s. In 1971, Firestone Truck Tire Center opened a new location at 2201 Airport Boulevard, just across the street from Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns. While some of the buildings surrounding the airport may remain, none of the mid- to late-twentieth century businesses are extant besides the motor inn.

The hospitality industry is noticeably absent during this period of growth surrounding the municipal airport. Historic aerial images confirm that Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns was the only motel or hotel to be constructed east of Airport Boulevard, adjacent the airport's entrance. Motel and hotel development in this section of the city was largely located on Manor Road to the west of Airport Boulevard. Upon opening, the motel routinely advertised its proximity to the airport in local newspapers, such as *The Austin American-Statesman* (see Figures 2, 3, and 4). These advertisements highlight that the motel is "Nearest Airport," "Near Airport," and "At The Airport," among others.⁴⁰ Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, therefore, took advantage of the increased traffic surrounding the airport, which by 1968 offered 37 daily flights to New York, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Kansas City, Memphis, and New Orleans, as well as service to Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston.⁴¹ Further, in 1968, there were approximately 1,257 passengers traveling through the airport each day.⁴² The more travelers going to and from Austin meant more people needed lodging during their trips, and the location of Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns was easily situated for airport travel and only a short drive away from downtown.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns remains one of the few remnants of commercial activity, specifically the hospitality industry, directly associated with the airport's growth and expansion in the jet age of the 1960s. Other businesses that catered to travelers were scattered during the latter half of the twentieth century and lacked longevity in their locations. The subject building retains its integrity and is still used as long-term lodging, although it has shifted to housing, typical of many motels. Increased use of the airport in the 1970s and 1980s, highlighted the shortcomings of the confined space. As early as the 1970s, airport officials explored alternative sites for an expanded airport in Austin. In 1999, the Robert Mueller Municipal Airport closed, with air travel in Austin moving south to the former Bergstrom Airforce Base where a new international airport opened.⁴³ Since the closing of the municipal airport, development in the area has been pronounced. As a result, all that currently remains of the former airport are the 1961 control tower, a 1940s era wooden hangar, and a private terminal.⁴⁴ Fehr and Granger's terminal was demolished in 2002.⁴⁵ The former airport, now consists of a large residential development and only minimally acknowledges its heritage as the capital city's primary airport during the majority of the 20th century. As development continues both within and outside the former airport, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns serves as a reminder of the mid-century development surrounding Austin's Robert Mueller Municipal Airport during its most important period of growth and the many travelers it served.

³⁹ *Austin American-Statesman*, March 15, 1962.

⁴⁰ "Now Renting," *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX), Aug. 12, 1968; "The Lexington Apts. and Motor Inns," *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX), May 31, 1970; "The Lexington Apts. and Motor Inns," *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX), Nov. 29, 1981.

⁴¹ "Rapid Growth of Airline Service," *The Austin American*, May 8, 1968.

⁴² Inderman.

⁴³ "Administrative History," Austin (Tex.), Aviation Department, Austin Historic Center, accessed May 10, 2021, <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/aushc/00544/ahc-00544.html>.

⁴⁴ Barry Harrell, "At Mueller, Defunct Control Tower Heading Toward Retro Restoration," *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX), July 30, 2010.

⁴⁵ Wear, "Tower Could Be Preserved."

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

The History of Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns

By the 1960s, the state capital fully embraced the motel industry along major roads like Congress Avenue and I-35. In various other locations around the state, the industry similarly built out, progressing through the various forms of motels as described by Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers. At that time, in Dallas-Fort Worth area, a local entrepreneur concocted a unique hybrid model for what would become a prominent regional motel chain.

Zolon Wilkins Sr., a native of Lexington, Tennessee, moved to Dallas in 1950, bringing with him his family and an aluminum awning company. By the end of the decade, Wilkins opened a seven-unit motel, named Zolon's Courts, in Grand Prairie, Texas. He also owned several apartment complexes in the greater Dallas-Fort Worth area. In 1961, Wilkins opened the first Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, named in honor of his Tennessee roots.⁴⁶ The business model was described as "unique" in multiple newspapers, with the *Grand Prairie Daily News* also referring to it as "unusual" and "different."⁴⁷ The concept paired Wilkins' two housing businesses into one, offering both traditional nightly and weekly motel stays, as well as long-term apartment living.

The development of Wilkins' motels was evolutionary. His original motel, Zolon's Courts, was a simple design of the motor court type. As he developed his Lexington brand, however, Wilkins experimented with the various shapes and forms associated with the motor inn, while maintaining similar design qualities at each location as was typical of chain motels. Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, therefore, were two-story buildings with street-facing gabled roofs in either rows, L-shapes, T-shapes, U-shapes, or variants of each. The gabled elevations generally featured an ornamental veneer consisting of a combination of brick, flagstone, and various types of siding, such as painted stucco or standing seam metal siding. In some mid-1960s models, such as the former Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns in Dennison and Paris, Texas, the buildings were constructed in a square shape, with a central courtyard and pool. Others, that were similar in form to the subject building, featured only partial segments of gabled roofs, with the remainder of the roof left flat.

The motor inn type of motel, as defined by Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, was often situated near airports or highway junctions. Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns generally followed this development pattern as they added locations throughout Texas in the 1960s. Grand Prairie's Lexington, for example, is located along Texas State Highway 180, near that highway's junction with State Highway 161. Similarly, the Euless location fronts Texas State Highway 10, in close approximation to State Highway 183. Desirable real estate was particularly important for motels, as high volumes of traffic are needed to survive. Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns advertisements from the 1960s, therefore, highlight the chain's convenient locations, adjacent specific factories, highways, airports, or tourist attractions like Six Flags Over Texas.⁴⁸

By 1967, there were seven Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns spread across the State of Texas. In a 1968 article announcing the chain's eighth location in Austin, Texas, *The Grand Prairie Daily News* indicated that the company was operating motels in "Irving, Arlington, Grand Prairie, Euless, Lubbock, Denison, and Paris."⁴⁹ The Austin location was constructed on Manor Road, in close approximation to Airport Boulevard, also known as Texas State Highway Loop 111,

⁴⁶ "Zolon A. Wilkins Sr.," *The Fort Worth Star* (Fort Worth, TX), April 6, 2014.

⁴⁷ "Apartment-Motel Having Weekend Grand Opening," *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX), March 20, 1965; "Belief in 'Different' Idea Has Paid Off," *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX), March 20, 1965.

⁴⁸ "Now Renting," *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX), April 14, 1963; "Lexington Apartments," *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX), April 28, 1963; "Now Renting," *The Austin American Statesman* (Austin, TX), August 12, 1968.

⁴⁹ "Lexington has Grown," *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX), Feb. 25, 1968.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

and the airport. This was an intentional choice of location, intended to expand the motor inn's clientele to include those traveling by air, while other motels were concentrated along I-35, only catering towards guests in the city center. It was an affordable option for an overnight stay, but it also offered larger rooms and amenities like the pool for long-term guests. Additionally, historic aerials show that the motor inn was located amongst businesses, including restaurants, mechanic shops, and convenience stores like 7-Eleven and Stop N Go Market. Although much of the surrounding area was residential, guests still had easy access to necessities near the airport and the highway and were only a short drive away from downtown Austin.

The success of the Lexington chain is evident in its growth into the 1970s, which extended to 15 locations in Texas and Oklahoma.⁵⁰ At that time, the company proudly branded itself as a "Home Away from Home," where lodgers could stay "For a Day or Lifetime."⁵¹ Many locations additionally enjoyed high occupancy rates. The success led founder Zolon Wilkins to exclaim, "I've always known [the hybrid living concept] would work... And it has."⁵² In 1958, motel managers in Austin reported that the average length of stay for families was one to two days, with 15% to 20% staying for three days.⁵³ Wilkins proposed a new approach, inviting guests to stay for longer periods of time. During the rise of the Lexington brand, typical guests included both white-collar and blue-collar workers, some in town for a short stay, while others were permanent residents. Additional tenants included preachers, salesmen, and young individuals searching for work.⁵⁴ Hiring managers would often travel to Austin and stay at the subject property for a couple of days, hosting interviews in their rooms. The location near the airport was accessible for the hiring managers arriving by plane and close enough to downtown that locals could easily drive to the motor inn for interviews. Further, once employment had been offered both the manager and the new employee could travel back to the company's home base through the airport. Contemporary newspaper articles also indicate that it was common for newlyweds to reside in the Austin Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, renting rooms for extended amounts of time during the early days of their marriage while they prepared to purchase their own homes. The Austin location, being the only Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns in a heavily populous city, served the standard clientele for short and long stays, but was also impacted by the municipal airport traffic.

In the late-1970s and early-1980s, Zolon Wilkins evolved his business once again and created Lexington Hotel Suites and Inns.⁵⁵ The hotels, which often closely resembled the earlier motor inns, were among the first in the country to utilize the all-suite concept.⁵⁶ The suites were made up of one- and two-bedroom units with an adjoining kitchen and living room space.⁵⁷ In addition to the new concept, the company also developed new slogans, including: "A Suite for the Price of a Room"; "Suite Dreams Are Made of This!"; and, "INTERSUITE."⁵⁸ One such example of the all-suite Lexington's is located along I-35 to the north of Austin. This example is constructed in a very similar design to the earlier Austin Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns but is more typical of the Highway Hotel model of the late-20th century period. As

⁵⁰ Jakle et. al, *The Motel in America*, p. 221.

⁵¹ "Now Renting," *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX), April 14, 1963; "Lexington Apartments," *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX), April 28, 1963; "For a Day or Lifetime, Lexington Apts. Ready," *The Irving Daily News* (Irving, TX), February 25, 1968; "Now Renting," *The Austin American Statesman* (Austin, TX), August 12, 1968.

⁵² "Belief In 'Different' Idea Has Paid Off," *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX), March 20, 1965.

⁵³ "Thousands Will Flock Here This Summer for Meetings," *The American-Statesman* (Austin, TX), May 20, 1958.

⁵⁴ "Ibid.

⁵⁵ "Zolon A. Wilkins Sr.," *The Fort Worth Star* (Fort Worth, TX), April 6, 2014.

⁵⁶ Jakle et. al, *The Motel in America*, p. 221.

⁵⁷ "Now Open the Most Unique Concept in the Lodging Industry," *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX), Oct. 10, 1981.

⁵⁸ Trademarks Owned by Lexington Apartments & Motor Inns, *Corporationwiki.com*, accessed March 2, 2021, <https://trademarks.corporationwiki.com/marks-owner/lexington-apartments-motor-inns/169308949/>.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

such, the building is not only larger, totaling three-stories, but also features a defined lobby space that is accessed by a semi-circle driveway. Additionally, the suites' features an enlarged courtyard and pool area.

Around that same time, prior to 1984, many Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns were sold, including the subject building, and rebranded as the Kensington Motor Lodge and Apartments. Wilkins, as well as his son Zolon Wilkins Jr., continued to evolve the Lexington brand throughout the late-20th century period. The two later founded the Lexington Services Corporation, which became one of the largest third-party hotel reservation providers in the United States. The original Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns locations, however, did not fare as well as their founder, and many of those constructed in the 1960s, including the Irving and Lubbock locations, were demolished in the late-20th century. Others, including the original Grand Prairie location, were heavily altered with partial demolition. The Austin location, therefore, retains a great deal of integrity when compared with its brother- and sister-locations.

Conclusion

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns' Austin location is locally significant under Criterion A in the category of COMMERCE as an excellent example of the motor inn type of motel that evolved from earlier motel iterations towards the end of the mid-20th century period, as well as for its association with Robert Mueller Municipal Airport's shift from a regional to a national airport in the 1960s, which resulted in increased development both within and around the airport. Austin's expansion in the mid-20th century, as evidenced by its expanded footprint and road network, resulted in the development of numerous motels, the majority concentrated along the north-south running Congress Avenue and I-35 following its construction. By the end of the 1960s, however, additional roadways and the introduction of various industries in the city's eastern and northeastern sections developed a demand for motels in other areas. Unlike the numerous motels closer to downtown, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns was developed along two major boulevards near the airport in north Austin. As such, it could service motor travelers and air travelers alike during an era when the airport's flight volume increased and expanded nationally. Further, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns exemplifies the evolution of the motel type during the 1960s as it enhanced its offerings for guests. It stayed true to the motor inn type, complete with its courtyard and pool, while expanding upon the standard motel business model to cater to more travelers and to allow for long-term residents. While recent redevelopment in the area of the former airport has resulted in a near complete loss of all fabric related to air travel, Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns remains as one of the few examples of commercial development, and perhaps more importantly, as one of the only examples of the hospitality industry to be constructed during the Robert Mueller Municipal Airport's jet age expansion in the 1960s. The period of significance is 1968-1973.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Bibliography

- “Administrative History.” Austin (Tex.), Aviation Department. Austin History Center. Accessed May 10, 2021. <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/aushc/00544/ahc-00544.html>.
- “Apartment-Motel Having Weekend Grand Opening.” *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX). March 20, 1965.
- “Austin is Only 7 Hours Away from Chicago.” *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX). June 21, 1935.
- “Belief in ‘Different’ Idea Has Paid Off.” *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX). March 20, 1965.
- “Boston’s Idea. Day When Tremont House was World’s Best.” *The Boston Globe*. April 10, 1895.
- “Brief History of Austin.” *Austin History Center*. Accessed March 1, 2021. <https://library.austintexas.gov/ahc/brief-history-austin>.
- “Figures on Growth of Tourist Camp Business.” *Hotel Monthly*. Vol. 43, December 1935.
- “Flight to Washington, Citizens to Help Braniff Celebrate.” *The Austin American-Statesman*. March 16, 1968.
- “For a Day or Lifetime, Lexington Apts. Ready.” *The Irving Daily News* (Irving, TX). February 25, 1968.
- “Friday Chamber Meeting Seeks Better Air Service.” *The Austin American-Statesman*. March 16, 1966.
- “History of the Airport.” Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. Accessed May 10, 2021. <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/history-airport>.
- “History of the Austin Motel.” *AustinMotel.com*. Accessed March 1, 2021. <https://austinmotel.com/culture/history/>.
- “Lexington Apartments.” *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX). April 28, 1963.
- “The Lexington Apts. and Motor Inns.” *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX). May 31, 1970.
- “The Lexington Apts. and Motor Inns.” *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX). Nov. 29, 1981.
- “Lexington has Grown.” *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX). February 25, 1968.
- “The Muny Airport.” *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX). April 5, 1930.
- “New System Aids Tourists.” *The Santa Maria Times* (Santa Maria, CA). December 19, 1925.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

“No Maps or Tents Needed by Automobile Tourists of the Future’ Say Expert.” *The Modesto Bee and News-Herald* (Modesto, CA). August 2019.

“Now Open The Most Unique Concept in the Lodging Industry.” *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX). October 10, 1981.

“Now Renting.” *The Grand Prairie Daily News* (Grand Prairie, TX). April 14, 1963.

“Now Renting.” *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX). August 12, 1968.

“Old Bridge May be Moved Up the River.” *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX). April 4, 1910.

“Pacific Coast ‘Road Homes’ to Welcome Tourists.” *Popular Science Monthly*. December 1922.

“Plans for New Bridge.” *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX). August 25, 1908.

“Rapid Growth of Airline Service.” *The Austin American*. May 8, 1968.

“State Highway Loop No. 111.” Highway Destination File. Texas Department of Transportation. Accessed February 26, 2021.

“Zolon A. Wilkins Sr.” *The Fort Worth Star* (Fort Worth, TX). April 6, 2014.

Anderson, Jessica Lauren. *Rehabilitation Models for the Treatment of Historic Motels and Motor Courts*. A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Texas at Austin in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Historic Preservation. University of Texas at Austin: Austin, TX. August 2013.

Belasco, Dr. Warren James. *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945*. MIT Press: Cambridge, MA. 1979.

City Directories. Austin, Texas. 1980-1999.

Harrell, Barry. “At Mueller, Defunct Control Tower Heading Toward Retro Restoration.” *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX). July 30, 2010.

Historic Aerial Imagery. Accessed May 10, 2021. Historicaerials.com.

Huddleston, John D. *Good Roads for Texas: A History of the Texas Highway Department, 1917-1947*. A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate College of Texas A&M University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Texas A&M University: College Station, TX. August 1981.

Hughes, C.J. “End of the Runway: New Homes Are Rising.” *The New York Times*. March 12, 2006.

Inderman, Bob. “Rotary Speaker Says Aviation’s A Big Business,” *Austin American-Statesman*, (Austin, TX) July 17, 1968.

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Jakle, John A. *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America*. University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, NE. 1985.

Jakle, John A., Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers. *The Motel in America*. Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, MD. 1996.

Klein, Christopher. "The First Great American Road Trip." *History.com*. June 29, 2016. Updated August 30, 2018. Accessed February 24, 2021. <https://www.history.com/news/the-first-great-american-road-trip>.

Long, Joshua. *Weird City: Sense of Place and Creative Resistance in Austin, Texas*. University of Texas Press: Austin, TX. 2010.

Molz, Anderson. "Tourist Homes." *Hotel Monthly*. Vol. 41, January 1933.

Pifano, Jimena Cruz. "West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek." National Register of Historic Places. Listed June 26, 2014.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps, Austin, TX, 1889-1962.

State Motor Vehicle Registrations, By Years, 1900-1945. Federal Highway Administration. April 1997.

Terrace Motor Lodge. Demolition and Relocation Permits. Austin, Texas Historic Landmark Commission. January 25, 2016.

Trademarks Owned by Lexington Apartments & Motor Inns. *Corporationwiki.com*. Accessed March 2, 2021. <https://trademarks.corporationwiki.com/marks-owner/lexington-apartments-motor-inns/169308949/>.

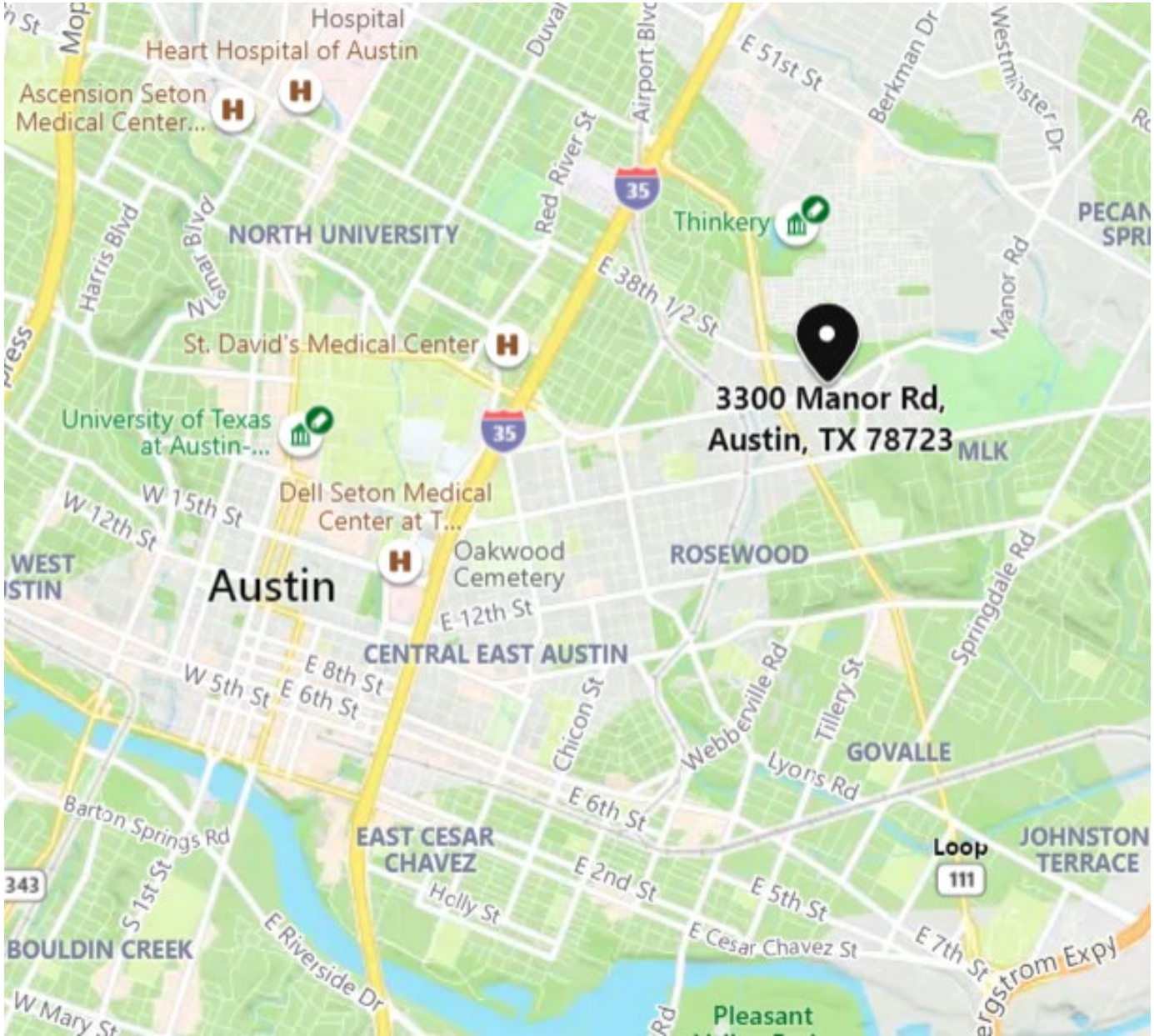
Wear, Ben. "Tower Could Be Preserved." *The Austin American-Statesman* (Austin, TX). Feb. 28, 2018.

SBR Draft

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Maps

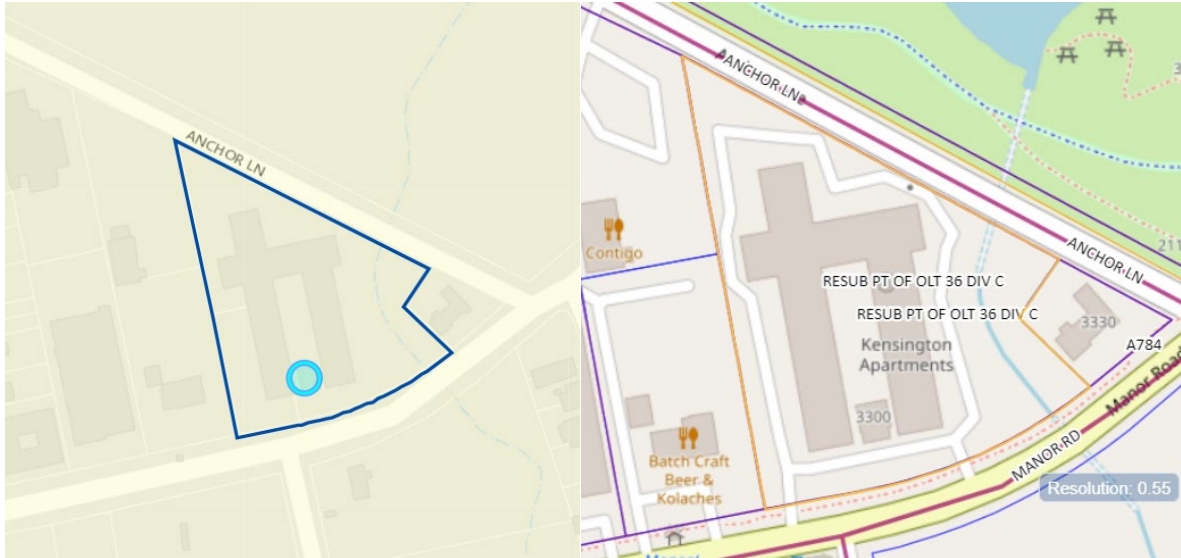
Map 1: Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns (3300 Manor Road) in Austin, Texas. Source: Bing Maps 8/18/2021



SBR Draft



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Map 2: The nominated boundary is the legal parcel recorded by the City of Austin in the Travis Central Appraisal District.



Map 3: Map Showing the Two Resources on Site



-  Office Building
-  Motel Building

SBR Draft

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Map 4: Map Showing UTM Coordinate



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Map 5: Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns Boundary Map



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figures

Figure 1: Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns Advertisement

Source: *The Austin American-Statesman*, Aug. 12, 1968.



SBR Draft

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 2: Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns Advertisement
Source: *The Austin American-Statesman*, May 31, 1970.

444-5844.

1 AND 2 BEDRM. AND EFFICIENCIES
ALL UTILITIES PAID
HEATED POOL—AMPLE PARKING
NEAR AIRPORT
OTHER LOCATIONS

IRVING
ARLINGTON
LUBBOCK
DENISON

GRAND PRAIRIE
EULESS
HURST
PARIS

THE Lexington[®]
APTS.
and MOTOR INNS
"A DAY OR A LIFETIME"

GR 8-3893
3300 MANOR RD.

BEAUTIFUL PEACE PARK

2
A
AC
A
501
4
—All
—Attr
—Cen
—Car
—Offs
—Clos
476
TWO
6 mo
8092
AC

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 3: Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns Advertisement
Source: *The Austin American-Statesman*, Nov. 29, 1981.

THE **Lexington**[®]
APTS.
and MOTOR INNS

"A Day Or A Lifetime"

3300 Manor Road
(At The Airport)
478-3893

No Required Lease
All Bills Paid

Daily • Weekly Rate

1 and 2 Bedroom Suites
Efficiencies

Direct Dial Telephone

Toll Free Reservation:
1-800-442-7682

Amarillo, Arlington, Austin,
Canyon, College Station,
Del Rio, Euless, Fort Worth,
Grand Prairie, Hurst, Irving,
Killeen, Lubbock, Midland,
Odessa, Pampa, Plainview,
San Angelo, Tempe

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 4: Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns Historic Site Aerial
Source: *HistoricAerials.com*



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 5: Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns Historic Current Aerial

Source: *Google Maps*

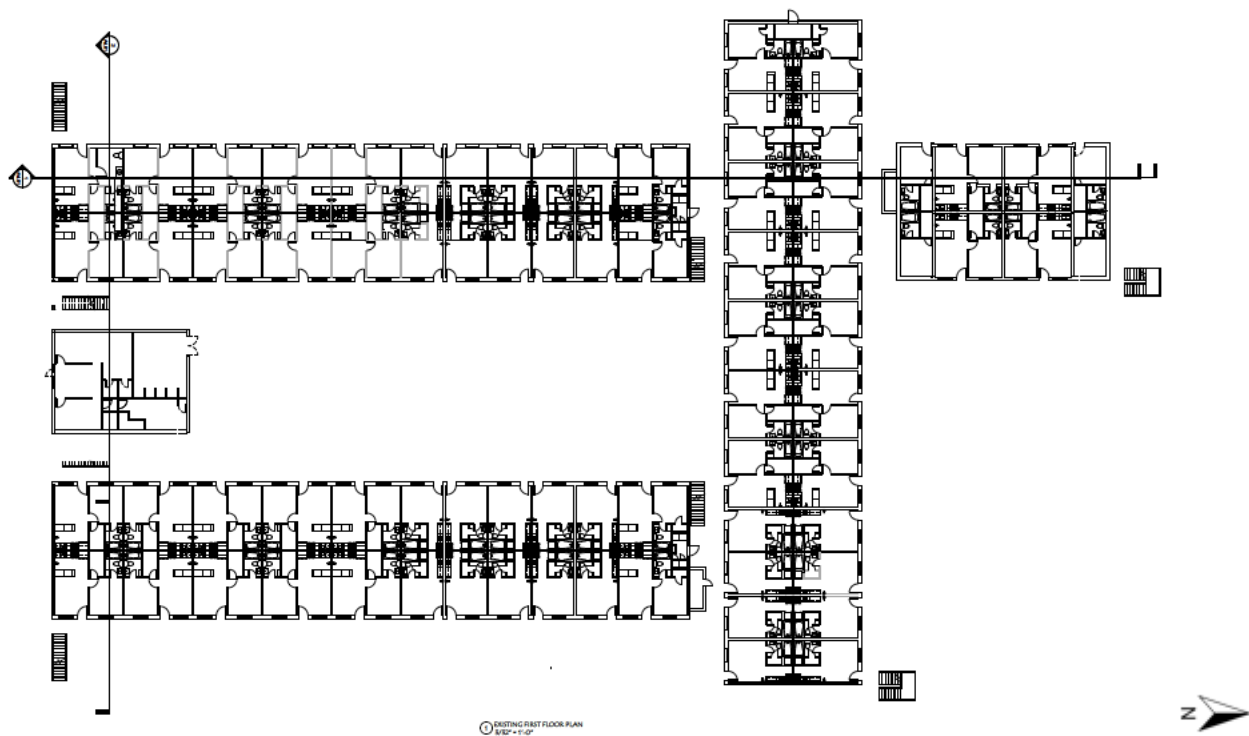


Current Aerial Image. Lexington outlined in red



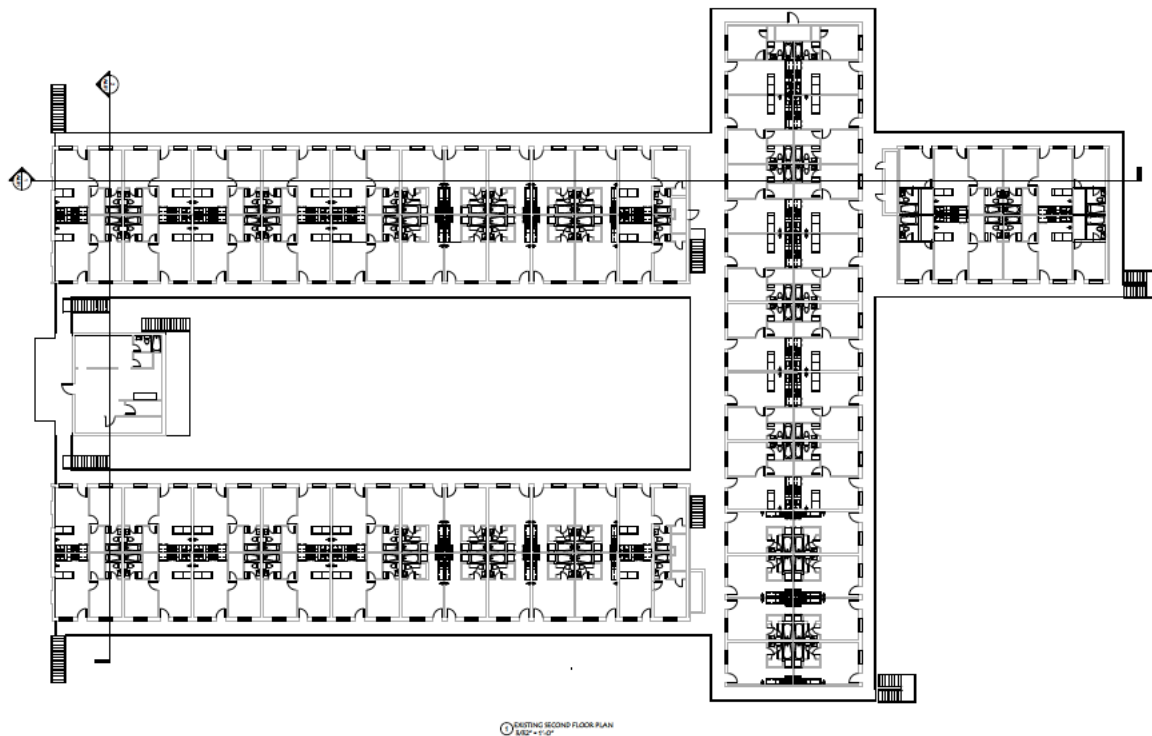
Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 6: Floor Plan – 1st Floor



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 7: Floor Plan – 2nd Floor



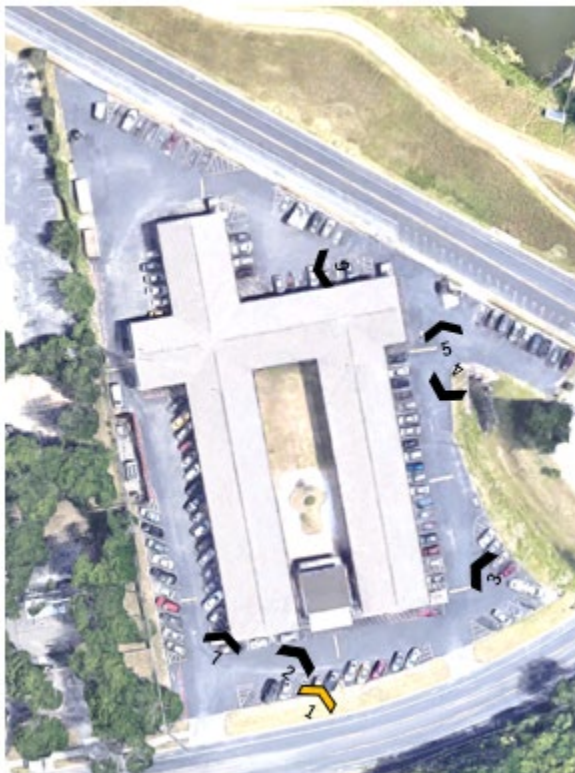
Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 8: Photo Key – Site, Exterior

Site, Exterior

Photos 1 – 7

Yellow arrow indicates starting point



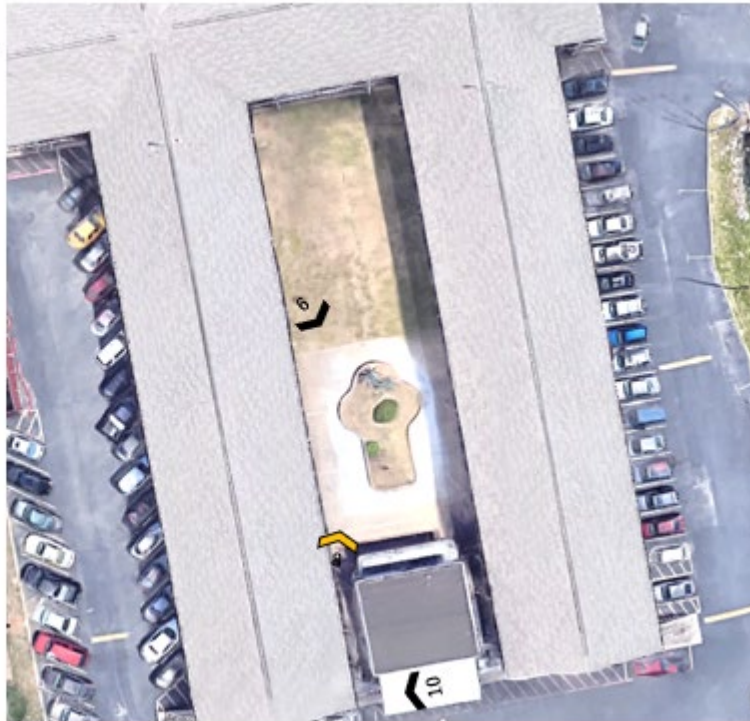
Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 9: Photo Key – Site, Courtyard

Site, Courtyard

Photos 8 - 10

Yellow arrow indicates starting point



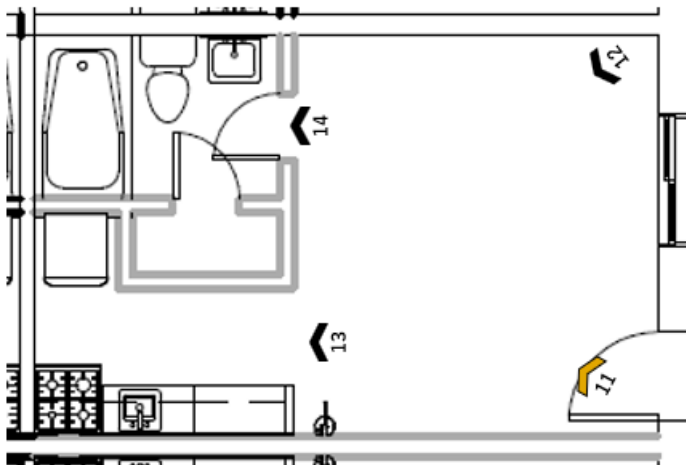
Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 10: Photo Key - **Interior**, Unit 109

Interior, Unit 109

Photos 11 – 14

Yellow arrow indicates starting point



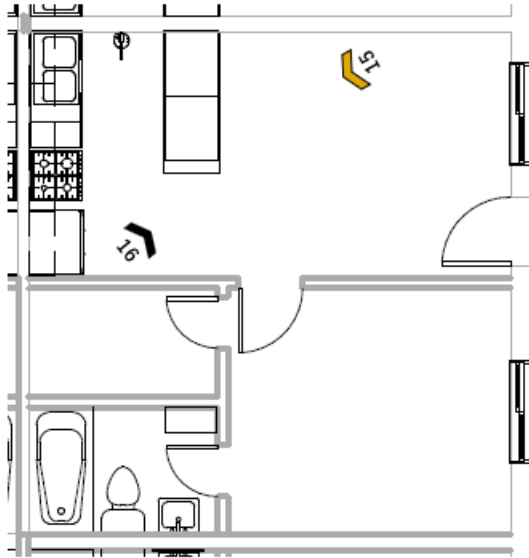
Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 11: Photo Key – Interior, Unit 241

Interior, Unit 241

Photos 15-16

Yellow arrow indicates starting point



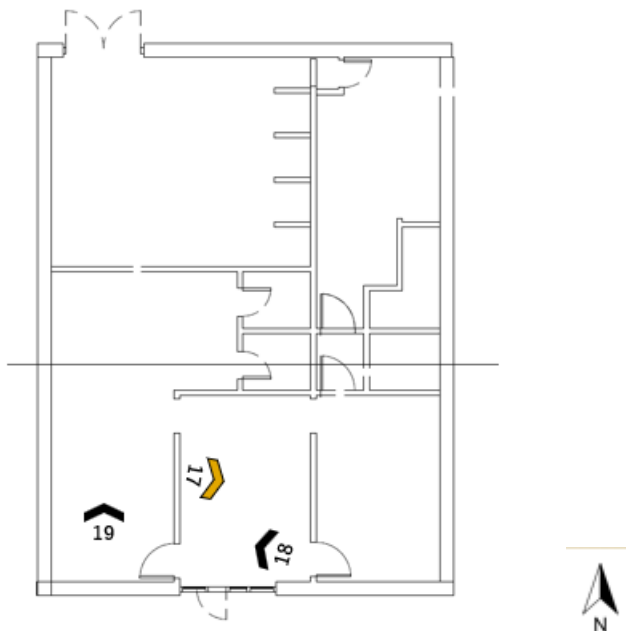
Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 12: Photo Key – Interior, Office Building, First Floor

Interior, Office Building, First Floor

Photos 17-19

Yellow arrow indicates starting point



SBR Draft

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 13: 1976 Aerial showing nominated property in context of Mueller airport.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photos

Photo 1: Exterior View, South Elevation, Looking Northeast.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 2: Exterior View, South Elevation of Office Building, Looking Northeast.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 3: Exterior View, East Elevation, Looking Northwest.



SBR Draft

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 4: Exterior View, East Elevation, Looking Southwest.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 5: Exterior View, East Elevation, Looking North.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 6: Exterior View, East Elevation, Looking West.



SBR Draft

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 7: Exterior View, West Elevation, Looking Northeast.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 8: Exterior View, Courtyard, Looking North.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 9: Exterior View, Courtyard, Looking Southeast.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 10: Exterior View, Office Building, Second Floor, Looking West.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 11: Interior View, Unit 109, Looking Northwest.



SBR Draft

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 12: Interior View, Unit 109, Looking Southwest.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 13: Interior View, Unit 109, Looking West.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 14: Interior View, Unit 109, Looking West.



SBR Draft

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 15: Interior View, Unit 241, Looking Southwest.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 16: Interior View, Unit 241, Looking Northeast.



Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 17: Interior View, Office Building, First Floor, Looking East.



SBR Draft

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 18: Interior View, Office Building, First Floor, Looking West.



SBR Draft

Lexington Apartments and Motor Inns, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 19: Interior View, Office Building, First Floor, Looking North.

