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Visioning: Public Participation Process

Public participation through a visioning process is critical for the future successful implementation of any plan. No one knows a community better than the people who live and work there. By sponsoring this process, the City of Austin provided an opportunity for community residents, visitors, business operators, developers and land owners to participate in the creation of the future plan for the East Riverside Corridor. This unique process, which utilized a variety of meetings and two public visioning sessions, had extraordinary civic interest demonstrated by all those who participated.

Obtaining the community's input is a hallmark of good planning. The A. Nelessen Associates (ANA) Team was selected as the consultant team for the project due to its use of innovative public involvement techniques. Three primary techniques were used to gather information from the public: the Visual Preference Survey™ (VPS™), a Demographic, Market and Policy Questionnaire, and the Vision Translation Workshop (see section titled "Visual Preference Survey" below for more detail on the VPS).

The outreach process began with meetings between the ANA Team, the City's technical staff, and community leaders and stakeholders. Local participants in the early outreach process included those who have been active in the planning or development process in the area, such as individuals who contributed to the East Riverside/Oltorf Combined (EROC) Neighborhood Plan, the Montopolis Neighborhood Plan, business owners, landowners, developers, and other community interest groups. The ANA Team had a meeting with these stakeholders and asked about their ambitions for the Study Area to gain a better understanding of their attitudes and beliefs relative to future potential changes in the area. These meetings identified considerations that needed be addressed while developing concepts for the Study

Area, a list of existing conditions to help the Team better understand the area, and a series of properties within the Study Area with the most likelihood of changing in the near future. Feedback from these stakeholders was incorporated into the Visioning Process.

In addition to the early outreach meeting with community leaders and stakeholders, the consultant team also held a meeting with the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) - staff from the Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department, staff from various other City of Austin departments, and representatives from non-City of Austin public entities in July 2008. During the meeting, the TAG participants engaged in planning exercises dealing with traffic and circulation, infrastructure improvements, potential transit connections and design guidelines. The TAG and initial stakeholder meetings provided valuable feedback for the consultant and City of Austin staff to prepare for the public visioning process.

The East Riverside Corridor Visioning Process included two intensive workshops. The first, a 'Beta Test', was administered to the stakeholder group to test the visioning ideas that would be administered to the public. The second was presented to the general public.

A 'Beta Test' Visioning Workshop, facilitated by A. Nelessen Associates, was held in August 2008 at Baty Elementary School, and a full-scale public Community Visioning Workshop was held at Travis High School in September of 2008. In addition, a small-scaled VPS™ and Questionnaire was posted on the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan website for several weeks. Nearly 150 people participated in the two workshops, and 450 people participated in the on-line survey, for a total of approximately 600 people. All who participated in the visioning process were crucial to help define the visual

and spatial characteristics desired for East Riverside Corridor. Attendees at each meeting completed a Visual Preference Survey and Community Questionnaire and participated in a Vision Translation Workshop. The Vision Translation Workshop indicates where people want the elements illustrated in positive images to be located and where, based on the negative images, redevelopment should be focused. The input from all participants was used to generate the concept plans. The results from both the stakeholder and public workshops, as well as the online survey results, are compiled later in this section. The combined results are described in the following summary of the Visioning Process.

The concept plans were further refined based on public input gathered at the "Did We Get it Right" public meeting held in November 2008.

Every aspect of the public's participation was integral to the formation of this plan. These elements are described on the next pages.

Visual Preference Survey

The Visual Preference Survey™ (VPS™) is a planning technique that brings residents, business owners and community leaders together to evaluate existing conditions and options for the future. The VPS™ process allows participants to identify and explore what they would like their community to look and feel like in the future by evaluating a series of images.

The VPS™ was built from an extensive set of local images, alternatives from other locations, and digital simulations. The local images were captured through fieldwork in Austin, while development alternative images were assembled from the ANA image library. Participants were asked to rate the image from a +10 to a -10 based on the question "How appropriate is the image you are seeing now and in the future for the East Riverside Corridor?"

Participants were asked to rate images from +10 to -10 on a computer answer sheet. Images were presented in a variety of categories including streets, buildings, and mobility. The results were tabulated by mean and standard deviation. The mean is the average image score generated from the participants at two meetings and those who took the survey online. The standard deviation is an approximate range of the participants' scores, identifying the highest and lowest score given for an image.

The Visual Preference Survey™ was composed of eleven categories:

- Streets
- Pedestrian Realm
- Development: Commercial
- Development: Mixed-Use
- Development: Residential
- Parking

- Signage
- Parks, Plazas, and Open Space
- Placemaking
- Sustainability
- Mobility

The highest rated images represent the visual and spatial characteristics desired for the East Riverside Corridor Area. These highest rated images, along with the results of the questionnaire and the synthesis of the Vision Translation Workshop, were used to create the recommendations presented in this Master Plan. When the positive results from the visioning survey and the other inputs are translated into two and three dimensions, a development plan emerges that illustrates the idealized future for the Area.

After finishing the image-based VPS™, survey participants were asked to complete a multiple-choice Demographic, Market, and Policy questionnaire. The questions were specifically tailored to the East Riverside Corridor and allowed the consultant team to gather quantitative data that correlated with VPS™ data. Responses to these questions were critical to fully understanding the

The image below is an example of a scantron survey form that is electronically scanned. Results are calculated by mean and standard deviation to reveal positive and negative imagery.

	-10										NEGATIVE										0										POSITIVE										+10									
1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
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demographics of those who participated and how they responded to the images. These questions ranged in subject but primarily dealt with current conditions and a variety of development alternatives and priorities. Topics included shopping patterns, economic development, traffic and commuting patterns, ratings of public facilities, neighborhoods and housing, urban design, and open space.

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What People Want

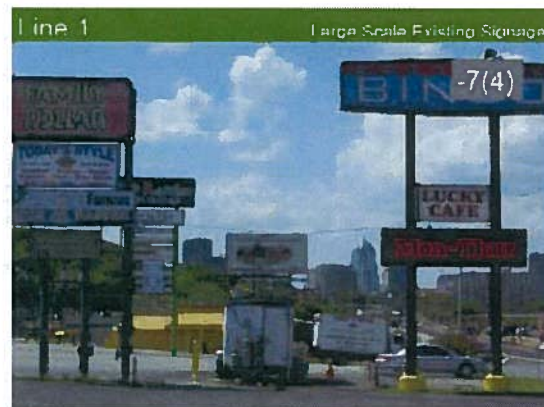
The intensity of the reactions to each image in the VPS and the answers to related questions provides direction for future planning, zoning, development, and redevelopment options. Two statistics are used to analyze each image; the mean (the first number shown in the top right corner of each image) is the average image score generated from the participants at two meetings and if applicable, online, who took the survey. The standard deviation (the second number in parentheses) is an approximate range of the participants' scores. To best understand the degree of consensus, add or subtract the standard deviation from the mean to approximate the range. The narrower the range, the greater the consensus towards the image. For example the slide titled, "Sidewalk with Green Buffer" received an average score of +7 with a standard deviation of 3. Add and subtract 3 from 7 and the range of responses for that question is from +4 to +10, therefore it was deduced that the participants strongly agreed that sidewalks with green buffers were appropriate for the area and should be recommended in the plan.

Responses from the VPS™ and community questionnaire provide an understanding of what the community envisions as appropriate for the future of the East Riverside area. Each image was rated based on the question, "How appropriate or inappropriate is the image you are seeing for now and in the future of East Riverside Corridor?"

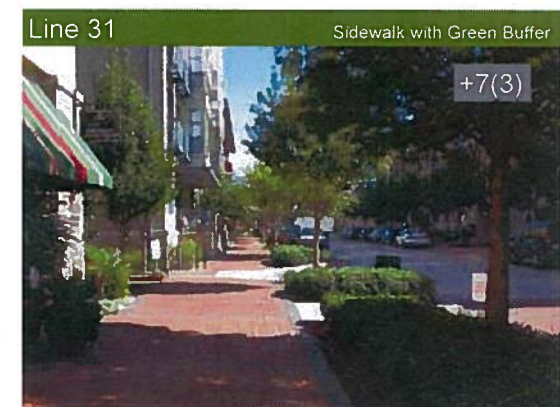
Highly-rated images illustrate pieces of the collective vision for the future of the area. The most highly valued elements are the most appropriate for the future of East Riverside Corridor. As the image values decrease, so does the perceived value of the elements in the images. After the workshop was completed, ANA conducted a detailed examination of each image category. Each image and category was analyzed to determine which

land-use, building and street design elements contribute to both positive and negative ratings. The positive VPS™ ratings focused the planning and design goals and objectives and helped define the most appropriate, as well as inappropriate, uses and characteristics for the future of the area.

The results of the questionnaire were separately scanned, analyzed and compared to the image results. Questions were cross-referenced with other questions and images to determine the wants and needs of participants, and to highlight areas of agreement or disagreement. Specific recommendations in this plan were generated from the questionnaire. The combination of policies and pictures proves to be an extremely effective planning tool. The overall results were calculated by combining the raw data from the stakeholder and public visioning sessions. The overall results present a combined vision



Negative images illustrate examples of places which are unacceptable, though having high opportunity for redevelopment (based on rating).



Images which received the highest positive ratings in a single category suggest the highest priority for future planning, urban form, and engineering policies.

Results = 4 (3) ← Standard Deviation
↑ Mean

VPS and Questionnaire Results

Provided below is a sampling of results that influenced the Master Plan, followed by a complete set of images arranged in the order they were delivered in the VPS and complete Questionnaire Results.

Geographic Distribution

48% of participants are property or home owners in the East Riverside Corridor Area. 54% of participants live within 1 mile of the East Riverside Corridor Study Area.

Interest in East Riverside Corridor

For participants that live in the Study Area, one-quarter choose to live there due to the area's proximity to downtown, another quarter choose to live there due to the affordability of the area, 15% for the diversity, 9% for proximity to work, 4% for proximity to Lady Bird Lake, 4% for the availability of services, and 18% for other reasons.

Age and Gender Distribution

Nearly an even split of males and females participated in the survey, with slightly more males than females. Almost two-thirds of the participants were ages 19-55, 13 % were ages 56-66, 3% were 67 and older, and 1% was 18 years old or younger.

Income

Less than 10% of the participants earn less than \$25,000 per year, approximately one quarter earn \$25,000-\$50,000 annually, slightly fewer than half earn \$50,000-\$100,000, and the rest of the participants earn more than \$100,000 per year.

Residency

21% of participants have lived and / or worked in or adjacent to the Study Area for 3 to 8 years. 18% do not live and / or work in or adjacent to the Study Area, 15% have lived and/or worked in or adjacent to the

Study Area for between 1-2 years, 15% have lived and/or worked in or adjacent to the Study Area for between 9-20 years, 14% have lived and/or worked in or adjacent to the Study Area for between 20-30 years, 10% have lived and/or worked in or adjacent to the Study Area for over 30 years, and 7% have lived and/or worked in or adjacent to the Study Area for 1 year or less.

Existing Conditions

About two thirds of participants do not feel that their shopping needs are met in the Study Area. More than three quarters of the participants feel it is not safe or pleasant to walk on the sidewalks along East Riverside Drive and feel that bicycle lanes and paths are insufficient to create a safe method of bicycle travel throughout the Study Area. Over half of the participants think the existing transit options in the area are insufficient; just over one-quarter believe that they are sufficient sometimes.

Of the biggest safety issues in the area (drug dealing/use and burglary), over half of participants feel that if things do not change, they see no opportunity for growth in the area for the future. About half of participants feel that the number one thing to do to ameliorate crime and safety issues in the area is to redevelop blighted areas; over a quarter feel the best solution would be to increase physical police presence.

Streets

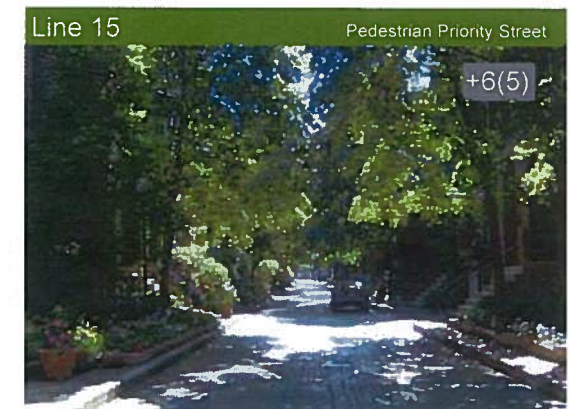
More than half of participants would like to see East Riverside Drive become "main street" type area in selective locations with a transit stop and slowly moving traffic. More than three-quarters of participants believe that a new transportation model (adding pedestrian streets, adding a transit system, landscaping, bike lanes and/or paths, wide sidewalks, etc.) is the most appropriate way to mitigate traffic congestion along the

East Riverside Corridor.

Streets form a community's most important public spaces. Both the initial and overall impressions of place are strongly influenced by the perceived character of its streets. All existing streets shown in the VPS were rated inappropriate for the future of Riverside Drive, except for one image showing a landscaped median. Significant improvements should be made to all existing streets in the Study Area.

Pedestrian Realm

The positive rated images represent the streetscapes people feel most comfortable walking in. The negative scores for all existing pedestrian realm images demonstrate a unified desire for improvements to the pedestrian realm.



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Development Options

Most of the participants support or highly support a range of housing types (ex. Condos, Apartments, Duplexes, Townhouses, Single Family Structures) in order to offer different housing options throughout the Study Area. A majority of participants agree or strongly agree that "Underutilized surface parking lots can provide space for infill and redevelopment of tomorrow."

Over three quarters of the participants either support or highly support concentrated infill development around transit stops. Participants believe that the following community benefits are the most important for the area, and could be provided in exchange for increased height or density: provision of open space, streetscaping, construction of bicycle facilities, and green building.

Development: Commercial

Buildings closest to the rail stations should have retail and services at the ground floor. Most of participants think grocery stores are either appropriate or extremely appropriate as an amenity for the East Riverside Corridor

Area. A majority of participants would like to see more restaurants, cafes, coffee shops, and local retail in the area.

Development: Mixed Use

Mixed use building developments combine more than one use in a single building. The highly rated images suggest that mixing office, retail, and residential is desired by the participants of the survey.

Development: Residential

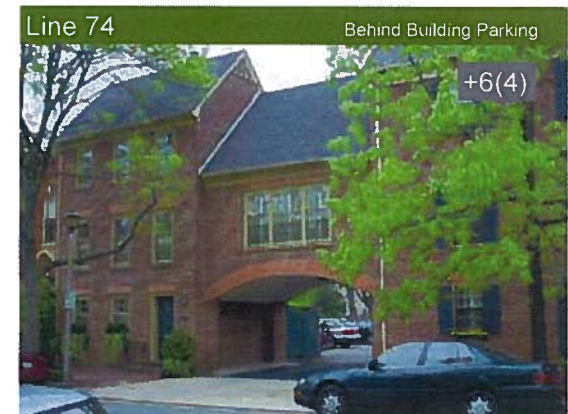
The results of the VPS and questionnaire indicate residential buildings should provide a mix of housing options. The highly rated images suggest that well designed residential, whether single family or multiple unit buildings, is desired by those who completed the survey.

Parking

Creative ways of dealing with parking, such as integrating it into buildings, placing parking underground, or

behind buildings as well as parking on the street, are appropriate for the Study Area. The Area currently has a large amount of surface parking, the images of which received the most negative values and are inappropriate for the area. Placement and design of parking is critical so that it doesn't overwhelm and divide the pedestrian.

Just under half of participants believe it is appropriate or extremely appropriate to reduce parking spaces required for buildings.



Signage

Pedestrian-scale signage coordinated with building designs was positively-rated by participants, while billboards and automobile-scale signs were negatively-rated. Information kiosks directing visitors and residents to sites and areas of interest in and around the East Riverside Corridor rated positively in the survey.

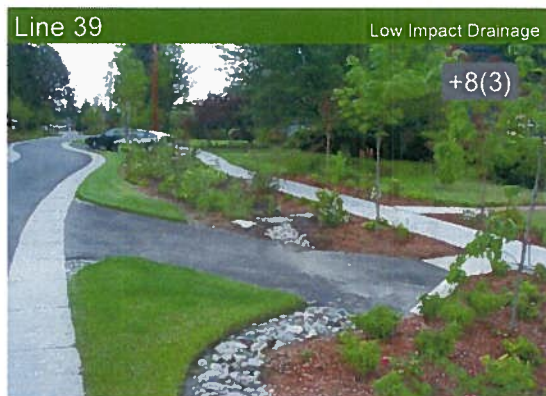


Parks and Plazas

Most participants believe it is appropriate or extremely appropriate to have open space, including parks and plazas in the Study Area. More than three-quarters of those who took the survey believe landscaping and streetscapes are appropriate or extremely appropriate for the Area.

**Placemaking**

Positively-rated placemaking images included murals, public art, signature lighting, gateways features, and landmark buildings.

**Sustainability**

Some of the highest rated images from the VPS™ illustrate the participants' desire for green technology and strategies.

Mobility

The East Riverside Corridor has the potential to become a great pedestrian-activity area in Austin and the high score from the survey for walking demonstrates the community's desire to create a more pedestrian-friendly place. Bicycle lanes and paths, along with transit and energy efficient vehicles can help the Corridor to become a center of sustainable transportation options for Austin and Texas. Providing alternatives to the car that are convenient is especially important for young and old residents as well as those who want to live close to work, shopping and recreation, and those who wish to live a more sustainable and urban lifestyle.

Results from the VPS indicate that nearly 90% of participants support or highly support a new light rail or streetcar system from the airport (ABIA) to downtown and over half would use a future light rail or streetcar once a week or more. Most of the participants believe that bicycling is an important or very important mode of alternative transportation for the Corridor's future. This translated into proposing a greater number of bike lanes and varied conditions, such as on-street lanes or bicycle trails.

Most participants believe that the Study Area should be both walkable and bikeable in the future. Over half of the participants would support signalized crosswalks at all intersections. Under half of the participants support slower traffic within the Study Area and just under half support traffic calming in certain locations.

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Full Visioning Results

Combined Results

Visual Preference Survey™ (VPS)

East Riverside Corridor Master Plan

Beta Test: August 14, 2008

Public Workshop: September 17, 2008

Web Survey: September 18 – October 20, 2008

Visual Preference Survey™ (VPS)

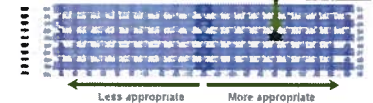
Participants were asked to rank the following images based on the question:

How appropriate or inappropriate is the image you are seeing – now and in the future – for the East Riverside Corridor



Visual Preference Survey™ (VPS)

Values were recorded from -10 to +10. Participants filled in the circle on the correct line that corresponded to their image response. For example, if participants felt the image to the right should get a +5, they would have filled in the +5 on the corresponding line number.



Visual Preference Survey™ (VPS)



Negative rated images illustrate visual and spatial characteristics of what people (survey sample) do not want and will not and would like to see changed



Images which received high **Positive** ratings illustrate the visual and spatial characteristics that people want and highest values within a single category are the highest priority for future planning and engineering policies

STREETS

Streets are a city's most important public spaces.



Line 1 Existing Riverside Drive near Kenneth Ave.



Line 2 Existing Residential Street



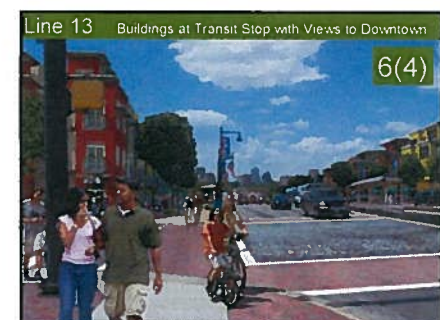
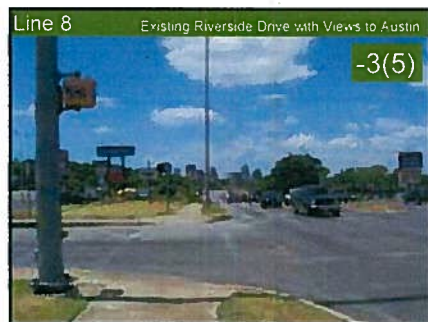
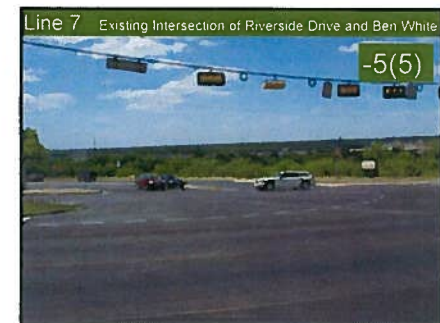
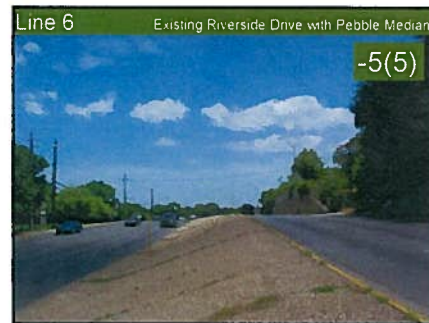
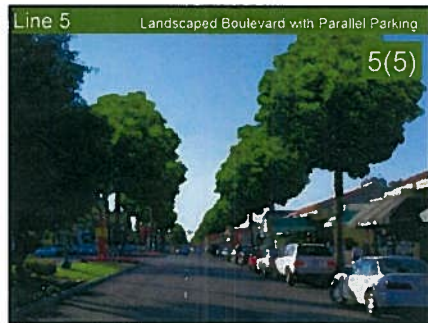
Line 3 'Main Street' with Brick Paver and Median Parking



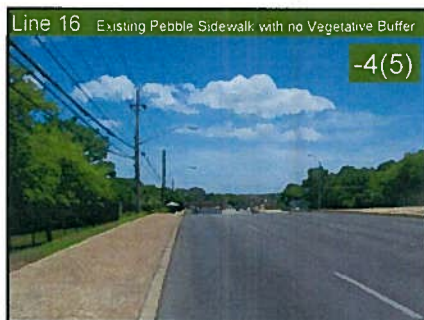
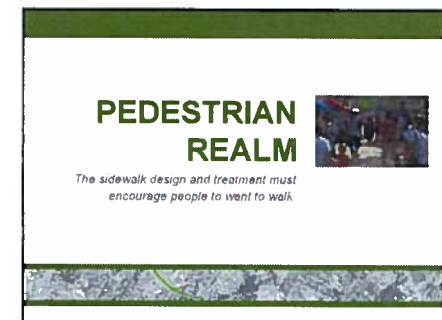
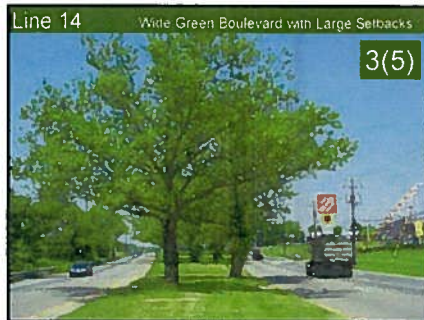
Line 4 Existing Riverside Drive with Landscaped Median



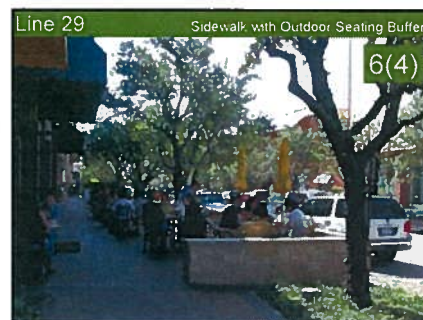
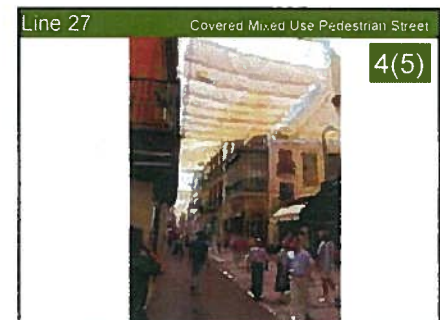
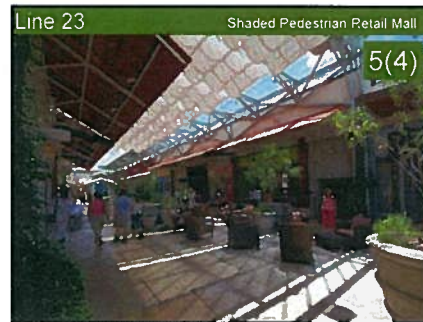
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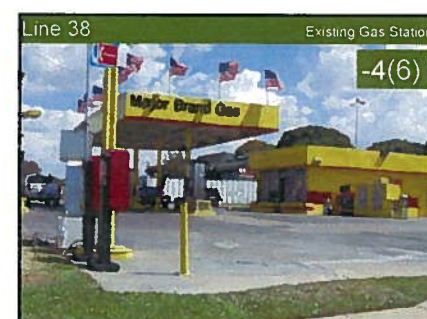
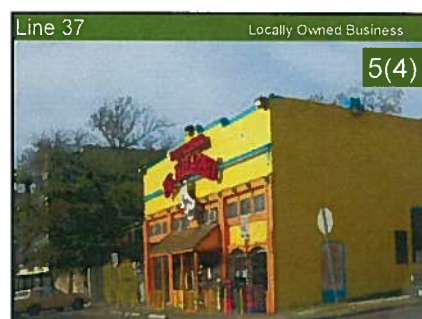
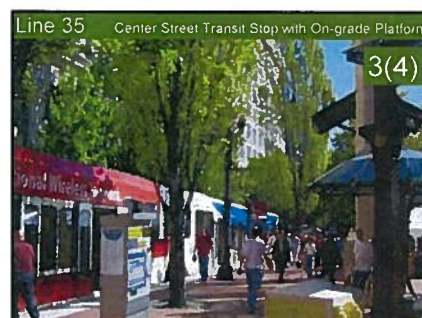
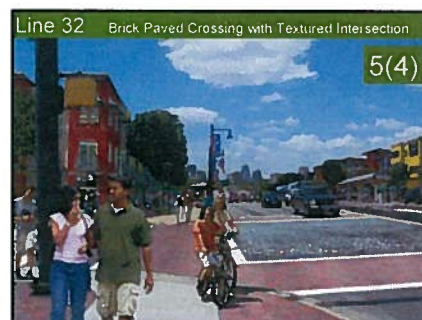
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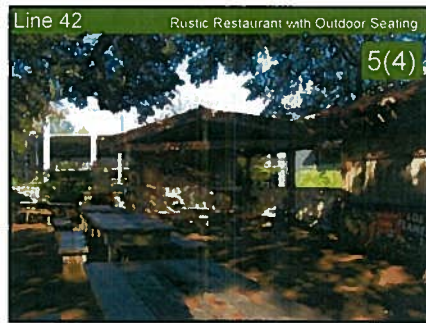
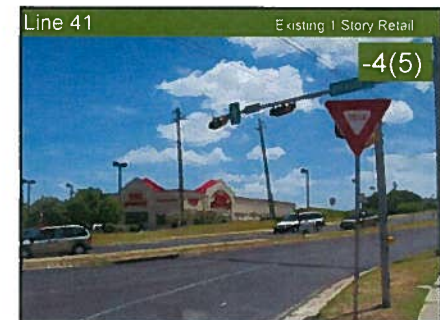
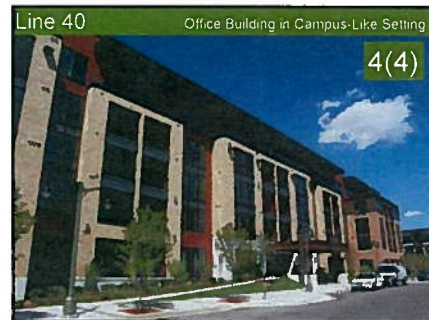
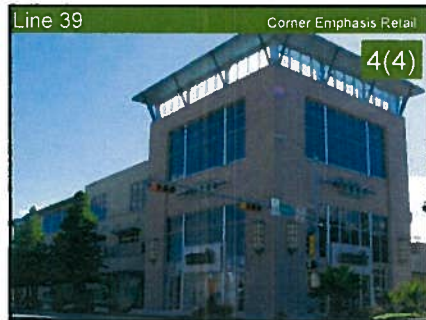
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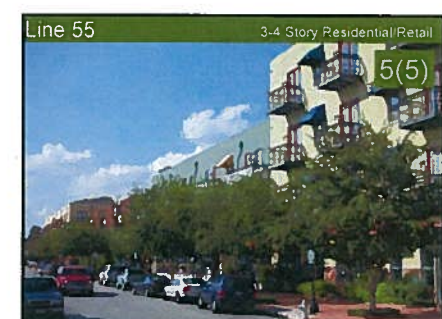
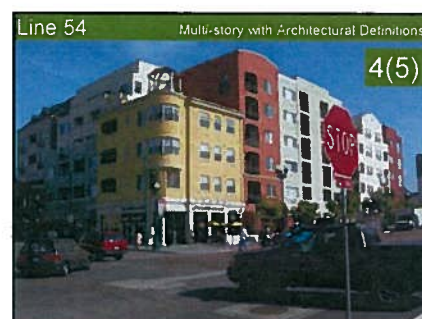
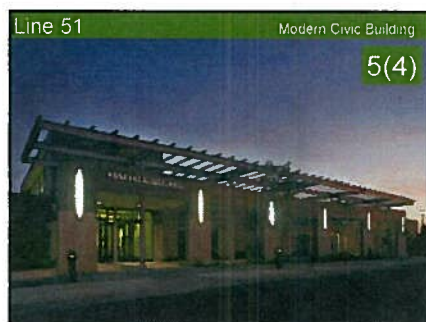
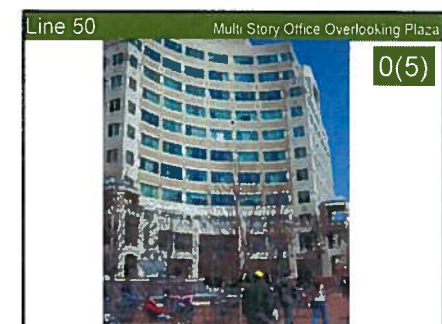
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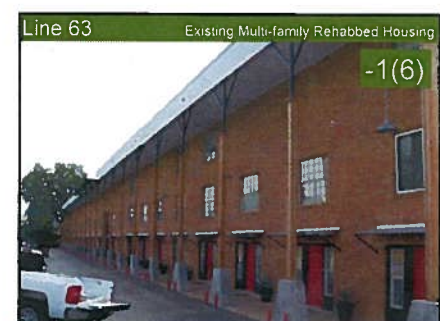
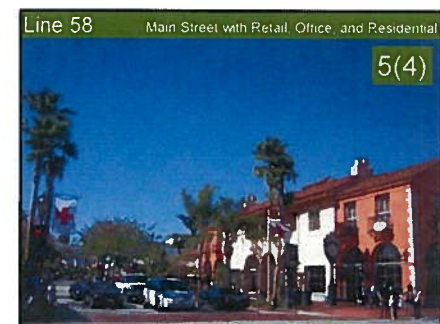
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