

Lincoln Village is being reimagined as

# THE LINC

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Photo Rendering looking south toward Downtown Austin

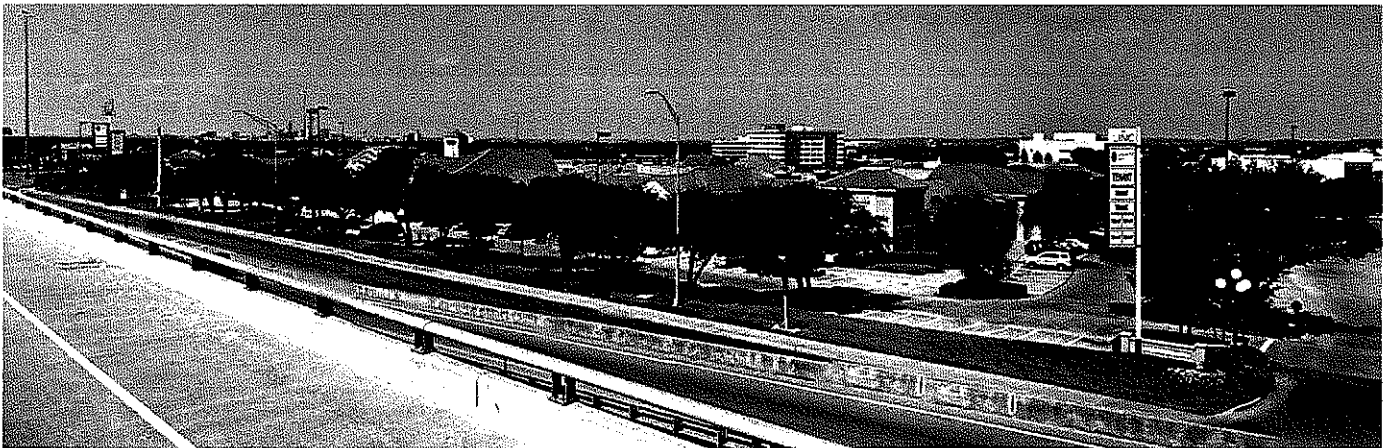
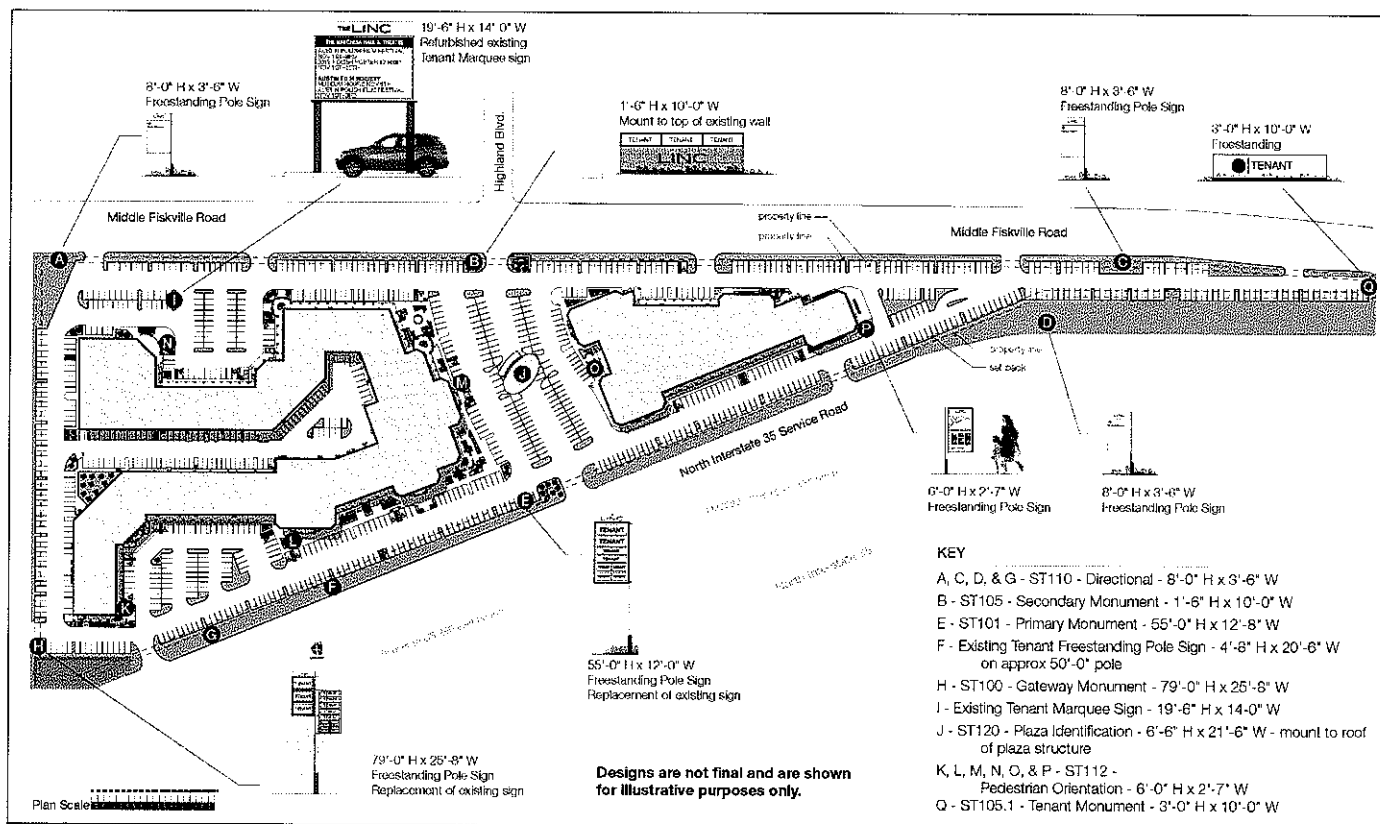


Photo Rendering from I-35 South Bound exit lane to 290 East

- The Linc is an Austin-centric, 16 acre retail, dining, and entertainment district.
- 40-50 unique, mostly local and iconic tenants in 180,000 SF of retail space.
- 1/2 mile of frontage along elevated Interstate 35.

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Site Signage Locations with Major Tenant Identity

## Why We Are Here

- Lincoln Village was sold to Austin Renaissance LTD in January 2013.
- Lincoln Village is being reimagined by its new owners. They are seeking to rehabilitate the once successful retail property.
- Changes in local highway and roadway infrastructure, and development of new, relatively advantaged retail developments (e.g., Mueller) have contributed to the decline of Lincoln Village and made it difficult for the businesses, especially the small and local businesses, to survive.
- The new owners are instituting a plan to revitalize the center into a retail and entertainment district that will exhibit a character more consistent with Austin's local culture.
- Signage upgrades are the crucial element in addressing and remediating the hardships which strongly contributed to the decline of Lincoln Village.

*More detailed images of the proposed site signage can be found on page 4 and at the end of the book. Additional images can be made available upon request.*

# Background

This sign variance request is a key step in:

- Addressing the hardships created by changes in the infrastructure.
- Redefining the property after years of decline.
- Signaling to the Austin community that the whole neighborhood is transforming.
- Attracting unique, local tenants with a need to communicate their existence to customers.



Aerial Photo showing Existing Sign and Elevated Freeway Structure



Existing Signage

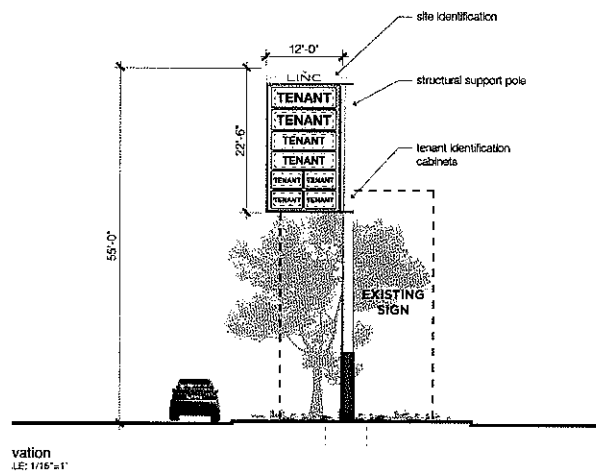
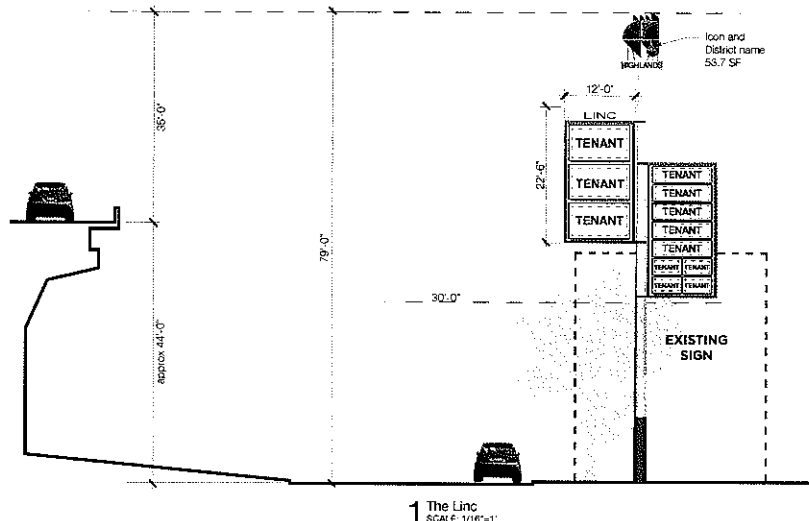
# Hardship: Line of site

Since Lincoln Village was built in 1985, several major highway infrastructure changes have negatively affected the visibility of and access to it and its tenants. These infrastructure changes include:

- Elevated Interstate.
- Trees, while an integral part of the site, block the view of signage below ~30ft.
- Construction of the I-35 / 290 flyover interchange. (built in 2001)
- Movement of I-35 exit.

These changes have created physical and psychological barriers, causing Lincoln Village to become a buried property with obscured tenants.

**This is evidenced by Lincoln Village's more than 50% vacancy as well as its long term distressed state.**



# Hardship: Highway Alterations

Lincoln Village's existing signage serves little practical purpose given the re-configuration of its environment since it was originally developed.

- Existing entry sign is visible only from the I-35 frontage road which has a relatively small traffic count of 5,660 cars (less than 3% of overall drive-by traffic) and less on the frontage road north of the exit.
- There is no visibility of entry sign due to negative grade differential.
- When combined with placement of changed exit ramp, the existing entry sign becomes invisible.
- The existing entry sign cannot even be seen from the frontage road, much less the elevated interstate and flyover.

5,660 VPD < 3% of traffic



SB I-35 Frontage Road showing proposed sign in Red



Photo Rendering from I-35 South Bound exit lane to 290 East

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## Hardship: Existing Signage Visibility

Existing property signage is obsolete as a result of the changes in surrounding infrastructure. It no longer serves its purpose.

- When fully occupied, The Linc will be an alliance of 40 - 50 small businesses, not a center dominated by one anchor-tenant.
- Tenants change out over time and these small businesses must effectively communicate their existence in order to survive. They cannot thrive under the current circumstances because no one knows they are there.
- Existing signs cannot be seen from these approaches.



NB I-35 showing proposed sign in Red



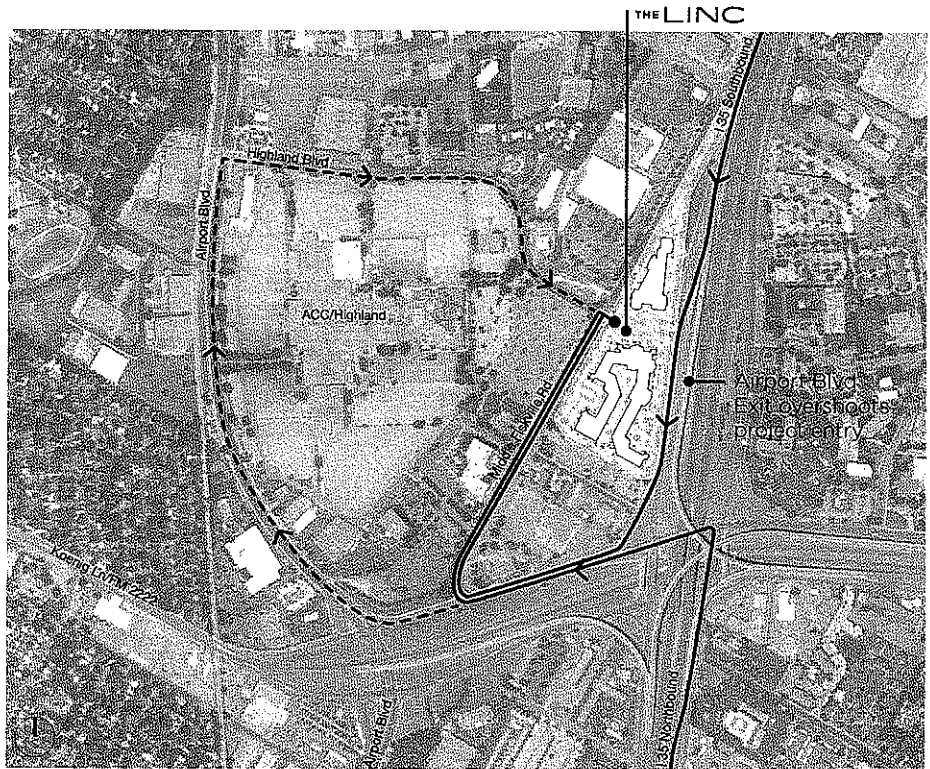
SB I-35 showing proposed sign in Red

Existing sign (fully obscured)

## Hardship: Access

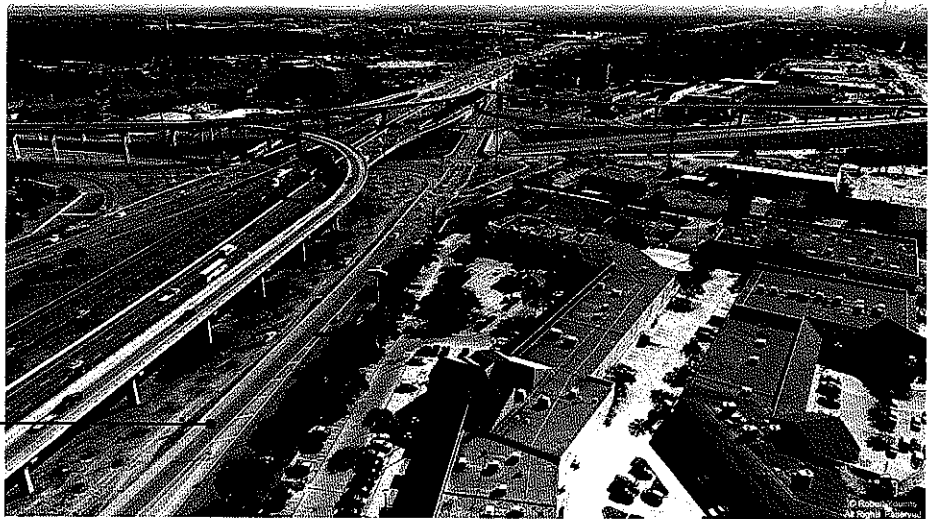
Frontage road access and visibility is of limited value.

- Access will remain difficult and confusing, but the proposed signage can help make The Linc more accessible.
- Signs can serve as a beacon to patrons, helping guide them through the turns required to reach the center.



Area Map showing Vehicular Approaches

Airport Blvd Exit  
Overshoots Project  
Entry



Aerial photo showing Airport Blvd. exit lane

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## Hardship: Access

Signage needs to be visible from highways to help address access issues.

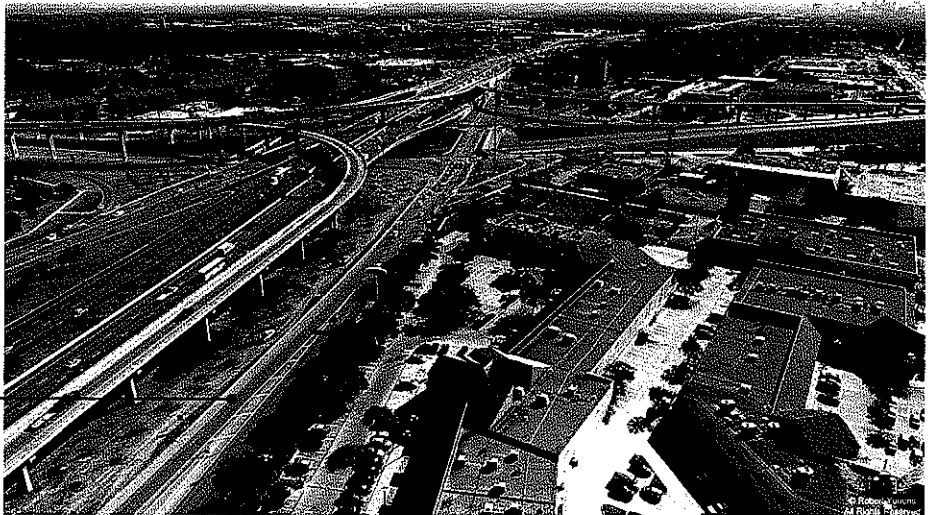
- The exit which originally served the Lincoln Village development was since moved and now fails to provide access to frontage road entry points.
- There is a high cost in time and customer sentiment in navigating the access.
- Poor signage adds to increased, unnecessary vehicle trips and traffic around the center, contributing to already existing congestion.
- While signage cannot solve the access issues, it does help with navigation and way finding.

Exit Location from Southbound I-35

Exit 240-Highway 183 2 miles away



Aerial photo showing looking North



Aerial photo showing Airport Blvd. exit lane

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## Hardship: Competitors

Other developments have a competitive advantage

- The request for taller signage puts the Linc in a similar position to (but still not as good as) nearby retail which does not have the same kind of relative elevation challenges.

## Compare Mueller

- Mueller's primary signage is above grade from the bottom and ~40 feet at its top.
- Our highest proposed sign begins 15 feet below I-35 and tops out 35 feet above it. The other signs are even less elevated. See diagram on page 4.
- I-35 is the necessary and appropriate grade reference as frontage road is lightly travelled and fails to practically serve the property entrances.



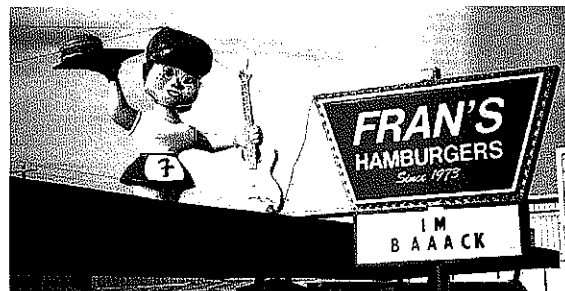
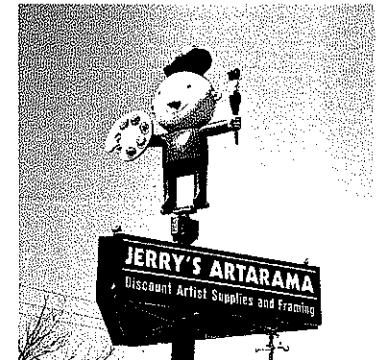
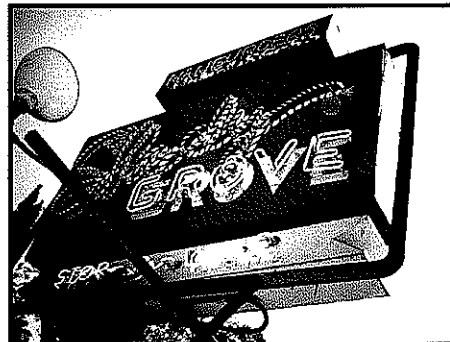
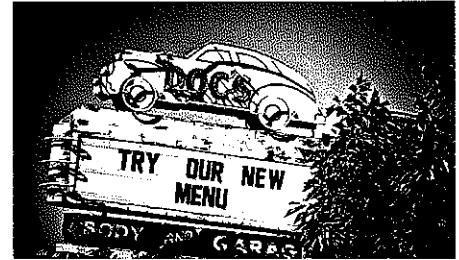
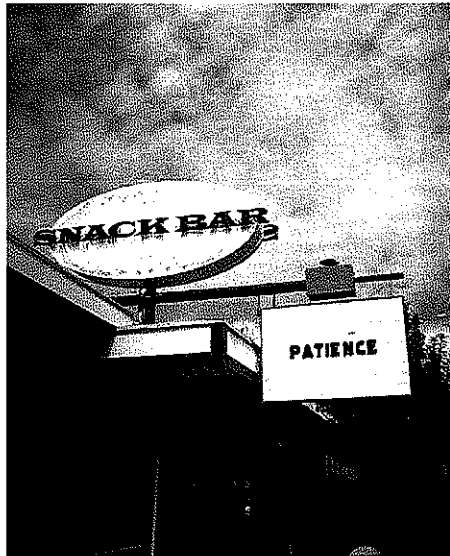
Photo of Mueller Retail Center Sign along I-35

## Community Benefits

- Given the likely increase in population density in and around the property over the next 5 years, along with a dearth of community retail (grocery, restaurants, services, etc.), The center needs to be capable of meeting the community's needs for dining, medical, retail, and entertainment services.
- The vision includes taking chances with local tenants and incubating local businesses (e.g., brick and mortar locations for popular food trucks)—the types of businesses that connect with the community and that Austinites will seek out.
- Tenants would struggle to survive at The Linc without place identity and/or signage.

Sign variance would have multiple benefits to the community, including:

- Increase awareness of the existence of these local businesses that often lack brand recognition of nationals;
- Create a unique "sense of place" to justify customers' effort to get there and tenants' investment in the property; and
- Encourage local businesses to have creative and unique signs, befitting the new vision for the center with a character consistent with Austin's most interesting districts.



Examples of Local Austin Iconic Signs

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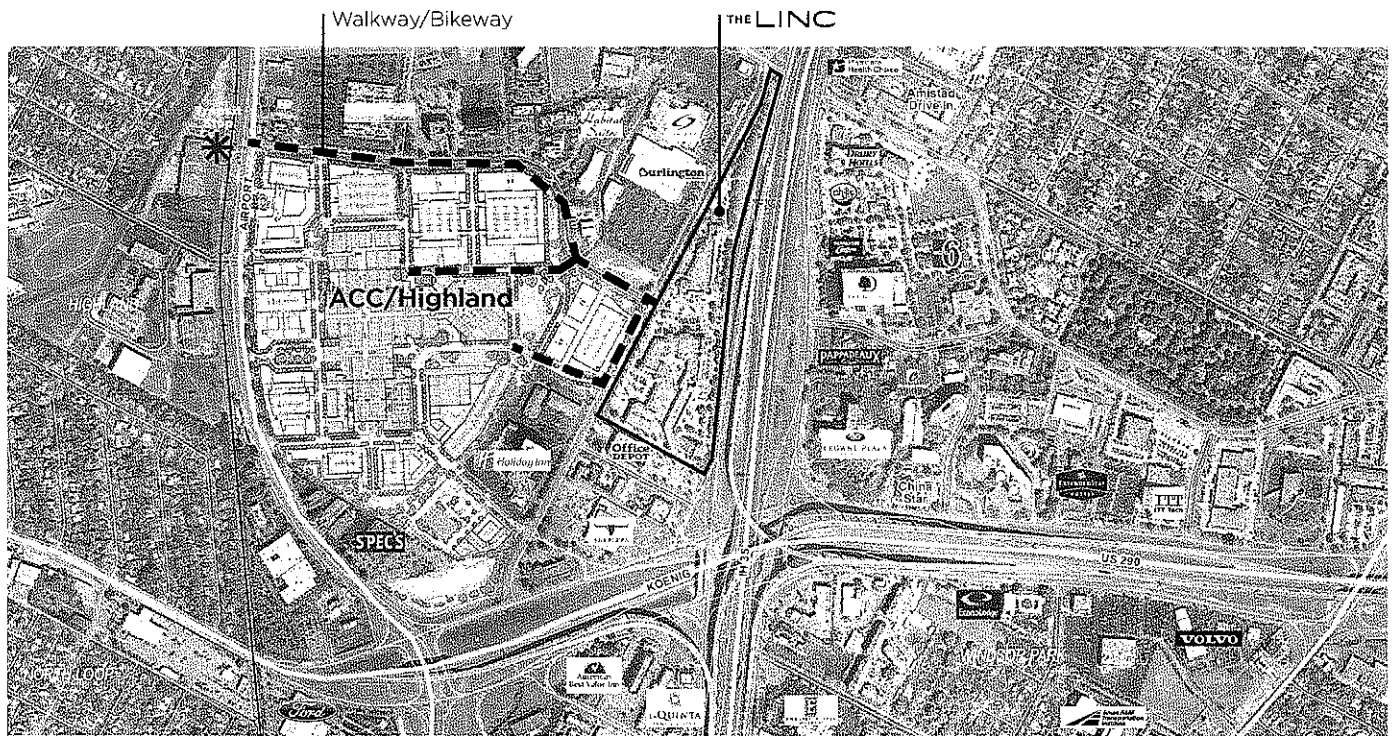


Area Map showing Pedestrian and Bicycle Approaches

## Relationship to Neighborhood Development

The Goal for Highland is to be a walkable, bikable, fully serviced neighborhood. Transformation of The Linc is an important element in achieving that goal.

- The Linc development timeline is moving faster than other nearby developments, but its owners are working closely with consultants, specialists, and decision-makers of the nearby developments to ensure its direction is complementary. (For example: Bike paths / walking paths through ACC Highland will connect to Linc entrance for the same.)
- The request is in compliance with the goals of Airport Boulevard Redevelopment Plan.
- With almost 1/2 mile of frontage on I-35, The Linc is the highway frontage for a large portion of the transforming Highland neighborhood.
- Signage will help signal neighborhood transformation to the larger community.
- Support letters from all conceivable corners show that we are working in coordination with all local stakeholders.

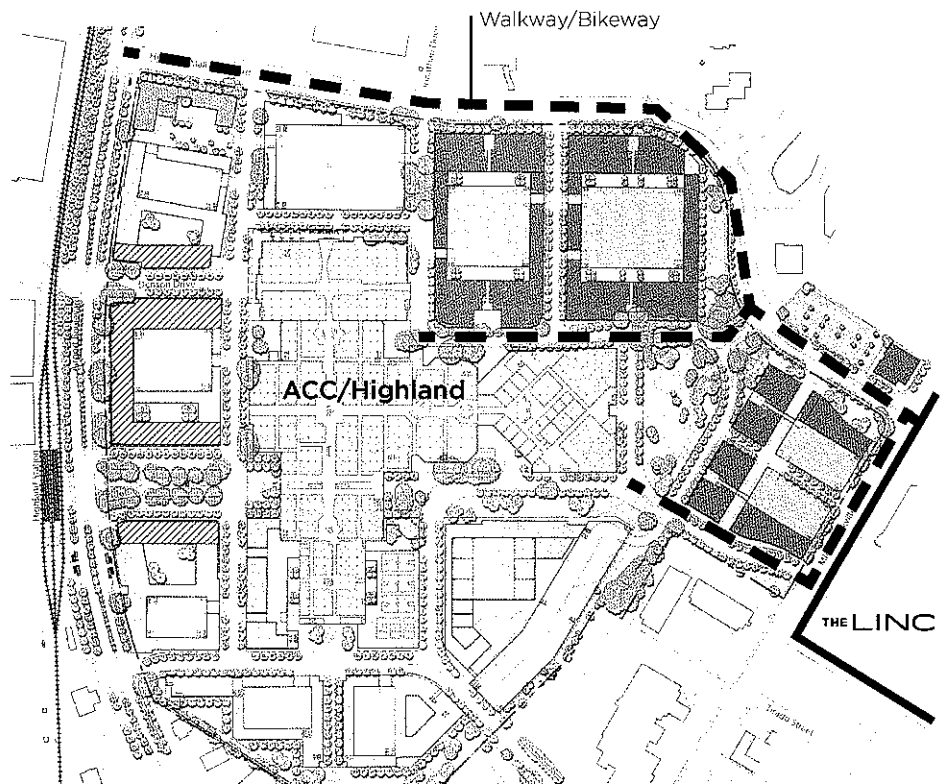


Lincoln Village Site Context

## Relationship to Neighborhood Development

Sign variance has multiple benefits for the overall neighborhood:

- Required to bring strong, capable retail and service operators to the center and community;
- Symbol communicates that something new is happening in Highland; and
- Helps "Brand" the neighborhood with something iconic.



Austin Community College/Red Leaf Development

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## Limited Adverse Impacts

- The property is unique in size, scope and surroundings.
- Support from all stakeholders.
- Strong owner control over quality; high production values befitting the dynamics of the neighborhood; see Marchesa Marquee.
- Owner control will be accomplished through a comprehensive site sign plan along with tenant design and construction standards. The Marchesa Marquee is the first implementation of these standards and guidelines.
- Allows us to keep nice elements like trees, because signs allow visibility that are no longer obscured by trees and not increase building heights across the property.
- Our signage plan is the result of 18 months of work to address these hardships and achieve a win-win for the Highland Community and the tenants of The Linc.



Original Marchesa Hall & Theatre sign



Renovated Marchesa Hall & Theatre sign

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Before



After - Gold's gym

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Before



After; looking south toward Downtown Austin



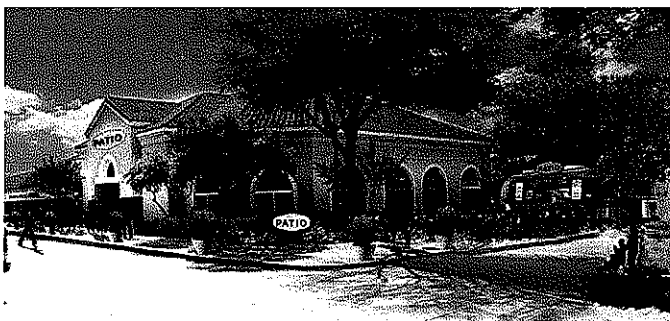
Before



After - Restaurant Row



Before

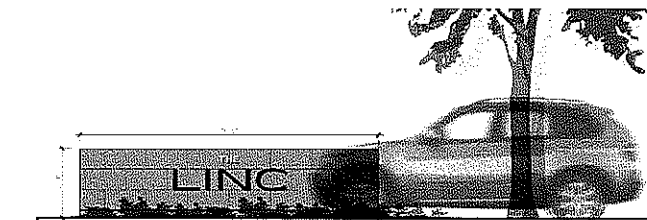
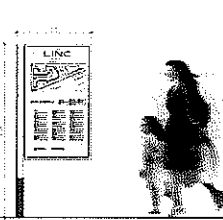
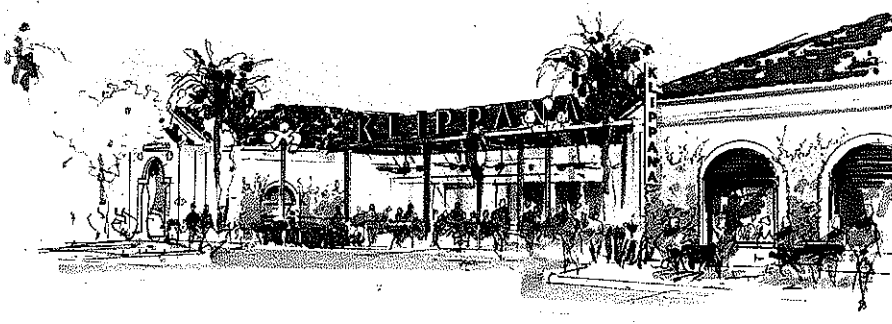
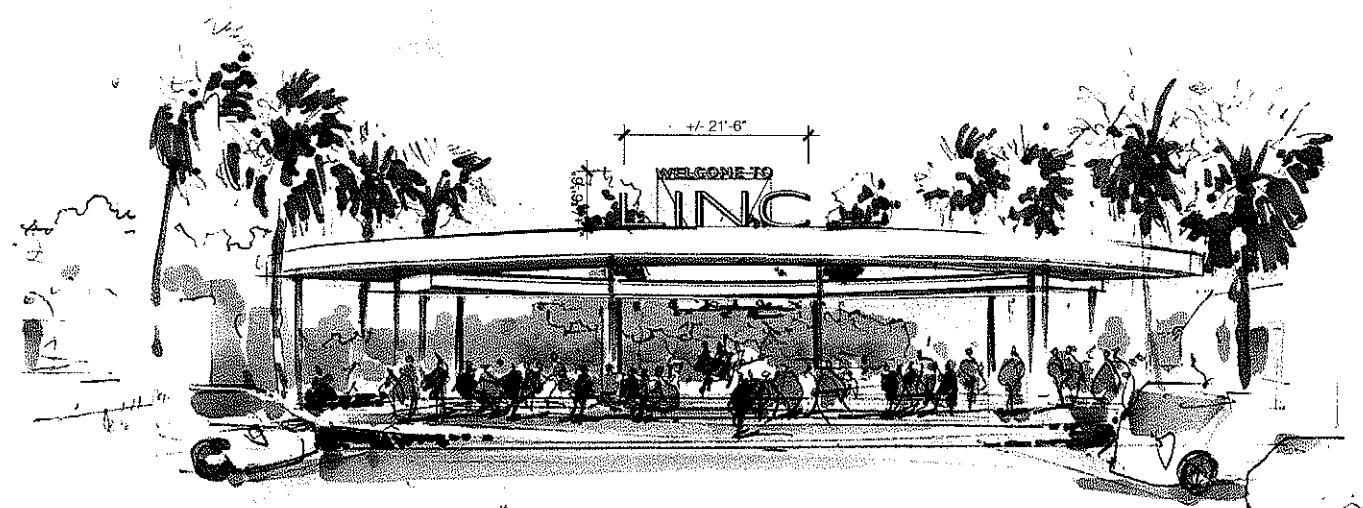


After - North Building

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