

Proposed University Neighborhood Overlay: Summary

Background and Purpose

The University Neighborhood Overlay (UNO) proposal is a recommendation generated through the Central Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan planning process. This consensus-based process involved the City of Austin, residents, property owners, and institutions in the neighborhoods surrounding the University of Texas. See maps on the pages 4 and 5 for UNO boundary, districts, and height limits.

The University Neighborhood Overlay is proposed as an incentive-zoning overlay. A project may or may not choose to take advantage of the proposed UNO provisions. If it does not, the base zoning district development standards apply.

The purpose of the proposed University Neighborhood Overlay (UNO) district is to:

- Promote high-quality redevelopment in the area generally west of the University of Texas campus,
- Provide a mechanism for the creation of a dense but livable and pedestrian friendly environment,
- Protect the character of the predominantly single family residential neighborhoods adjacent to the district.

Applicability

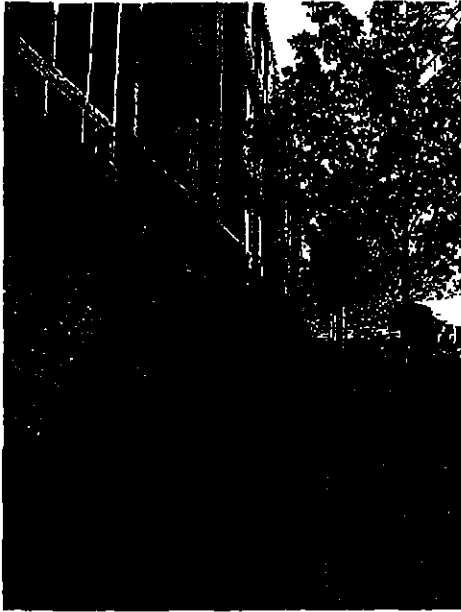
To take advantage of the UNO, developments will have to:

- Make improvements to the sidewalk such as widening it and plant street trees;

Street trees provide a shaded walkway and can act as a barrier between pedestrians and automobiles.



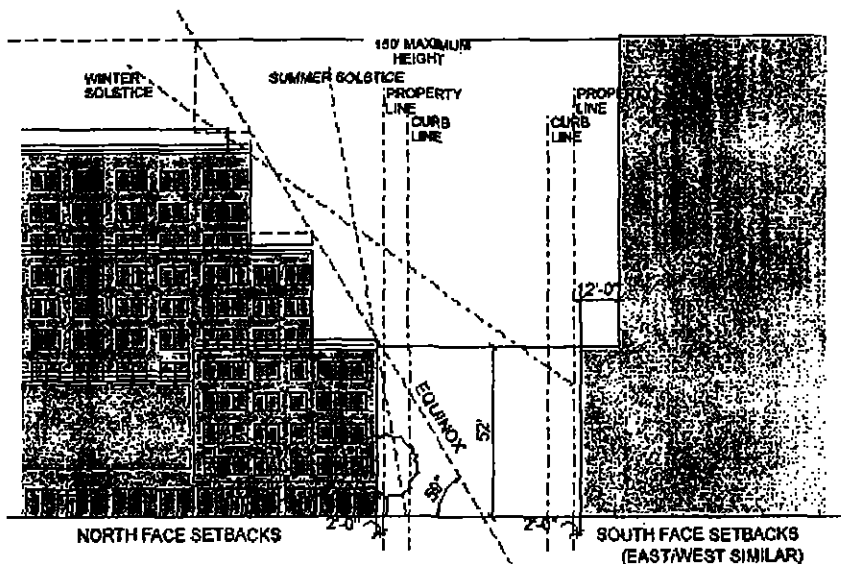
- Ensure that 10% of the units are affordable (80% of local median income as defined by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) for 15-20 years (this time frame is currently under discussion),
- Construct buildings so that the street-level is not dominated by parking structures,



The ground level of parking structures should not dominate the streetscape. In the example, on the left the parking structure is softened by vegetation and on the right there is a restaurant at the corner of a parking garage.



- Provide a minimum of 80% residential uses allowing up to 20% of a project to be commercial,
- Require taller buildings to step back when they reach 60 feet (approximately 5 stories) to allow sunlight to reach adjacent properties and to avoid creating a canyon-like effect;



Example of how the step back provision will work

- Provide pedestrian-scaled lighting,
- Require screening of trash receptacles, recycling pick-up spots, and mechanical equipment from the street,
- Require specific design guidelines that are being developed by Cotera+Reed Architects who were hired by members of the University Area Partners (a stakeholder group in the Central Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan process); the guidelines are being vetted by City of Austin staff,

- Limit or prohibit new curb cuts along pedestrian-oriented east/west streets.

A project that takes advantage of the proposed UNO may:

- Waive compatibility standard set-backs within the UNO boundaries for multi-family development; compatibility standards will be applicable to properties along the boundaries within the UNO to a depth of 75',
- Waive site area requirements for multi-family developments (The amount of land area required for a particular type of apartment unit—efficiency, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, etc.),
- Develop street-level, pedestrian-oriented retail uses on multi-family zoned parcels,
- Construct buildings taller than allowed in the base zoning district; these heights will vary depending upon what district the property is located,
- Waive floor-to-area requirements,
- Have increased impervious cover allowances
 - * 100% in the Guadalupe and Inner West Campus Districts
 - * 90% in the Outer West Campus District
 - * 85% in the Dobie District,
- Reduced front setback requirements (currently listed in the ordinance to be 3.5' but ultimately may be 2' to 0').

Parking Relief

Existing smaller commercial uses along segments of Guadalupe Street, 24th Street, and MLK Boulevard will have a reduced parking requirements. Currently along Guadalupe, every time there is a change of use in one of the commercial sites, a variance must be obtained to grant relief from the mandated parking requirements. This is viewed as an undue burden on property and business owners. Due to the high volumes of pedestrian traffic in the area, the same relief is sought for similar, smaller commercial sites in the area. Sites smaller than 6,000 square feet could receive an administrative waiver to mandated parking requirements.

Smaller pedestrian-oriented commercial sites constructed in the Inner West Campus District under the guidelines of the UNO and smaller than 3,500 square feet would be granted similar parking relief.

Additional Information:

- The more technical design elements of the UNO will be established in the rules process and will be derived from the design guidelines.
- The UNO proposal contributes to creating a future land use pattern of denser inner city infill development that received overwhelming support in the five-county Envision Central Texas regional planning process final survey.

Issues

COA Issues

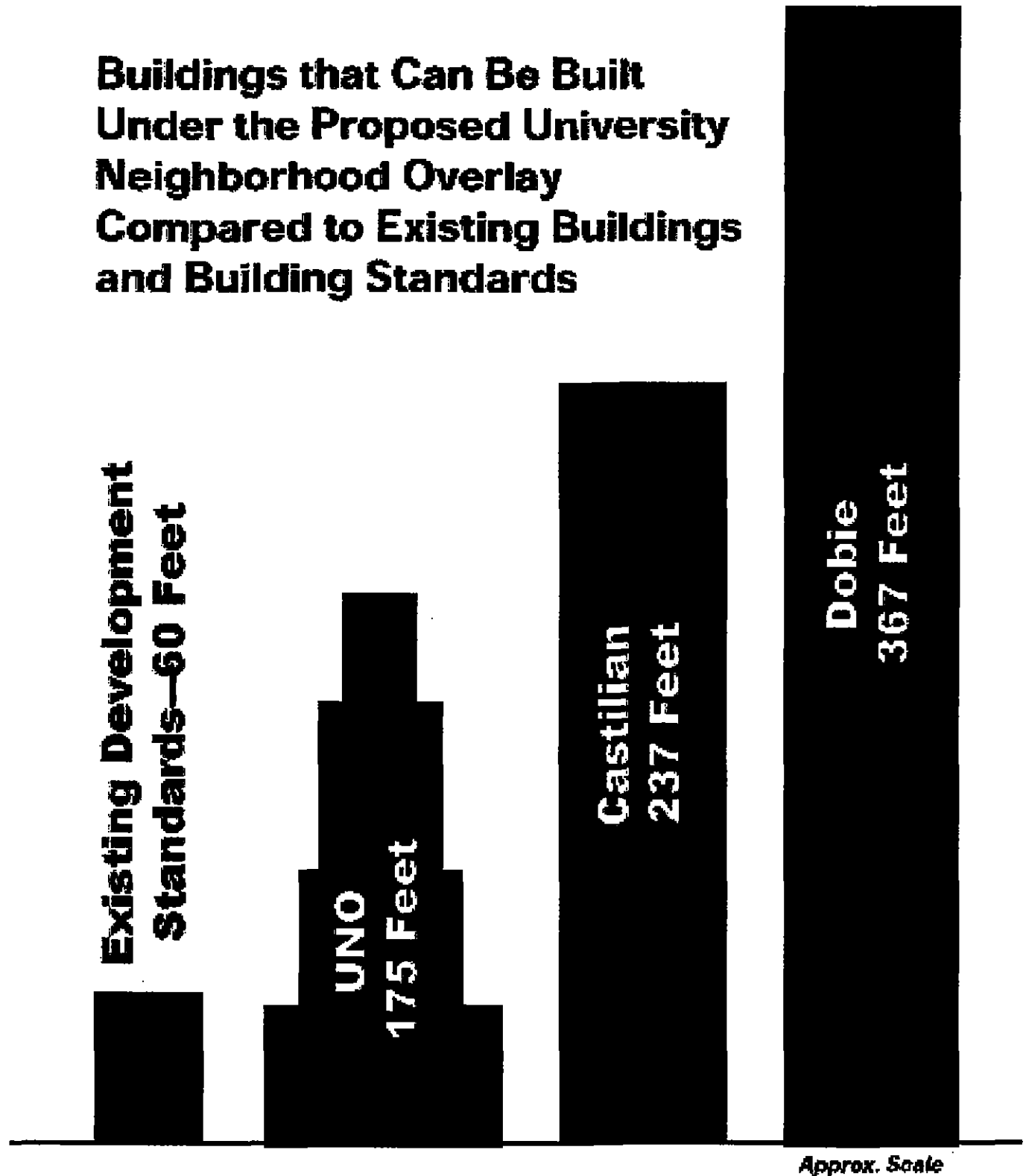
- Could increase review time for projects submitted under the UNO due to more complex development criteria. This will likely be more of an issue for the first few projects and will become shorter as staff becomes more familiar with the requirements.
- Possible greater demand on nearby parks due to increased population in West Campus, especially Pease Park and the Shoal Creek Hike and Bike Trail.

- Who will ultimately be responsible for the long-term (20+ years) maintenance of the street trees? Currently the developer/property owner will be responsible for the maintenance of the trees, however, the long-term requirements cannot be known at this time.
- Improvements to water supply to ensure adequate fire flow. The area's water supply infrastructure will need to be updated, but can be accomplished on a site-by-site or street-by-street basis.
- The Shoal Creek waste pump station will need to be significantly upgraded to accommodate increased residential densities. This is currently in the 5-year CIP queue.
- Would require an area-wide transportation study to determine the effects of increased density on the local transportation network. The area stakeholder group is in agreement with TPSD on the need for a study. No funding source for this study has been identified.
- An area study would need to be conducted to establish a master plan for the streetscape improvements. The area stakeholder group is in agreement with TPSD on the need for a study. No funding source for this study has been identified. In the interim, a set of rules to govern streetscape improvements is currently under development.

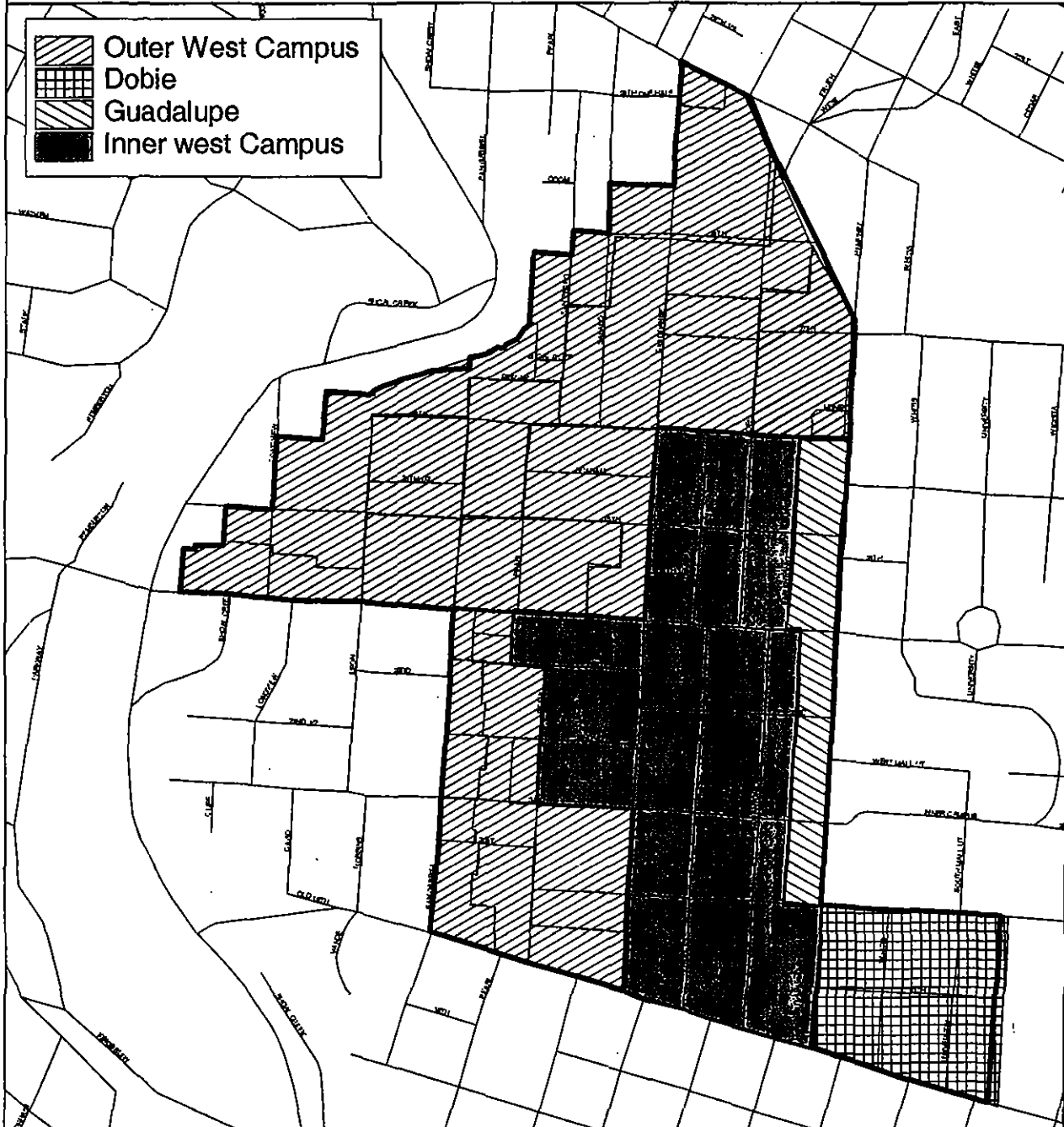
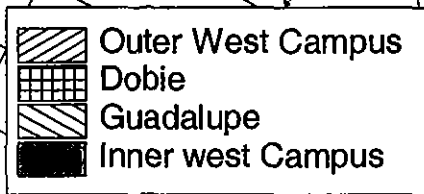
General Issues

- May obscure views of the University of Texas Tower from neighborhoods west of West Campus.
- New development could significantly alter the character of West Campus.
- Increased supply of new units could adversely affect existing West Campus rental market.

Buildings that Can Be Built Under the Proposed University Neighborhood Overlay Compared to Existing Buildings and Building Standards



University Neighborhood Overlay: Districts



University Neighborhood Overlay: Height Limits

