NORTHWEST DISTRICT PLAN

Downtown Austin Plan

DRAFT

May 21, 2010

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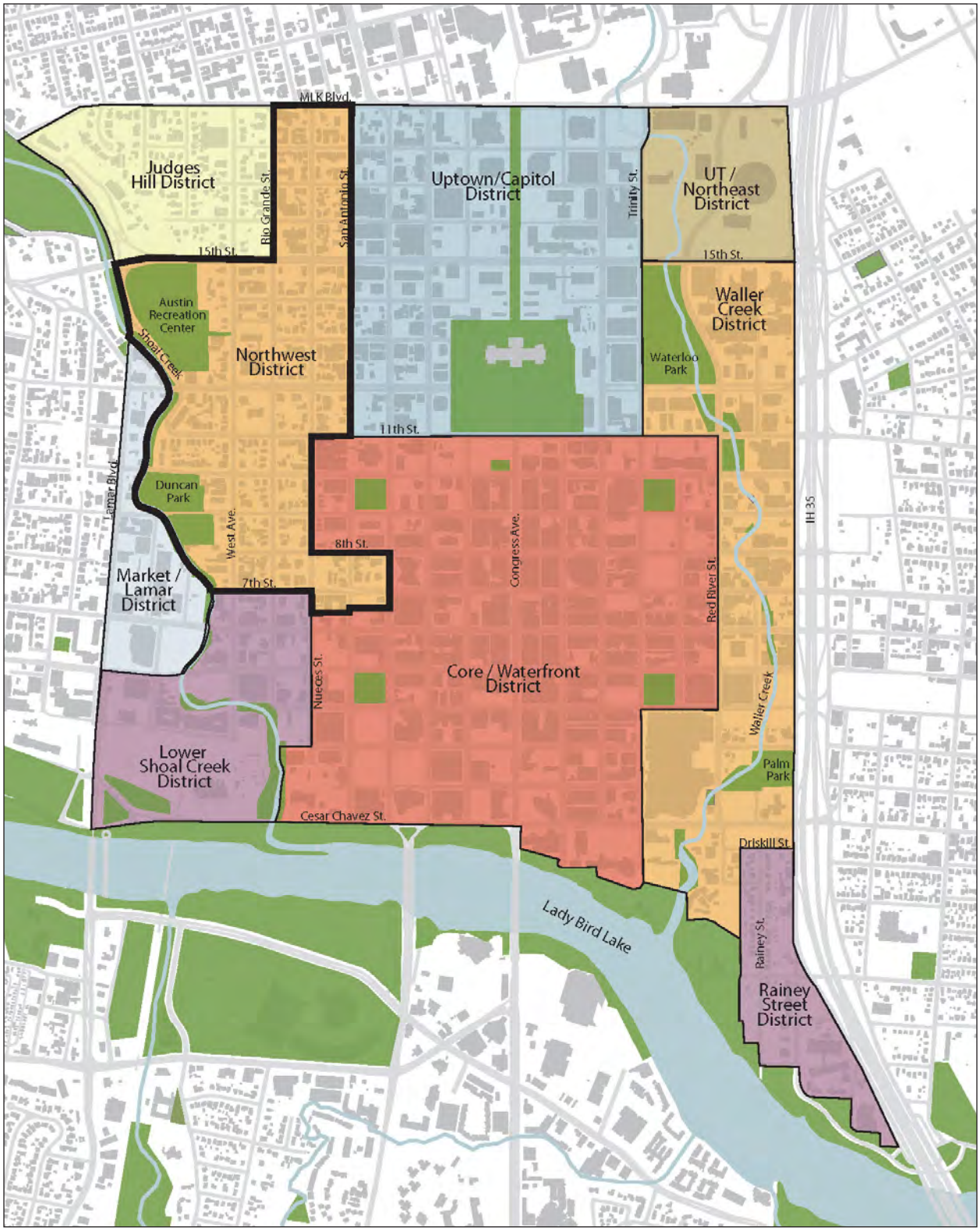


Figure 1:
Downtown Austin Form and Character Districts

INTRODUCTION

The Northwest District of Downtown Austin is generally located north of 7th Street and west of San Antonio Street, east of Shoal Creek and south of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. The 34-block District evolved as one of the City's first residential neighborhoods with a pattern of one and two-story single-family homes dating back to the 19th century. With its tree-lined streets and residential scale, the area offers a form and character that is distinctly different from the more urbanized parts of the Downtown to the south and east.

The district is one of nine established during the first phase of the Downtown Austin Plan (DAP), intended to delineate areas of Downtown that have a distinct form and character, and where there are specific goals and priorities for each area's evolution and enhancement. The Northwest District shares boundaries with five other Downtown districts: Judges Hill, Lamar/Market, Shoal Creek, Core/Waterfront and Uptown/Capitol. (See Downtown Form & Character Districts Map, *Figure 1,* and Analytical Map*, Figure 2*).

As part of the DAP process, this chapter of the Plan describes specific priorities for the Northwest District that have been articulated by area stakeholders, including: historic preservation, activities and uses, building density and form, parks and open spaces, transportation and streetscape, infrastructure and affordable housing. The policy recommendations and implementation strategies established in this District Plan will be made an integral part of the overall DAP.

Numerous stakeholder and focus group discussions, as well as a Town Hall meeting, have occurred since January 2009.

PLANNING PROCESS

During the fall of 2009, several stakeholder and focus group meetings were held with property owners, residents, businesses and representatives of the Original Austin Neighborhood Association (OANA) to discuss district issues, and to confirm goals and priorities. In addition, a Town Hall meeting took place in October 2009 to receive input on the draft policy recommendations for each district of Downtown. This draft of the plan builds on stakeholder and community input received at these and earlier meetings and on input received by a web survey conducted in January 2009 by the City of Austin.

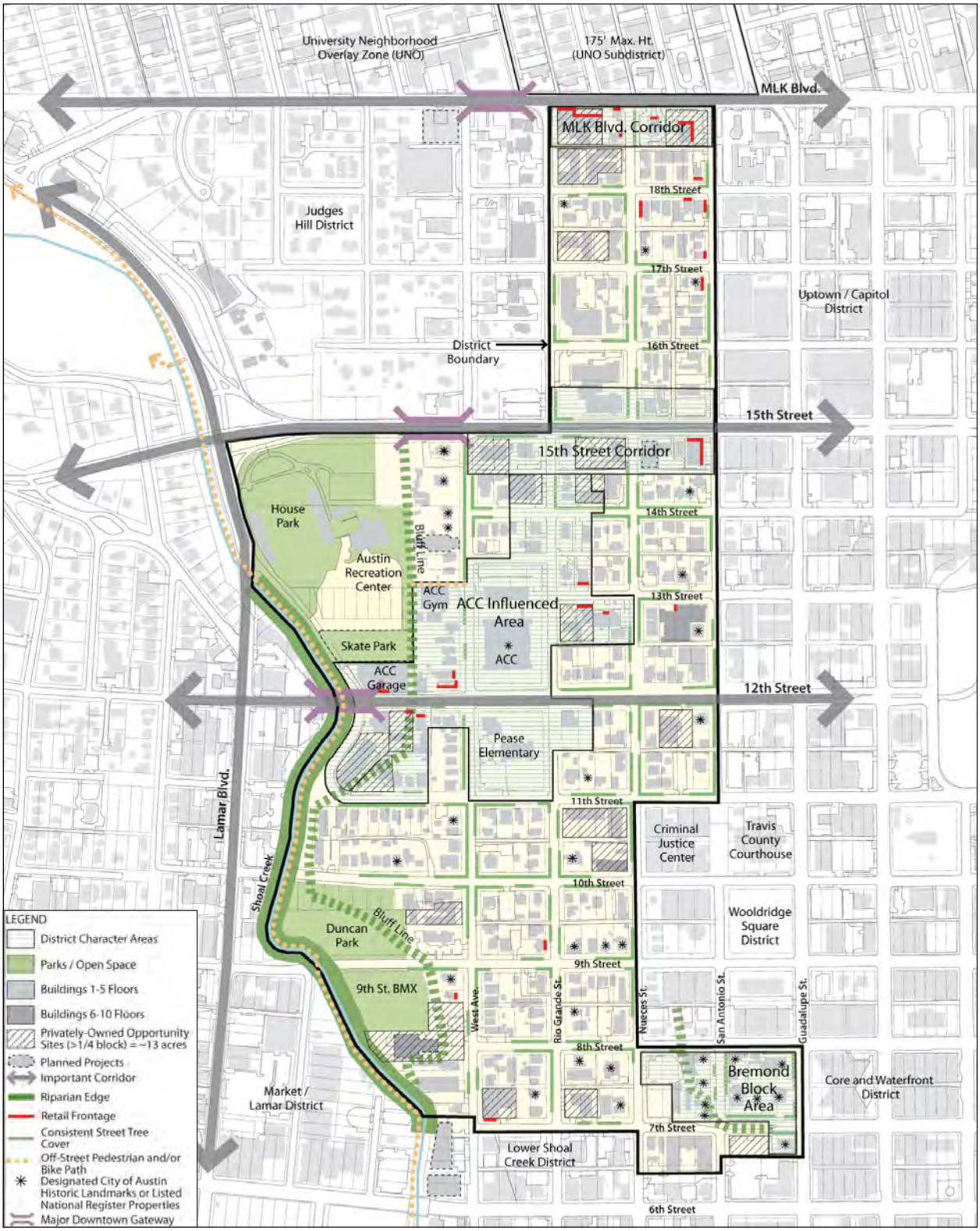


Figure 2:
Northwest District Form and Character Analysis

EXISTING FORM AND CHARACTER

Most of the Northwest District (15th Street and southward) was platted within the original Waller Plan in 1839 and developed as Austin's first residential neighborhood, with houses of prominent citizens dating back to the mid-19th century. The historic residences are typically one and two floors and include front porches set back from property lines by 10 to15 feet. The mature streetyard tree canopy throughout the District contributes greatly to the character of the area, as well as to the city's urban forest. Many of the original homes have maintained their historic character, although few are currently in residential use. Most have been rehabilitated for office use, including many law offices and governmental organizations that benefit from their proximity to the Travis County Courthouse and the Capitol.

The historic school structures at the heart of the neighborhood, now occupied by Austin Community College (ACC) and Pease Elementary School, create a campus environment and a center of activity in the District. There are some small, neighborhood-serving retail uses near these campuses. The principal public open spaces of the neighborhood, Duncan Park with its BMX park, and House Park with its stadium and soon-to-be-completed skate park, are both located along Shoal Creek and are connected to one another by the creekside hike-and-bike trail.

The Northwest District was Austin's first residential neighborhood (top left). ACC (top right) is at the heart of the District, while Duncan Park (bottom left) and Shoal Creek (bottom right) are the District's principal open spaces.

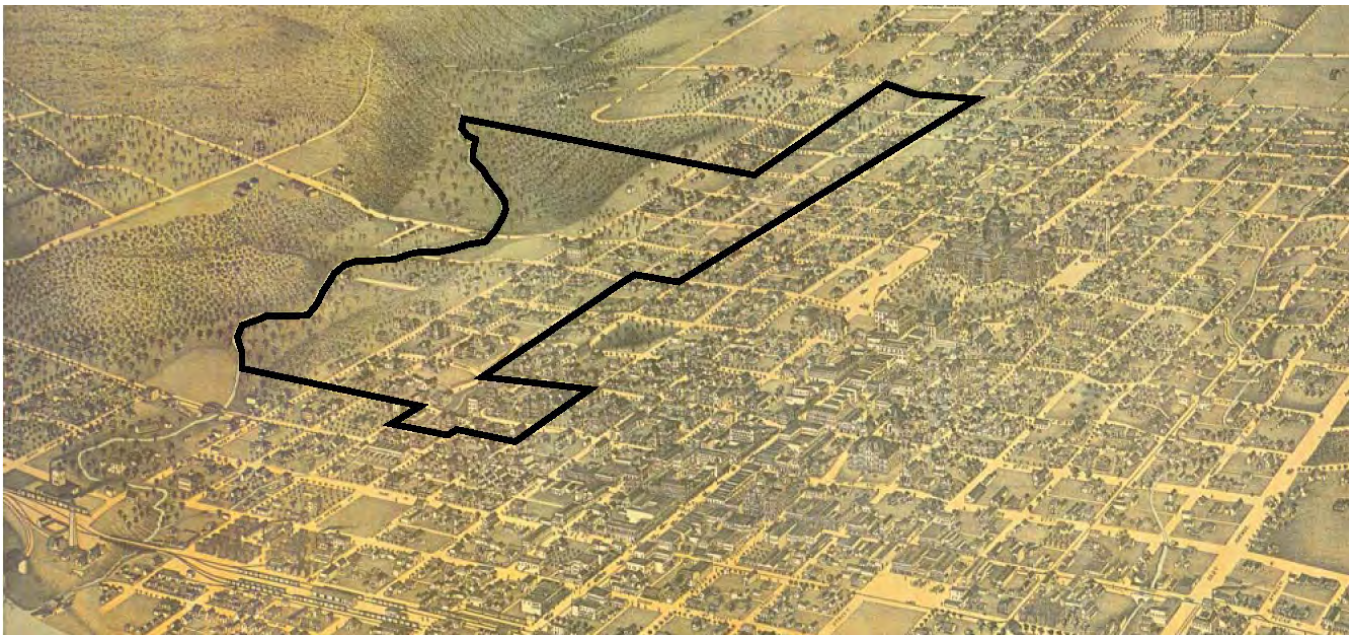
The Judges Hill District, a predominantly single-family neighborhood with many historic homes, is located immediately west of Rio Grande Street and north of 15th Street. MLK Boulevard, east of Rio Grande Street, defines the northernmost edge of the District, which is occupied by a mix of uses, including "strip-commercial", multi-family housing, bed-and-breakfast inns and offices. Across MLK Boulevard is the University Neighborhood Overlay (UNO) district, which is evolving as a mixed-use residential area with mid and high-rise buildings, many oriented to the large UT student population. 7th Street, which forms the southern edge of the district, has become a demarcation line between the Northwest District and recently-approved, high-rise developments in the Core/Waterfront District. The Uptown/Capitol District, East of San Antonio Street and north of 11th Street is emerging as a higher density mixed-use district.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Northwest District has a rich fabric of individual historic buildings, as well as the small, but impressive collection of 19th and early 20th century homes fronting 7th, 8th and San Antonio streets, certified as the Bremond Block National Register Historic District. There are 18 Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks, 36 City Historic Landmarks and eight National Register properties in the District.

Many other properties were identified in Austin's 1984 Cultural Resources Survey (CRS) as priorities for further research, as they appeared to be of historic significance, i.e., they were 50 years old or more and were still largely intact. Unfortunately, the City's Historic Preservation Office has not been able to conduct

The Northwest District's fabric of historic residential structures creates a unique identity. Excerpt of 1897 Koch map showing the Northwest District.



the follow-up research and preservation planning outlined in the 1984 CRS, leaving a basic gap in knowledge about what historically-significant resources may still exist, as the 1984 CRS only evaluated buildings built before 1935. In addition, there were about 150 properties identified by the 1984 CRS that were never designated, either individually or as a "contributing structure" within a historic district, and therefore have no form of protection whatsoever. Since the 1984 CRS, it appears that 21 buildings have been demolished in the District, underscoring the need to update the survey and follow-through with preservation planning.

John Bremond House

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY SITES

As part of the DAP process, underutilized or vacant parcels that did not appear to have historic significance and were one-quarter block or greater in size, were identified as "opportunity sites", indicating that these properties have potential to redevelop over the next five to 15 years. (Note: This is not to say that these properties will develop, or that other properties not identified as opportunity sites will not develop; it is simply a measure of sites most susceptible to change.) Within the Northwest District, there are 21 such assembled properties, totaling about 13 acres. Under existing zoning entitlements, approximately one million square feet of development could occur on these opportunity sites.

This 3D model illustrates the build-out of new development in the District. (Existing buildings are shown in white; new in brown.)

EXISTING REGULATIONS

Zoning: The predominant zoning in the Northwest District is General Office (GO), which is restricted to office and commercial uses, with building heights up to 60 feet and maximum densities of 1:1 FAR (Floor Area Ratio). Residential, beyond one dwelling unit per property, is not a permitted use in the GO zoning district, unless zoned with an MU (mixed-use) combining district overlay. Other zoning districts are interspersed throughout the area, including several properties designated Central Business District (CBD, with no height limit and 8:1 FAR) and Downtown Mixed-Use (DMU, with 120-foot height limit and 5:1 FAR). Several Commercial Services-zoned properties (CS, with 60-foot height limit and 1:1 FAR), which permit a range of commercial and auto-oriented uses, are located in the northernmost areas of the District along and near the MLK corridor. A few properties along the West Avenue corridor are zoned Local Office (LO, with 40-foot height limit and 0.7:1 FAR, also not permitting residential) and Multi-Family (MF-4, with 60-foot height limit and 0.75:1 FAR).

Overlay Districts: In addition to the base zoning districts described above, there are two overlay and special districts that regulate the Northwest District. (See Special Districts Map, *Figure 3*.) These include the Capitol View Corridors (CVCs) and the Downtown Creeks Overlay Districts. Several CVCs traverse the Northwest District, preserving views to the Capitol Dome from key public viewpoints (including from Lamar Boulevard and Loop 1) by limiting building heights within these view "cones". The DAP proposes no changes to these corridors or height limits. The Downtown Creeks Overlay District establishes a maximum building height of 60 feet on the portion of properties within 60 feet of the centerline of Waller and Shoal creeks. Within the Northwest District, only a few private properties front onto Shoal Creek south of Duncan Park, generally between 7th and 8th streets.

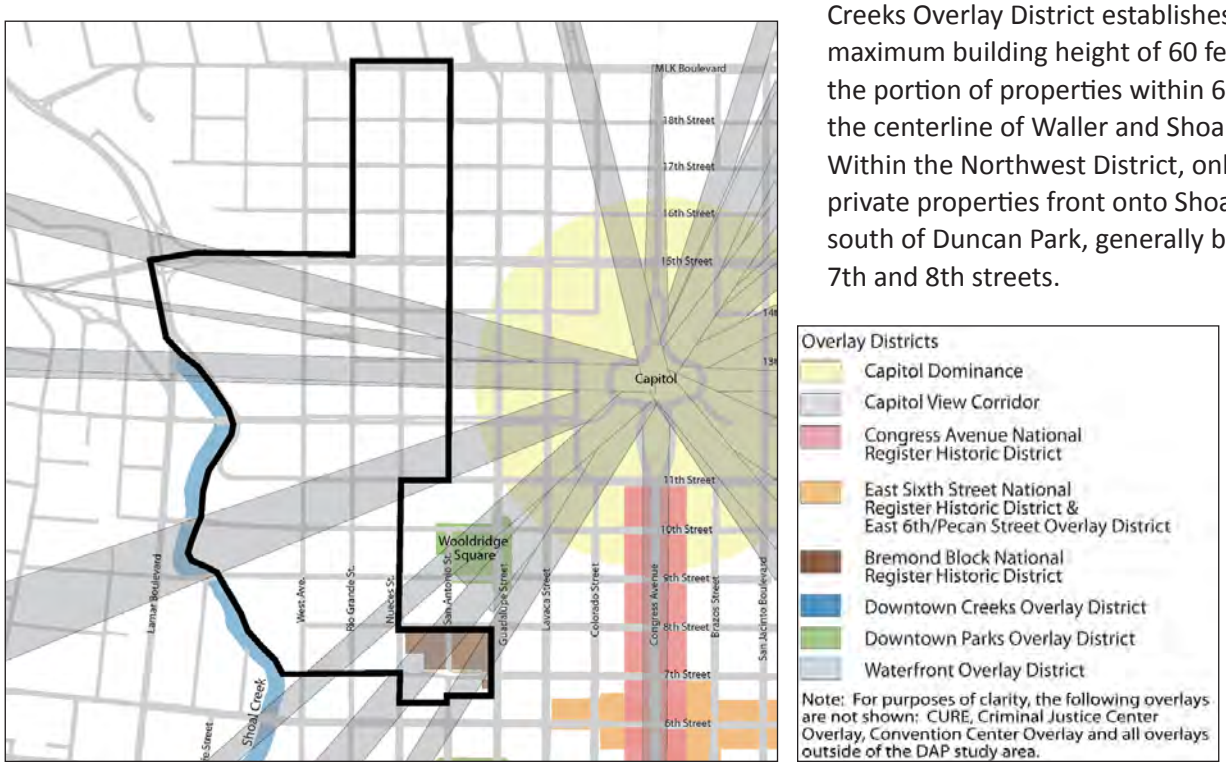


Figure 3:
Special Districts and Overlays

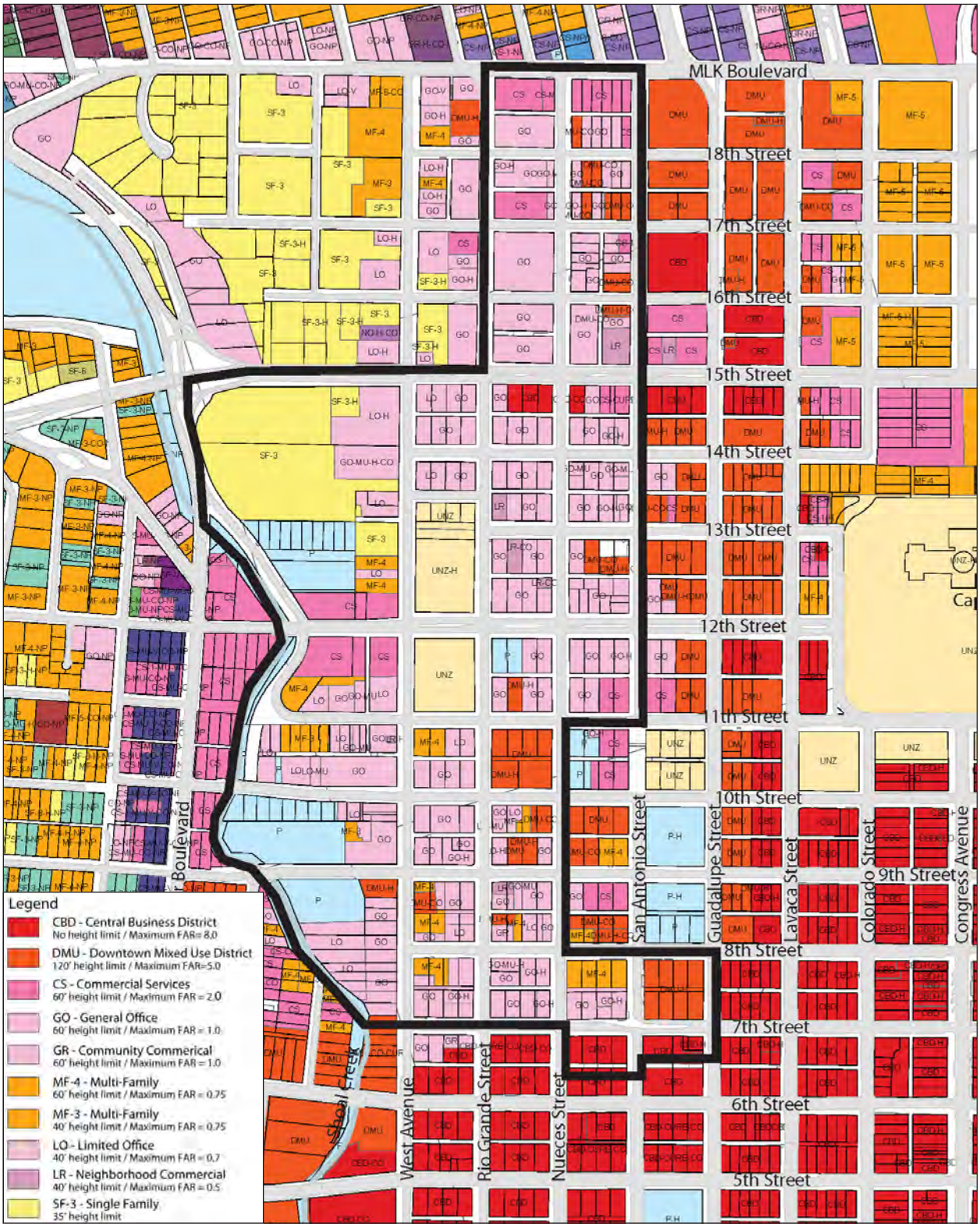


Figure 4:
Existing Zoning in Northwest District

Compatibility Standards: The intent of the City's Compatibility Standards ordinance is to ensure that all properties (except those with CBD zoning) develop in a way that is compatible - in terms of scale, views, and noise, lighting and activity levels - to single-family areas and other use-sensitive properties, such as churches, schools and child care facilities. To ensure scale compatibility, the ordinance requires both setbacks and height reductions from the "triggering" property or area, that in effect, may reduce the maximum height allowed under a property's base zoning. Within the Northwest District, properties immediately adjacent to the Judges Hill neighborhood are affected by the height limitations imposed by the Compatibility Standards. As discussed below, the DAP proposes an alternative way to achieve compatibility in the Downtown, with form-based code standards, and with height limits along sensitive corridors adjacent to the Judges Hill District, which is the only area in the Downtown with single-family zoned property.

CURE (Central Urban Redevelopment District): The Northwest District is entirely within what is called the CURE, a special overlay district established by ordinance. The CURE ordinance contains special provisions available to most of Downtown, as well as to key commercial corridors of near-in East Austin. The intention of this ordinance is to encourage the positive, urban redevelopment of properties within the central core. The ordinance allows projects to enter into a discretionary re-zoning process requiring City Council approval that can grant greater entitlements and/or relief from site development regulations under a property's base zoning. In the last decade, the Council has consistently approved such requests for greater density and height, and CURE cases continue to frequent Council agendas.

The DAP's Downtown Density Bonus Program proposes that the CURE ordinance be amended to disallow consideration of greater height and density (FAR). Instead, projects would be required to submit such requests through an administrative (non-discretionary) process whereby higher entitlements may be allowed in exchange for community benefits (e.g., provision of affordable housing, on-site open space, increased levels of Green Building, etc.) (See Downtown Density Bonus Program.)

Tree Protection Ordinance: This recently passed ordinance regulates how development must address "protected trees" (those over 19 inches in diameter) and "heritage trees" (those over 24 inches in diameter of certain "Class 1" species). This ordinance reinforces the community's goal of preserving the exceptional tree canopy and character of the Northwest District.

DISTRICT GOALS AND SUMMARY OF PROPOSED POLICIES

On the basis of stakeholder input, visual reconnaissance and the form and character analysis, the following seven goals have been identified for the Northwest District. These goals are consistent with those already established by the Original Austin Neighborhood Association (OANA):

1. ***Preserve the neighborhood's historic residential character.***
2. ***Bring residents back to the neighborhood.***
3. ***Preserve the existing tree canopy along the streets.***
4. ***Preserve and enhance existing open space.***
5. ***Improve the pedestrian environment.***
6. ***Improve conditions for bicycling.***
7. ***Improve Shoal Creek and improve the quality and accessibility of its creekside trail.***

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED POLICIES

The proposed plan policies outlined in the remainder of this Plan are aimed at achieving the seven District goals described above. They are summarized as follows:

Historic Preservation:

NW-1: Update Austin's Cultural Resources Survey and Preservation Plan.

NW-2: Develop form-based design standards that require new development to be compatible with the historic fabric of the District.

NW-3: Provide design standards and incentives for the rehabilitation and preservation of historic buildings and districts.

NW-4: Promote and market the heritage of the Northwest District.

Activities and Uses:

NW-5: Amend the current zoning ordinance to include multi-unit residential as a permitted land use throughout the Northwest District.

NW-6: Provide incentives for residential infill and affordable housing development.

NW-7: Provide incentives for neighborhood-serving commercial uses in certain activity areas of the Northwest District.

Building Setbacks:

NW-8: Amend the zoning ordinance so that front yard setbacks are regulated by street, rather than zoning.

NW-9: Establish creekfront setback standards along Shoal Creek.

Building Form:

NW-10: Replace existing city-wide compatibility standards with area-specific standards aimed at preserving compatibility between the Northwest and Judges Hill districts.

NW-11: Introduce form-based standards that promote a compatible relationship between existing and new development and an engaging pedestrian environment.

NW-12: Allow for additional density for properties along Martin Luther King Boulevard, West 15th Street and West 12th Street, subject to the provisions of the proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program.

Parks and Open Spaces:

NW-13: Improve the Shoal Creek Greenway.
NW-14: Improve connectivity to, and circulation within House Park and the Austin Recreation Center.
NW-15: Enhance Duncan Park as the Northwest District's Neighborhood Park.
NW-16: Improve sidewalks and streetscapes in keeping with the character of the Northwest District's tree-lined and canopied streets.
NW-17: Improve the cycling environment.

Infrastructure

NW-18: Implement flood control improvements along Shoal Creek.
NW-19: Underground overhead transmission lines.
NW-20: Mitigate other utility deficiencies.

Implementation

(Recommendations on implementation will be part of the upcoming, overall Downtown Austin Plan report.)

ShoalCreek

House Park Skate Park

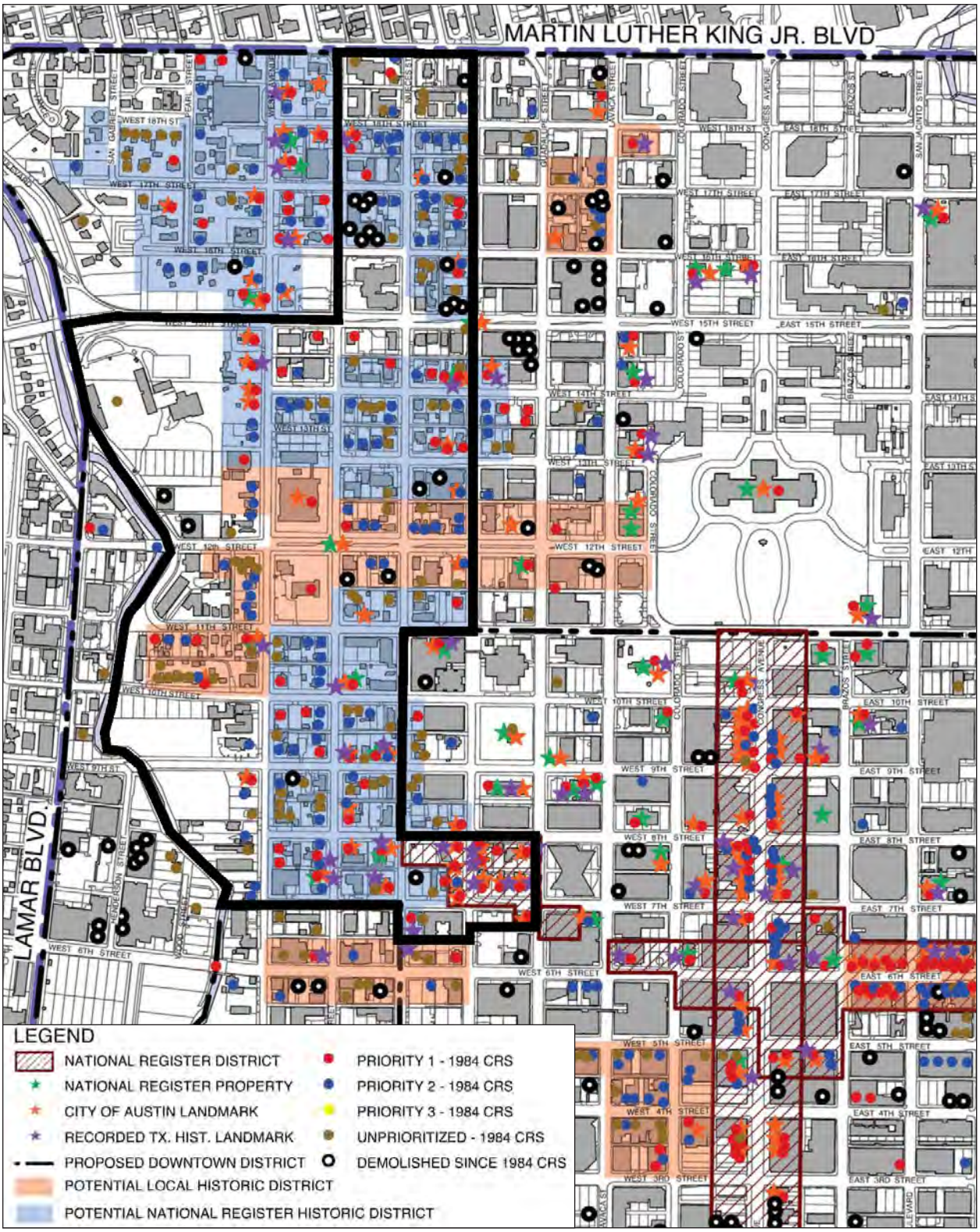


Figure 5:
Downtown Historic Resources Map Excerpt

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Without careful preservation planning and subsequent appropriate actions, in the form of code amendments, policy changes and funding, the Downtown is at risk of losing its special character and unique identity, therefore its competitive edge as a creative class city, as well as a great place and community. In addition, historic preservation is a cornerstone of sustainable development- in terms of providing affordability, green building and economics. Maintaining and reusing existing buildings not only reduces Austin's carbon footprint, but can also provide more affordable places for businesses and residents to occupy, helping to achieve the Downtown Austin Plan vision of being the greenest place in our region. Finally, maintaining and enhancing the Downtown's identity as a unique and interesting place to work, live, play and visit is central to Austin's economic vitality in the future.

Northwest District looking towards the County Courthouse from the Capitol, c. 1930.

NW-1: Update Austin's Cultural Resources Survey and Preservation Plan.

As discussed in the Introduction, committing resources to update and maintain the City's Cultural Resource Survey (CRS) and Preservation Plan are of paramount importance, in order to provide the public and the City with a clear roadmap of what is important to preserve and how, so that Downtown can develop in a way that is authentically and uniquely Austin—where the history of place is evident and celebrated. This goal of enhancing and maintaining the unique character of districts is central in achieving the kind of Downtown stakeholders desire, and is one of the key overall goals of the DAP. In addition, a city-wide preservation plan is also a required element of the City's Comprehensive Plan (itself currently being updated), and required if the City is to maintain its ability to attract funding and grants through its Certified Local Government status.

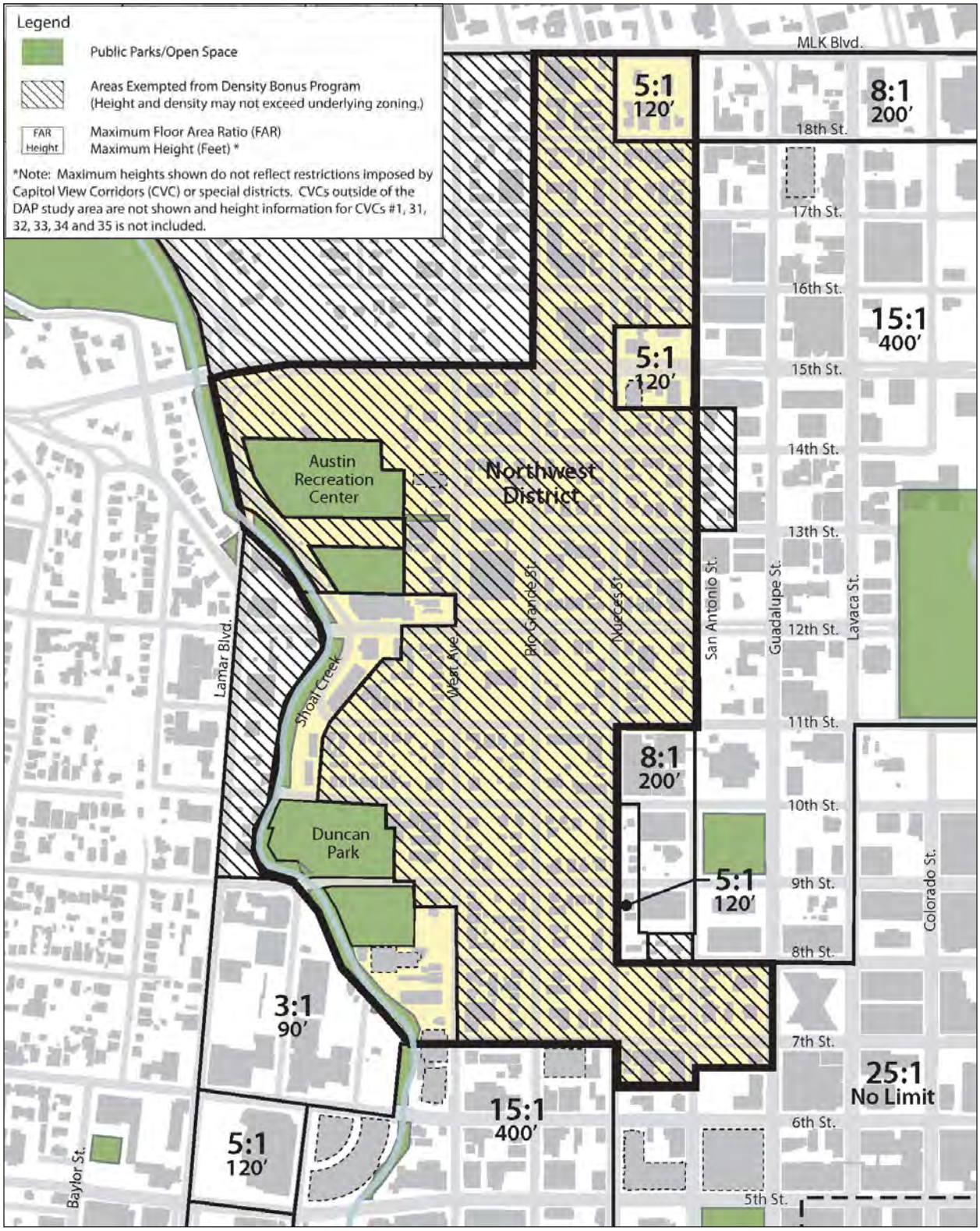

Figure 6:
Downtown Density Bonus Program Map Excerpt

NW-2: Develop form-based design standards that require new development to be compatible with the historic fabric of individual buildings and districts. Today, there are no standards in place that require new, infill construction to be compatible with adjacent historic buildings. Putting in place such "form-based code", as is recommended below in the Building Form and Building Setback sections, is a key part of the DAP's strategy for preserving and complementing the character of individual historic buildings, landscapes and districts. Consistent with this strategy, the DAP has recommended that many properties within the Northwest District be exempt from the proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program (Figure 6).

The Byrne-Reed House is an outstanding example of preservation and adaptive re-use as the administrative office for Humanities Texas. This would be considered a "contributing" property in a potential NRHD covering much of the Northwest District.

NW-3: Provide design standards and incentives for the rehabilitation and preservation of historic buildings and districts. In absence of an updated Cultural Resource Survey and Preservation Plan, and on the basis of windshield surveys and the City's 1984 Cultural Resources Survey, several sub-areas of the Northwest District have been identified as potential historic districts, subject to further study (see Historic Resources Map, *Figure 5*):

- a possible Local Historic District (LHD) in a portion of the blocks 12th and 10th streets, west of West Avenue. The old West Austin Public School, now the Pease Elementary School, could also be included in this LHD. A thematic historic context of the residential development of this district thought the 19th and 20th centuries and associated residential building property types, would be the basis for the district designation;

- a possible National Register Historic District (NRHD), incorporating many properties within the West Avenue, Rio Grande and San Antonio corridors and extending into much of the Judges Hill District and a small portion of the Uptown/Capitol District;

- a possible LHD comprised of properties facing West 12th Street, between West Avenue and Colorado streets, recognizing this important axial approach to the Capitol from the west and its intention as a civic street in the Waller Plan, where it was named "College Avenue".

- a possible LHD could be designated on top of the existing Bremond Block NRHD, therefore making "contributing" property owners eligible for a City rehabilitation incentive.

NW-4: Promote and market the heritage of the Northwest District, through website development, expanded historic building rental for events, district walking tours, a unique district way-finding system, interpretive displays, etc., to bring attention to this unique Downtown district and create a draw for visitors.

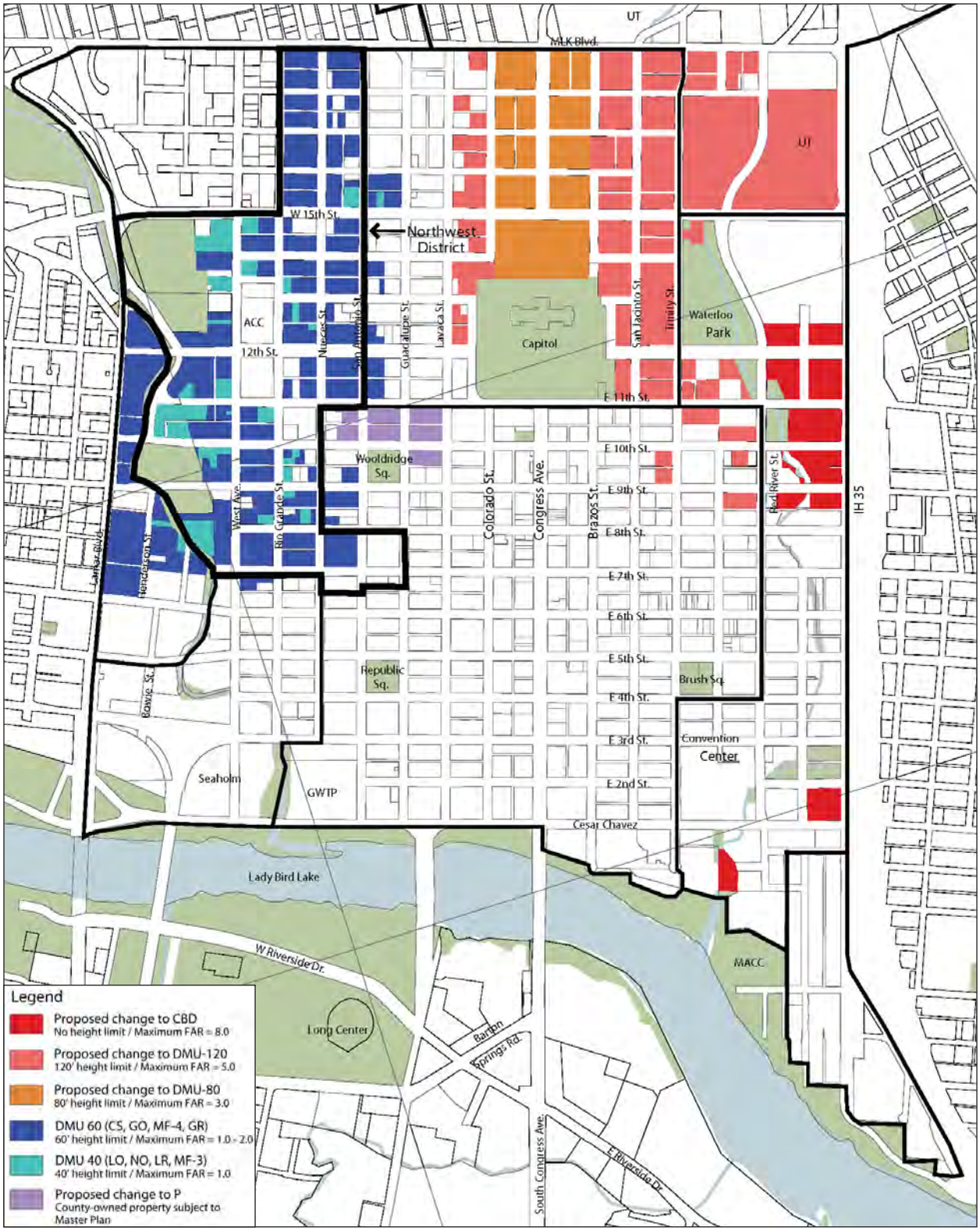

Figure 7:
Northwest District Proposed Zoning Changes

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ACTIVITIES AND USES

The majority of properties within the Northwest District are designated as General Office (GO) or Local Office (LO) which preclude residential as a permitted land use. This restriction is inconsistent with the stated goals of bringing residents back to the district within existing residential buildings and in new construction. In addition, there are several properties designated as Commercial Services (CS), which allow for auto-oriented uses that are not in keeping with the district goals for a pedestrian-oriented mixed-use district. The District Plan makes the following policy recommendations related to activities and uses:

NW-5: Amend the current zoning ordinance to include multi-unit residential as a permitted land use throughout the Northwest District.

- DMU-60: A new zoning district called DMU-60 should be created to replace the current General Office (GO) and Commercial Service (CS) zoning districts within the Northwest District. These properties should be rezoned to this new DMU-60 designation to allow a mix of permitted uses similar to those within the existing DMU zoning district; the proposed list of permitted uses is provided in Appendix A. DMU-60 properties would be allowed to build to the same 60-foot height limit as currently permitted by the existing GO and CS zoning. Properties with a current GO-zoning would be permitted to build to the same 1:1 FAR that is allowed today, as well as to the existing interior side and rear yard requirements (both five feet). The maximum building coverage (60%) and the maximum impervious cover (80%) would remain unchanged. Similarly, properties with a current CS-zoning would be permitted to build to the existing 2:1 FAR, to the existing interior and side yard requirements (zero feet) and to the existing maximum building coverage and impervious cover (both 95%).

- DMU-40: A new zoning district called DMU-40 should be created to replace the current Local Office (LO) and Local Retail (LR) zoning districts within the Northwest District, to allow for most of the uses permitted under DMU zoning, within the same 40-foot height limit, and within the same development standards that currently exist for LO-zoned properties (i.e., a maximum density of 0.7:1 FAR; five-foot interior side and rearyard setbacks; 50% building coverage and 70% maximum impervious cover).

- DMU-120: The existing Downtown Mixed Use (DMU) zoning should be renamed as "DMU-120" to reflect its (existing) maximum height limit. No changes, other than minor modifications of permitted and conditional uses, are proposed to the existing DMU zoning district. (See Appendix A for list of proposed changes to uses, per zoning district.)

  (Note: The Land Development Code's (LDC) definition of DMU will need to be modified to encompass these two new categories of the zoning district, so there is no possible interpretation that DMU-40 and DMU-60 may "open the door" to a potential rezoning to a DMU-120 or CBD-zoning.)

NW-6: Provide incentives for residential infill development and affordable housing. Special incentives should be offered for residential infill and affordable housing development within the Northwest District, subject to the form-based standards provided in this Plan. It is proposed that properties that are exempted from participation in the Downtown Density Bonus Program be allowed to participate under the following provisions:

- Projects on properties designated as DMU-40 and with a base zoning density of 0.7:1 FAR (i.e., properties, with a current zoning of LO or LR) should be permitted to develop to a maximum FAR of 1.5:1, to a maximum impervious cover of 90% and to a maximum building coverage of 65%, if:
    - at least 75% of the gross floor area is residential;
    - the design is in compliance with form-based standards for Low-Rise Neighborhood Infill Buildings described in Appendix B; and
    - at least 50% of the additional floor area above the base zoning density limit meets the affordable housing requirements of the DAP Downtown Density Bonus Program, with on-site affordable housing, and/or contributions to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

- Projects on properties designated as DMU-60 and with a base zoning density of 1:1 FAR (i.e., properties with a current zoning of GO) should be permitted to develop to a maximum FAR of 2:1, to a maximum impervious cover of 90% and to a maximum building coverage of 80% if:
    - at least 75% of the gross floor area is residential;
    - the design is in compliance with form-based standards for Low-Rise Neighborhood Infill Buildings described in Appendix B; and
    - at least 50% of the additional floor area above the base density meets the affordable housing requirements of the Downtown Density Bonus Program, with on-site affordable housing, and/or contributions to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

- Projects on properties designated as DMU-60 and with a base zoning density of 2:1 FAR (i.e., properties with a current zoning of CS along MLK Boulevard, 12th and 15th streets) should be permitted to develop to a maximum FAR of 3:1, to a maximum impervious cover of 95% and to a maximum building coverage of 95% if:

- at least 75% of the gross floor area is residential;
- ground level pedestrian-oriented uses are included along the street frontage;
- the design is in compliance with form-based standards for Low-Rise Mixed-Use Buildings; and
- at least 50% of the additional floor area above the base density meets the affordable housing requirements of the Downtown Density Bonus Program, with on-site affordable housing and/or contributions to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

NW-7: Provide incentives for neighborhood-serving commercial uses in certain activity areas of the Northwest District. A concentration of neighborhood-serving retail businesses should be encouraged along MLK Boulevard, 12th Street west of West Avenue, and 15th Street east of Rio Grande Street. To encourage retail shops and restaurants along these designated frontages, the floor area of these particular uses should be exempted from the FAR density calculation.

Infill development should respect the scale of the surrounding historic houses, preserve the tree canopy, and introduce ground-level pedestrian-oriented uses.

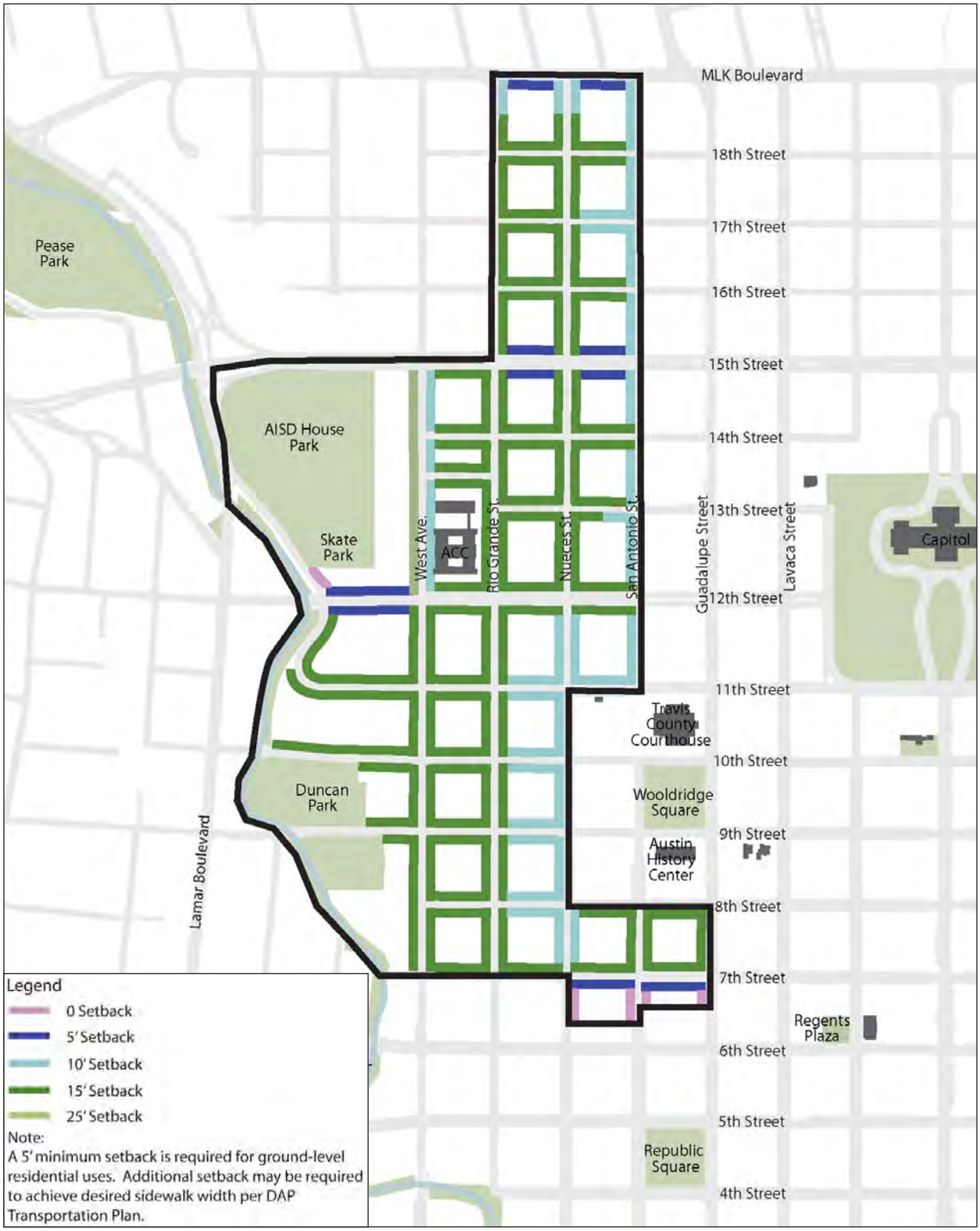

Figure 8:
Northwest District Streetfront Setback Requirements Map

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BUILDING SETBACKS

The LDC currently regulates building setbacks through a property's zoning designation. For example, a property with a CBD or DMU zoning requires no building setback, whereas General Office (GO) zoning requires a 15-foot frontyard setback. This has created incongruities wherever a street has multiple zoning designations, which is not atypical in the Northwest District. (See Existing Zoning Map excerpt.) The DAP calls for frontyard setbacks to be regulated by street, so that the character of that street can be maintained, regardless of the zoning designation or building type along it. Within the Northwest District, the majority of properties are zoned GO, which requires a 15-foot front yard setback. This is appropriate in most parts of the District, as it reflects the current condition of the historic residential building fabric, as well as the large-canopy trees that give the area its unique character. As shown on the Streetfront Setback Requirements map, there are, however, exceptions where greater or lesser frontyard setbacks are appropriate.

NW-8: Amend the zoning ordinance so that frontyard setbacks are regulated by street, rather than by zoning district.

- Along most streets of the Northwest District, the 15-foot minimum streetyard setback required under the existing zoning should be maintained.
- Along the west frontage of West Avenue north of 12th Street, new development should be required to set back 25 feet from the front property line, to reflect the asymmetrical nature of the street (i.e., the narrower sidewalk condition on the west side), and the existing building pattern, which includes several landmarked structures.
- Along the east frontage of West Avenue north of 12th Street, new development should be required to set back 10 feet from the front property line, to reflect the asymmetrical nature of the street (i.e., the wider sidewalk condition on the east side), and the existing building pattern.
- Along the north and south frontages of 12th Street west of West Avenue, and along MLK Boulevard and 15th Street east of Rio Grande Street, new development should be required to set back five feet from the front property line, to reflect the commercial nature of existing buildings and the goal of creating a concentration of pedestrian-oriented, ground-level commercial uses.

- Along the following frontages, new development should be required to set back 10 feet from the property line to reflect the more urban nature (i.e., buildings set closer to the street) of the existing building pattern:
    - The west frontage of San Antonio Street between 11th Street and MLK Boulevard;
    - The west frontage of Nueces Street south of 12th Street, and the east frontage of Nueces Street between 7th and 8th streets;
    - The half-block frontages closest to MLK Boulevard along Rio Grande and Nueces streets;
    - The north and south frontages of 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th streets between Rio Grande and Nueces streets;

- Along the frontages of Nueces, San Antonio and Guadalupe Streets, south of 7th Street, there should be no setback, reflecting the predominant CBD zoning.

- Along the south frontage of 7th Street, new development should set back five feet to accommodate full-sidewalk width Great Streets improvements.

NW-9: Establish creekfront setback standards along Shoal Creek. Within the Northwest District, much of the Shoal Creek frontage is already in parkland. It is only south of Duncan Park and 8th Street, where private properties abut directly onto the creek. This portion of the creek edge has a steep and vegetated bluff, limiting public access, and the hike-and-bike trail is on the opposite (west) side of the creek. New development is required by the existing Downtown Creeks Overlay District to set back from the centerline of the creek by 60 feet, but given the varying nature of the creek banks, more specific standards are needed to assure future opportunities for public access, bank stabilization, revegetation and restoration of the creek's riparian environment. These standards should be developed as part of the proposed creek improvement and flood control project discussed below, but in the meantime, it is recommended that new development be required to meet the following standards, in addition to those described in the Downtown Creeks Overlay:

- All projects should be required to contribute to the improvement of the creekfront, including improvements such as streambank stabilization, revegetation, removal of invasive species, water quality and provision for a future public access trail.

- An additional setback beyond the required 60 feet should be provided if the responsible Director finds that such is required to provide desired streambank stabilization and vegetation, and/or area for future public access.

- Properties immediatley adjacent to Shoal Creek should include uses and activities that contribute to a safe and interesting environment, and service and parking areas should not be located along the creek edge. Outdoor spaces, such as terraces, cafes, plazas, pedestrian ways and trails are particularly encouraged to create an active edge along the creekfront.

- Accessible building entries should be oriented to publicly-accessible outdoor spaces and trails along the creek edge.

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BUILDING FORM

Building form throughout the city is governed by the development standards of the zoning ordinance, which regulate height, building coverage, impervious cover, minimum lot size, setbacks and density. As it stands, there are no form-based standards that take into consideration the massing and treatment of buildings or their relationship with the existing neighborhood context of residential buildings. With the GO-zoned areas of the Northwest District, buildings are allowed to build to the 15-foot streetyard setback and up to their full allowed height of 60 feet. This has made for incompatible conditions, especially where new development has located immediately adjacent to smaller, historic residential buildings. The following policies and proposed regulations are aimed at promoting infill development that is compatible with the existing neighborhood fabric, and at promoting medium-density mixed-use development at the edges of the District.

NW-10: Replace existing, citywide Compatibility Standards with area-specific standards aimed at preserving compatibility between the Northwest and Judges Hill districts. As discussed above, the current compatibility standards of the LDC are applied citywide to properties adjacent to single-family zoned or used properties. A graduated height limit radiates out horizontally from such properties up to 540 feet, regulating those properties in terms of height, setbacks for buildings and parking, provision of screening, etc. *(See Figures 9 and 10.)* Within the Downtown, the DAP recommends that more specific height standards be established in keeping with the actual conditions that exist between the Northwest and Judges Hill districts. These revised standards are, in some areas, more restrictive than existing Compatibility Standards, and in others, less so. More specifically:

- Properties fronting on West Avenue north of 12th Street should have a maximum height of 40 feet or three floors, whichever is less, and no more than two floors within 50 feet of a single-family-zoned property. Such properties that are 20,000 square feet or less that abut a single-family-zoned property should have setbacks no less than 15 feet along the abutting side or rearyard property

New development should be in scale with the existing neighborhood fabric. Existing zoning regulations do not promote such compatibility.

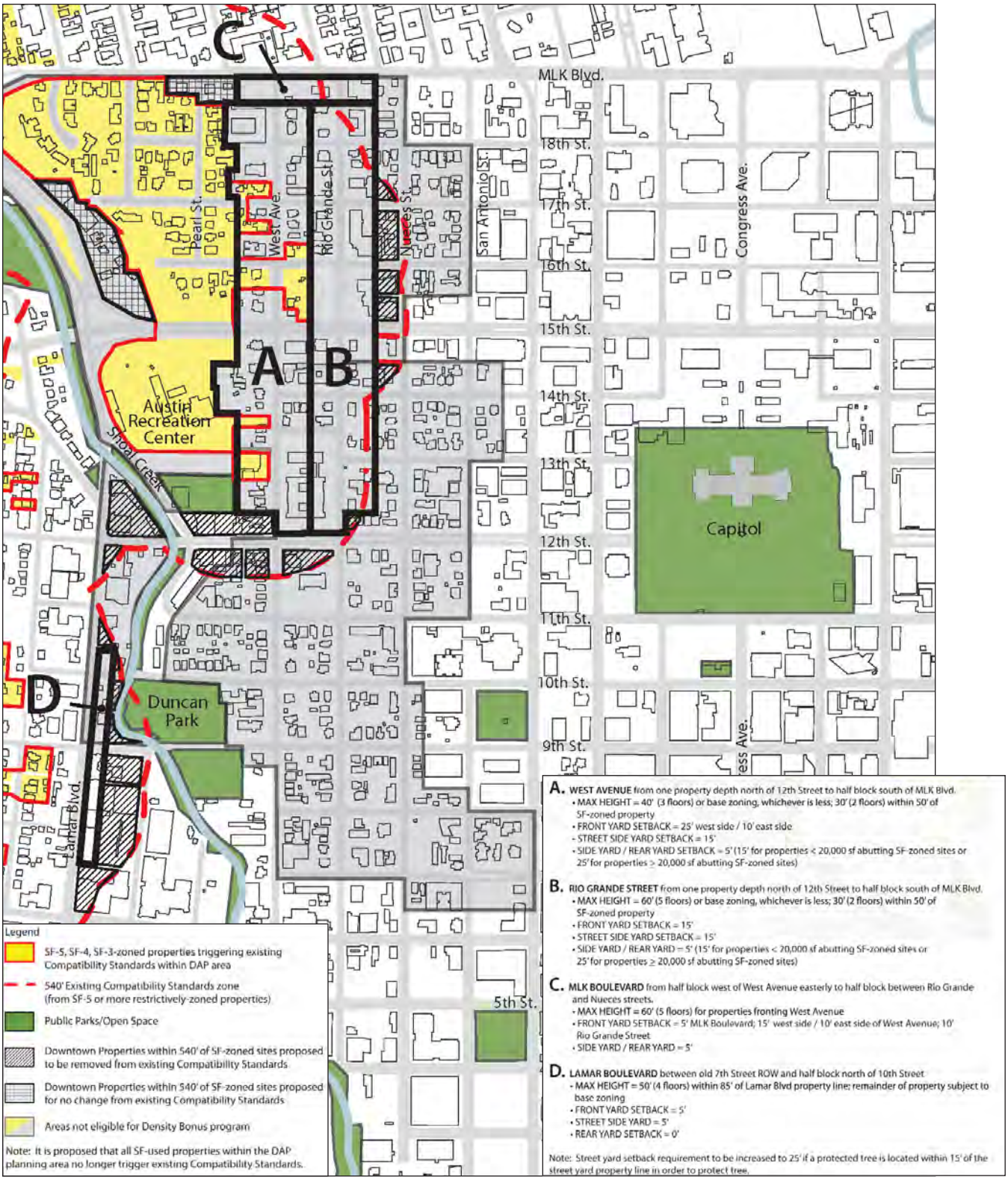
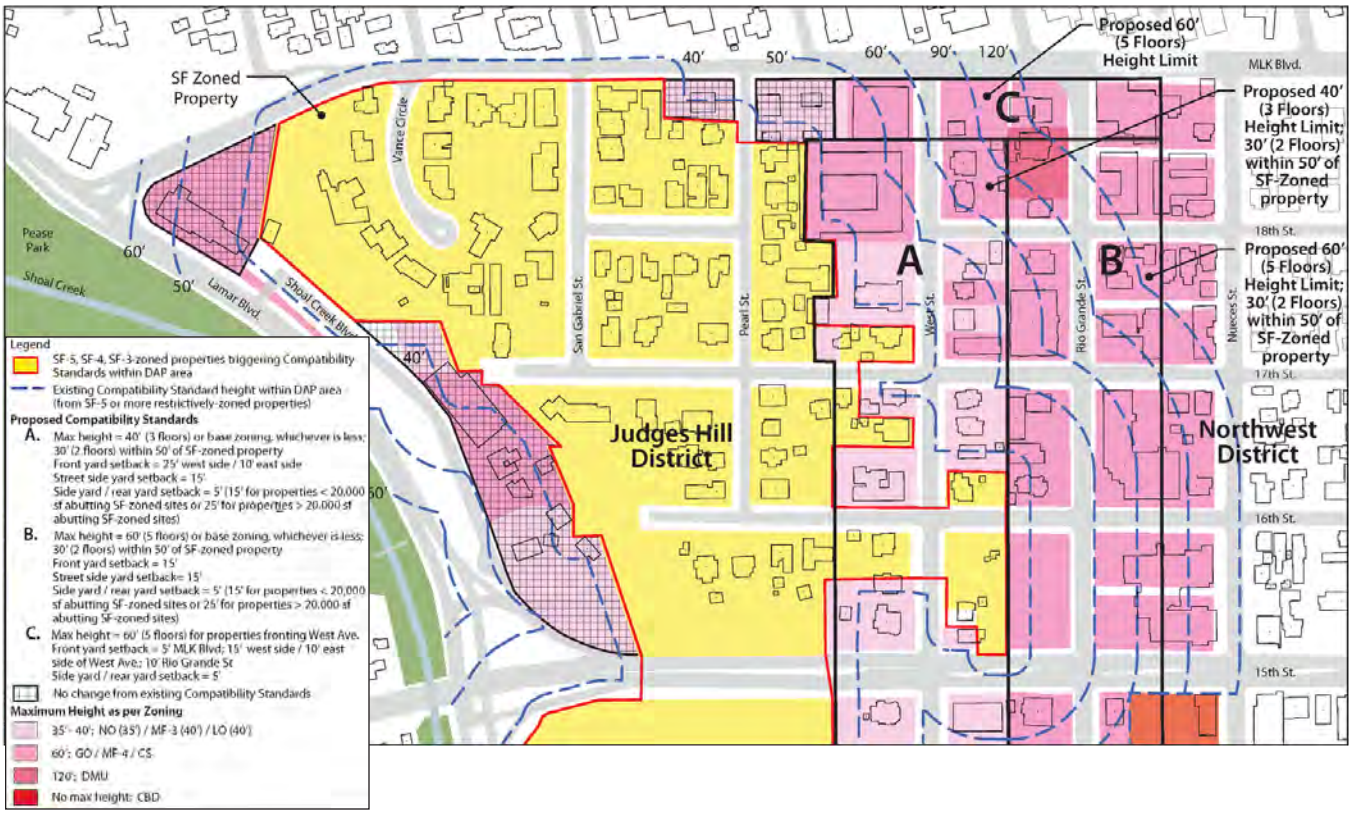


Figure 9:
Proposed Downtown Compatibility Zones and Standards



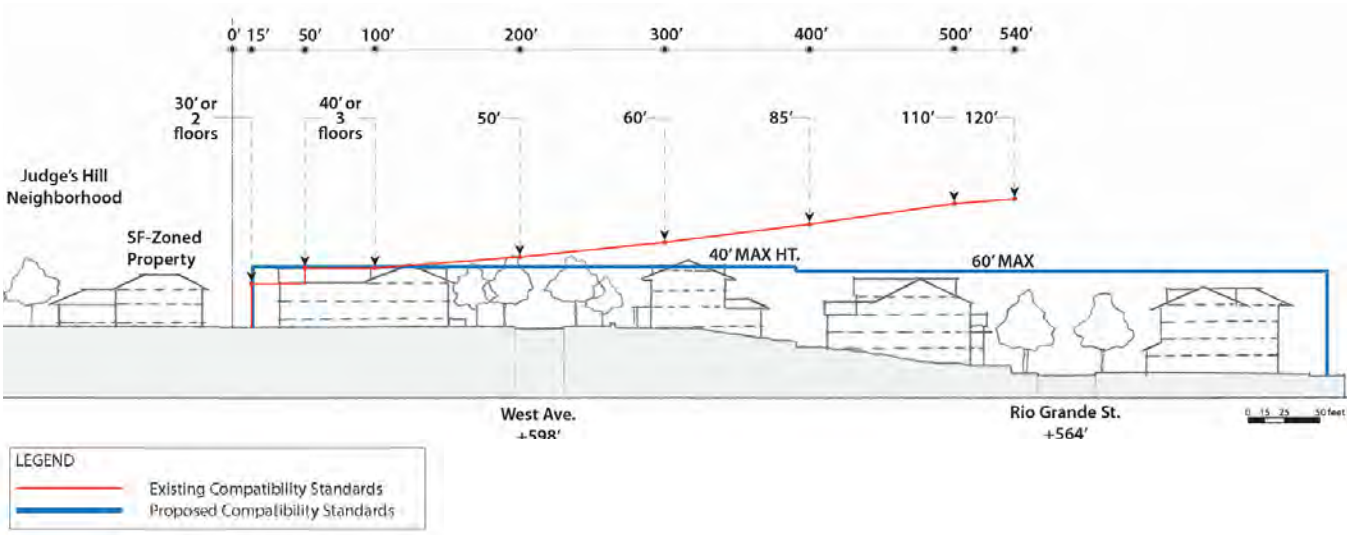


Figure 10:
Proposed Judges Hill Neighborhood Compatibility Study Plan and Section

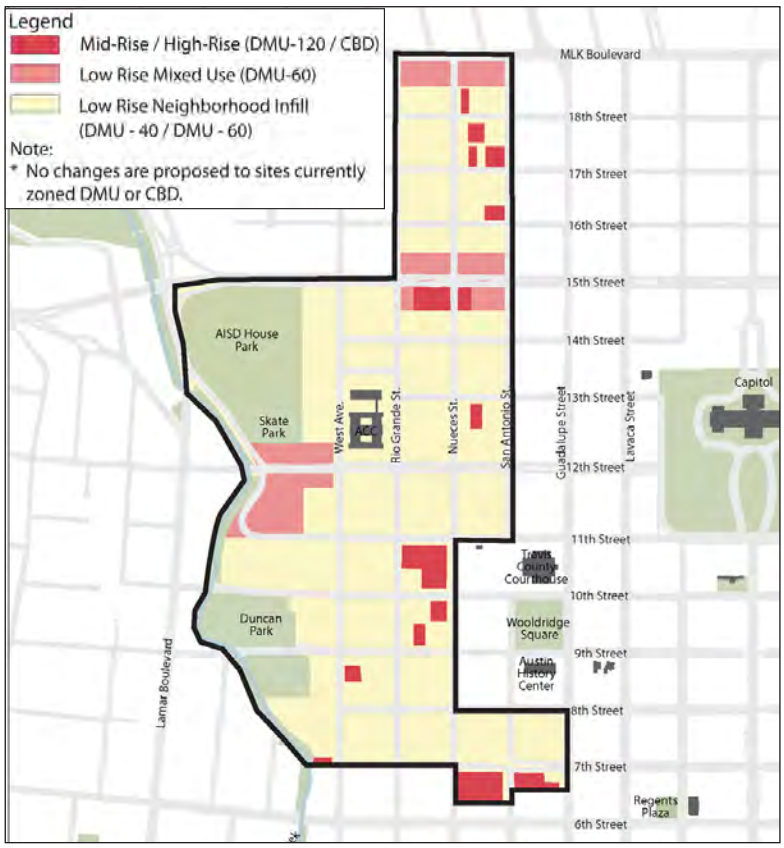
line. Development on sites greater than 20,000 square feet that abut a single-family-zoned property should have setbacks no less than 25 feet along the abutting side or rear yard property line. (See Area A on *Figures 9 and 10*.)

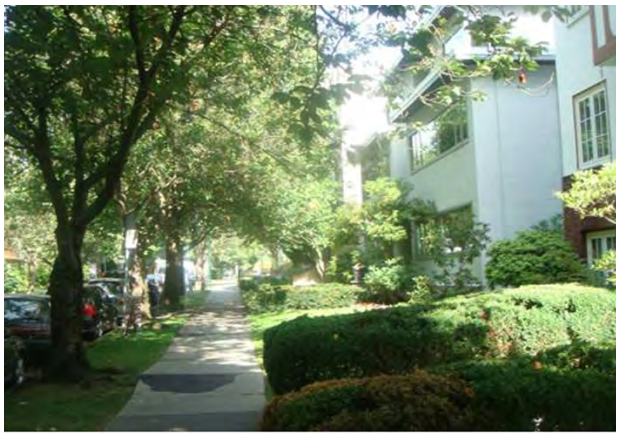
- Properties fronting on Rio Grande Street north of 12th Street shall have a maximum height of 60 feet or five floors, and no more than two floors within 50 feet of a single-family-zoned property. Such properties that are 20,000 square feet or less that abut a single-family-zoned property shall have setbacks no less than 15 feet along the abutting side or rear property line. Development on sites greater than 20,000 square feet that abut a single-family-zoned property shall have setbacks no less than 25 feet along the abutting side or rear yard property line. (See Area B on *Figures 9 and 10*.)
- Properties within one-half block of MLK Boulevard west of Rio Grande Street shall have a maximum height of 60 feet or five floors. The side and rearyard setbacks for these properties shall be five feet. (See Area C on *Figures 9 and 10*.)

NW-11: Introduce form-based standards that promote a compatible relationship between existing and new development, as well as an engaging pedestrian environment. Individual buildings define the spatial experience and character of Downtown's various districts, so it is important that they be designed not only to meet their own requirements, but also to contribute to a harmonious cityscape: one that is compatible with the existing historic fabric. To this end, it is recommended that form-based development standards be adopted for specific building types within the Northwest District to regulate their form and massing and their relationship to the street and to adjacent properties. Standards should be formulated in a way that provides property owners and developers with a clear administrative path for approval. At the same time, new form regulations should allow for flexibility and creativity, with a method of equivalent or "alternative" compliance, established for project designs proposing alternate methods for achieving the same or superior results.

Within the Northwest District, low-rise buildings of 60 feet or less in height will be the dominant building type, although there are some sites where existing zoning and the proposed Density Bonus Program would allow for additional height. Figure 11

Figure 11:
Northwest District Regulating Plan





Examples of neighborhood scaled infill development in Vancouver, Portland and Seattle.

provides a regulating plan for the Northwest District, describing the location of the two predominant building types:

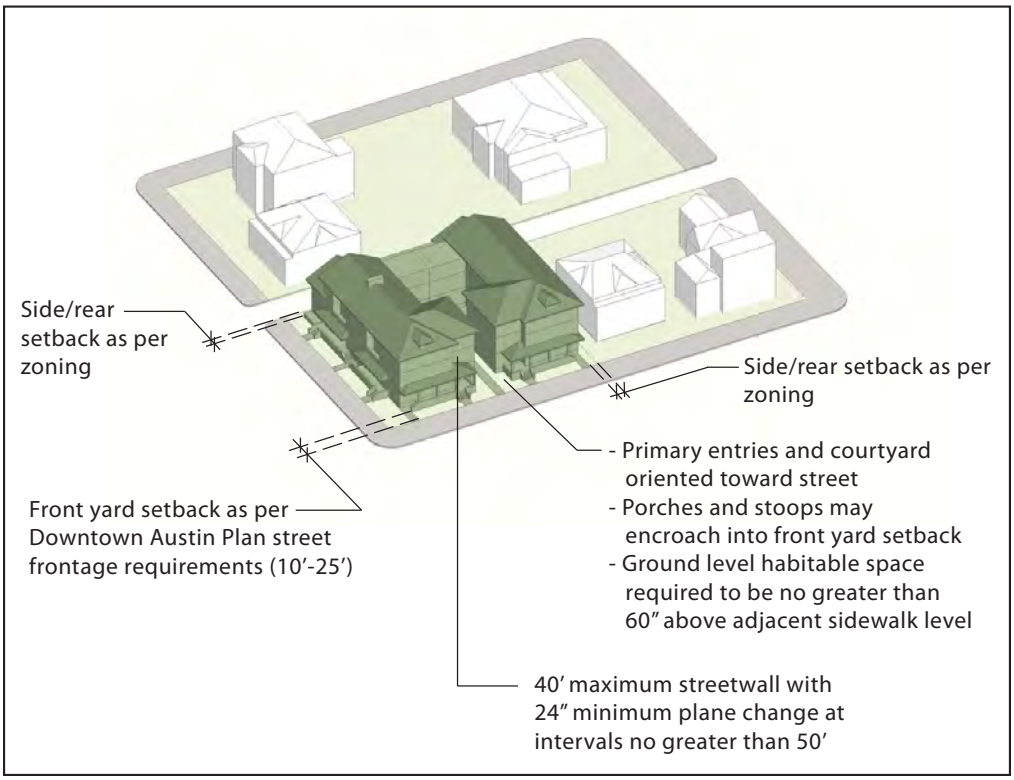
- *Neighborhood Infill Buildings*, which are intended to fit into the predominantly two to three-story fabric of single-family homes; and
- *Mixed-Use Buildings*, along key corridors (i.e., MLK Boulevard, 15th Street west of Rio Grande Street and 12th Street west of West Avenue), where a more urban form with ground-level commercial uses is desired.

The following provides some general direction on the types of regulations that should be considered for each of the potential building types within the Northwest District. Appendix B provides a more detailed description of these regulations. As part of the ordinance amendment process (and before these standards are adopted), further input should be gathered from District stakeholders and additional testing undertaken to ensure that these regulations do not have unintended consequences, and that they are flexible enough to address the spectrum of existing conditions encountered within the Northwest District.

Neighborhood Infill Buildings: This building type is suitable for properties with a DMU-60 designation located in the heart of the Northwest District. (See Regulating Map, *Figure 9*.) These standards are designed to promote well-scaled infill development with a positive relationship to the street. The standards, illustrated in Appendix B, can be summarized as follows:

- Any portion of a building above 40 feet in height that faces a public street or alley should be stepped back from the building face by 10 feet, reflecting the predominant two to three-story scale of adjacent buildings.
- On sites adjacent to properties that are either historic landmarks or are deemed a contributing structure within a historic district, buildings should be stepped back so that no portion of the building within 15 feet of the adjoining property line is greater than 30 feet, or two floors, in height. If the historic property is greater than 30 feet in height, this stepback requirement does not apply.
- Changes in the plane of a building (of at least 24 inches in depth) at intervals no greater than 50 feet measured horizontally should be provided to create scale, interest and variation in a building façade.
- Primary entries should be oriented to the street, with ground-level commercial storefronts, or with ground-level residential or commercial porches or stoops that may encroach into the frontyard setback (if allowed under existing zoning).

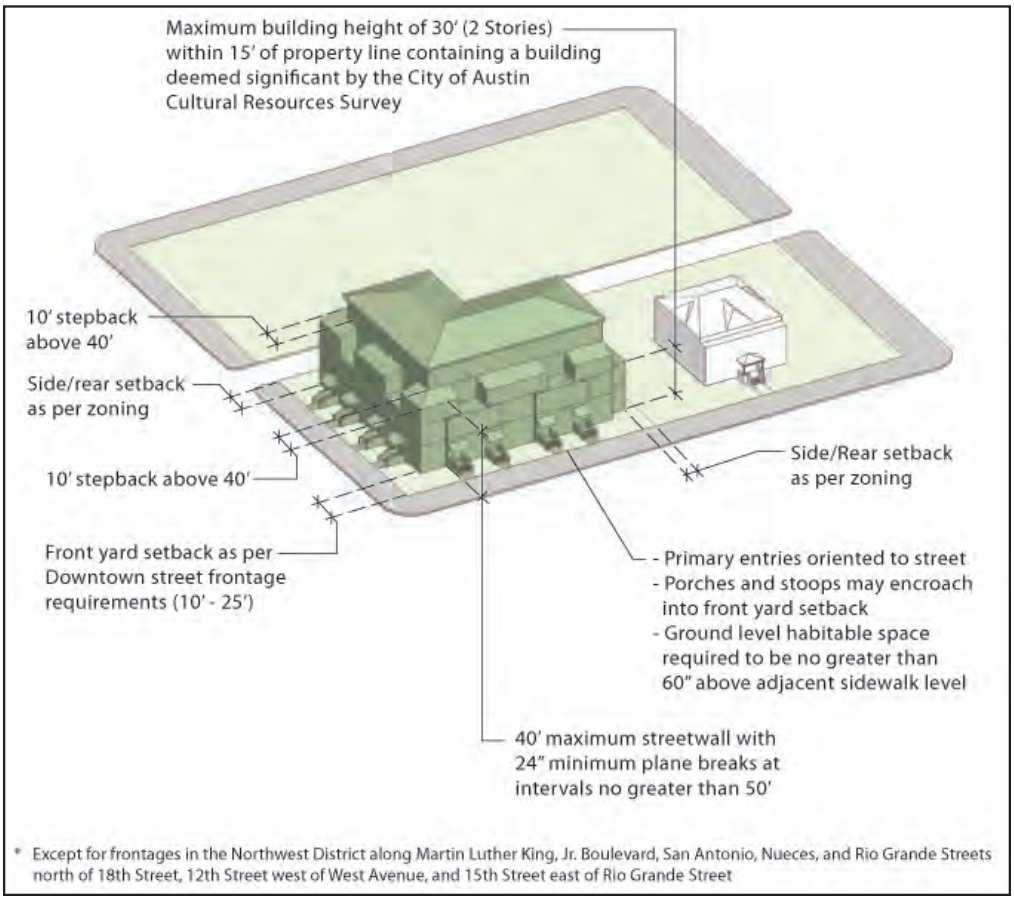
Proposed standards for Courtyard and Walk-up Buildings on properties designated as DMU-40.



- Ground-level habitable spaces should be no more than 60 inches above the most adjacent sidewalk level.
- Above-grade parking should be encapsulated and not visible from a public street.

Low-Rise Mixed-Use Buildings: This building type is intended for properties along MLK Boulevard, 12th Street west of West Avenue, and 15th Street east of Rio Grande Street, beyond the historic fabric of the District, where ground level commercial and neighborhood-serving uses are desired. The standards are described in detail in Appendix B and summarized as follows:

- Ground-level spaces should should have a minimum floor-to-bottom-of second-floor-structure dimension of at least 12 feet in height along 40% of the parcel frontage to accomodate pedestrian-oriented uses.
- Storefront glazing with a Visible Transmittance (VT) rating of 0.6 or higher should be provided on at least 40% of the street front wall area of the ground level between two and 10 feet above grade.
- Shelter and shading devices, including awnings canopies, or other projecting devices should be provided along at least 50% of the street frontage, and over all building entries.



Proposed standards for residential infill developmen on sites zoned DMU-60.

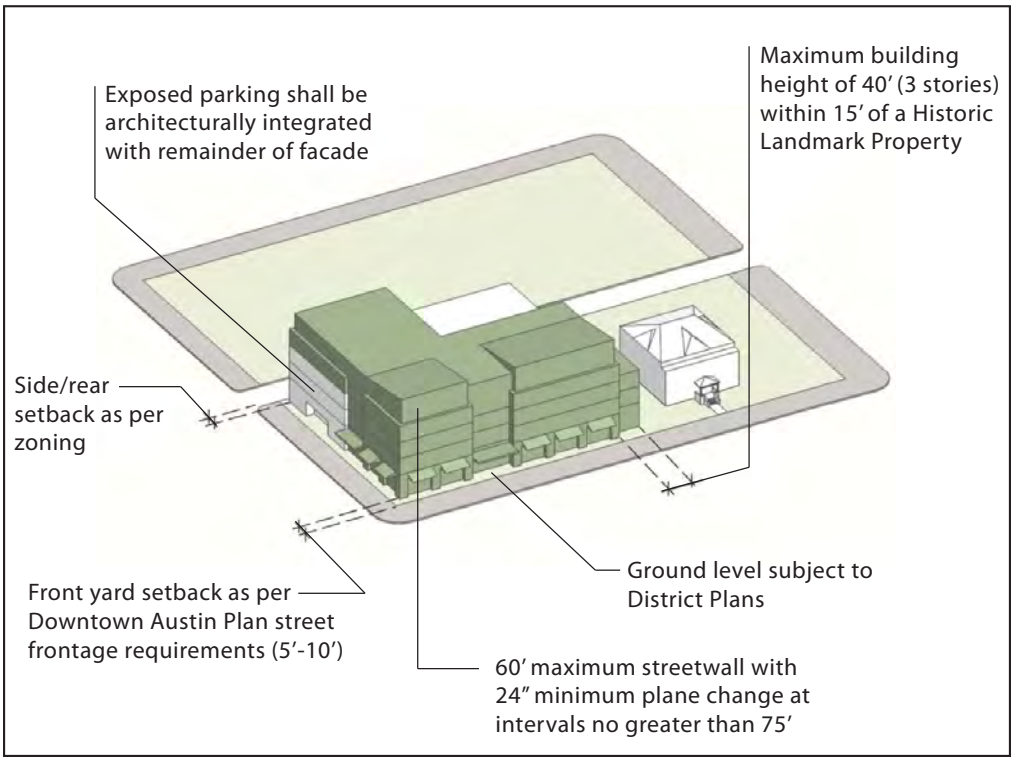
- Building entries should be generally flush with the sidewalk of MLK Boulevard, 15th Street and 12th Street, at intervals not exceeding 75 feet.
- Above-grade parking should be encapsulated within the building mass and not visible from the street frontages along MLK Boulevard, 15th Street or 12th streets, and not occupy more than 25% of the total parcel frontage along other streets.

Mid-Rise and High-Rise Buildings: On properties where the base zoning or Density Bonus Program permits buildings to exceed 60 feet in height, such buildings should comply with the form-based development standards for mid and high-rise buildings described in Appendix B.

Treatment of Service Areas: Loading and service areas should be located along public alleys to the maximum extent possible. Where such areas are located along public streets, their frontages should be minimized to avoid disruption of pedestrian or bicycle circulation and should be architecturally-screened from public view. All truck maneuvering should occur within the interior of a structure or a screened loading area.

Parking Treatment: Surface parking lots should be located at the rear of a property and screened from public view by buildings, low walls and/or landscaping. Parking garages should be underground and/or encapsulated (i.e., not exposed to public view) and an integral part of the building's architecture with similar materials and treatments. Freestanding parking garages should not be permitted within the Northwest District.

Proposed standards for Mixed Use Buildings on sites designated DMU-60.



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Alternative Compliance: If a project proponent wishes to deviate from the above building form standards, an "alternative compliance" procedure, to be developed during the ordinance preparation process, will be made available by the City. This process should require a design review of the proposal and a finding by the City's Urban Design Officer as well as an endorsement by the Design Commission that the alternative treatment meets the City's Urban Design Guidelines and the overall goals of the Northwest District.

NW-12: Allow for additional density for properties along MLK Boulevard, 15th Street and 12th Street, subject to the provisions of the proposed Density Bonus Program. If the provisions of the proposed Density Bonus Program are met, development should be permitted to a maximum height of 120 feet and to a maximum density of 5:1 FAR at the following locations, per the Density Bonus Program Map, Figure 6:

- The block bounded by MLK Boulevard, San Antonio, Nueces and 18th Streets; and
- The half-blocks fronting 15th Street between Nueces and San Antonio streets. These sites shall be subject to the development standards for Mid-Rise Buildings.
- On properties fronting 12th Street, west of West Avenue, development will be permitted to a maximum height of 90 feet and to a maximum density of 3:1 FAR, subject to the provisions of the proposed Density Bonus Program, and to the standards for Mid-Rise Buildings.

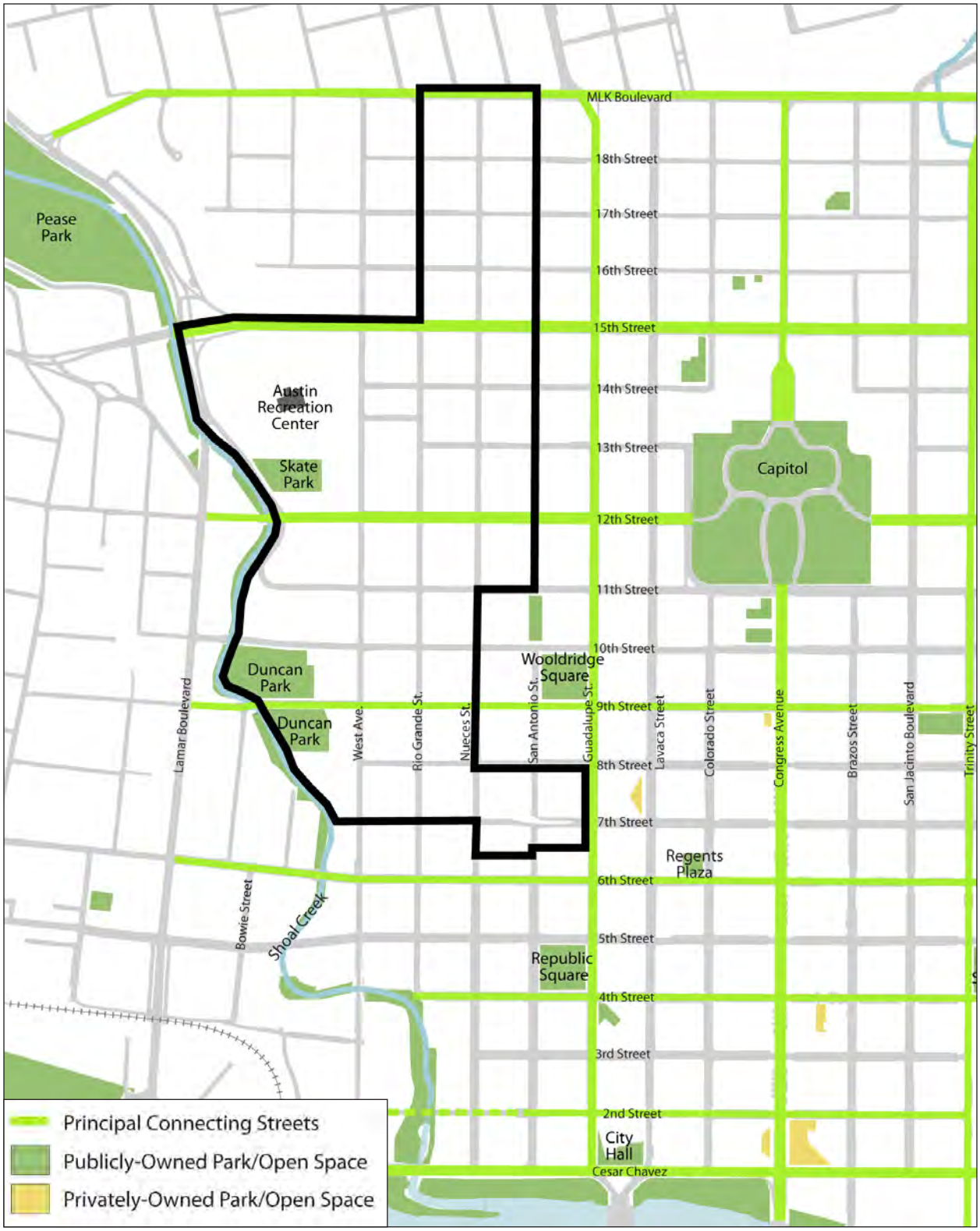

Figure 12:
Northwest District Parks and Open Spaces with Connecting Streets

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PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Three public parks are located within the Northwest District: Shoal Creek Greenway, House Park and Duncan Park. The DAP Parks and Open Space Master Plan has made recommendations for the programming and improvement of these parks, which are summarized and illustrated below.

NW-13: Improve the Shoal Creek Greenway. Forming the entire west boundary of the Northwest District and the west boundary of the 1839 Waller Plan is flood-prone Shoal Creek. A creekside hike-and-bike trail exists in the corridor that, except for a few missing stretches, links the Lady Bird Lake trail through Downtown to Pease Park and neighborhoods as far north as 38th Street. Near-term priorities for the Shoal Creek Greenway in the Northwest District should focus on:

- Enhanced creek maintenance, including enhanced water quality;
- Making the trail safer (more visible) and more viable for both bicyclists and pedestrians travel, in terms of path width and alignment (better sight lines, less extreme curves);
- Designing and implementing a way-finding and signage system;
- Establishing development standards that foster positive interaction between properties facing the creek and the creek corridor itself; and
- Initiating a conceptual engineering project, greenway master plan and funding strategy for a flood control project, similar to what has occurred for the Downtown segment of Waller Creek.

Longer term priorities should focus on implementing a flood control project that allows for appropriate redevelopment, improved ecology of the creek corridor and creation of a more cohesive greenway corridor.

Shoal Creek Greenway trail is an important north-south bicycle and pedestrian connection that should be enhanced.

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KEY GOALS

- Improve trail width and continuity.
- Introduce regular professional maintenance and security programs.
- Plan for future flood control, erosion control and water quality improvements.
- Require private development to contribute to creek environment.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Resolve gaps in trail and obtain access easements between West Avenue and 5th Street.
2. Improve bicycle access beneath railroad trestle and pedestrian bridge.
3. Widen trail to 14 feet wherever possible.
4. Introduce creekside trail below West Avenue.
5. Provide accessible route from street sidewalks to trail.
6. Restore historic bridge.
7. Preserve unique character of deep channel and spring.

Figure 13:
Shoal Creek Greenway Improvement Concept

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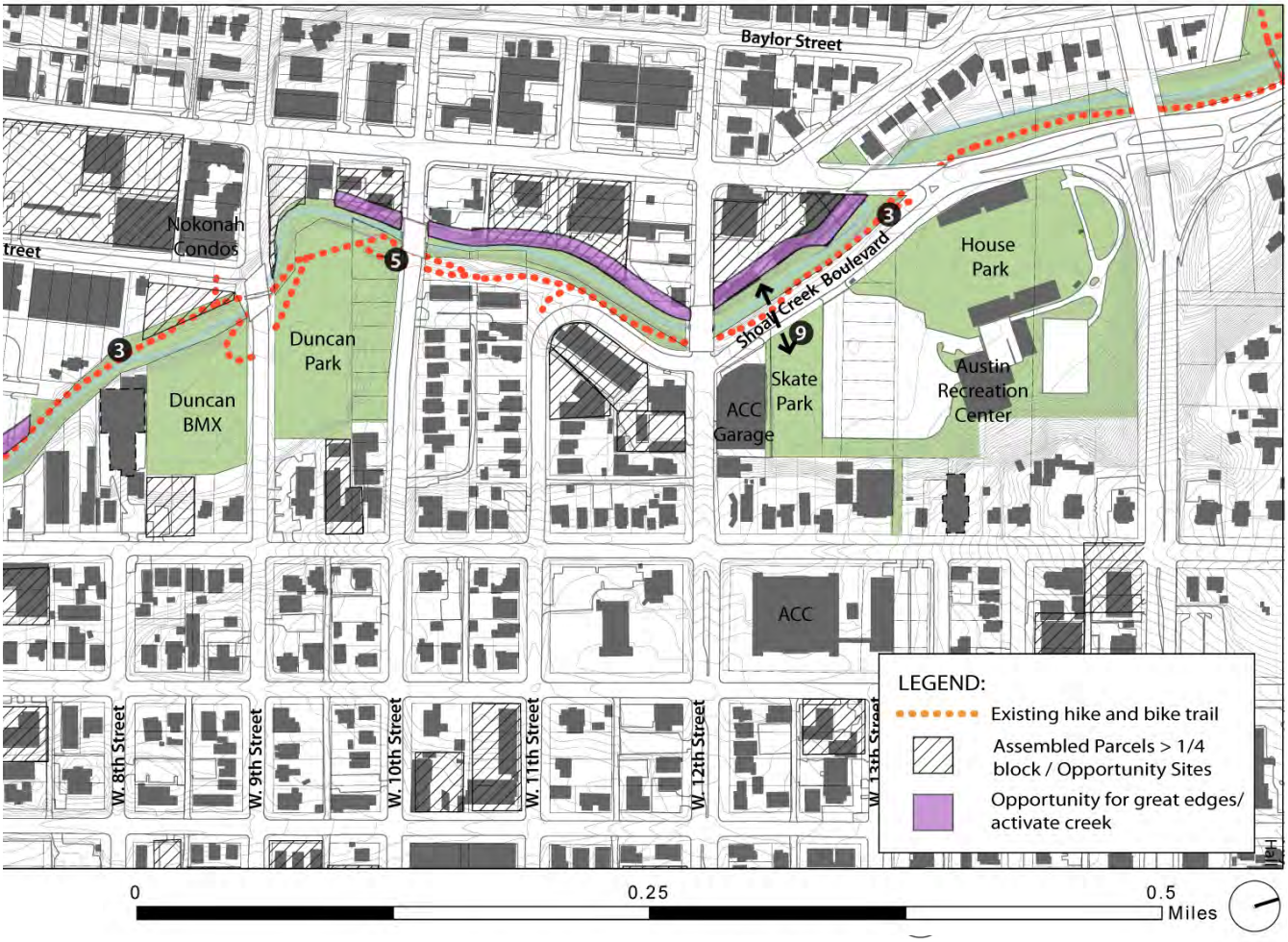

8 Provide pedestrian/bike connection and bike parking.

9 Ensure connections between BMX park, Shoal Creek and new skate park.

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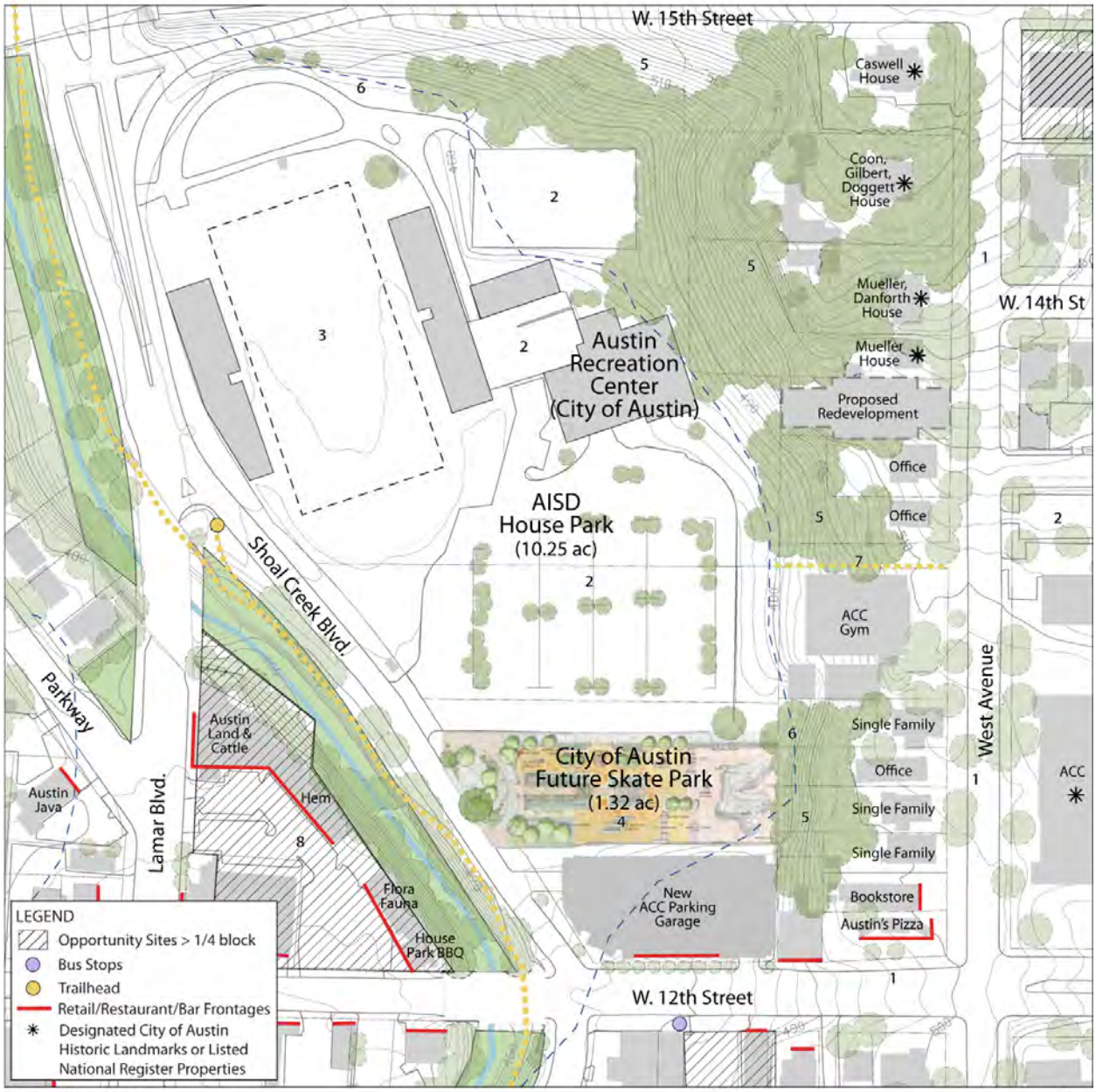

1. Parallel parking
2. Parking lot
3. Sports field
4. Skate park
5. Steep slope
6. Existing 100-year floodplain
7. Public stair
8. Shopping Center (retail, restaurants)

Figure 14:
House Park Existing Conditions

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NW-14: Improve connectivity to, and circulation within House Park and the Austin Recreation Center. House Park is located in the extreme northwest corner of the Northwest District and contains AISD's House Park Stadium, the PARD's Austin Recreation Center and the City's newest combined skate and BMX park, which is under construction. These facilities serve the greater Austin area, as well as the Northwest District and Downtown. As the park area is already maximized in terms of programmed activities, improvements should focus on enhancing – both functionally and aesthetically – the circulation systems and parking on-site, and in the immediate vicinity of the site. There are opportunities to reduce some of the surface parking that could be used to restore some green, open space to this park. This could best be accomplished first by conducting a joint master planning process with the City, AISD and ACC. Great Streets treatments, as was recently implemented with the new ACC parking garage, should be implemented along the Lamar Boulevard and Shoal Creek park edges, and a clearer and safer pedestrian crossing from the Shoal Creek Greenway to House Park should be constructed. The PARD Master Plan calls for constructing a playscape associated with the Austin Recreation Center, which could be developed once some amount of open space near the ARC is liberated.

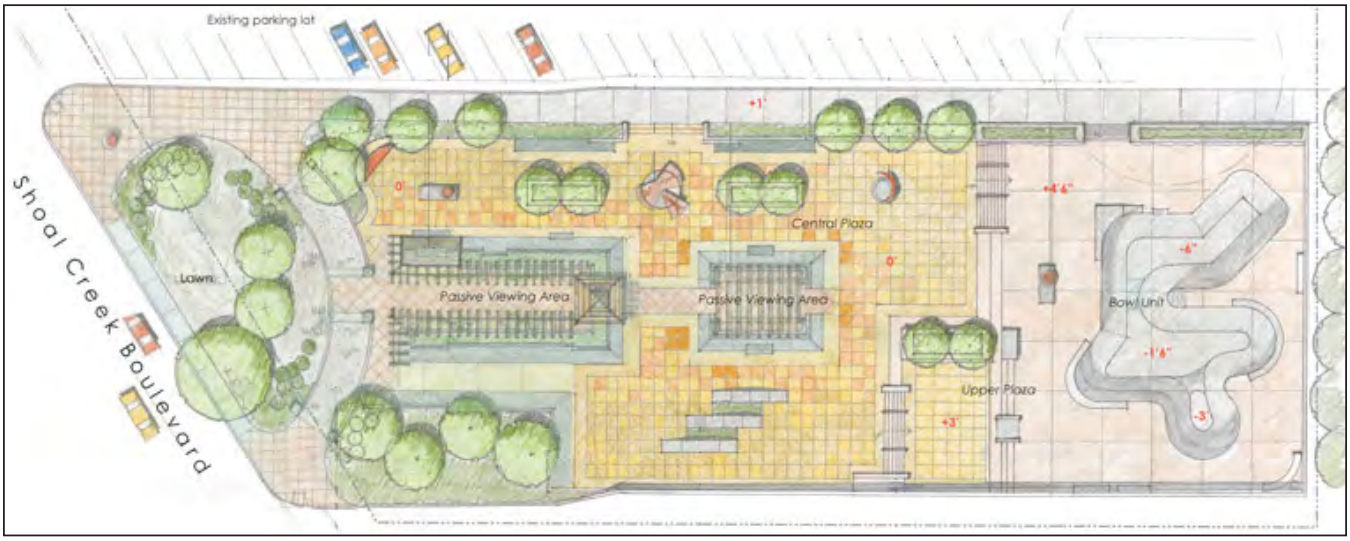

Figure 15:
Concept Plan of Proposed Skate Park

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KEY GOALS

- Improve tree health and vegetation throughout, reinforcing the natural creekside environment.
- Create new attractions to the park to intensify its daily use by nearby residents and employees.
- Contain the BMX park activity so it does not impede use of public ROW.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Preserve open lawn and introduce an irrigation system.
2. Introduce crosswalk on Ninth Street.
3. Maintain and enhance BMX park.
4. Install a low wall or vegetated buffer along sidewalk.
5. Create a vegetated buffer along Shoal Creek and adjacent properties in BMX park.
6. Implement Great Streets sidewalks and street trees.
7. Install children's play area.
8. Construct restroom building.
9. Improve and create accessible paths connecting activities.
10. Integrate off-leash area adjacent to slope.
11. Maintain riparian vegetation, implement slope stabilization and provide benches/picnic tables along the riparian edge.
12. Maintain woodland and vegetated slope.
13. Consider land acquisition for additional parkland.
14. Improve pedestrian connection between park and Lamar Blvd.

Figure 16:
Duncan Park Improvement Plan

NW-15: Enhance Duncan Park as the Northwest District's Neighborhood Park.
The 5.7-acre Duncan Park, located in the central western portion of the Northwest District, serves as its neighborhood park. Today, its northern half is mostly passive open space giving on to Shoal Creek, with a few picnic tables and a large open space: ideal for unprogrammed recreation. The southern half, south of 9th Street, is almost completely occupied by a community-built and maintained BMX park, which is a major attraction to both children and young adults.

In PARD's Long Range Plan, the redevelopment of Duncan Park is ranked as eighth of the top nine priorities for the Downtown. As a neighborhood park, Duncan Park should be programmed to serve the surrounding area and the expected and desired increase in residents. Long-term recommendations include:

- Installing a children's play area with nearby restroom;
- Providing an off-leash dog area;
- Creating stronger pedestrian connections from the park to Lamar Boulevard and the Shoal Creek Greenway trail; and
- Considering the acquisition the City-owned tract at the southwest corner of Lamar Boulevard and Shoal Creek for parkland.

Short-term recommendations include:

- Installing an irrigation system;
- Maintaining vegetation along Shoal Creek to open up views to the creek and remove invasive plants;
- Constructing a more visible pedestrian crosswalk between the two halves of the park near the 9th Street bridge;
- Creating a vegetated buffer along the Shoal Creek edge; and
- Installing a low wall or vegetated buffer along the 9th Street southern sidewalk to contain BMX activity within the park and keep the sidewalk clear and safe for pedestrians.

A leash-free dog area and a children's playground would serve the surrounding neighborhood and provide much-needed family-friendly activities in the Northwest District.

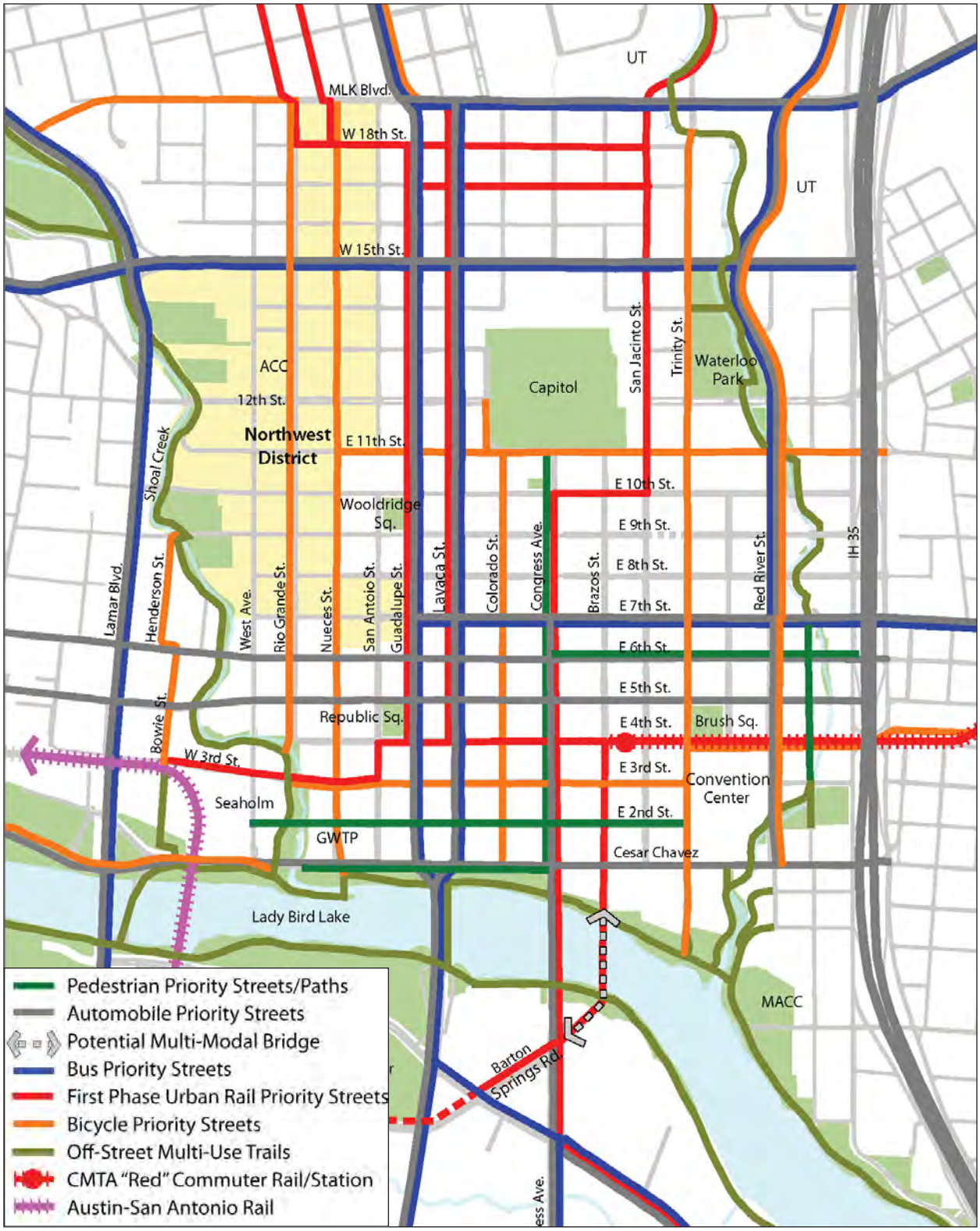

Figure 17:
Transportation Framework Plan

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TRANSPORTATION AND STREETSCAPE

Most of the streets within the Northwest District are relatively narrow, two and three-lane roadways with light volumes of traffic, reinforcing the neighborhood-like character of the area, as distinct from the more intense parts of Downtown to the south and east. The narrow streets with curbside parking help to calm traffic, making the streets fairly comfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists. The busier streets of MLK Boulevard, 15th and 12th are exceptions to this, but these provide important east-west connectivity through the District.

As part of the DAP, a Transportation Framework Plan has been established to guide transportation planning and improvements throughout the Downtown. The Plan calls for all streets to be improved as multi-modal corridors with enhanced pedestrian facilities, but also establishes a classification system defining priority roles for each street, (e.g., pedestrian, bicycle, transit and vehicular-priority. The plan provides streetscape cross sections for most streets. (This Framework Plan will continue to be updated as projects are slated for implementation and further stakeholder input is gathered and detailed design and engineering analysis is conducted.) The following is a summary of the transportation policies relevant to the Northwest District:

NW-16: Improve sidewalks and streetscapes in keeping with the character of the Northwest District's tree-lined and canopied streets. The overall pedestrian environment of the Northwest District benefits greatly from the continuous canopy of street trees that provide shade and greenery throughout the area. However, the sidewalk network is in poor condition; some streets have only one sidewalk along the street edge; many segments are in poor condition (cracked, heaved, inaccessible, etc.) and many lack curb ramps for wheelchair access. The City's Sidewalk Master Plan prioritizes these needed sidewalk improvements.

Northwest District stakeholders strongly support the construction of "Great Streets" improvements, which means constructing wider, typically 18-foot sidewalks, in the public rights-of-way, with street trees in tree grates at the curbside every 25 feet. The Northwest District touts only one "true" Great Streets sidewalk: that on the north sidewalk of 12th Street at Shoal Creek Boulevard, which was developed as part of the new ACC parking garage facility. This type of streetscape is appropriate

for this part of 12th Street, as well as for the more urban, mixed-use streets such as MLK Boulevard and 15th Street. However, for the streets that are more interior to the District, streetscape and sidewalk improvements should be designed to protect and complement the existing mature trees in the streetyard. A new Great Streets approach should be developed specific to this prevailing condition for the Northwest District that judges the appropriate type of improvements to make, based on a property-specific assessment by the City's Great Streets Program Manager.

The DAP proposes that all new development provide Great Streets improvements or, if it is not practical to do so, to contribute to the Great Streets Program fund in the form of an in-lieu fee. In order to address the deficiencies in the public sidewalk system, a phased capital improvement project should be pursued.

NW-17: Improve the Cycling Environment. As described in the DAP Transportation Framework Plan, a premier bicycle facility or a "bicycle boulevard" linking UT on the north with Lady Bird Lake on the south should be constructed through the Northwest District. The facility should be designed to share vehicle lanes on a calm and relatively flat street that does not carry a large volume of traffic. It should be suited for experienced as well as beginning cyclists, and the north-south bicycle movement should be given the priority over east-west movements at intersections. Both Nueces Boulevard and Rio Grande have been identified for bicycle boulevard improvements, and the project is funded and will be commenced later this year.

In addition to the bicycle boulevard, dedicated bicycle lanes should be implemented according to the DAP Transportation Framework Plan, which is consistent with the City's adopted 2009 Bicycle Plan Update. Finally, most streets within the Northwest District are relatively calm, two-lane, two-way streets that could accommodate "sharrows", which are shared bicycle/auto lanes. These lanes (which today are being piloted on Guadalupe and Lavaca streets in the Downtown) carry special graphic designations on the pavement to indicate to both motorists and cyclists that cyclists may take the center of the lane.

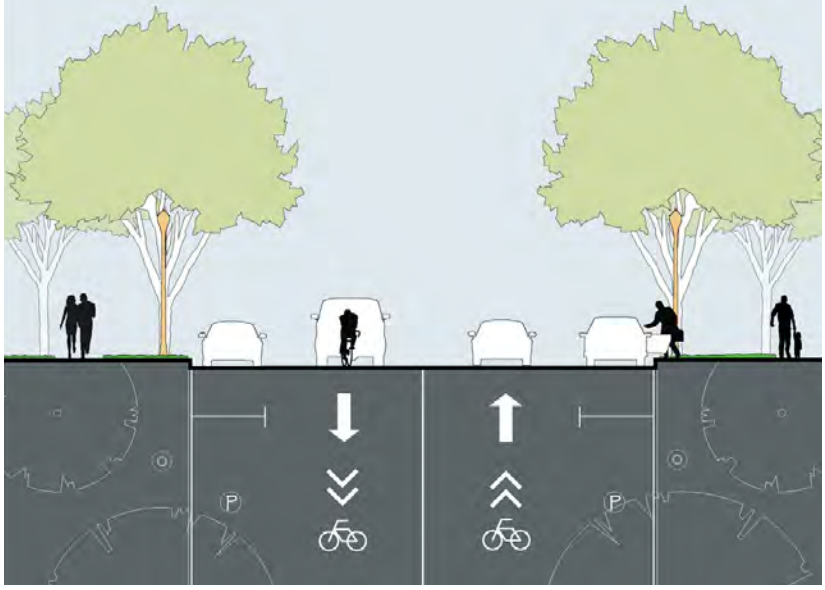

Figure 18:
Nueces Street Bicycle Priority Street Section

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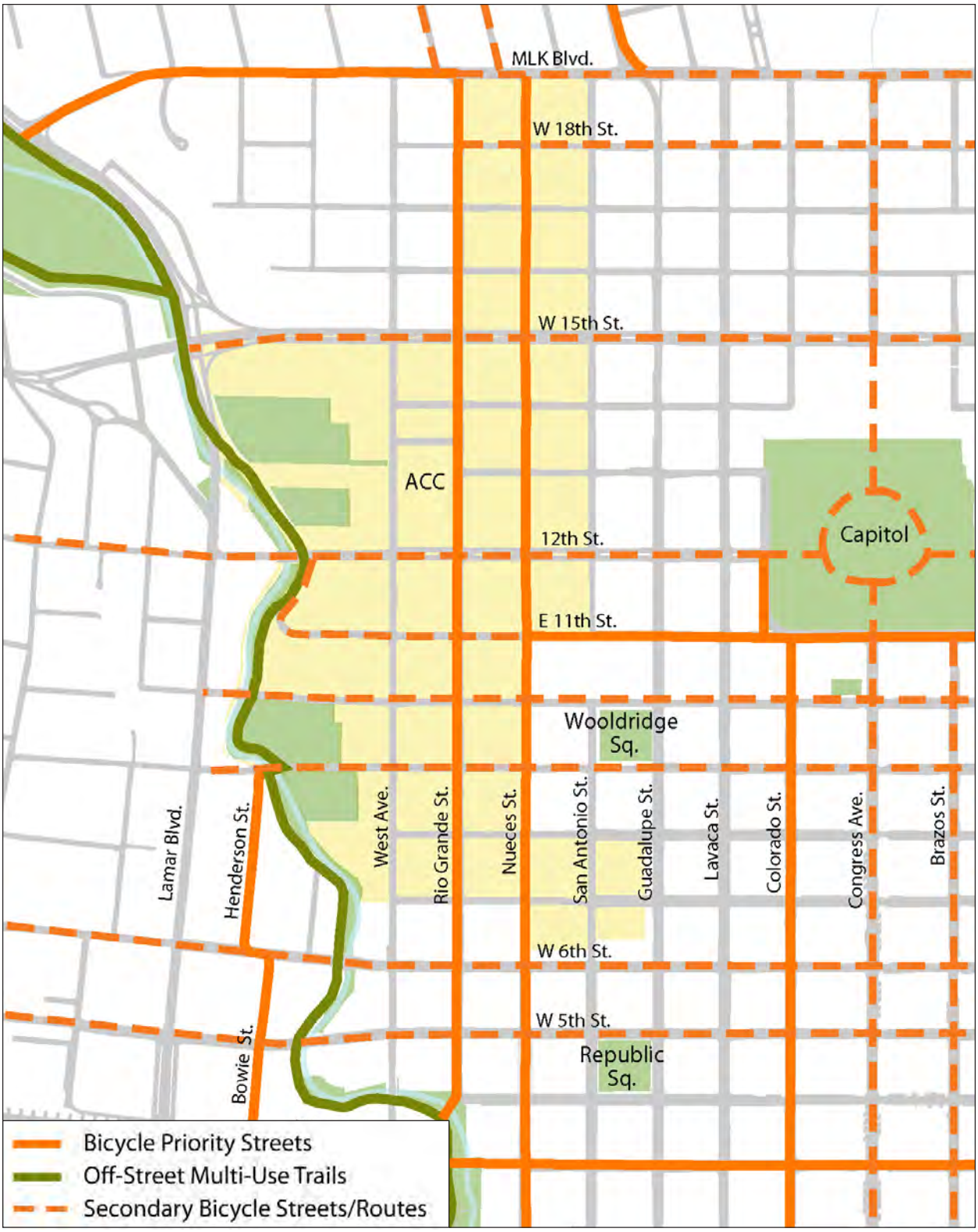

Figure 19:
DAP Bicycle Framework Plan

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UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure planning and implementation is undertaken by a number of City departments and divisions, including:

- Austin Water Utility, responsible for water and wastewater infrastructure, and for "Service Extension Requests" as part of the site plan process;
- Watershed Protection Department, responsible for storm sewer infrastructure, drainage/flood control, floodplain management (litter control in creeks and inlets), and water quality issues through their Watershed Engineering and the Field Operations Divisions;
- Austin Energy, the City's municipal energy provider, responsible for electric distribution and service, substations, and site plan review for location of underground vaults;
- Solid Waste Management, responsible for street sweeping and trash pickup and recycling.
- Street and Bridge Division of Public Works, responsible for roadway, bridge and alley maintenance, and roadway striping; and
- Public Works, charged with coordination of these departments during project management and the CIP process, and responsible for traffic control plan approvals, and public improvement construction schedules.

The Downtown Austin Plan calls for a higher level of coordination among these departments in planning and implementing utility and infrastructure projects throughout the Downtown, so that individual developers and property owners are not overly burdened with these costs. The DAP policy recommendations include:

- Establishment of a recurring "flex fund" to address water and wastewater upgrades needed for new Downtown development projects on a case-by-case basis
- Preparation of a Downtown Drainage Master Plan that defines systems requirements, and allows for a systematic approach to stormwater improvements, and preparation of clear CIP priorities.

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- A water quality program to provide policies for the maintenance of downtown streets, creeks and Lady Bird Lake, including sediment control systems, green roofs, and other forms of on-site interception; and
- Higher levels of solid waste collection, recycling and composting throughout the Downtown.

In addition to these Downtown-wide policies the following recommendations specifically address infrastructure and utility needs in the Northwest District:

NW-18: Implement Flood Control Improvements along Shoal Creek. The Shoal Creek corridor has experienced major flood events as urbanization of the watershed has taken place over time. It is the most significant infrastructure need in the Northwest District, therefore, a master plan and initial engineering study be undertaken to explore strategies for reducing flood levels along the corridor, including the construction of a by-pass tunnel similar to that being planned for Waller Creek. The study should identify funding sources, financing strategies, and an implementation and management program.

NW-19: Underground Overhead Transmission Lines. Unlike other parts of the Downtown, areas of the Northwest District still have overhead electric and communication lines that conflict with mature street tree canopies and create visual clutter. These include: West Avenue, 16th Street, 17th Street and segments of 7th Street. Undergrounding of these lines should be planned and phased as part of Austin Energy's Capital Improvement Program.

Overhead communication and electric lines create visual clutter and conflict with tree canopies.

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APPENDIX A

PROPOSED CHANGES TO LIST OF PERMITTED AND CONDITIONAL USES FROM CURRENT CITY CODE DMU ZONING DISTRICT

For the proposed DMU districts (DMU-120, DMU-60, DMU-40), modify the existing DMU list of uses to:

- Permit Retirement Housing (both large and small site).
- Allow Cocktail Lounge as a Conditional Use (except in the Northwest District as described below).
- Allow Exterminating Services as a Conditional Use.
- Allow Pawn Shop as a Conditional Use (except in the Northwest District as described below).
- Allow Limited Warehousing and Distribution as a Conditional Use (except in the Northwest District as described below).
- Permit Urban Farming as a Conditional Use.
- Permit Administrative Services (Civic Use).

For the proposed DMU-40 and DMU-60 districts within the Northwest District, further restrict DMU uses as follows:

- Prohibit Automotive Rentals, Automotive Repair Services, Automotive Sales, Automotive Washing, Bail Bond Services, Pawn Shop Services, Service Station, Vehicle Storage, Limited Warehousing and Distribution and Maintenance and Service Facilities.
- Prohibit Cocktail Lounge use, except along 12th Street (west of West Avenue), 15th Street and MLK Boulevard, where it shall be a Conditional Use.
- Allow Liquor Sales (limited to a 2,500 gross square foot sales area) as a Conditional Use along the above-mentioned street frontages only.

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APPENDIX B

PROPOSED BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS

The following development standards are intended to guide the form of new construction within the Downtown. The intent is to promote a compact, engaging and livable urban environment, while allowing for further growth and intensification. Upon adoption of the Downtown Austin Plan, these standards should be given further consideration as part of the ordinance preparation process; additional stakeholder review and testing should be pursued.

I. MID AND HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS GREATER THAN 60 FEET IN HEIGHT

Purpose: The following standards govern the form and treatment of mid-rise and high-rise buildings on properties with DMU-120 (Downtown Mixed Use 120 feet) or CBD (Central Business District) zoning designations or on any properties where buildings are allowed to exceed 60 feet in height. They are intended to promote buildings that:

- Contribute to an active and engaging streetfront environment;
- Minimize disruption to public sidewalks;
- Provide spatial definition along public streets and rights-of-way;
- Respect historic buildings;
- Allow light to the street;
- Create attractive skyline expression; and
- Promote livability and intensification by ensuring appropriate spacing between buildings.

a. Streetwalls and Setbacks: Like walls in a room, private buildings provide critical spatial definition to a city's public streets and open spaces, giving them a sense of enclosure, and in many cases a distinctive scale and character. As such, it is important that there be a level of coordination between buildings, so that strong spatial expression of the public realm can be achieved. Exceptions and variations can also be encouraged to create diversity and to give meaning to particular places and buildings, but these exceptions should be dealt with in specific cases where such variation is deemed to be warranted.

- For mid and high-rise buildings, a streetwall is defined as that portion of the building up to 90 feet in height and constructed within 5 feet of the street front property line.

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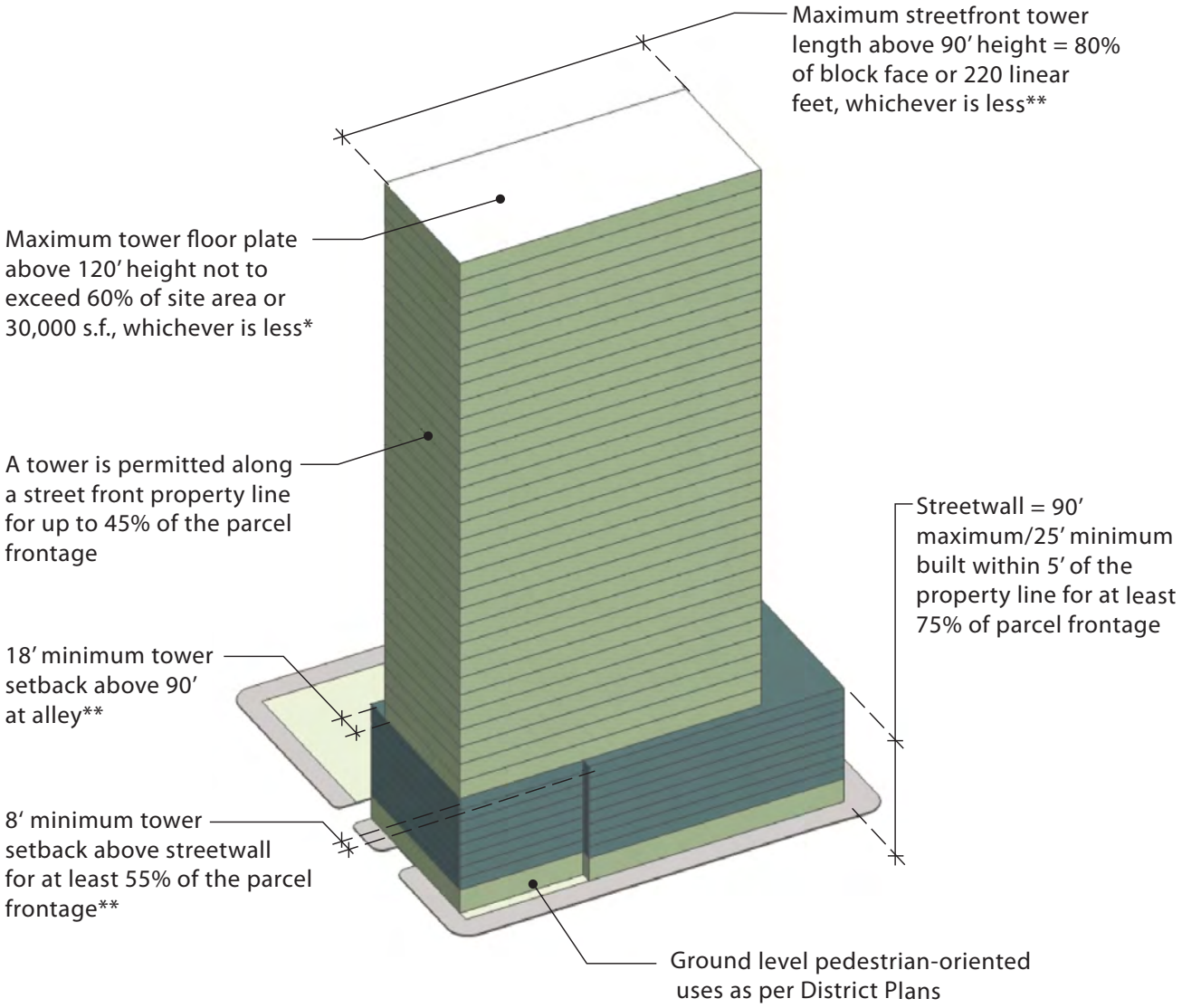
High-Rise Building
Half-Block and Greater

PARKING AND SERVICING

- Parking and service access from alley
- Driveways along "Pedestrian Activity Streets" not permitted, unless approved by the responsible Director
- Two driveway curb-cuts permitted from street, up to 25' wide each
- Above-grade parking may not be visible from the street



* Buildings above 600' may exceed maximum floor plate by 500 s.f. for each 10' of additional height above 600'.
** May be modified by the responsible Director for properties beneath Capitol View Corridor, or where special conditions create hardship.

Figure A:
High-Rise Building Proposed Regulations

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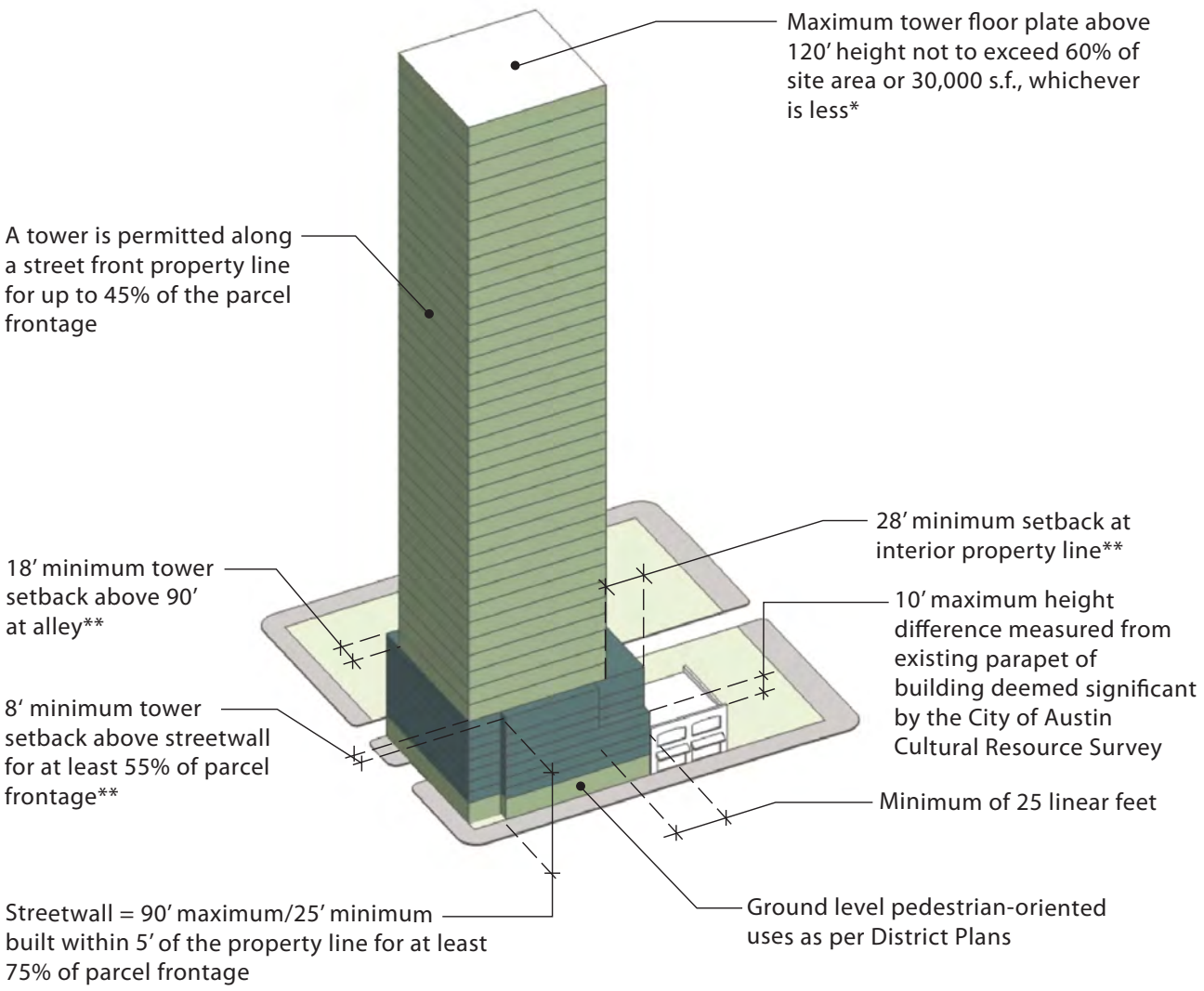
High-Rise Building
Quarter-Block and Greater

PARKING AND SERVICING

- Parking and service access from alley
- Driveway curb-cuts along "Pedestrian Activity Streets" not permitted, unless approved by the responible Director
- One driveway curb-cut permitted from street up to 25 feet wide
- Above grade parking may not be visible from the street



* Buildings above 600' may exceed maximum floor plate by 500 s.f. for each 10' of additional height above 600'.
** May be modified by the responsible Director for properties beneath Capitol View Corridor, or where special conditions create hardship.

Figure B:
High-Rise Building Proposed Regulations

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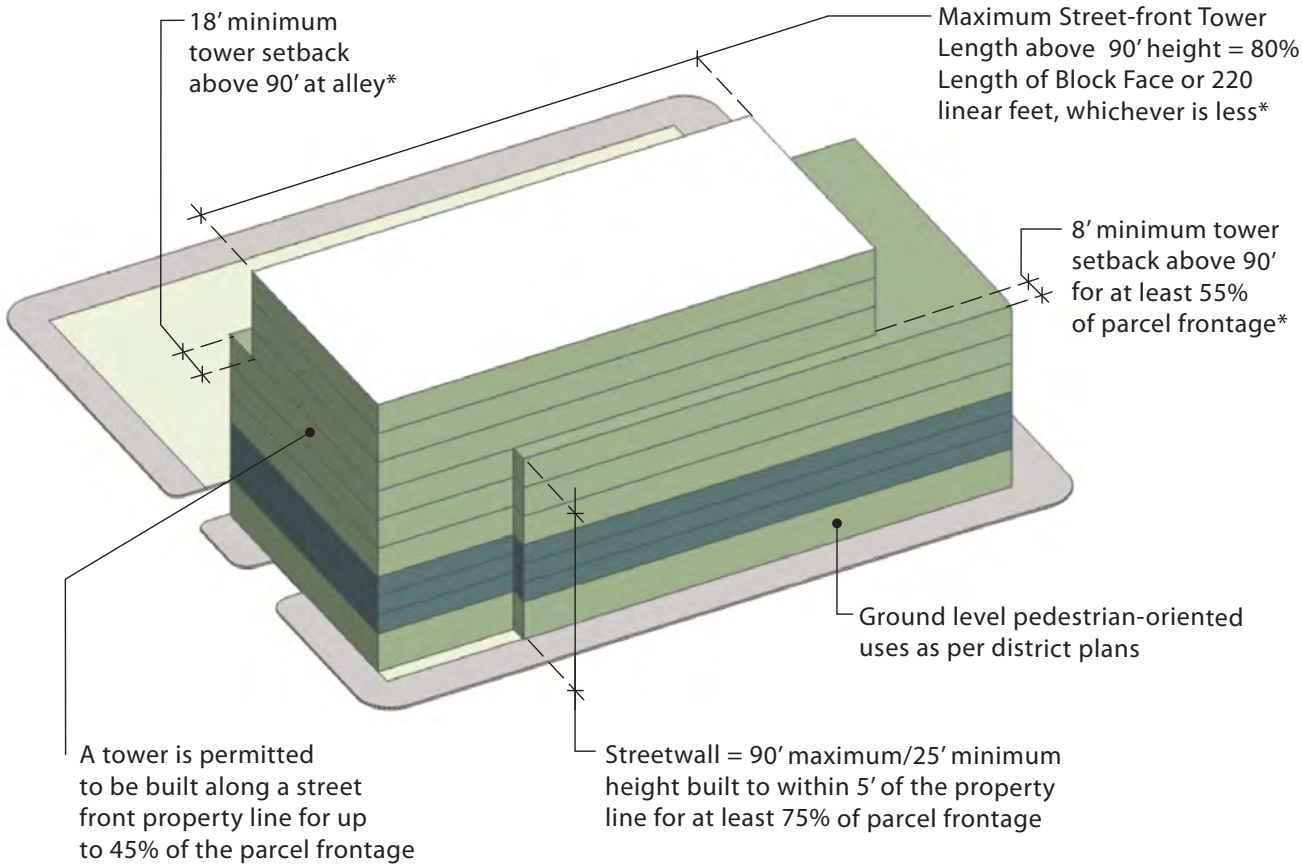
Mid-Rise Building
Half-Block and Greater

PARKING AND SERVICING

- Parking and service access from alley
- Driveways along a "Pedestrian Activity Street" are not permitted, unless approved by the responsible Director
- Two driveway curb-cuts permitted from street, up to 25' wide each
- Above grade parking may not be visible from the street



* May be modified by the responsible Director for properties beneath Capitol View Corridor, or where special conditions create hardship.

Figure C:
Mid-Rise Building Proposed Regulations

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- A streetwall up to a maximum height of 90 feet but no less than 25 feet must be built along 75% of the parcel frontage within five feet of the street front property line. If the building is adjacent to a structure more than 50 years old, the height of the streetwall must be within 10 feet of the height of the parapet of that building for a horizontal dimension of at least 25 feet.
- Building setbacks of up to 10 feet from the property line are allowed on the remainder of the streetfront perimeter.
- Greater setbacks are permitted only if such setbacks comply with the following publicly accessible open space criteria:
- The setback has a minimum area of 600 square feet, and a minimum dimension of 15 feet;
- The area is accessible to the public, visible from the public sidewalk, and does not require an admission fee or the purchase of goods or services;
- The area is useable by the general public throughout daylight hours.
- The area provides public seating and/or serves as a public pedestrian passageway connecting one public sidewalk with another.
- The open space has at least 75% of its area is open to the sky.
- The area has interior ground level space adjoining, overlooking and accessible to it.

b. Ground Level Pedestrian-Oriented Uses and Treatments: In addition to spatial definition, private buildings provide life and activity along a street. This can include restaurants with outdoor cafes, shops with generous storefront displays, office uses with activities that are visible from the street, or residential buildings that provide entry stoops and common spaces along the sidewalk. Such uses not only provide interest and activity, but also a sense of security and safety with “eyes on the street”. Conversely, buildings with long expanses of blank or inactive walls can create “dead” spots in an urban district and discourage pedestrian activity; they can also result in areas that are unsafe or that engender anti-social and even criminal behavior. Within the Downtown’s various districts there are many different conditions that demand a particular approach. Certain streets (e.g., Congress Avenue, East Sixth Street, Second Street) warrant a high proportion of intensive retail and restaurant uses, critical to their success as regional destinations, while other streets can be successful with a more eclectic range of ground level uses.

- Active ground level pedestrian-oriented uses are required along street-facing frontages, in compliance with specific requirements for street frontages established in the Downtown District Plans.
- Such space must meet the specific ground level treatment requirements set forth in the Downtown District Plans.

c. Tower Massing and Bulk: As multiple high-rise buildings begin to be constructed within a single block, consideration needs to be given to the spacing and massing of towers. This is particularly important in achieving both the density potential of the Downtown, preserving the value of adjacent sites, and in promoting a livable environment, where sunlight can reach the street. To the extent practicable, tall slender towers are preferred over short and massive ones.

- For the purposes of these standards, a tower is defined as any portion of a building above 90 feet in height.
- Towers should be set back from an alley property line by a minimum of 18 feet, and from an interior property line by at least 28 feet. These setbacks are intended to ensure a spacing of 56 feet between towers within a block, to provide optimal separation and privacy, while allowing for a reasonable floorplate within the standard Downtown block. Subject to the responsible Director's approval, setbacks may be reduced where hardship is demonstrated (e.g., for properties beneath a Capital View Corridor where the height limit is less than 200 feet), or if the proposed development secures an air-rights easement over the adjacent property that assures a 56-foot spacing between towers or if conditions (e.g., natural features, historic zoning, or Capitol View Corridors) on the adjacent property ensure that the 56-foot spacing will be permanently achieved.
- The maximum floorplate of a tower above a height of 120 feet should not exceed 60% of the site area or 30,000 square feet, whichever is less. Buildings taller than 600 feet may exceed the 30,000 square foot maximum tower plate by 500 square feet for every 20 feet of vertical height above 600 feet. This standard is intended to avoid bulky buildings and to promote a visually attractive skyline with slender vertical towers.

Slender towers are encouraged to create a pleasing skyline and provide light and air to the street. Below are typical floor-plate areas for four Downtown towers.

The Austonian
12,700sf

The Spring
8,000sf

Carr America
29,500sf

Frost Tower
33,000sf

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- Along a public street, towers (i.e., the portion of a building above 90' high) should be set back from the property line by a minimum of 8 feet for at least 55% of the parcel frontage. This standard is intended to allow for a clear streetwall definition. In order to promote vertical expression, a tower may be built along a streetfront property line for up to 45% of the parcel frontage, or a total of 110 linear feet, whichever is less.

- The minimum spacing between two towers on one property should be 56 feet.

- In order to achieve light to the street and to avoid a continuous "canyon" effect, towers above 120 feet in height should occupy no more than 80% of the length of a block or 220 feet whichever is less.

The new W Hotel (right) is an example of a tower that occupies approximately 80% of the block. The AMLI building (left) is built along the entire block length.

d. Parking Access and Driveways

- Driveways and curb cuts should be restricted on "Pedestrian Activity Streets" as described in the District Plans (e.g., Congress Avenue, East Sixth Street, Second Street, and the Warehouse District frontages in the Core and Waterfront District) unless the responsible Director finds that such a curb cut is the only reasonable way of achieving access to the property.

- The maximum width of a driveway curb cut should not exceed 25 feet.

- Properties that are one-half block in size or greater will be permitted two driveway curb cuts from perimeter public streets, provided that the curb cuts are not located within 50 feet of one another, and no closer than 50 feet from an intersection.

- Properties less than one-half block in size will be permitted one driveway curb cut; any additional driveways should be provided from the alley. Subject to approval from the responsible Director, up to two driveway curb-cuts from a public street may be allowed on a parcel less than one-half block in size, only if it is found that access from the alley is not feasible or desirable from a public safety standpoint.

e. Service and Loading

- Service and loading and maneuvering should be from the alley; service and loading maneuvering on public streets will be permitted only where the responsible Director determines that there is no practicable alternative".

f. Porte-Cocheres and On-Site Drop-Off Areas

- Porte-cocheres and on-site drop-off areas are permitted on a case by case basis (as determined by the responsible Director), subject to the following findings:
  - Because of the volume of drop-offs, the operation of the particular use requires a porte-cochere or drop-off area on site. (Note: Special priority is given to hotel uses; office and residential uses should use designated curbside drop-off lanes within the public right-of-way.)
  - The design and configuration of the drop-off area minimizes disruption to the continuity of the sidewalk along the street.
  - The design and configuration of the drop-off area minimizes disruption to the continuity of ground level pedestrian-oriented uses. The maximum curb cut across a public sidewalk should not exceed 25 feet.

g. On-Site Parking

- All above-grade parking must be architecturally integrated within the building. The façade treatment of the garage should be an integral extension of the primary façade, with the same materials and treatments as the remainder of the building. There should be no views from public streets to cars and garage lighting should be screened to the maximum extent practicable.
- If parking is the predominant use, the façade should employ high quality materials and treatments that reduce the visual impression of the building as a parking garage. Review of the design should be part of the Conditional Use Permit process, required for commercial parking garages.

h. Floor Area Ratio

- In addition to the proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program, Floor Area Ratio (FAR) incentives may be applied on a district-by-district basis within the Downtown to achieve desired outcomes (e.g., below-grade parking, ground level uses, etc.). These are outlined in the District plans

II. LOW-RISE MIXED-USE BUILDINGS 0F 60 FEET OR LESS

Purpose: The following standards govern the form and treatment of low-rise buildings up to 60 feet in height except for the portions of the Northwest District, where the regulations for low-rise neighborhood infill buildings will apply. Within the Northwest District these regulations apply to properties along: Martin Luther King Boulevard; San Antonio, Nueces and Rio Grande Streets, north of 18th Street; 15th Street, east of Rio Grande Street; and 12th Street, west of West Avenue (see Northwest District Plan, *Figure 10*). The regulations are intended to promote buildings that:

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Low-Rise Mixed Use Building
Quarter Block and Greater

PARKING AND SERVICING

- Parking and service access from alley
- One driveway curb-cut permitted on street if access cannot be achieved from alley
- Driveway width 25' maximum
- Above-grade parking shall be architecturally integrated and/or encapsulated

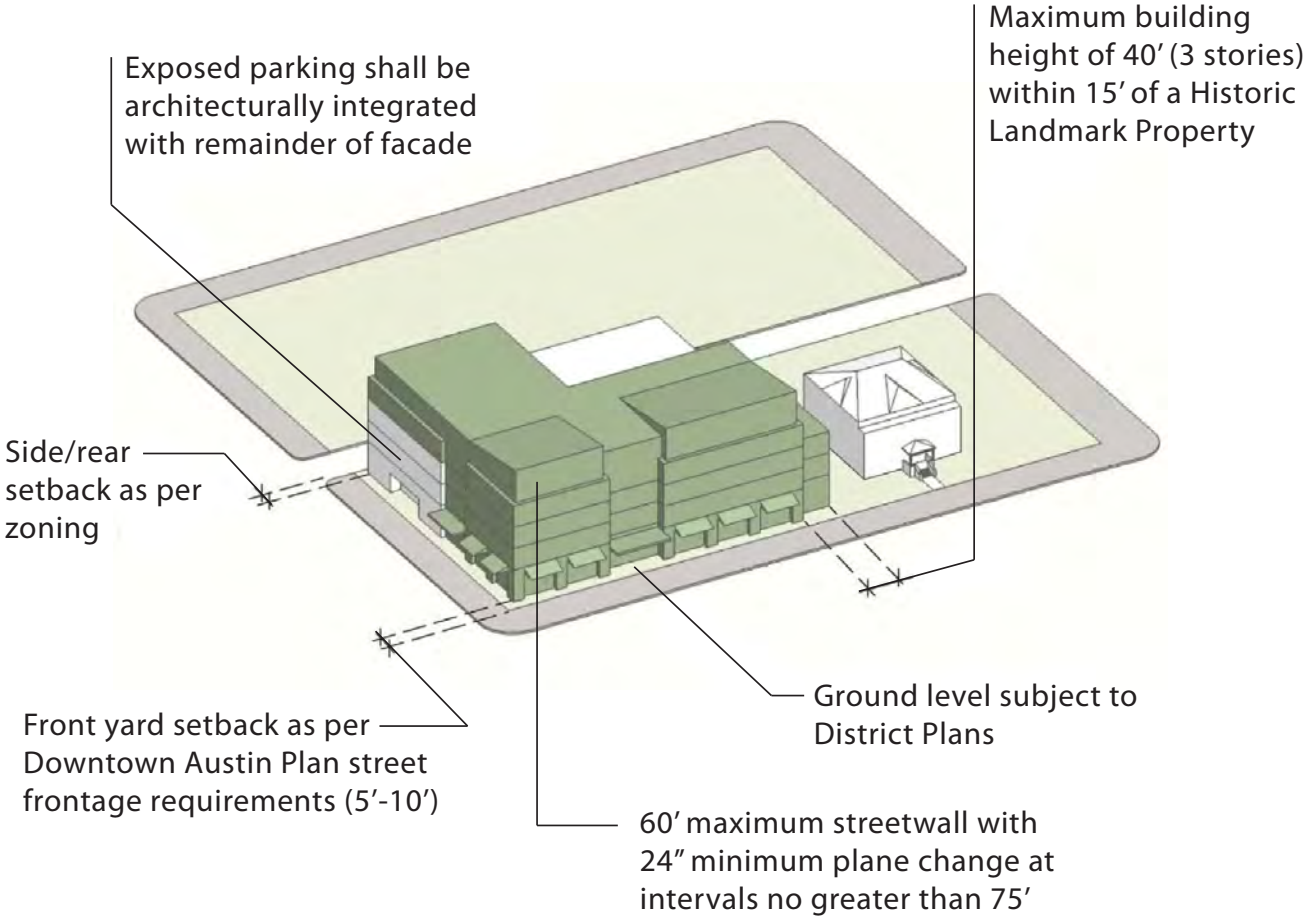

Figure D:
Low-Rise Mixed-Use Building Proposed Regulations

- Contribute to an engaging streetfront environment;
- Minimize disruption to public sidewalks; and
- Provide spatial definition along public streets and rights-of-way;

a. Streetwalls and Setbacks: Like walls in a room, private buildings provide critical spatial definition to a city's public streets and open spaces, giving them a sense of enclosure, and in many cases a distinctive scale and character. As such, it is important that there be a level of coordination between buildings, so that strong spatial expression of the public realm can be achieved. Exceptions and variations should also be permitted to create diversity and to give meaning to particular places and buildings, but these exceptions should be dealt with in specific cases where such variation is deemed by the responsible Director to be warranted.

- For this building type, a streetwall is defined as that portion of the building up to 60 feet in height and constructed along the required front yard setback line of the property. While no stepbacks are required for this building type, variation of the building roof line or parapet is encouraged.
- On sites adjacent to a property with a designated historic landmark, buildings should be stepped back so that no portion of the building within 15 feet of the adjoining property line is greater than 40 feet or three floors in height. If the historic property is greater than 40 feet in height, this stepback is not required.
- The streetwall should be designed and articulated with changes in plane and materials to reduce its scale and to promote a compatible relationship with existing adjacent structures. A change in plane of at least 24 inches should occur at intervals no greater than 60 feet.
- Building setbacks should comply with the Street Frontage Requirements set forth in the Downtown Austin Plan.
- Side and rear yard setbacks should be consistent with the underlying zoning designation.

b. Ground Level Uses and Treatments: Ground level uses should comply with the regulations set forth in the District Plans of the Downtown Austin Plan.

c. Parking Access and Driveways: Efforts should be made to limit the frequency and width of driveways which interrupt the continuity of sidewalks. More specifically:

- On properties less than one-half block in area, one driveway curb cut should be permitted by the responsible Director only if it is found that access to on-site parking can not be achieved from a rear alley.

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- Subject to approval of the responsible Director, up to two driveway curb-cuts from a public street may be allowed on a parcel less than one-half block in size, only if it is found that one driveway is not feasible or desirable from a public safety standpoint.
- The maximum width of a driveway curb cut should not exceed 25 feet.

d. Service and Loading

- Service and loading and maneuvering should be from the alley; where the responsible Director finds that this is not practicable, service and loading maneuvering on public streets may be permitted.

e. Porte-Cocheres and On-Site Drop-Off Areas: Porte-cocheres and on-site drop off areas are permitted on a case by case basis (as determined by the responsible Director), subject to the following findings:

- Because of the volume of drop-offs, the operation of the particular use requires a porte-cochere or drop-off area on site. (Note: Special priority is given to hotel uses; office and residential uses should use designated curbside drop-off lanes within the public right-of-way.)
- The design and configuration of the drop-off area minimizes disruption to the continuity of the sidewalk along the street and to existing trees.

f. On-Site Parking

- All above-grade parking must be architecturally integrated and/or encapsulated within the building. No stand-alone parking garages are permitted. The façade treatment of the garage should be an integral extension of the primary façade, with the same materials and treatments as the remainder of the building. There should be no views from public streets to cars and garage lighting should be screened to the maximum extent practicable.

g. Floor Area Ratio

- In addition to the proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program, Floor Area Ratio (FAR) incentives may be applied on a district-by-district basis within the Downtown to achieve desired outcomes (e.g., below-grade parking, ground level uses, etc.). These are outlined in the District plans.

III. LOW-RISE NEIGHBORHOOD INFILL BUILDINGS 0F 60 FEET OR LESS

Purpose: The following standards govern the form and treatment of low-rise buildings up to 60 feet in height, located in the Northwest District. They are intended to promote buildings that:

- Compliment the residential character and scale of the area;
- Contribute to an engaging streetfront environment;
- Minimize disruption to public sidewalks and to the existing tree canopy; and
- Promote infill residential development with a high degree of livability.

a. Streetwalls and Setbacks: Within the Northwest District, street walls in conjunction with the mature street tree canopies, provide a more relaxed and informal street definition than the taller and denser buildings within other districts of the Downtown.

- For this building type, a streetwall is defined as that portion of the building up to 40 feet in height and constructed along the required front yard setback line of the property.
- Any portion of the building that is more than 40 feet in height above the street wall, or side yard walls should be stepped back by at least 10 feet in order to promote a compatible relationship with existing structures. Alley and rear yard edges are not required to step back.
- On sites adjacent to a property with a designated historic landmark, buildings shall be stepped back so that no portion of the building within 15 feet of the adjoining property line is greater than 30 feet or two floors in height. If the historic property is greater than 30 feet in height, this stepback is not required.
- The streetwall shall be designed and articulated with changes in plane and materials to reduce its scale and to promote a compatible relationship with existing adjacent structures. A change in plane of at least 24 inches shall occur at intervals no greater than 50 feet.
- Building setbacks shall comply with the Street Frontage Requirements set forth in the Downtown Austin Plan.
- Side and rear yard setbacks shall be consistent with the underlying zoning designation.

b. Ground Level Uses and Treatments: Within the heart of the Northwest District, ground level uses could be a mixture of residential, commercial or cultural uses. It is the intent to preserve and extend the predominant development pattern of buildings set back with landscaped front yards. More specifically:

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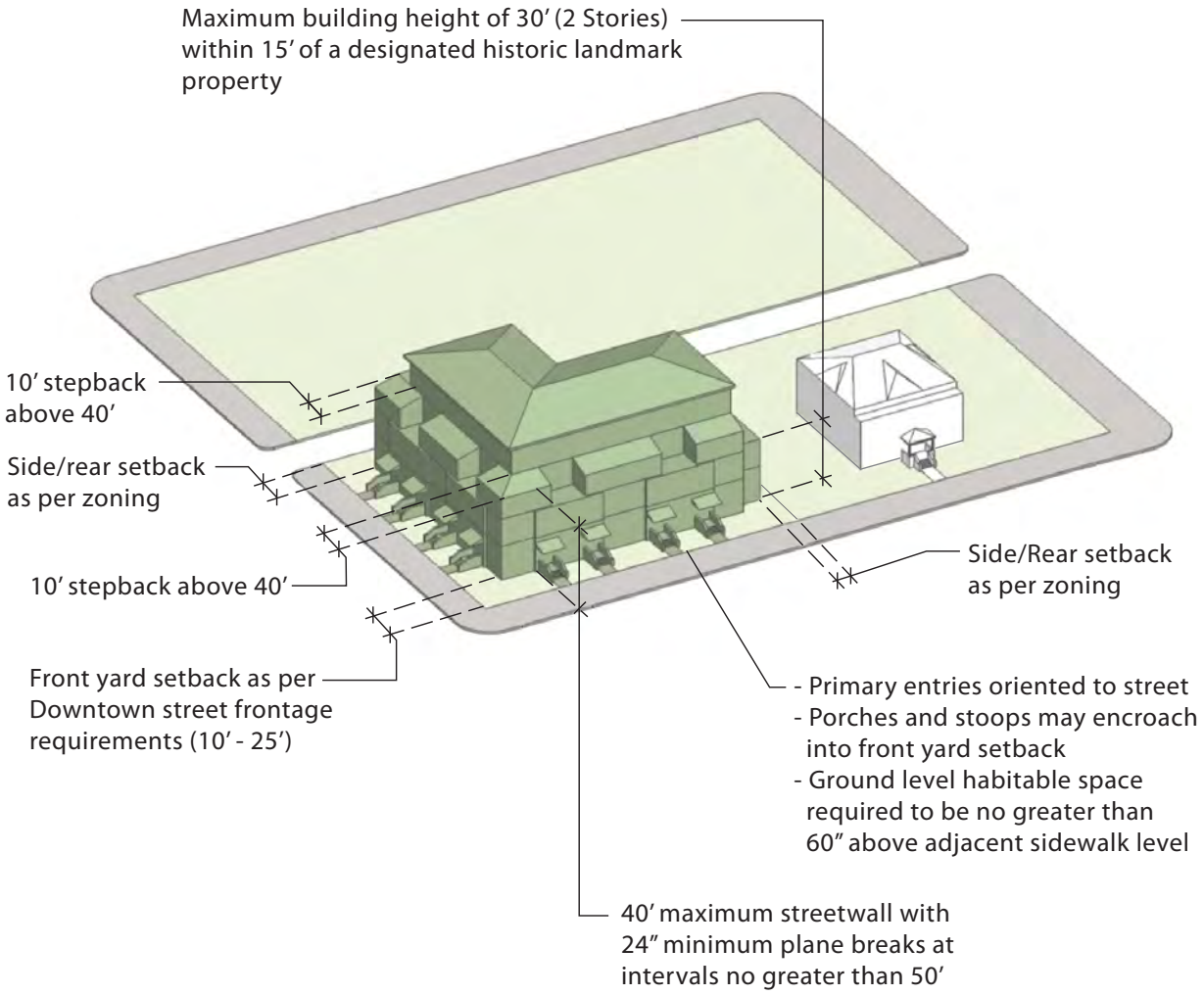
Low-Rise Neighborhood Infill Buildings within Northwest District*

PARKING AND SERVICING
- Parking and Service Access From Alley
- One Driveway Curb-Cut Permitted if Alley Access not Possbile
- Above-Grade Parking May Not be Visible from the Street



* Except for frontages in the Northwest District along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, San Antonio, Nueces, and Rio Grande Streets north of 18th Street, 12th Street west of West Avenue, and 15th Street east of Rio Grande Street

Figure E:
Low-Rise Infill Building Proposed Regulations

Low-Rise Courtyard/Walk-up Building
Quarter Block and Greater

PARKING AND SERVICING

- Parking and Service Access From Alley
- One Driveway Curb-Cut Permitted if Alley Access not Possbile
- Above-Grade Parking May Not be Visible from the Street

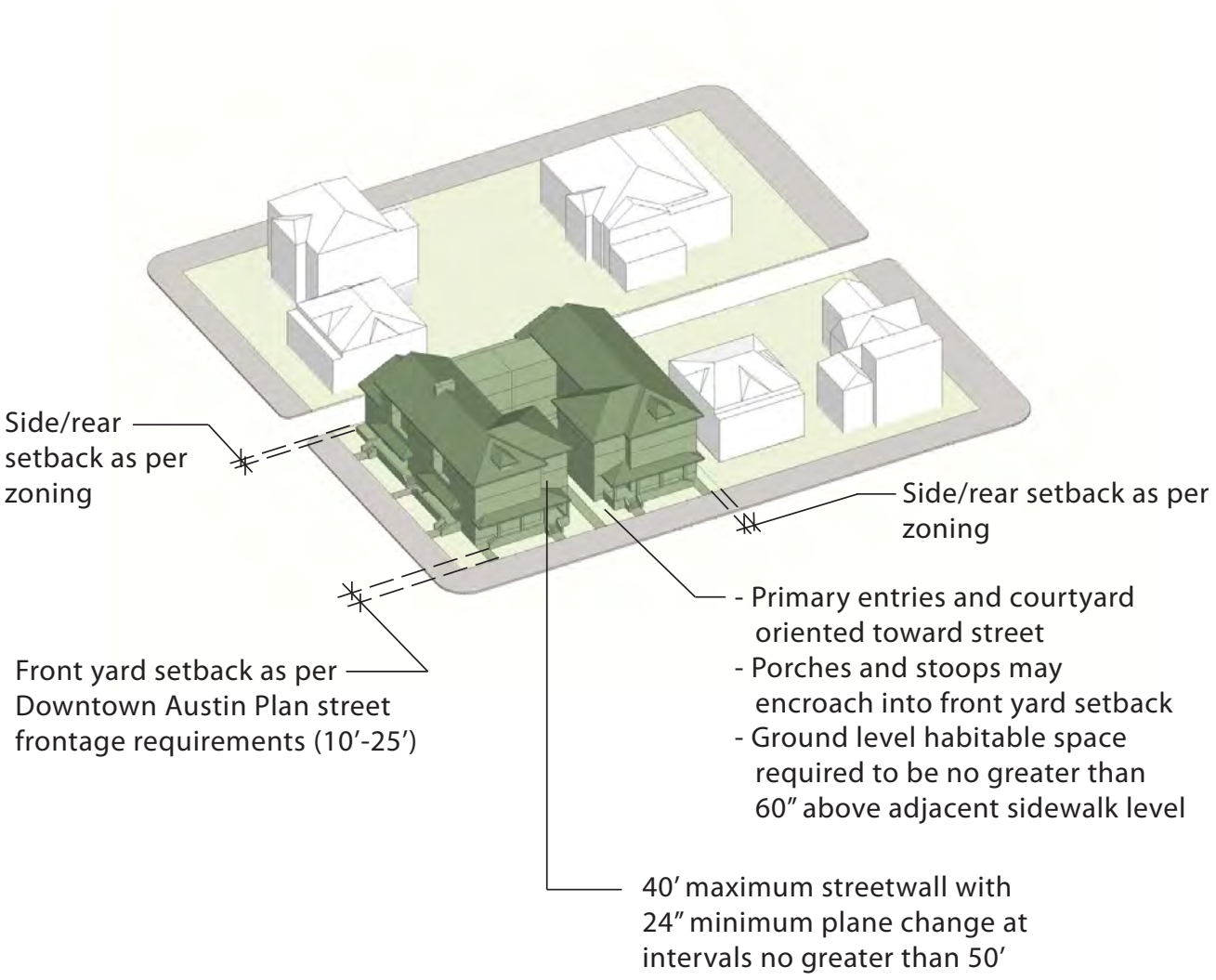


Figure F:
Low-Rise Courtyard/Walk-up Building Proposed Regulations

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- All buildings shall have their principal entries oriented to the street front.
- Ground level floor area adjacent to public streets shall be habitable and located no more than 60 inches above the elevation of the sidewalk; service areas and parking garages above a height of 60 inches are not permitted within 20 feet of the street front property line.

c. Parking Access and Driveways

- On properties less than one-half block in area, one driveway curb cut will be permitted by the responsible Director only if it is found that access to on-site parking can not be achieved from a rear alley.
- Subject to approval of the responsible Director, up to two driveway curb-cuts from a public street may be allowed on a parcel less than one-half block in size, only if it is found that one driveway is not feasible or desirable from a public safety standpoint.
- The maximum width of a driveway curb cut shall not exceed 25 feet.

d. Service and Loading

- Service and loading and maneuvering should be from the alley; where the responsible Director finds that this is not practicable, service and loading maneuvering on public streets may be permitted.

e. Porte-Cocheres and On-Site Drop-Off Areas

- Porte-cocheres and on-site drop-off areas are permitted on a case by case basis (as determined by the responsible Director), subject to the following findings:
    - Because of the volume of drop-offs, the operation of the particular use requires a porte-cochere or drop-off area on site. (Note: Special priority is given to hotel uses; office and residential uses should use designated curbside drop-off lanes within the public right-of-way.)
    - The design and configuration of the drop-off area minimizes disruption to the continuity of the sidewalk along the street and to existing trees.

f. On-Site Parking

- All above-grade parking must be architecturally integrated within the building. No stand-alone parking garages are permitted. The façade treatment of the garage shall be an integral extension of the primary façade, with the same materials and treatments as the remainder of the building. There should be no views from public streets to cars and garage lighting should be screened to the maximum extent practicable.

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g. Floor Area Ratio

- In addition to the proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program, Floor Area Ratio (FAR) incentives may be applied on a district-by-district basis within the Downtown to achieve desired outcomes (e.g., below-grade parking, ground level uses, etc.). These are outlined in the District plans.
- Within the Northwest District, residential projects with an underlying zoning of DMU-60 (formerly GO, CS or MF-4) may be constructed to a maximum FAR of 2:1, provided that they meet the form standards described above.Residential projects with an underlying zoning of DMU-40 (formerly LO) may be constructed to a maximum FAR of 1.5:1, provided that they meet the form standards described above.