ORDINANCE NO. 20050818-Z001

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE AUSTIN TOMORROW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BY ADOPTING THE SOUTH CONGRESS COMBINED NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

PART 1. FINDINGS.

(A) In 1979, the City Council adopted the "Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan."

(B) Article X, Section 5 of the City Charter authorizes the City Council to adopt by ordinance additional elements of a comprehensive plan that are necessary or desirable to establish and implement policies for growth, development, and beautification, including neighborhood, community, or area-wide plans.

(C) On March 30, 2004, the City of Austin Neighborhood planning staff assigned to the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area met with representatives of several neighborhood associations, business owners, non-resident property owners, and agents of non-resident property owners to complete a neighborhood plan. The South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan followed a process first outlined by the Citizens' Planning Committee in 1995, and refined by the Ad Hoc Neighborhood Planning Committee in 1996. The City Council endorsed this approach for neighborhood planning in a 1997 resolution. This process mandated representation of all of the stakeholders in the neighborhood and required active public outreach. The City Council directed the Planning Commission to consider the plan in a 2003 resolution. During the planning process, the South Congress Combined Neighborhood planning team gathered information and solicited public input through the following means:

(1) neighborhood planning team meetings;

(2) collection of existing data;

(3) neighborhood inventory;

(4) neighborhood survey;

(5) neighborhood workshops; and

(6) community-wide meetings.

(D) South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan recommends action by the neighborhood planning team, the City, and by other agencies to preserve and improve the neighborhood. The South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan has five major goals:

(1) preserve and enhance the existing single-family neighborhoods and retain the affordability of these neighborhoods;

(2) transform South Congress Avenue into a more vibrant, accessible mixed-use corridor and a destination for nearby residents and the citizens of Austin;

(3) focus mixed-use development and commercial uses along major commercial corridors and in specialized districts;

(4) improve the accessibility, convenience, and safety of all forms of transportation; and

(5) preserve and enhance the public open spaces.

(E) The South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan goals include more focused objectives. In turn, each of these objectives is supported by specific action items. These action items are the key recommendations of the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan.

(F) On July 26, 2005, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan, and recommended adoption of the plan by the City Council.

(G) The South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan is appropriate for adoption as an element of the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan. The South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan furthers the City Council's goal of achieving appropriate, compatible development within the area. The South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan is necessary and desirable to establish and implement policies for growth, development, and beautification in the area.

PART 2. ADOPTION AND DIRECTION.

(A) Chapter 5 of the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan is amended to add the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan as Section 5-20 of the Comprehensive Plan, as set forth in Exhibit A to this ordinance, which is incorporated as part of this ordinance.

(B) The city manager shall prepare zoning cases consistent with the land use recommendations in the Plan.

(C) The city manager shall provide periodic updates to the City Council on the status of the implementation of the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan.

(D) The specific provisions of the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan take precedence over any conflicting general provision in the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan.

PART 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This ordinance takes effect on August 29, 2005.

PASSED AND APPROVED

August 18, 2005 § Will Wynn
Mayor

APPROVED: David Allan Smith
City Attorney

ATTEST: Shirley A. Brown
City Clerk

EXHIBIT A

South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan

August 2005

The South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan

An Amendment to the
City of Austin's Comprehensive Plan

The Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 5
Section 5-20
Exhibit A

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CITY COUNCIL

Mayor Will Wynn

Mayor Pro Tem Danny Thomas

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Raul Alvarez
Betty Dunkerley
Jennifer Kim
Lee Leffingwell
Brewster McCracken

CITY MANAGER

Toby Hammett Futrell

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER

Laura Huffman

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT

Alice Glasco, Director

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By adopting the plan, the City Council demonstrates the City' s commitment to the implementation of the plan. However, every recommendation listed in this plan will require separate and specific implementation. Adoption of the plan does not begin the implementation of any item. Approval of the plan does not legally obligate the City to implement any particular action item. The implementation will require specific actions by the neighborhood, the City and by other agencies. The Neighborhood Plan will be supported and implemented by

- City Boards, Commissions and Staff
- City Departmental Budgets
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Other Agencies and Organizations
- Direct Neighborhood Action.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks are extended to the following for the use of their facilities as meeting spaces throughout the neighborhood planning process:

- Bedichek Middle School
- Onion Creek Hall
- Pleasant Hill Elementary School

Special thanks are also extended to Whole Foods Market for their generous donations of refreshments for several meetings throughout the neighborhood planning process.

Finally, special acknowledgment is extended to the participants. In order to be successful, the planning process requires participation by stakeholders representing a cross-section of the community. Stakeholders include homeowners—both recent and long-term, renters, business owners, and associates, and non-resident property owners. At some time in the plan development process representatives of each of these stakeholder groups attended a meeting or participated by some other means, including surveys, emails, telephone calls, and appointments with staff. The input they provided was instrumental in producing this plan.

City Staff Acknowledgements

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Kathleen Welder, Planner III

Ricardo Soliz, Neighborhood Planning Manager
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Neighborhood Contact Team

The Neighborhood Plan Contact Team (NPCT)—also known as a Neighborhood Planning Team (NPT)—is a group of people who have participated in the development of the plan and serve as stewards of the plan after its adoption. The team is responsible for determining the sentiment of neighborhood stakeholders and will be called to meetings to discuss proposed plan amendments. The NPCT/NPT will submit a letter to NPZD either supporting or not supporting the particular plan amendment case prior to the scheduled Planning Commission and City Council hearings. Furthermore, the NPCT may submit its own application to amend the neighborhood plan document, the future land use map, or any other component of the plan. The team may also submit an application on behalf of another party wishing to apply for a plan amendment outside of the established amendment cycle for the planning area.

The NPCT/NPT may find it desirable to review the plan recommendations periodically. They may wish to create committees or points-of-contact to pursue the implementation of a particular recommendation or group of recommendations. The team may also wish to re-prioritize recommendations according to changing dynamics in the community and city-at-large.

The plan amendment process ordinance states the Neighborhood Plan Contact Team or Neighborhood Planning Team shall include at least one representative from the following groups within a neighborhood plan area:

- Property owners
- Renters
- Non-resident property owners
- Business owners; and
- Neighborhood associations

New members may join the NPCT/NPT in the future according to the bylaws of the team.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Neighborhood Planning in the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area 5

Vision and Goals 13
- Vision 13
- Goals 13

Top Ten Priorities 14

Demographic Profiles of the South Congress Combined Planning Area 15
- Population Change 15
- Ethnicity 15
- Housing 16
- Family Income 18

History of the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area 19

Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations 29

Goal One
Preserve and enhance the existing single-family neighborhoods and retain the affordability of these neighborhoods 33

Goal Two: South Congress Avenue should become a more vibrant accessible mixed-use corridor and a destination for nearby residents and the citizens of Austin 50

Goal Three: Focus mixed-use development and commercial uses along major commercial corridors and in specialized districts 60

Goal Four: Improve the accessibility, convenience, and safety for all forms of transportation 73

Goal Five: The public open spaces should be preserved and enhanced 84

South Congress Design Guidelines 90
- Residential Design Guidelines 91
- Commercial Design Guidelines 92

Appendix A:
Initial Survey Results.....101

Appendix B
Strength, Opportunities, and Challenges (SOC) Exercise Results.....108

Appendix C
Current Zoning Map.....115

Appendix D
Affordability Impact Statement 118

Appendix E
Plan Ordinance.....119

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1
South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area.....1

Figure 2
East Congress Neighborhood Planning Area.....2

Figure 3
West Congress Neighborhood Planning Area.....3

Figure 4
Sweetbriar Neighborhood Planning Area 4

Figure 5
Neighborhood Planning Areas: 2004-2005..... 6

Figure 6
Future Land Use Scenario "A".....8

Figure 7
Future Land Use Scenario "B".....9

Figure 8
Future Land Use Scenario "C".....10

Figure 9
William Cannon and Isaac Decker "League and a Labor"
Republic of Texas Land Grants 20

Figure 10
Approximate Location of Johns Town Based on 1872 Plat 22

Figure 11
St. Elmo Community..... 23

Figure 12
West Congress Neighborhood Planning Area
Future Land Use Map..... 30

Figure 13
East Congress Neighborhood Planning Area
Future Land Use Map..... 31

Figure 14
Sweetbriar Neighborhood Planning Area
Future Land Use Map..... 32

Figure 15
Impervious Cover and Parking Placement Design Tool..... 35

Figure 16
Potential Subdistricts in the South Congress
Combined Neighborhood Planning Area..... 36

Figure 17
Annexation History of the South Congress Combined
Neighborhood Planning Area..... 37

Figure 18
Reduced Front Porch Setback Design Tool..... 39

Figure 19
Garage Placement Design Tool..... 41

Figure 20
North Bluff Subdistrict..... 47

Figure 21
South Congress Districts..... 51

Figure 22
South First Street Districts..... 70

Figure 23
Current Sidewalk Network and Existing and Potential
Local Attractors..... 74

Figure 24
Proposed Sidewalk Network..... 75

Figure 25
Possible Greenbelt along Williamson Creek through the South
Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area..... 87

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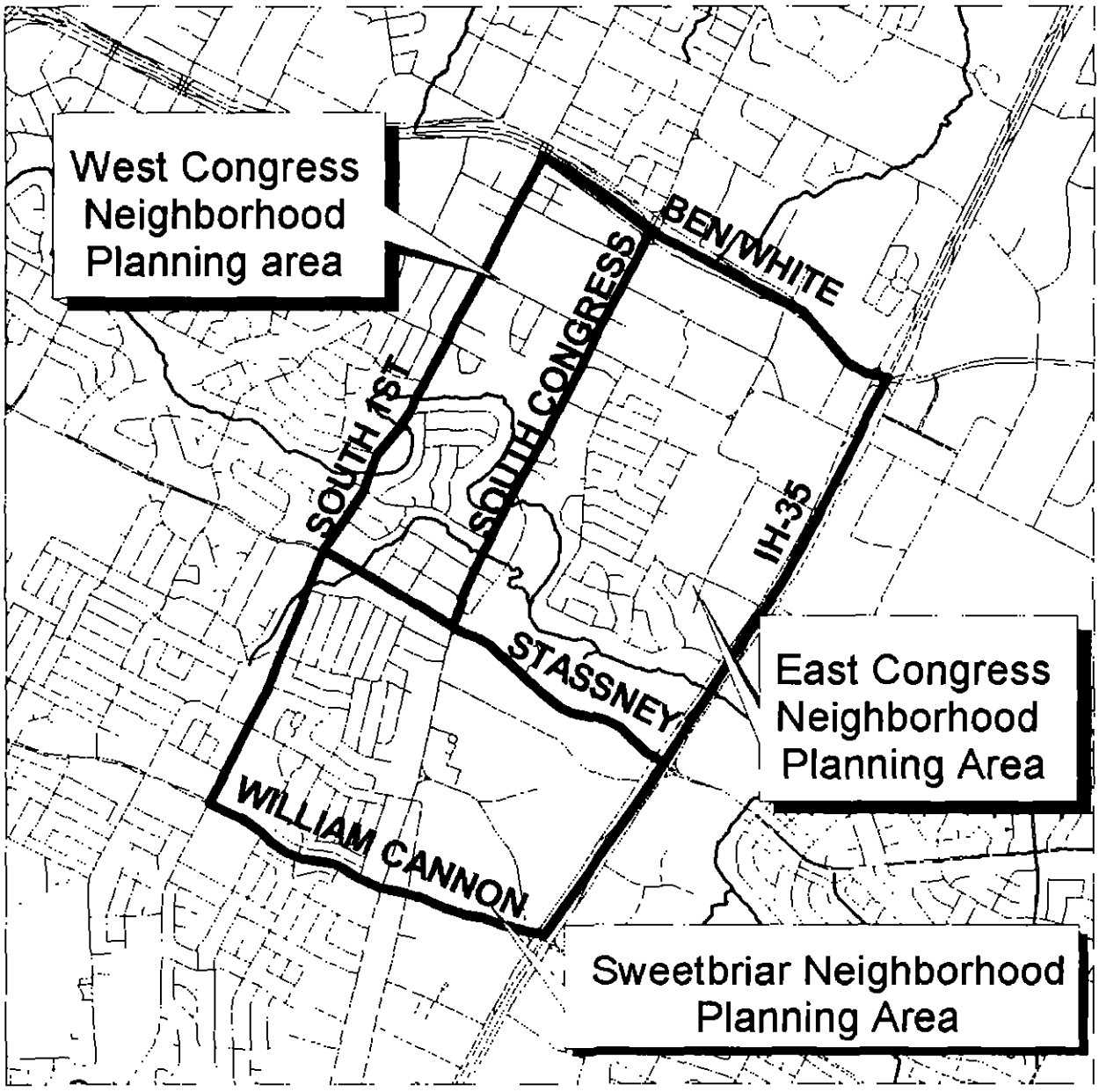


Figure 1
South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

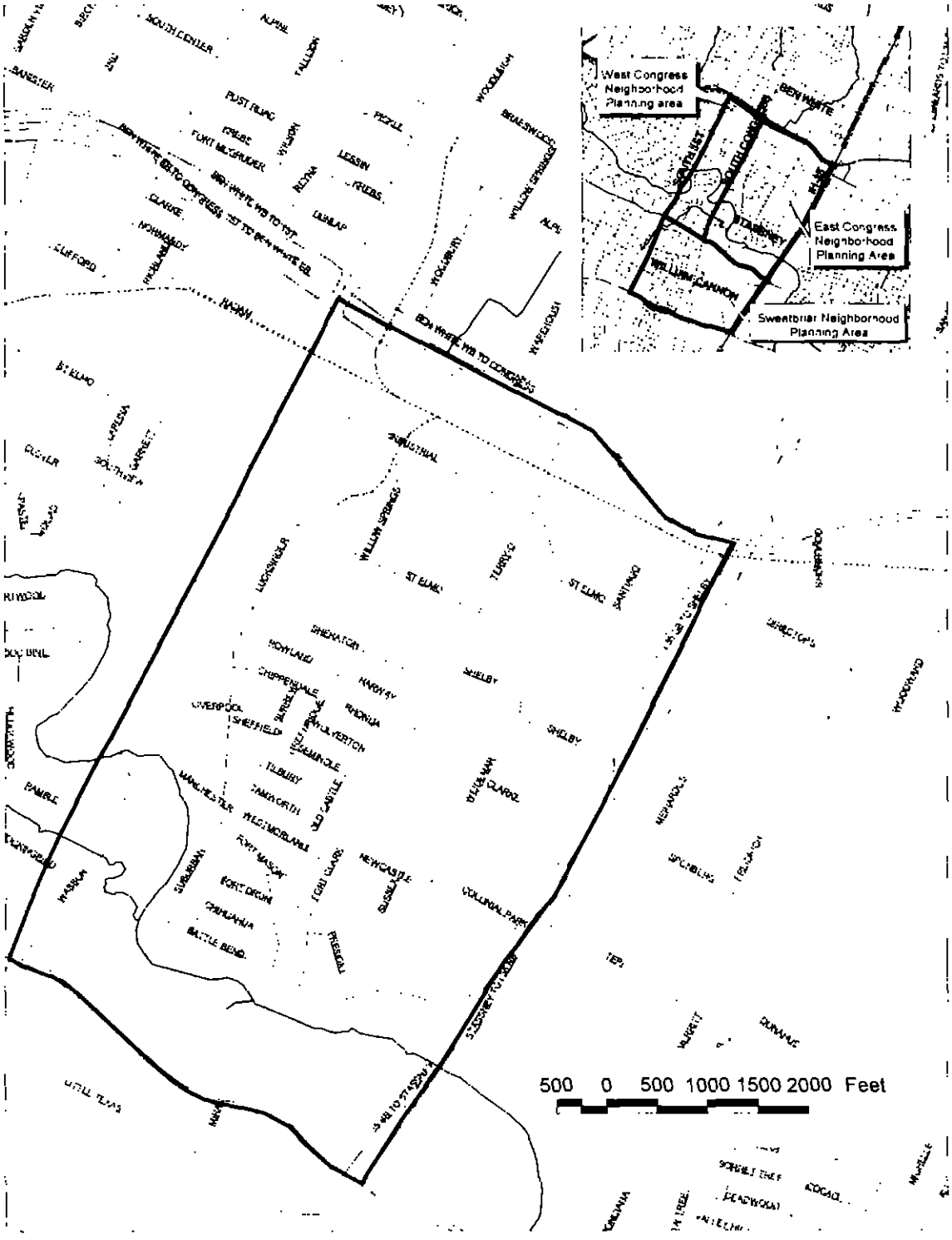


Figure 2
East Congress Neighborhood Planning Area

Figure 3
West Congress Neighborhood Planning Area

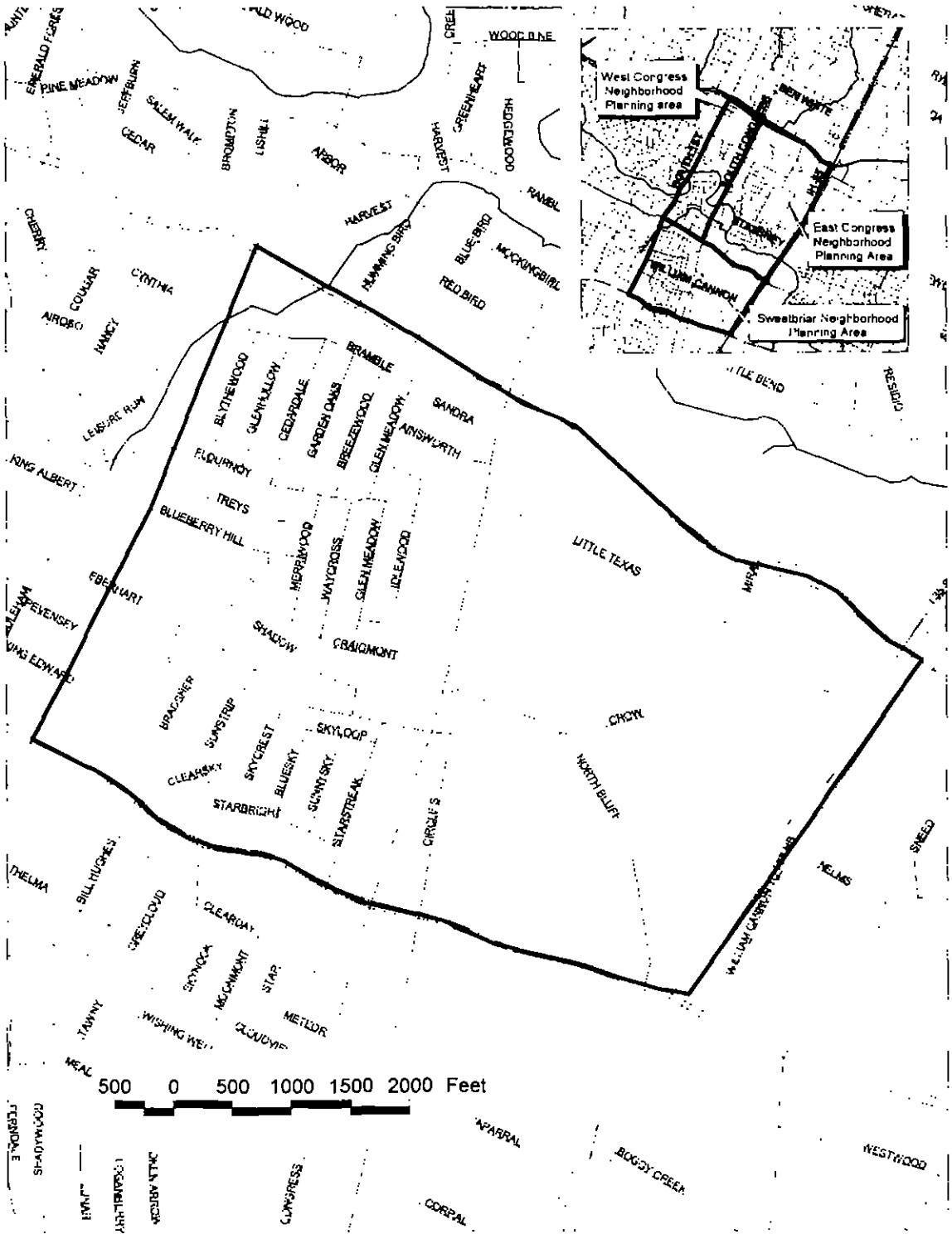


Figure 4
Sweetbriar Neighborhood Planning Area

Neighborhood Planning in the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

Austin City Council Resolution
The Austin City Council passed a resolution on November 6, 2003 instructing the Neighborhood Planning staff to develop neighborhood plans for three combined planning areas in south and southeast Austin: East Riverside/Oltorf, Greater South River City, and South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Areas (See Neighborhood Planning Areas: 2004-2005 map on page 6).

Initial Stakeholder Meeting
On March 30, 2004 Neighborhood Planning staff assigned to the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (SCCNPA) met with representatives of several neighborhood associations, business owners, non-resident property owners, and agents of non-resident property owners at Pleasant Hill Elementary School. At this meeting, an overview of the neighborhood planning process and a general timeline were presented. Following the staff presentation, there was a question and answer session.

Workshop One
Workshop One was held on June 26, 2004 at Bedichek Middle School. At this workshop, attendees were presented a brief overview of the neighborhood planning process. Following the presentation, there was a question and answer session. Attendees then formed small groups and participated in the Strengths, Opportunities, and Challenges (SOC) exercise. During this brainstorming exercise, people identified areas of their neighborhoods that they considered assets; areas providing opportunities for change; and areas needing improvement. (See Appendix A on page 99 for exercise results.)

Land Use Meeting One
The first Land Use meeting was held on July 14, 2004 at Bedichek Middle School. The attendees received a brief overview of land use planning principles and concepts. Following the presentation they broke into four groups to participate in a future land use mapping exercise. Using the results from Workshop One's SOC exercise, they were asked to identify one or more types of land uses they desired for areas identified as an opportunity or challenge. Areas identified as strengths remained unchanged on the map. The results of the four groups were incorporated into three future land use scenarios, which were discussed at Land Use Meeting Two.

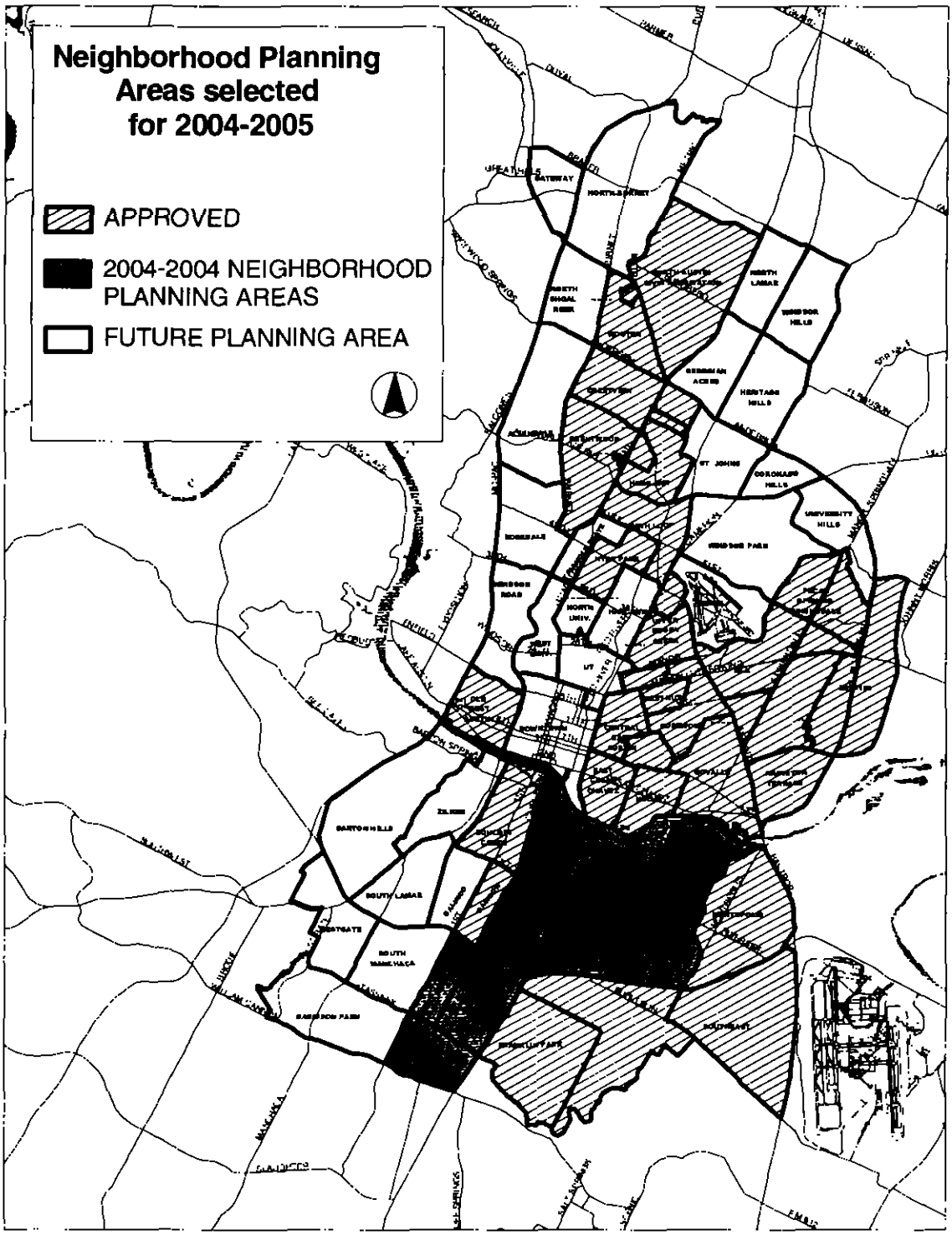


Figure 5
Neighborhood Planning Areas: 2004-2005

Services Forum

On August 4, 2004 the Services Forum for the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area was held at the Onion Creek Lodge. The Services Forum provided the opportunity for stakeholders to meet representatives from City of Austin departments and discuss a variety of issues that affect their neighborhoods, but fall outside the scope of the Neighborhood Planning process. The City departments and divisions represented at the forum were:

- Austin Energy
- Austin Fire Department
- Austin Police Department
- Building Code Enforcement
- Austin Public Library
- Parks and Recreation
- Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services
- Transportation, Planning, and Sustainability
- Watershed Protection and Development Review
- Zoning Code Enforcement.

In addition, a representative from the Capital Metropolitan Transit Authority (CMTA) was available to answer questions relating to area bus service and a representative from the Texas Department of Transportation was on hand to answer questions about state-maintained roads, such as IH-35 and South Congress Avenue.

Land Use Meeting Two

The Second Land Use meeting was held on September 22, 2004 at Bedichek Middle School. The attendees heard a brief presentation on land use decision-making principles and divided into three groups to continue and complete the land use exercise begun at the First Land Use Meeting. Following the end of this exercise, several representatives of landowners seeking zoning changes presented their proposals to the group.

Land Use Meeting Three

The Third Land Use Meeting was held on October 27, 2004 at Bedichek Middle School. Three small groups conducted an exercise to develop a single draft Future Land Use Map (FLUM) from three future land use scenarios derived from the results of the previous Land Use meetings and Workshop One (See pages 8-10 for the three scenario maps). Scenario "A" represented the greatest amount of change and increasing density with a significant amount of mixed-use along the major corridors and applying high-density single-family in selected areas. Scenario "B" represented a more moderate amount of mixed-use land use designation along the corridors. Scenario "C" represented the least amount of change in the planning area and reflected a continuation of the existing land use patterns.

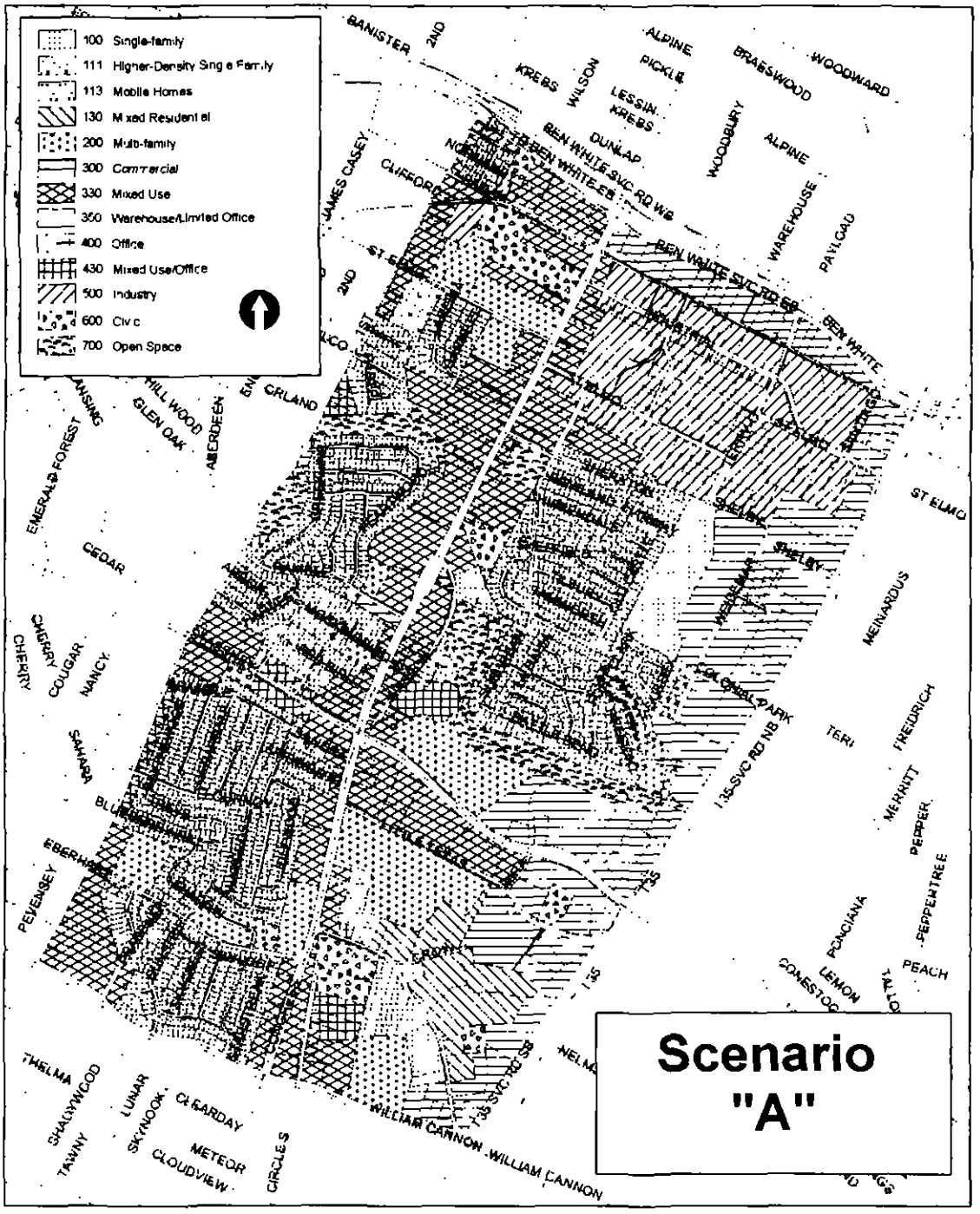


Figure 6
Future Land Use Scenario "A"

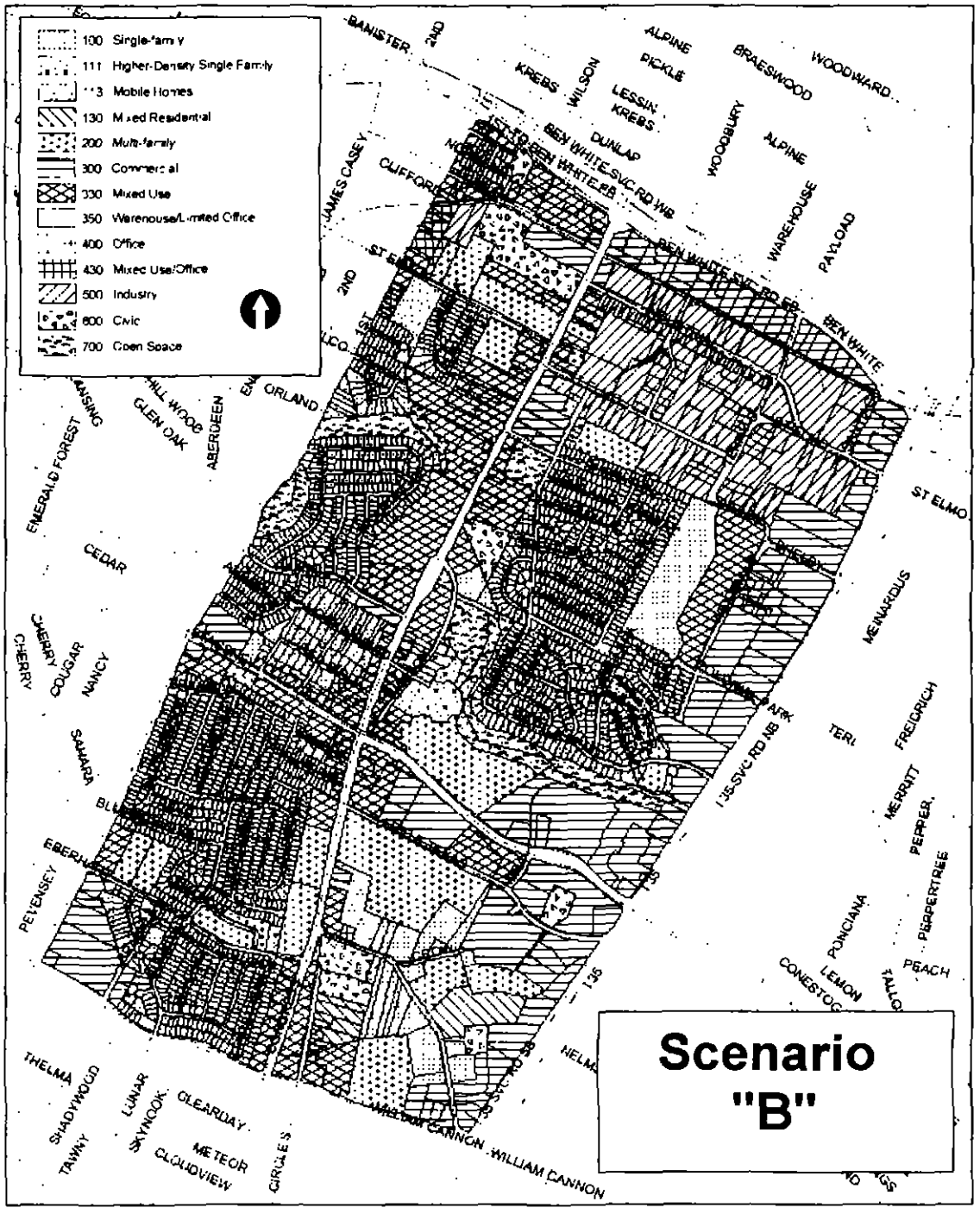


Figure 7
Future Land Use Scenario "B"

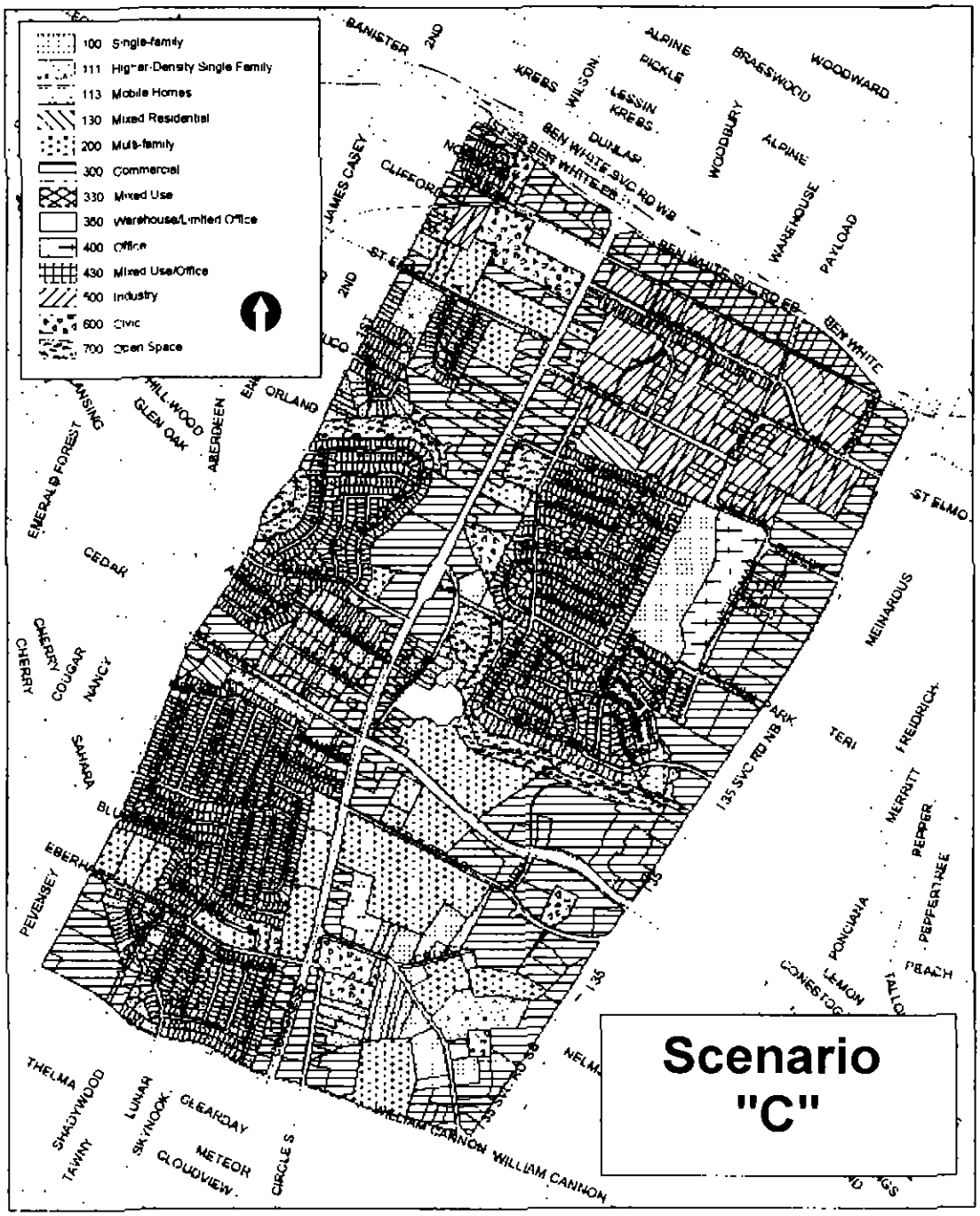


Figure 8
Future Land Use Scenario "C"

Transportation Meeting
The Transportation Meeting was held on December 1, 2004 at Bedichek Middle School. At this meeting attendees reviewed the sidewalk, bicycle, public transit, and road networks. For each of the transportation topics, suggestions were given to Neighborhood Planning staff.

Land Use and Zoning Meeting One
The first meeting to discuss how the future land use map relates to zoning recommendations was held on January 12, 2005 at Bedichek Middle School. Neighborhood Planning and Zoning staff presented a draft future land use map (FLUM) and the initial zoning recommendations for the SCCNPA. Part of the presentation focused on the connection between the FLUM and the zoning recommendations.

Land Use and Zoning Meeting Two
The second meeting to discuss the zoning recommendations and infill options was held on February 2, 2005 at Bedichek Middle School. Neighborhood Planning staff presented the zoning recommendations that were based on input from Land Use and Zoning Meeting One. Different infill and design tool options available for the area were also presented and discussed.

Urban Design and Parks and Open Space Meeting
The Urban Design and Parks and Open Space Meeting was held on February 23, 2005. In an open house format, participants indicated their preferences on a number of pictures of different types of buildings (commercial, apartments, mixed-use, and single-family) and sidewalks and streetscapes in a dot voting exercise. Following this exercise, the participants discussed the results of the voting exercise and indicated the specific design elements they did or did not care for in the images.

Property Owner Meeting
On April 27, 2005, a meeting was held to discuss the proposed zoning recommendations with owners of property affected by the proposals. After a presentation by Neighborhood Planning staff, the attendees divided into two groups to discuss rezoning recommendations in the East Congress Neighborhood Planning Area and to discuss rezonings in the West Congress and Sweetbriar Neighborhood Planning Areas.

Open House
On June 18, 2005 an open house was held at Bedichek Middle School. This meeting marked the final public opportunity for the community to comment on the neighborhood plan before it was presented to the Planning Commission and City Council. The open house was organized around panels presenting elements of the plan: land use and zoning, urban design, neighborhood sidewalks, and infill options and design tools.

Planning Commission
The plan was presented to the Planning Commission on July 26, 2005. Following the staff presentation and public hearing, the Commission recommended the plan and attendant rezonings, with several minor changes, move forward to the City Council.

City Council
The plan and rezonings to implement the land use element of the plan was presented to the Austin City Council for their consideration on August 18, 2005. One small area was postponed until early September 2005 and the remaining portion was unanimously approved after a brief discussion.

Vision and Goals

Vision

The neighborhoods of the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area should be quiet and safe communities. Tree-lined neighborhood streets should allow residents to safely travel by foot, bicycle, or car. Commercial streets, especially South Congress Avenue, should become more pedestrian-friendly and safely accessible from nearby neighborhoods. South Congress Avenue should become a mixed-use corridor serving local and regional needs. Parks should be places where people can play, relax, or simply enjoy the outdoors. Public open spaces and natural areas should be preserved as places for wildlife and where people can enjoy nature in the middle of the city.

Goals

GOAL ONE: Preserve and enhance the existing single-family neighborhoods and retain the affordability of these neighborhoods.

GOAL TWO: South Congress Avenue should become a more vibrant, accessible mixed-use corridor and a destination for nearby residents and the citizens of Austin.

GOAL THREE: Focus mixed-use development and commercial uses along major commercial corridors and in specialized districts.

GOAL FOUR: Improve the accessibility, convenience, and safety for all forms of transportation.

GOAL FIVE: The public open spaces should be preserved and enhanced.

Top Ten Priorities

This list reflects the preferences of participants and stakeholders in the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area regarding the key issues and priorities for implementation. The numbered items are specific objectives in the neighborhood plan. Below them are some recommended actions to realize the objectives.

1) Improve traffic flow, safety, and ease of travel throughout the area while discouraging the use of neighborhood streets by through traffic.

   Widen South Congress Avenue with a continuous left turn lane and bike lanes.
   Consider traffic calming studies and the implementation of such measures.

2) Williamson Creek should be maintained in a natural state.

   Engage developers to dedicate or set aside land in the flood plain.
   Investigate the construction of a primitive trail along the creek.

3) Improve infrastructure along South Congress Avenue to make it pedestrian friendly.

   Undertake a corridor improvement study for South Congress Avenue.
   Implement new Commercial Design Standards.

4) New development should be compatibly scaled when adjacent to residential uses.

5) Improve pedestrian connections throughout the area.

   Complete sidewalk network along arterial routes.

6) Prevent commercial incursion into neighborhoods.

7) Limit the effects of industrial and commercial uses on adjacent neighborhoods.

   Allow for greater buffers between residential and non-residential development.
   Restrict commercial and cut-through traffic in neighborhoods.

8) Develop a neighborhood park on the vacant tract of land on the east side of South 1st Street between Ramble Lane and Heartwood Drive.

9) Enhance Battlebend Park.

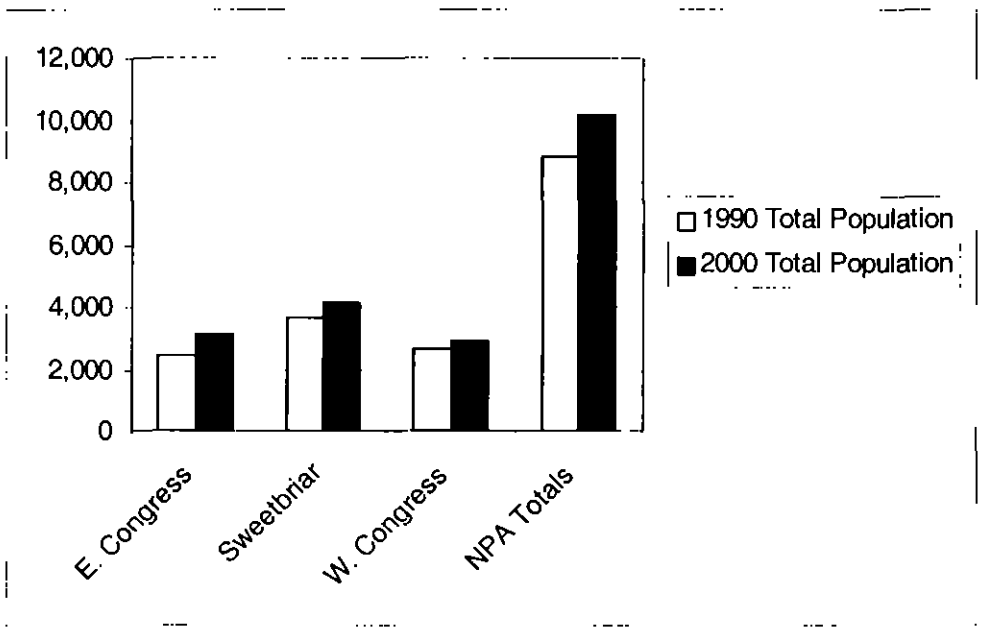
   Plant more significant shade trees.

10) Preserve the character of single-family neighborhoods.

Demographic Profiles of the South Congress Combined Planning Area

Population Change

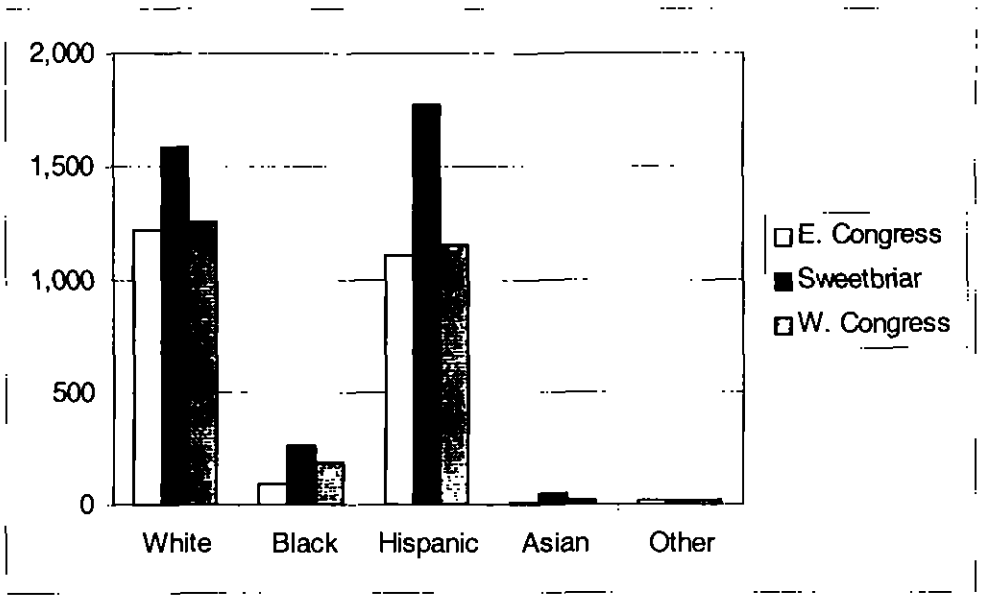
The total population in the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (SCCNPA) grew from 8,796 to 10,143 residents between the year 1990 and 2000, adding 1,300 new residents 13%. By comparison, the average growth rate was 22% in Austin's Urban Core, comprised of all Neighborhood Planning Areas in the City of Austin (see Figure 5 on page 6). Within South Congress Combined, the East Congress Neighborhood Planning Area saw the greatest percentage increase, growing by 27% or an additional 661 people. The West Congress and Sweetbriar planning areas increased by 10% and 11% respectively, or by an additional 273 and 413 people respectively.



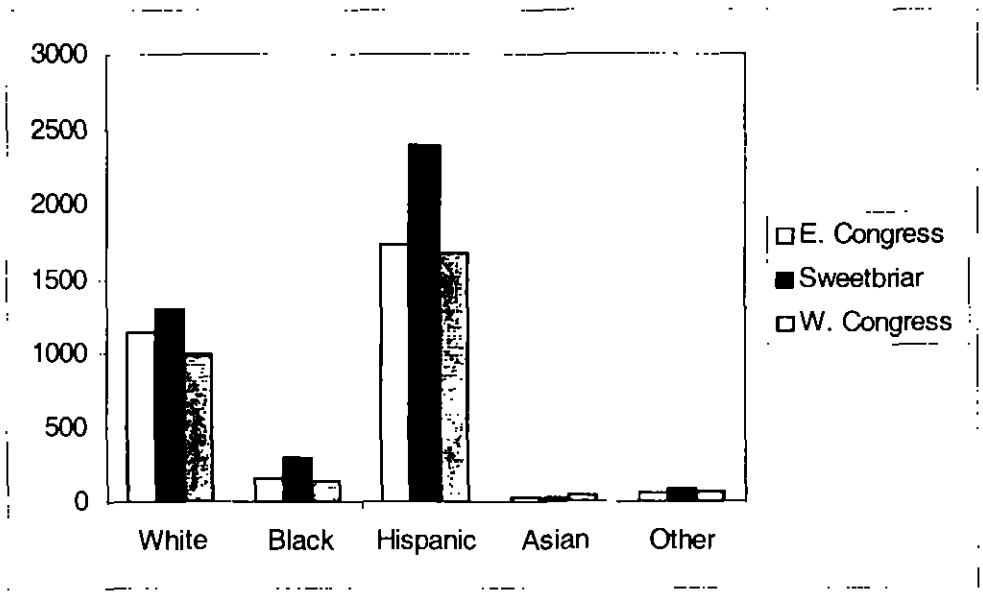
Population Increases: 1990 to 2000

Ethnicity

During the decade of the 1990s, the ethnic mix of the SCCNPA experienced a marked shift. The 1990 census showed that the Hispanic population constituted 37 percent of the population; by 2000, they became the majority ethnic group with 55 percent of the total population. This trend mirrors increases in Hispanic populations throughout the city, as well as the state. During the same time the White ethnic group decreased from 50 to 37 percent. The Black, Asian, and "Other" groups experienced very modest increases.



South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area
1990 Ethnic Composition

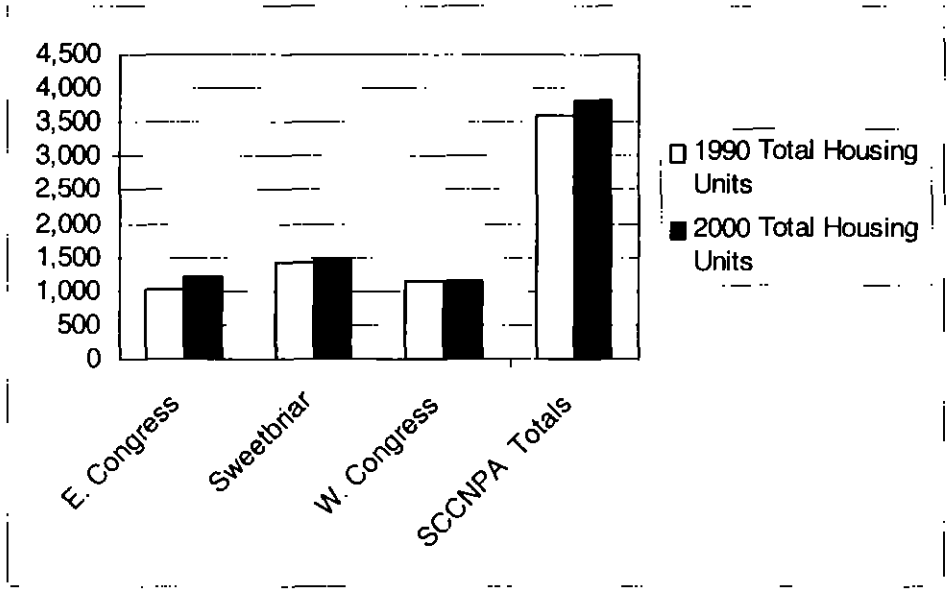


South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area
2000 Census Ethnic Composition

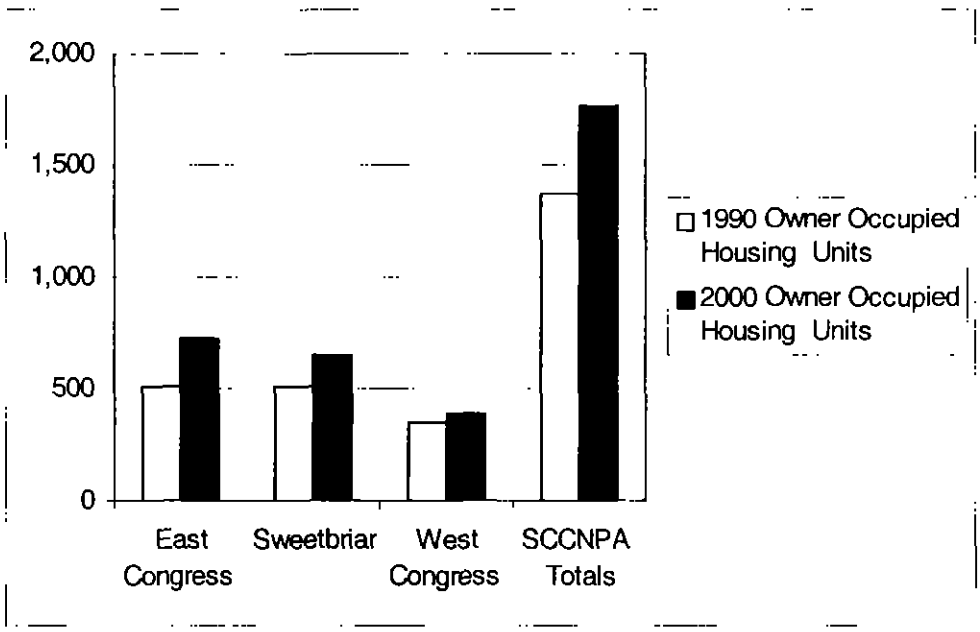
Housing

During the 1990s, the number of housing units in the SCCNPA increased by a modest 214 new units. The most significant change in housing in the combined planning area was the 393 unit increase in owner-occupied housing units—close to double the amount of new housing units created during the same period. The

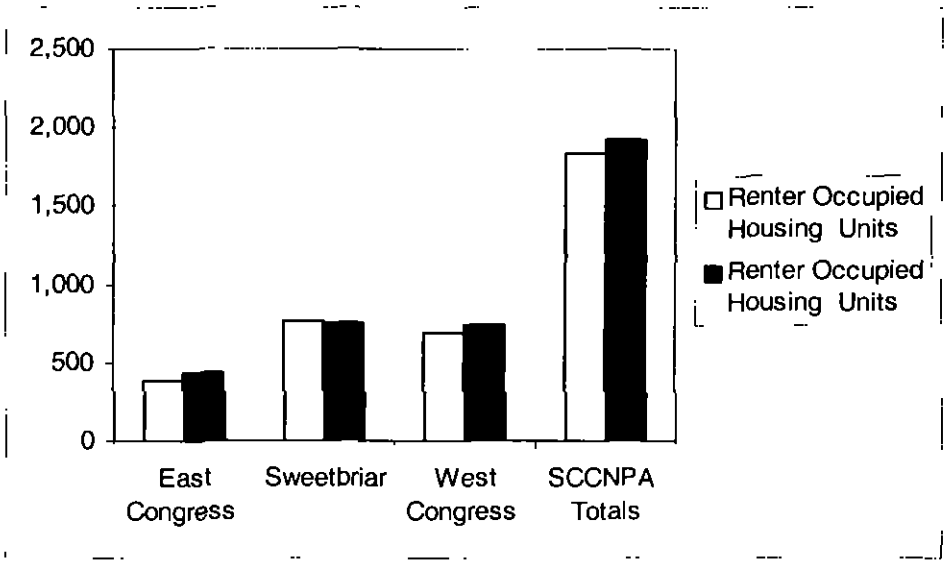
increase in home ownership was most dramatic in the East Congress Neighborhood planning area with 251 additional owner-occupied units. The Sweetbriar NPA had the second largest increase with an increase of 142 additional owner-occupied units. The number of rental housing units increased by 82. The census data does not indicate whether these were apartments or houses.



Number of Housing Units: 1990 to 2000



Number of Owner-Occupied Housing Units: 1990 to 2000



Number of Renter-Occupied Housing Units: 1990 to 2000

Family Income

Median family income is the average income among households with two or more related persons. Sweetbriar Planning Area family incomes saw a significant increase of $6,253 when adjusted for inflation. West Congress and East Planning Area incomes increased by a more modest, but significant, $5,903 and $3,432 respectively.

Median Family Income			
Change from 1990 to 2000			
NPA	**MFI 1990 Census**	**Inflation Adjusted 1990 MFI**	**MFI Census 2000**
West Congress	$24,023	$32,832	$35,735
East Congress	$28,724	$39,257	$42,689
Sweetbriar	$30,703	$41,961	$48,214
Note: Income figures for decennial censuses are actually from the year prior *to the census, for example, Census 1990 income figures are from 1989, and Census 2000* figures are from 1999.			

History of the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

Earliest Residents
Native Americans were the first inhabitants of the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (SCCNPA). Artifacts of these people have been found along the banks of Williamson Creek. Archeological evidence suggests that people may have inhabited Central Texas as early as 10,000 years ago (Smyrl). Over time, these earliest Central Texans were displaced, assimilated, or overwhelmed by succeeding groups, or disappeared due to famine and pestilence. By the time the first European explorers and settlers reached the area, the Tonkawa were becoming the predominant tribe.

From the early eighteenth century through the middle of the nineteenth century, the Tonkawa tribes camped, hunted, gathered, and fished near the rivers and streams of Central Texas. Their alliances shifted between the Comanches and the Apaches, who opposed one another. They had occasional conflicts with the Spanish, but were generally on good terms with the Anglo-American settlers helping Texas and the United States in their wars against other native tribes, into the late nineteenth century. Soon thereafter, many settled around Fort Griffin, Texas, northeast of Abilene. Eventually, they were relocated to north central Oklahoma where the Tonkawa Nation is currently based (Carlisle, "Tonkawa," 2003; "Native Americans: The Tonkawa Nation" 2003).

Other tribes in the area were the Lipan and Mescalero Apaches. These groups migrated here after being pushed southward by the raiding Comanches (Carlisle, "Apache," 2003).

Republic of Texas Land Grants
The SCCNPA is located on land awarded separately to William Cannon and Isaac Decker as headright grants. Under the Texas Constitution of 1836, all heads of families living in Texas on March 4, 1836, except Africans and Indians, were granted "first class" headrights of one league and one labor (4,605.5 acres) (Lang, Long, 2002). However, within a few years of receiving his grant, Cannon began to sell off portions (Baker, Freeman, Blake, 2000). The record of these land grants can still be seen on Travis County tax plats of the area.

Early Communities
Before the City of Austin annexed the land area within the SCCNPA (See Annexation History of the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area map on p. 35), there were several small, unincorporated communities.

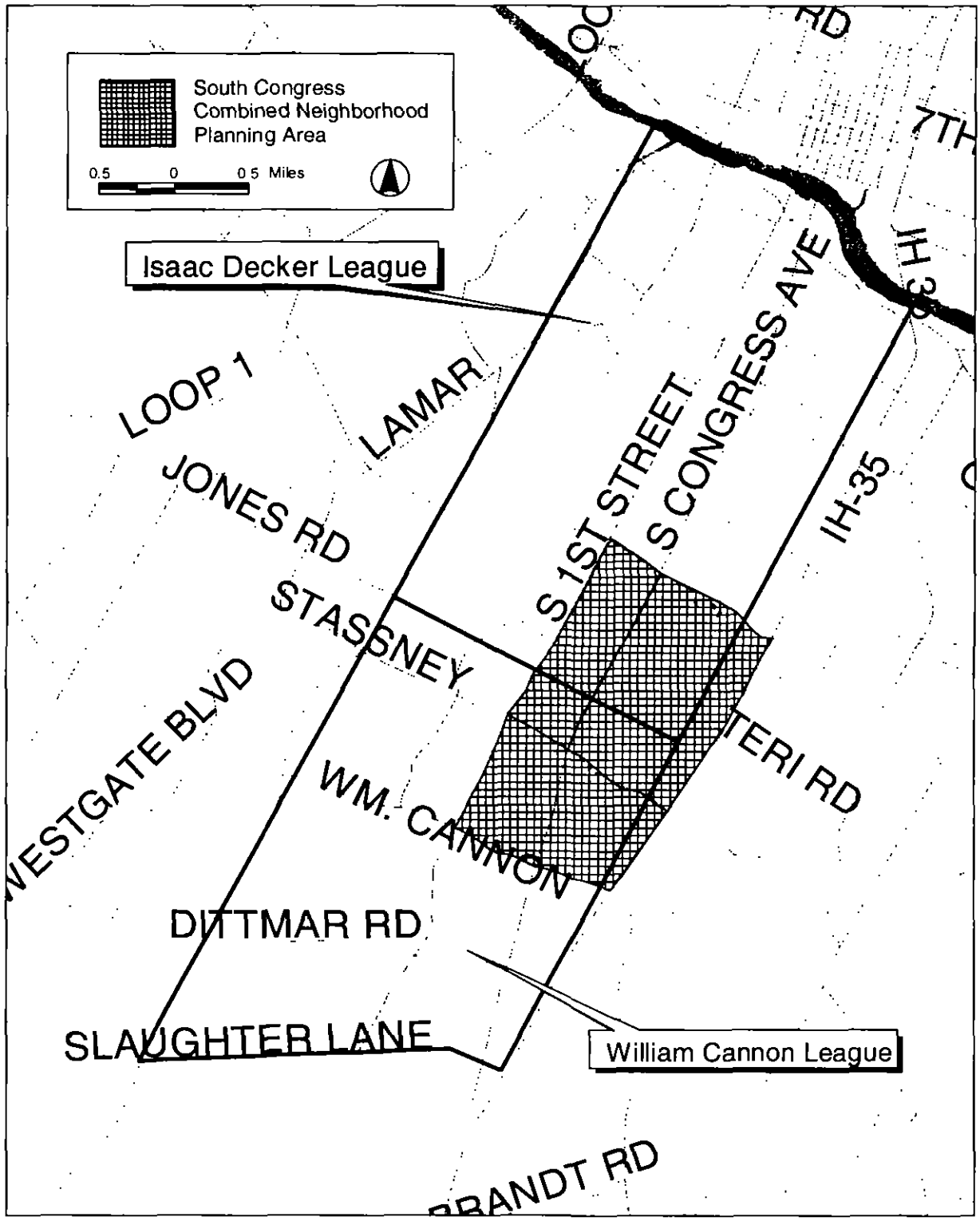
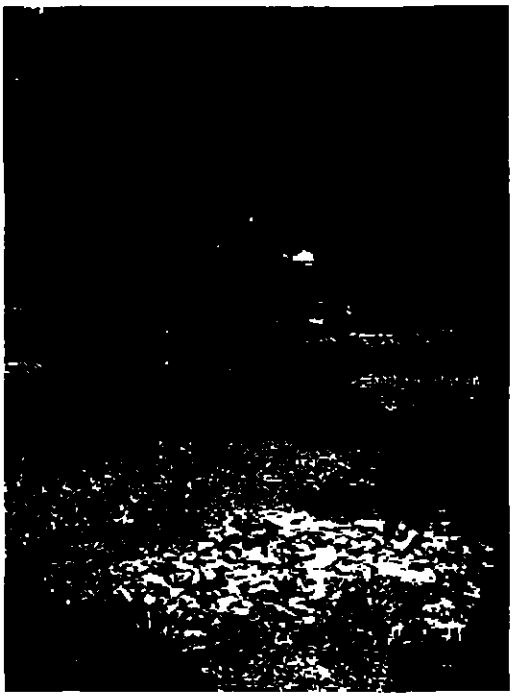


Figure 9
William Cannon and Isaac Decker "League and a Labor" Republic of Texas Land Grants

Johns Town

Located east of current-day South Congress Avenue, generally north of North Bluff Drive, south of Williamson Creek and several hundred feet west of IH-35, the community of Johns Town was surveyed in December, 1872. By 1880, it was a small, racially-integrated farming community with seven families and forty-four residents (Baker, et. al., 2000). The various histories about this part of Austin are not clear, but it seems that some time near 1900 the name of Johns Town and possibly the surrounding area was changed to Pleasant Hill.



Williamson Creek Cemetery—Little Texas Lane

This 3-acre cemetery was located in the community of Johns Town and traditionally used by the African-American community. The earliest known burials indicate it was in use from the early 1870s; although there are many unmarked graves and burials possibly occurred before then. Some of the earliest known burials are Pricilla Overton (1871), Percilla Overton (1874), and Peggy Lane (1876) (Baker, et al. 2000). Members of some of Johns Towns' first families were laid to rest in this cemetery and it was used as an active cemetery as late as the mid-1990s (Flatt, 2003).

Pleasant Hill

Pleasant Hill was a rural community located near the current-day intersection of William Cannon Boulevard and South Congress Avenue. In 1903, Pleasant Hill had a one-teacher school with forty-two white students and another one-teacher school with 73 black students. (Smyrl, "Pleasant Hill, Texas", 2002). In the late 1940s, a church, a school, and several widely scattered houses marked the community on county highway maps (Smyrl, "Pleasant Hill, Texas", 2002). By the 1980s, the area had been absorbed by the southern city limits of Austin (Smyrl, "Pleasant Hill, Texas", 2002).

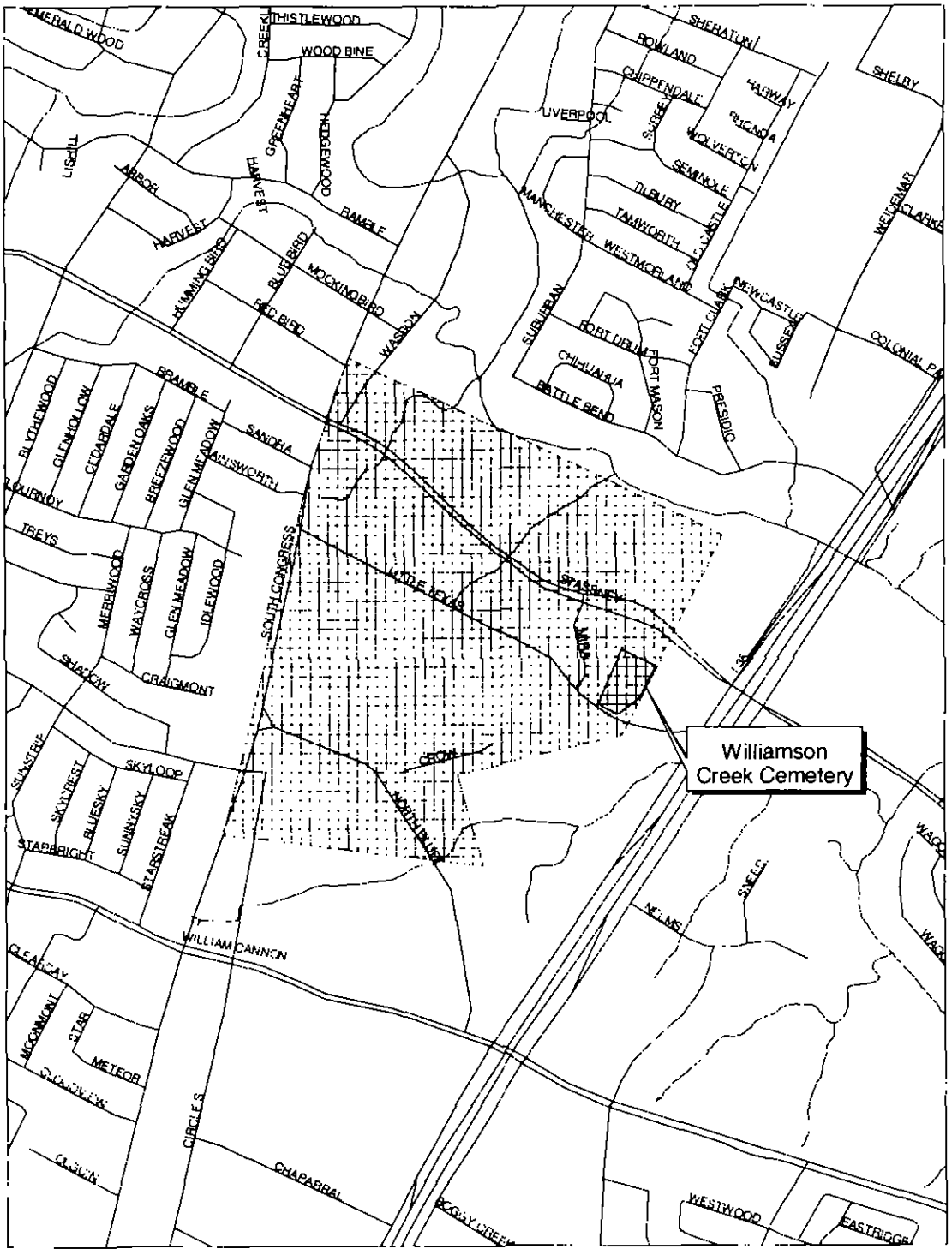
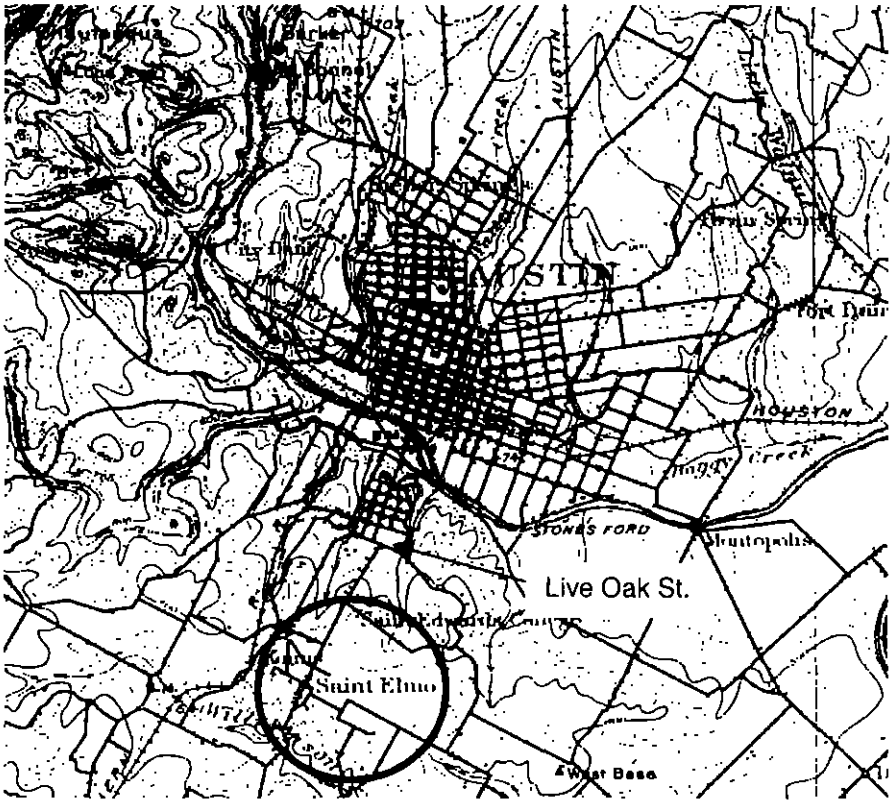


Figure 10
Approximate Location of Johns Town Based on 1872 Plat
(Baker, et. al., 2000)

Pleasant Hill School

One of the early Pleasant Hill schools still stands and is now the Onion Creek Lodge.



1921 reprint of 1910 Topographic City Map of Austin.
(University of Texas Perry-Castañeda Library Online Map Collection)

Figure 11
St. Elmo Community

St. Elmo

St. Elmo was located near the present-day intersection of South Congress Avenue and St. Elmo Road. A post office was moved there in 1875, and William W. Puckett served as postmaster. During the mid-1880s, St. Elmo had a school and 25 residents. By the early 1890s it had 200 residents, a general store, a saloon, and a cotton gin. However, by 1900, St. Elmo had begun to decline. Its post office was discontinued in 1902 and community mail was sent to Austin. By 1904, the population had fallen to 104. The St. Elmo community was eventually absorbed into Austin (Smyrl, "St. Elmo, Texas", 2002).

Motels and Motor Lodges

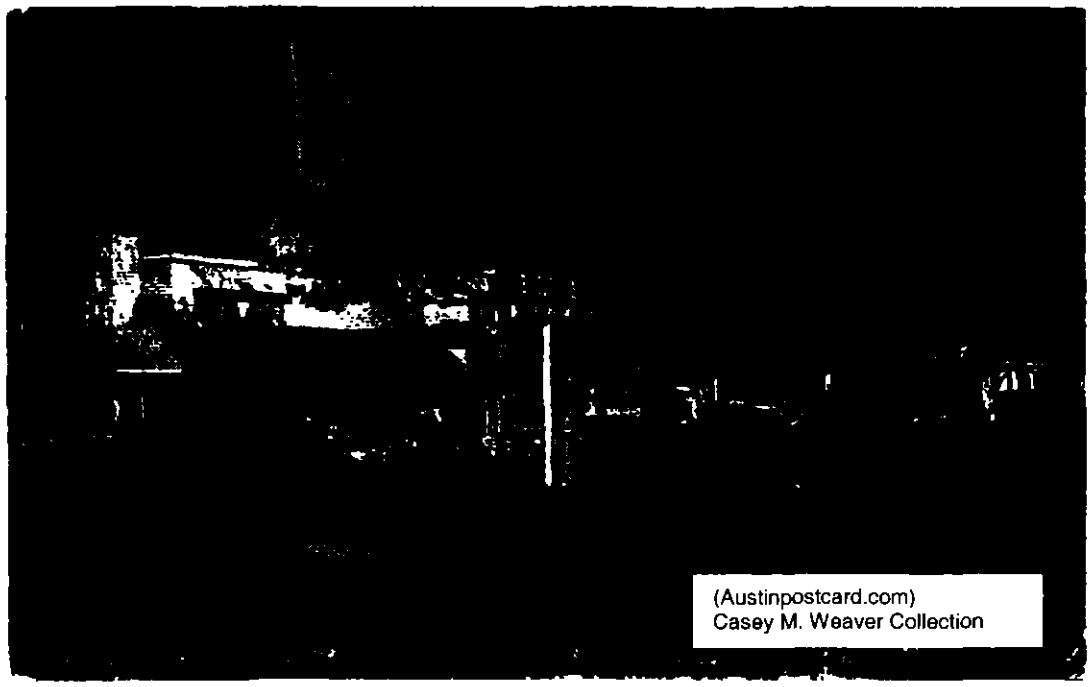
South Congress Avenue was once the southern gateway into Austin. As travelers approached the city on US 81 (the former name of South Congress Avenue) from the south, they were greeted by a number of small motels and motor lodges. Two of these motels are still in use today.

St. Elmo-tel

A May 12, 1940 Austin Daily Tribune advertisement invited Austinites to come and visit "nineteen units now ready for the traveling public" at the "finest motel in Texas". Visitors to the St. Elmo-tel could experience such modern conveniences as "hot water instantly available at the turn of the faucet". The new motel also boasted other amenities such as a kitchens, practice tees, and a croquet court (Kerr 2004). Today, the St. Elmo-tel has twenty-two rooms and is no longer the shining example of a motor lodge it once was. However, it still remains in business, providing modestly-priced housing for short and long-term visitors.

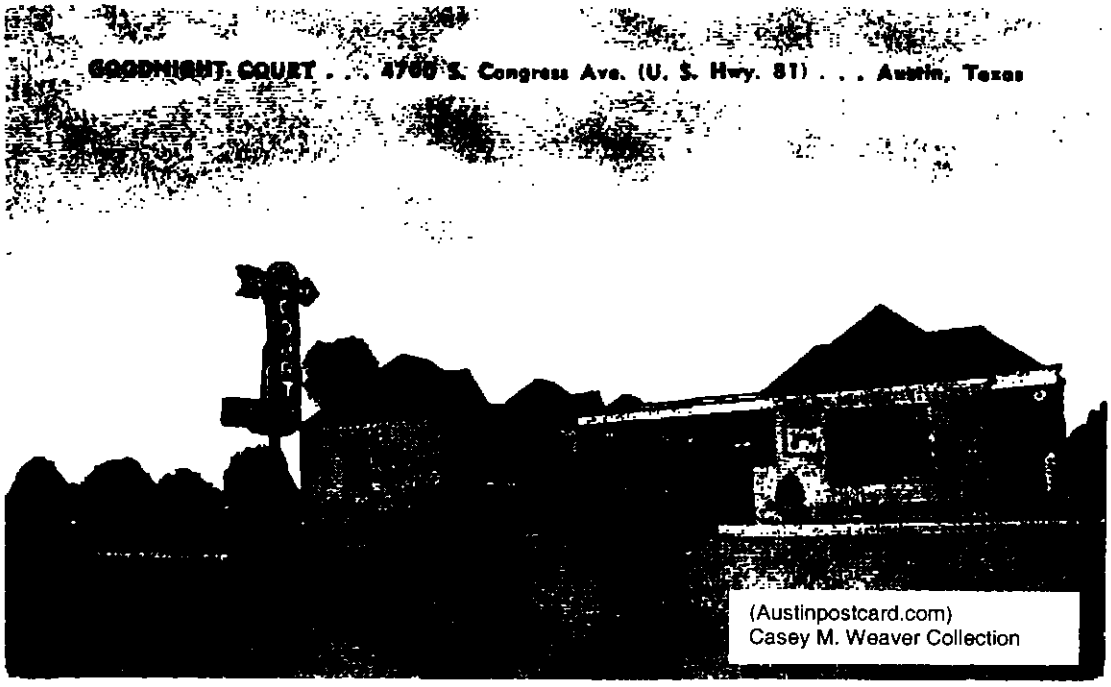
Goodnight Court Motel

Built in 1941, the Goodnight Court motel, along with the St. Elmo-tel, were two of the first motor lodges greeting visitors to Austin. The Goodnight family built a 20-seat coffee shop next to the Goodnight Motel on South Congress. It was opened with partner Sam "Posey" Hill, hence the name Hill's Cafe. The Goodnights bought out Mr. Hill in 1957. Throughout the years, the cafe complex has grown to accommodate nearly 500 people (History, 2005)



Above: Photograph from a postcard soon after the St. Elmo-tel first opened in the 1940s.

Below: Still in operation, the St. Elmo-tel (May 2005) provides inexpensive lodging for short and long-term visitors.



(Austinpostcard.com)
Casey M. Weaver Collection

Above: The Goodnight Court motel—"We Specialize in Cleanliness and Comfort" was built in the early 1940s and was one of the first motels travelers encountered arriving from the south.

Below: Over the years little has changed in the general appearance of the former Goodnight Court motel.

Sources

Austinpostcard.com (2005) "St. Elmo-tel postcard image" Casey M. Weaver Collection Retrieved 22 March, 2005 from http://www.austinpostcard.com/cgibin/view.cgi?index=pclist.txt?card=1633

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online/articles/view/TT/hct8.html.

University of Texas Perry-Castañeda Library Online Map Collection. (1921) *1921 reprint of 1910 topographic city map of Austin.* Original Scale 1:125,000. 1910; Reprint, 1921. Retrieved 4 Jan. 2005 from http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/austin21.jpg.

Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations

By adopting the plan, the City Council demonstrates the City's commitment to the implementation of the plan. However, every recommendation listed in this plan will require separate and specific implementation. Adoption of the plan does not begin the implementation of any item. Approval of the plan does not legally obligate the City to implement any particular action item. The implementation will require specific actions by the neighborhood, the City and by other agencies. The Neighborhood Plan will be supported and implemented by

- City Boards, Commissions and Staff
- City Departmental Budgets
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Other Agencies and Organizations
- Direct Neighborhood Action.

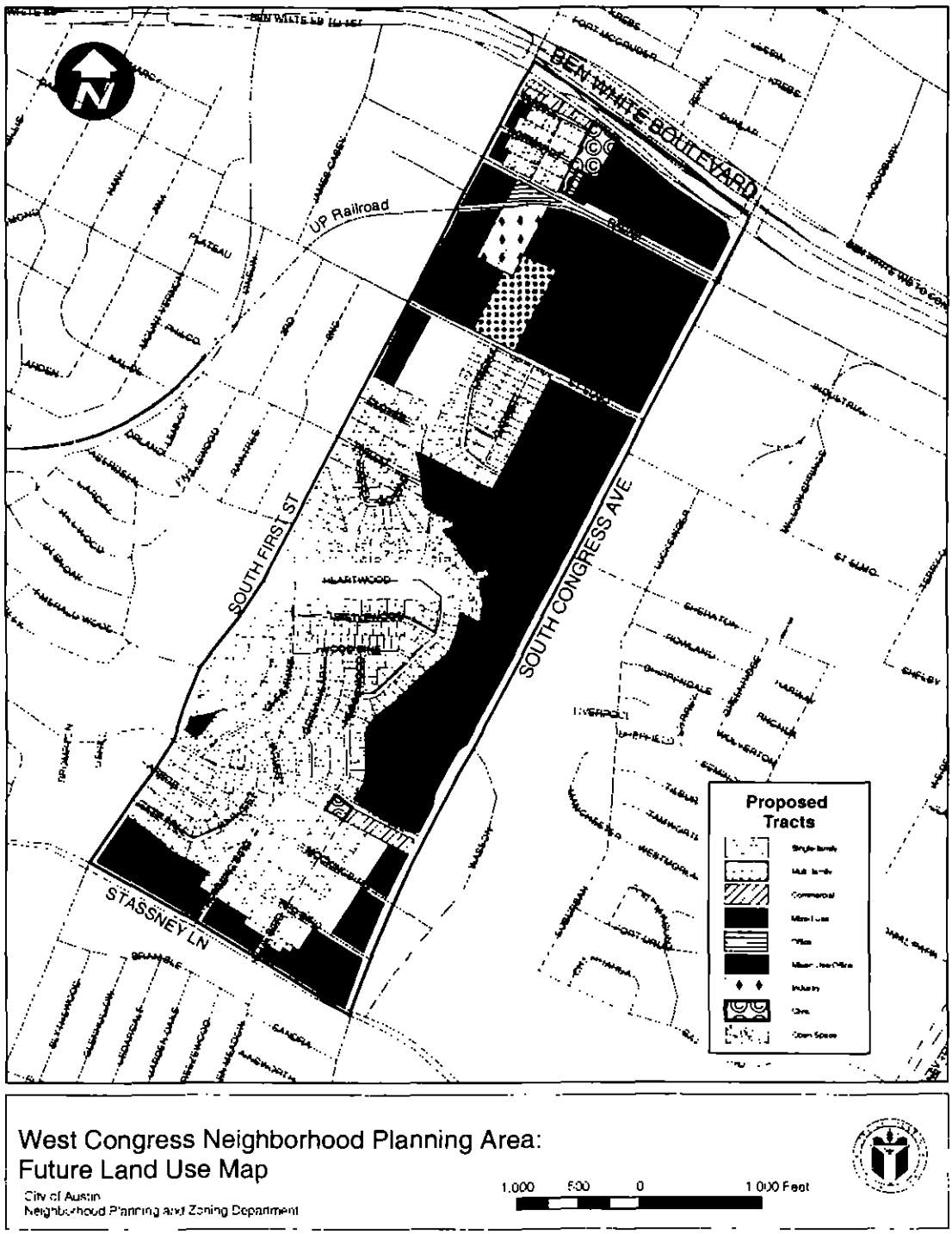


Figure 12
West Congress Future Land Use Map

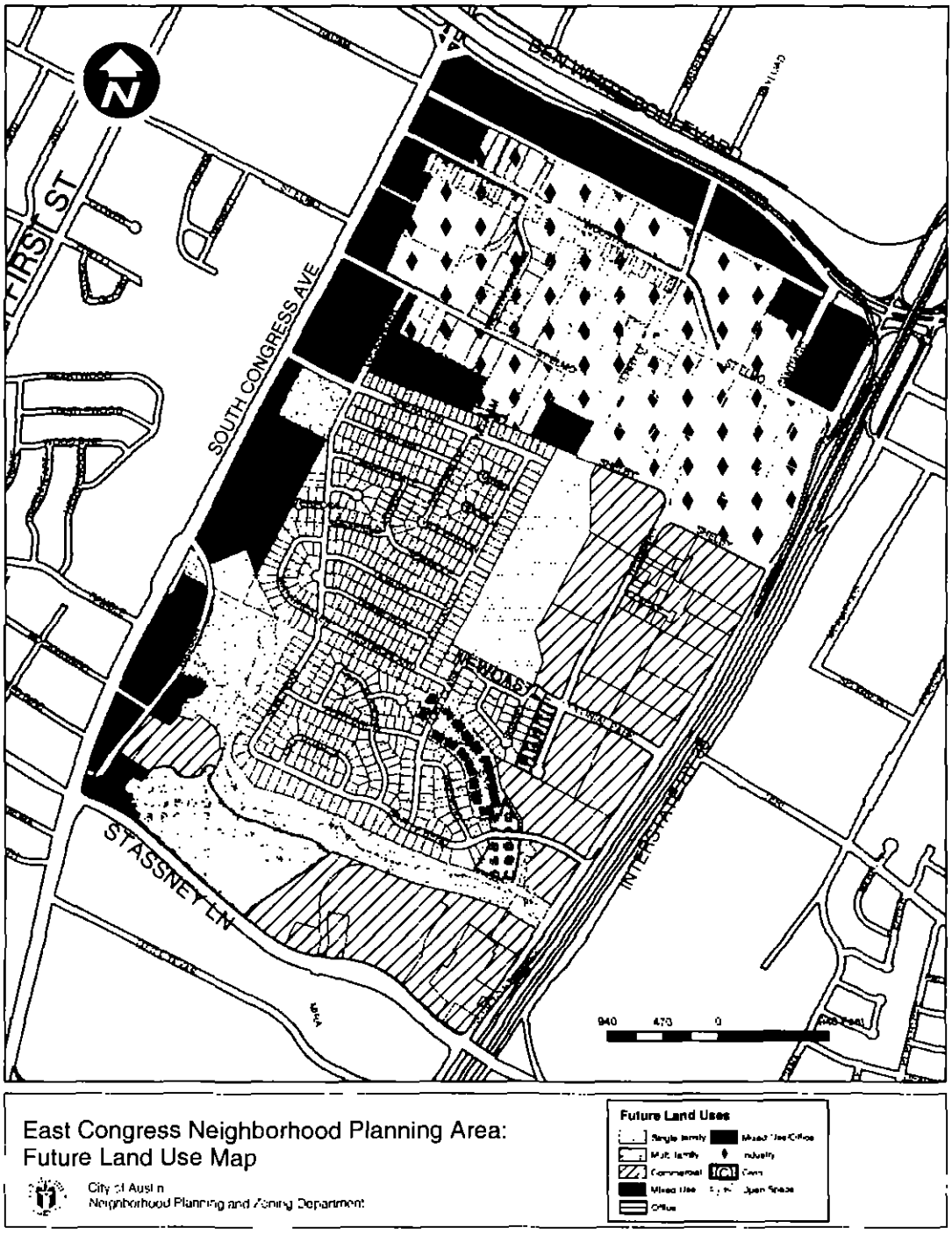


Figure 13
East Congress Future Land Use Map

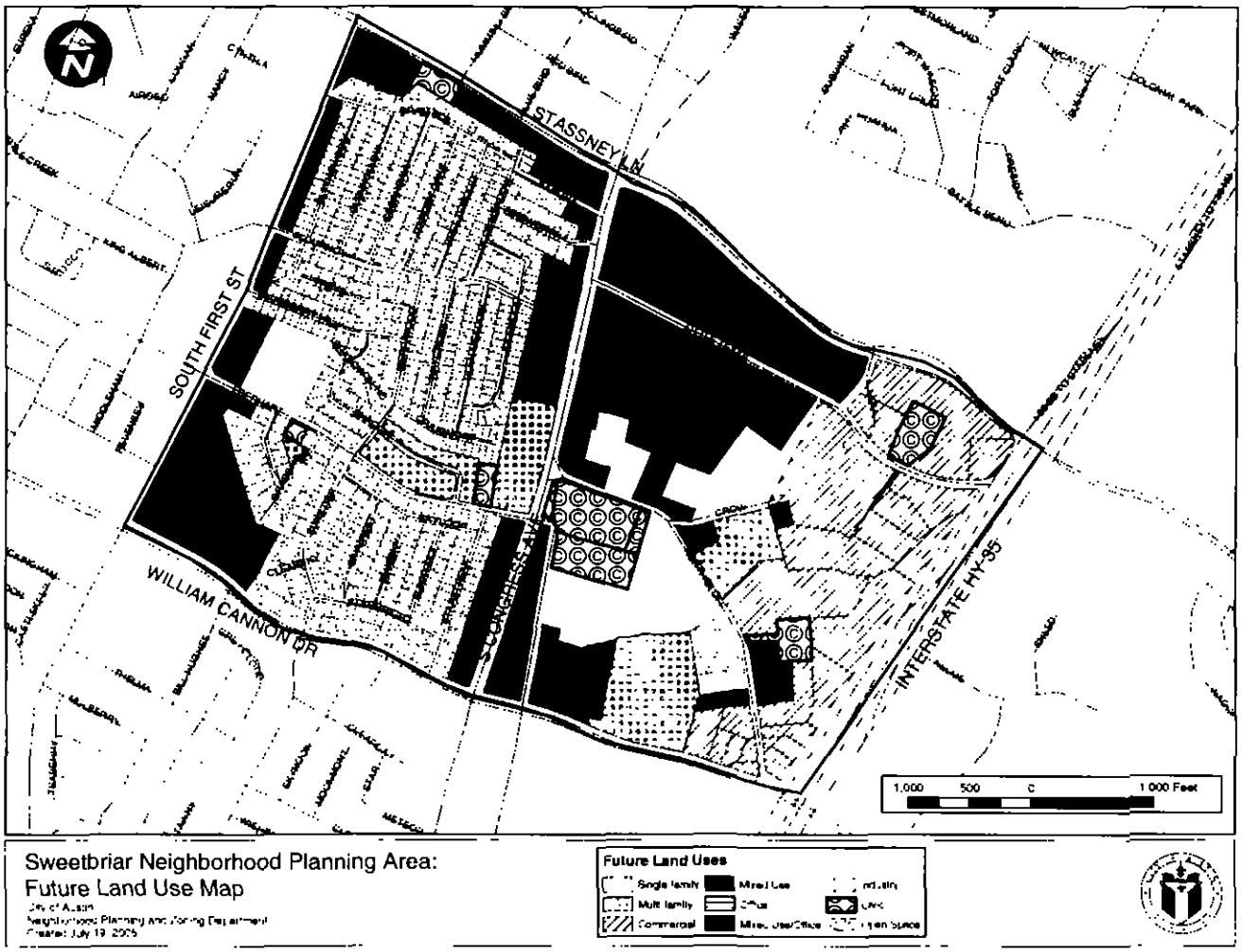


Figure 14
Sweetbriar Future Land Use Map

GOAL ONE
Enhance the existing single-family neighborhoods and retain the affordability of these neighborhoods.

Residential Character
The single-family neighborhoods of the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (SCCNPA) represent several periods of housing construction in the Austin area. The majority of the neighborhoods in SCCNPA are best characterized as typical suburban developments built during the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s. In addition, there are several smaller neighborhoods developed from the1920s through the 1950s. During the 1980s and early 2000s, several apartment complexes—some very large—and townhouse projects were built throughout the planning area and reflect the first of two current residential housing trends in the area. The second more recent trend is the development of new single-family housing projects. During the planning process, two such projects, containing 104 and 34 houses respectively, entered the development process.

Location
Although south of Ben White Boulevard, the SCCNPA neighborhoods' relative location and direct access to Downtown and Central Austin could make them more attractive. There are several factors that could contribute to an increased interest to these neighborhoods:

- Fuel prices rise
- Traffic congestion increases
- The number of local amenities such as new shops and restaurants increases
- Transit service along South Congress Avenue connecting to Central Austin employment centers improves.

In addition, the more modest house prices, compared to many neighborhoods north of Ben White Boulevard in the 78704 zip code, may make these neighborhoods popular among first-time homebuyers and others looking for reasonably priced housing that is easily accessible to the central city.

Objective 1.1
New development should be compatibly scaled when adjacent to residential uses.

From the beginning of the planning process in SCCNPA, a strong consensus emerged. The large undeveloped tracts and larger, more readily redevelopable

parcels, particularly along South Congress Avenue, should become more pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use places. However, the size of the parcels indicates they could be *large* and *dense* developments. Many of these sites abut single-family neighborhoods and as they develop or redevelop, adjacent neighborhoods should be afforded increased buffering.

Recommendation 1 Establish generous setbacks between commercial, multi-family or mixed-use development and adjacent, single-family neighborhoods.

Objective 1.2
Prevent commercial encroachment into neighborhoods.

Recommendation 2 Limit most commercial and mixed-use developments to the planning area's arterial roads or to established commercial districts or nodes.

Opportunities for well-planned commercial and mixed-use projects may arise in the future. Community stakeholders, developers, and City of Austin staff should work together through the plan amendment process to determine the most appropriate action.

Objective 1.3
Preserve the character of single-family neighborhoods.

Within the boundaries of the combined planning area there are a number of residential developments with their own distinct character. In large part, the neighborhoods within the SCCNPA are best characterized by their architecture and roadway layout. These elements help define each neighborhood as unique, and although several of these subdivisions were developed close in time and in a similar design, they have become individual places.

A number of **design tools** and **residential infill options** are available to Neighborhood Planning Areas intending to preserve the uniqueness or enhance the diversity of certain neighborhoods or subdistricts within the planning area. Where appropriate to implement specific design tools and infill options, the subdistricts should be based on the original subdivisions boundaries.

Recommendation 3 Allow the "Impervious Cover and Parking Placement" design tool for the entire planning area.

Impervious Cover and Parking Placement Design Tool

(Applies to all new single-family construction))

- No more than forty percent (40%) of the required front yard may be impervious cover—including sidewalks and driveways.
- No more than four parking spaces may be located in the front yard. Corner lots may have no more than four parking spaces in the front and side yards combined.
- The Director of Watershed Protection and Development Review (WPDR) may grant a waiver to this requirement if he/she determines a circular driveway or turnaround is necessary to address traffic safety issues associated with vehicles backing onto the adjacent street or roadway.

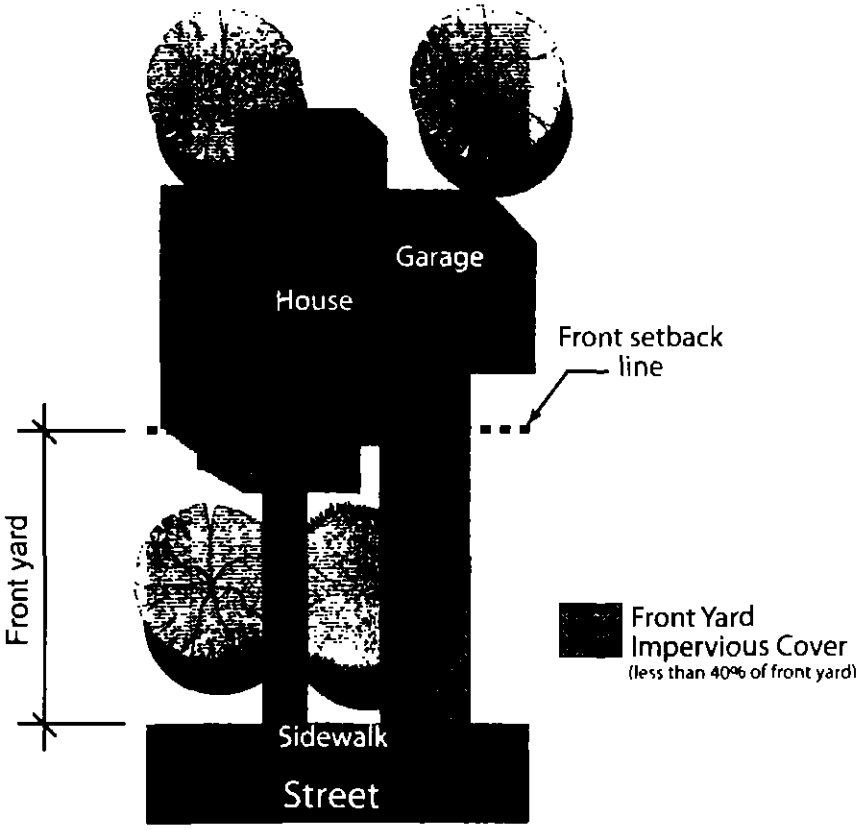


Figure 15
Impervious Cover and Parking Placement Design Tool

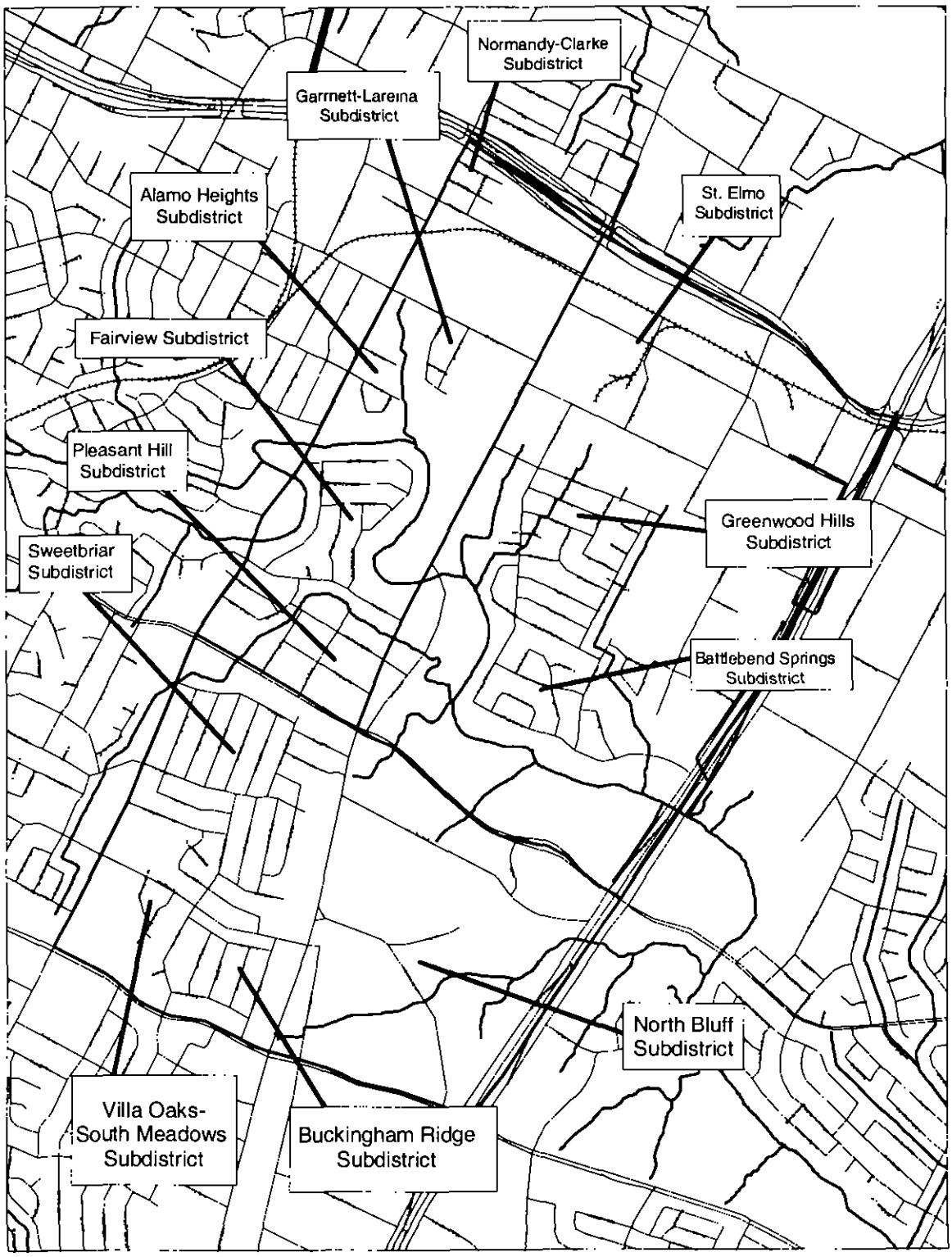


Figure 16
Potential Subdistricts in the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

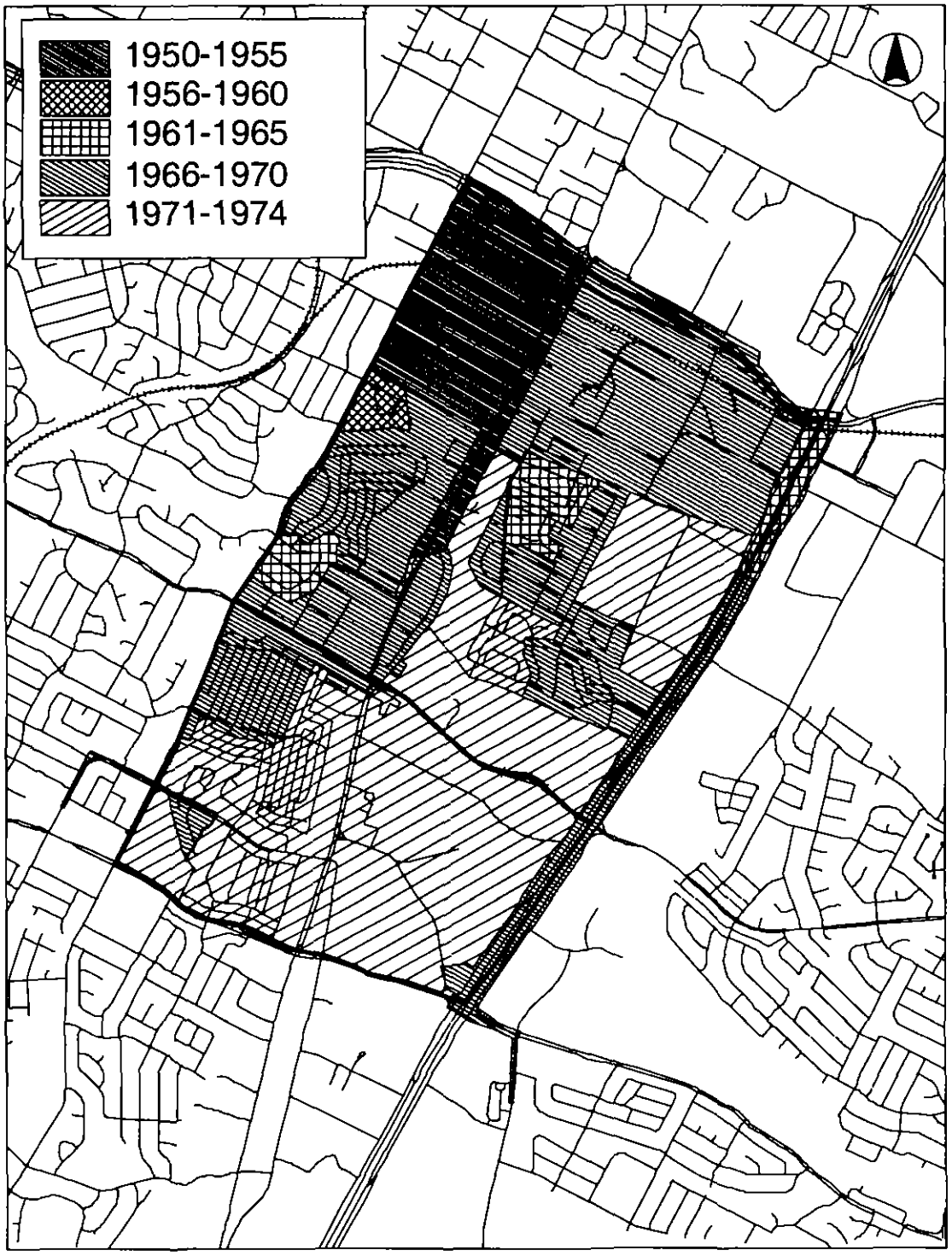
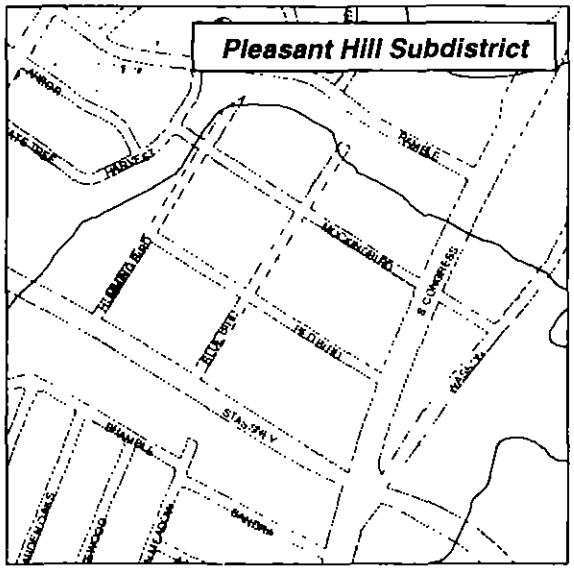
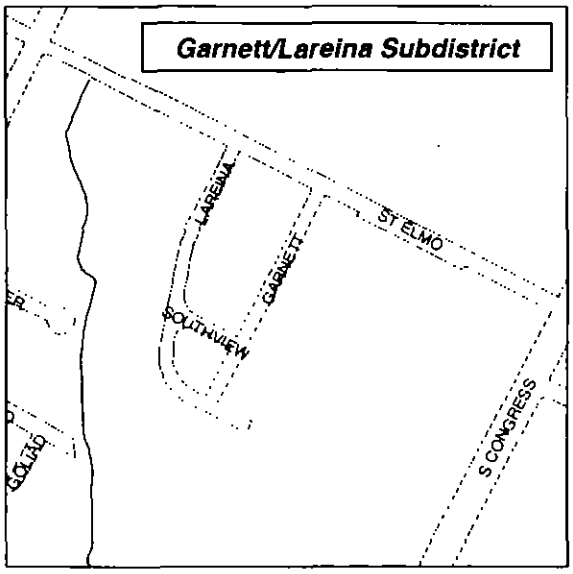


Figure 17
Annexation History of the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

The Older Neighborhoods

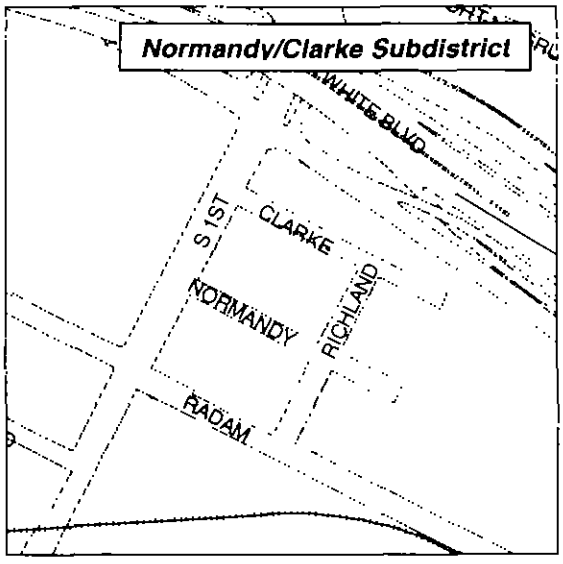
The **Pleasant Hill Addition Subdivision** (Mockingbird/Red Bird/Hummingbird/Blue Bird Lanes) is located in the center of the SCCNPA. The majority of houses were built in the 1930s and 1940s, but, unlike the other older neighborhoods, many of these have been significantly altered. In addition, the larger lots and lack of curbs and gutters in this neighborhood lending to it a more rural feel.





Located in the northwest section of the SCCNPA, the **Oldham Addition** and **Lareina Drive Addition Subdivisions** (Lareina Drive/Southview/Garnett Streets) compose a small neighborhood with a varied collection of houses dating from the early 1940s through the mid-1960s. Most of the houses have retained their original architectural character, lending to it a feel more like a neighborhood located north of Ben White Boulevard.

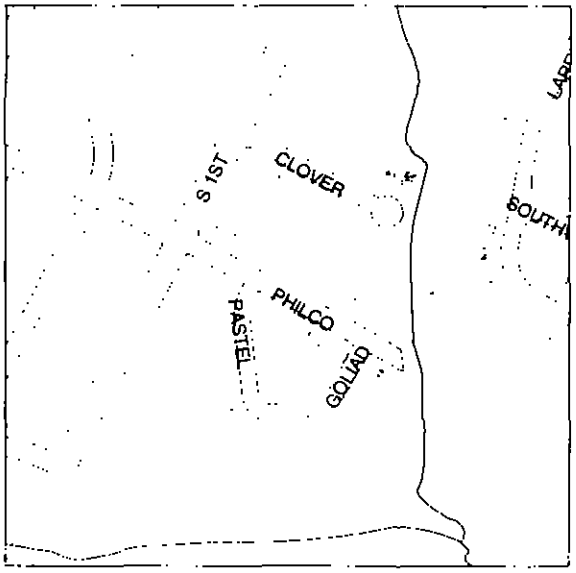
Also located in the northwest corner of the SCCNPA, the **Placidena Subdivision** (Clarke/Normandy/ Richland Streets) is a collection of modest houses mostly built in the early 1950s. The majority of the houses in this small and isolated neighborhood (it is surrounded by commercial uses) have retained their original character. Due to its small size and location, it may face the pressure commercial creep into the neighborhood.



Residential Character: 1920s to the 1950s

Out in the Country

When most of these houses were built, they were on the very edge of the city limits or not in the city at all. These older, smaller neighborhoods serve as notable contrasts to those other SCCNPA communities developed during the 1960s and 1970s.



The **Alamo Heights** subdivision is located in the northwestern section of the planning area. Most of the houses in this small subdivision are modest and were built in the late 1950s. The neighborhood is wooded, with many houses backing up to Williamson Creek.

Recommendation 4 Apply neighborhood design tools to the older neighborhoods in the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area.

Pleasant Hill Subdistrict
- *Reduced Front porch setback*
- *Garage Placement*

Garnett/Lareina Subdistrict
- *Reduced Front porch setback*
- *Garage Placement*

Normandy/Clarke Subdistrict
- *Garage Placement*

Reduced Front Porch Setback Design Tool

- Allows covered and uncovered front porches to extend up to fifteen feet (15') from the front property line.
- Porch roof overhangs or steps may extend to thirteen feet (13') from the front property line.
- Support columns—but not walls—are allowed within the footprint of the porch.

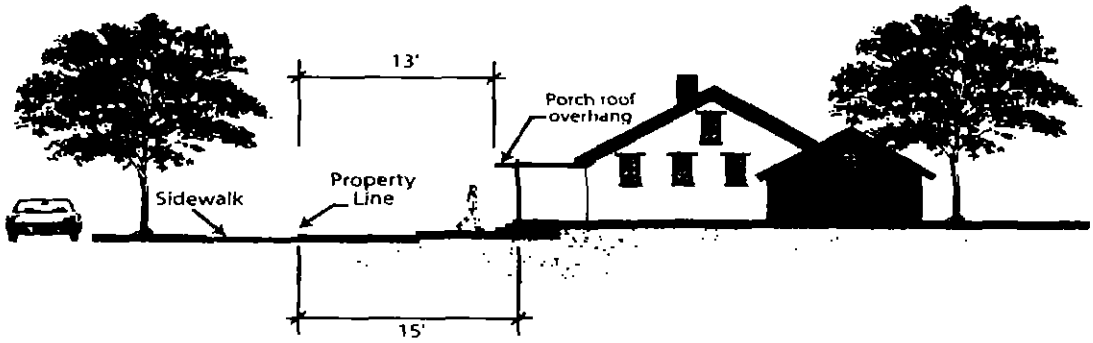


Figure 18
Reduced Front Porch Setback Design Tool

Garage Placement Design Tool

- Attached or detached garages *or carports* with entrances facing a front yard must be located flush with or behind the front façade of the house.

- The width of a garage located less than twenty feet (20') behind the front façade of a house may not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the width of the façade of the house. For example, if the front façade of a house—not including the garage—is thirty feet (30') wide, then the garage may be no wider than fifteen feet (15').

- There is no garage width limitation for side entry garages or for garages or carports located twenty feet (20') or more behind the front façade of a house.

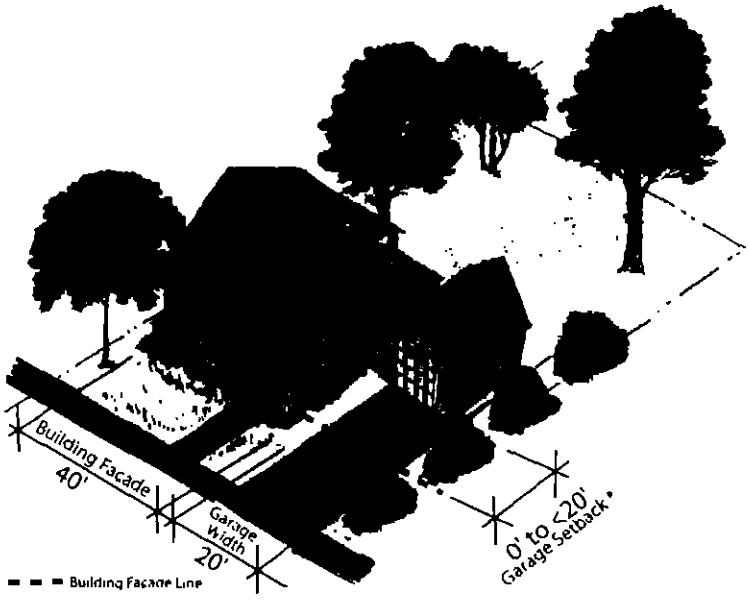
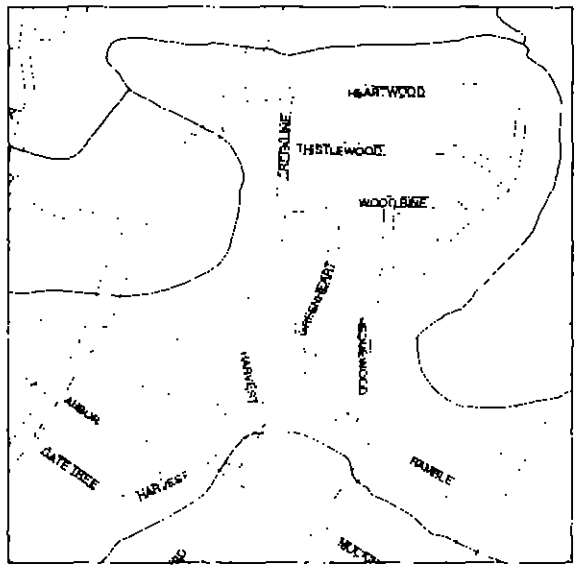
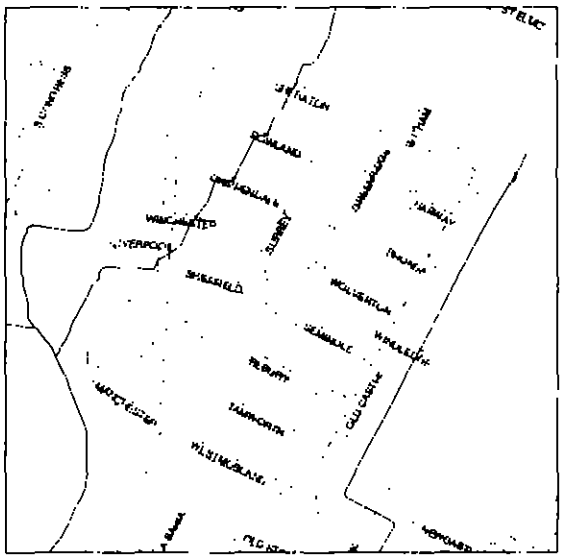


Figure 19
Garage Placement Design Tool

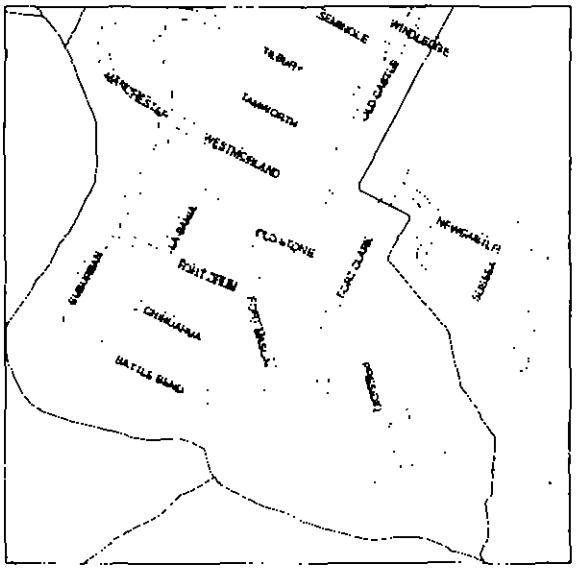
The Suburban Neighborhoods

The **Community of Fairview** subdivision, currently referred to as the Fairview neighborhood, is located in the central western part of the planning area. The houses in this neighborhood were built in the mid-1960s through the early 1970s. The majority of houses retain their original architectural character, with the most significant alterations being a number of garages converted into living



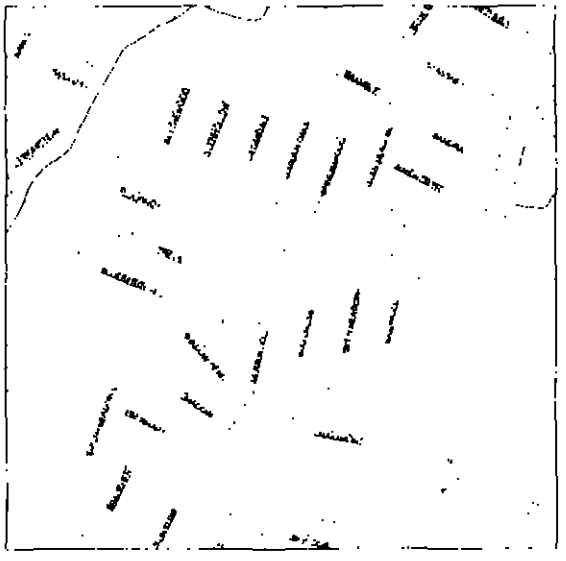


The **Greenwood Hills** subdivision is located in the northeastern part of the planning area. The majority of houses were built in the late 1960s and early 1970s and are typical of housing styles of the time. The neighborhood retains much of its architectural character, with the exception being that some garages having been converted into living space.



The **Battle Bend Springs** subdivision is located in the central eastern part of the SCCNPA. The majority of houses were built in the early 1970s. The housing stock is suburban ranch-styled houses. The appearance of the majority of these houses has not been significantly altered since their original construction and the neighborhood's physical character, as a whole, has not significantly changed since the 1970s.

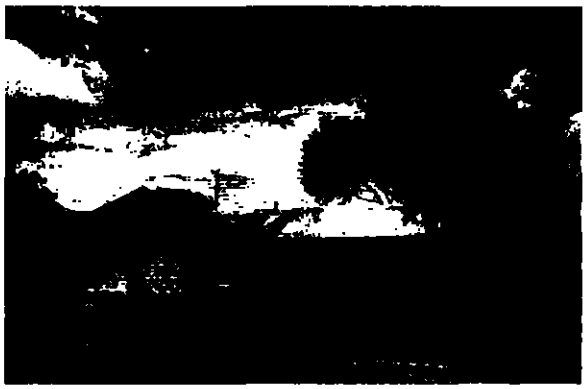
The **Flournoys Sweetbriar and Sweetbriar Village** subdivisions, currently referred to as the Sweetbriar neighborhood, are located in the southwestern part of the SCCNPA. The development was built in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The housing stock is characterized by modest suburban ranch-styled houses.

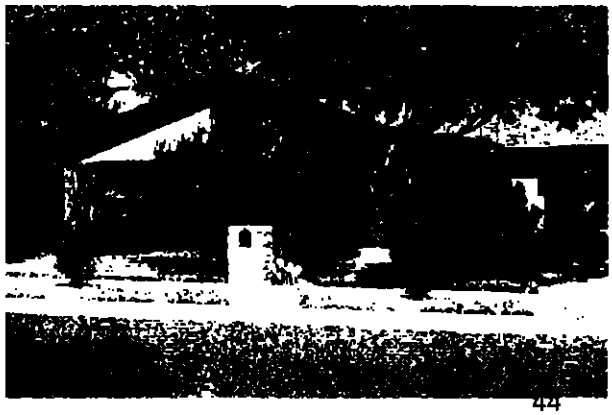


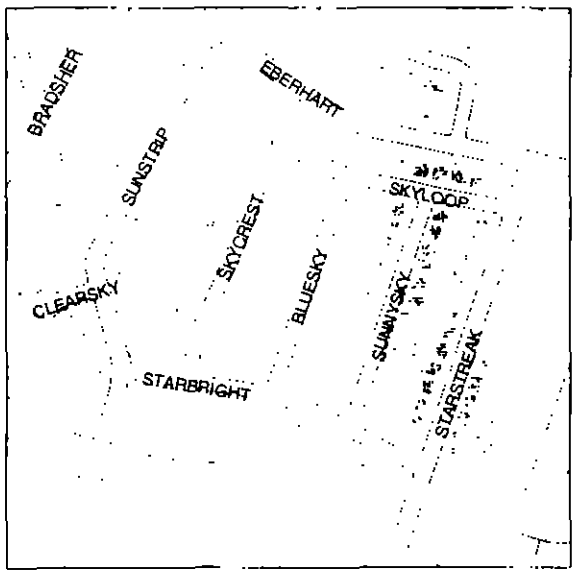
Residential Character: 1960s to the1970s

The Suburbs

The majority of the neighborhoods in the SCCNPA date from the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s. The so-called "ranch style houses" are typically single story with low-pitched gable roofs, deep-set eaves, and large double-hung or picture windows. Their floor plans feature horizontal, L-shaped, or U-shaped layouts emphasizing openness and an efficient use of space. Other common elements are attached garages and sliding glass doors leading out to a patio.

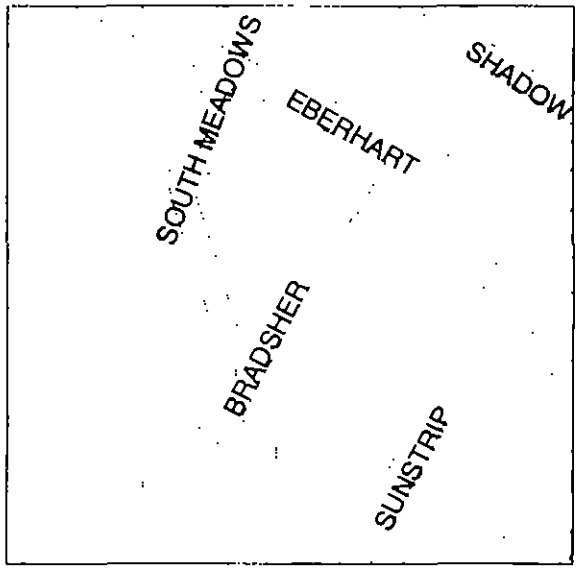






The **Buckingham Ridge** subdivision was built in the mid to late 1970s. The housing stock typifies the suburban building styles of the time. The houses are, for the most part, well-maintained and have not been significantly altered since their construction.

The **South Meadows** and **Villa Oaks** subdivisions were the last significant single-family subdivisions built in the SCCNPA. Constructed in the early 1980s, these subdivisions contain the typical suburban housing styles of the time.

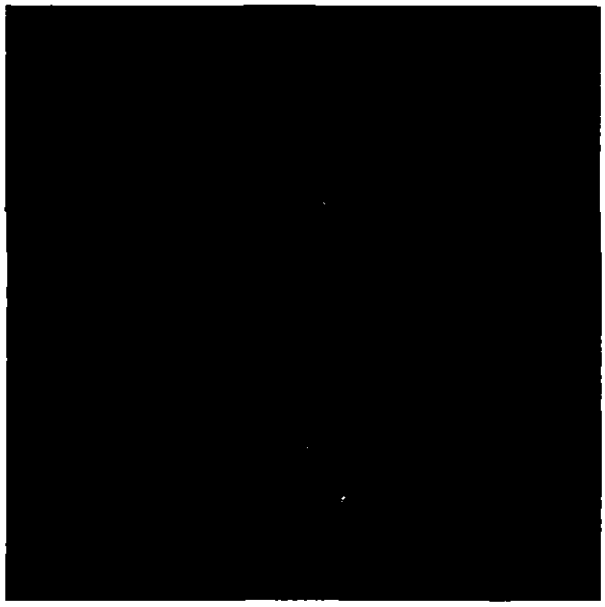


Objective 1.4
Limit the negative effects of industrial and commercial land uses on adjacent neighborhoods.

<u>Recommendation 5</u> Increase the required setbacks between single-family and commercial and industrial uses.

<u>Recommendation 6</u> Limit vehicular access from commercial uses into residential neighborhoods, where safe and practical.

Residential Character: 1980s through 2005



Infill and Greenfield Development

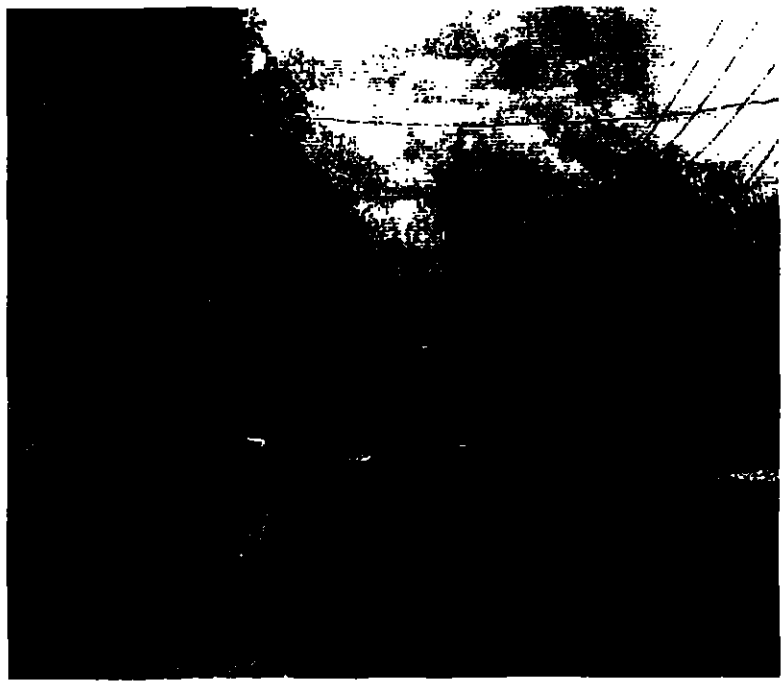
From the 1980s to today, the majority of new residential construction has been townhouses and apartments. The most recent were built on undeveloped land. The modern-styled house (above right) was built in an older 1950s neighborhood on one of the few remaining vacant lots. During the planning process, two subdivisions, amounting to almost 140 single-family houses, entered the City of Austin's development process. Like previous recent development in the area, these projects are to be located on larger vacant tracts of land. Despite the recent increase in activity on undeveloped land, a significant amount of vacant and redevelopable land remains in the combined planning area.

Objective 1.5
Retain the scenic nature of the North Bluff Drive/Crow Lane area.

Located in the southeast corner of the SCCNPA, the North Bluff Drive/Crow Lane area is experiencing increasing development pressures due to the availability of undeveloped or easily redeveloped tracts. By the end of this decade, much of this land is likely to be developed. Regardless of the type of development—residential, commercial, or mixed-use—special care should be taken to preserve as much of the area's scenic character as possible.

Recommendation 7 Allow the residential infill and neighborhood corner store options in the North Bluff Drive/Crow Lane area.

Figure 20
North Bluff Subdistrict



North Bluff Drive's wooded and rural nature should be preserved as the area develops. The mature forest canopy could provide an important amenity to future development.

Objective 1.6
Preserve affordable housing options.

One of the themes repeated throughout the planning process was the affordability of the houses in the neighborhoods located in the planning area. This is a neighborhood characteristic many of the participants in the planning process would like to see maintained. However, if local real estate trends continue, this area will see an increase in demand and property values, and possibly the onset of large-scale redevelopment of single-family lots with larger homes. All of these factors would threaten the affordability of the SCCNPA. Concerned homeowners should continually monitor the market, as well as examine strategies of other neighborhoods that have undergone similar transitions, to identify appropriate strategies to mitigate the negative effects of market and development pressures on the area.

The mobile home park located on South Congress Avenue in the Sweetbriar Neighborhood Planning Area provides reasonably priced housing for some of the residents of the SCCNPA.

Recommendation 8	Monitor changes in residential real estate for signs of market and development pressure and implement strategies to maintain affordability.
Recommendation 9	Apply the mixed-use future land use designation to commercial properties on arterial roads to encourage combined residential and commercial projects, resulting in increased housing options and more housing units.
Recommendation 10	Maintain the mobile home park at South Congress Avenue and North Bluff Drive.

GOAL TWO

South Congress Avenue should become a more vibrant, accessible mixed-use corridor and a destination for nearby residents and the citizens of Austin.

U.S. Highway 81 or The Old San Antonio Highway—both former names for South Congress Avenue—once served as the southern gateway into Austin and the Texas State Capitol. The completion of Interstate Highway 35 in the early 1960s provided motorists with an alternative route into the city and removed the entryway status from South Congress Avenue. Today, the segment of South Congress Avenue in the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (SCCNPA) is characterized by a number of large undeveloped and underdeveloped lots, used car lots, storage facilities, assorted industrial uses, a large automobile salvage yard, and a general lack of pedestrian and bicycle amenities.

South Congress Avenue, more so than many commercial corridors inside the Austin city limits, presents the potential for significant redevelopment due to the large amount of vacant and redevelopable land. Recognizing this potential, business owners, non-resident property owners, and residents have articulated their desire for a different future than a continuation of the status quo along South Congress Avenue.

The vision presented for South Congress Avenue is one where new development and redevelopment redefine the street in a more urban and pedestrian-friendly manner. This transformation could provide opportunities for new businesses serving nearby residents, people working in the area, other Austinites, Central Texans, and out-of-town visitors. It could include a greater variety of restaurants—large and small, an increased array of retail opportunities, and innovative residential designs reinforcing a more urban environment. As the character of the street changes, new development should be human-scaled and, where practical and appropriate, connect to adjacent, similarly designed projects.

Generally, redevelopment requires vision, planning, and a change in the real estate market. This plan contains the first two elements and implementation of them will lead to the third. It is likely that specific actions by the City of Austin to set the stage for reinvestment and redevelopment along South Congress Avenue will be required. Among these are zoning changes to allow for mixed-use development and financial incentives, as well as assistance in relocating existing businesses in order to redevelop specific sites.

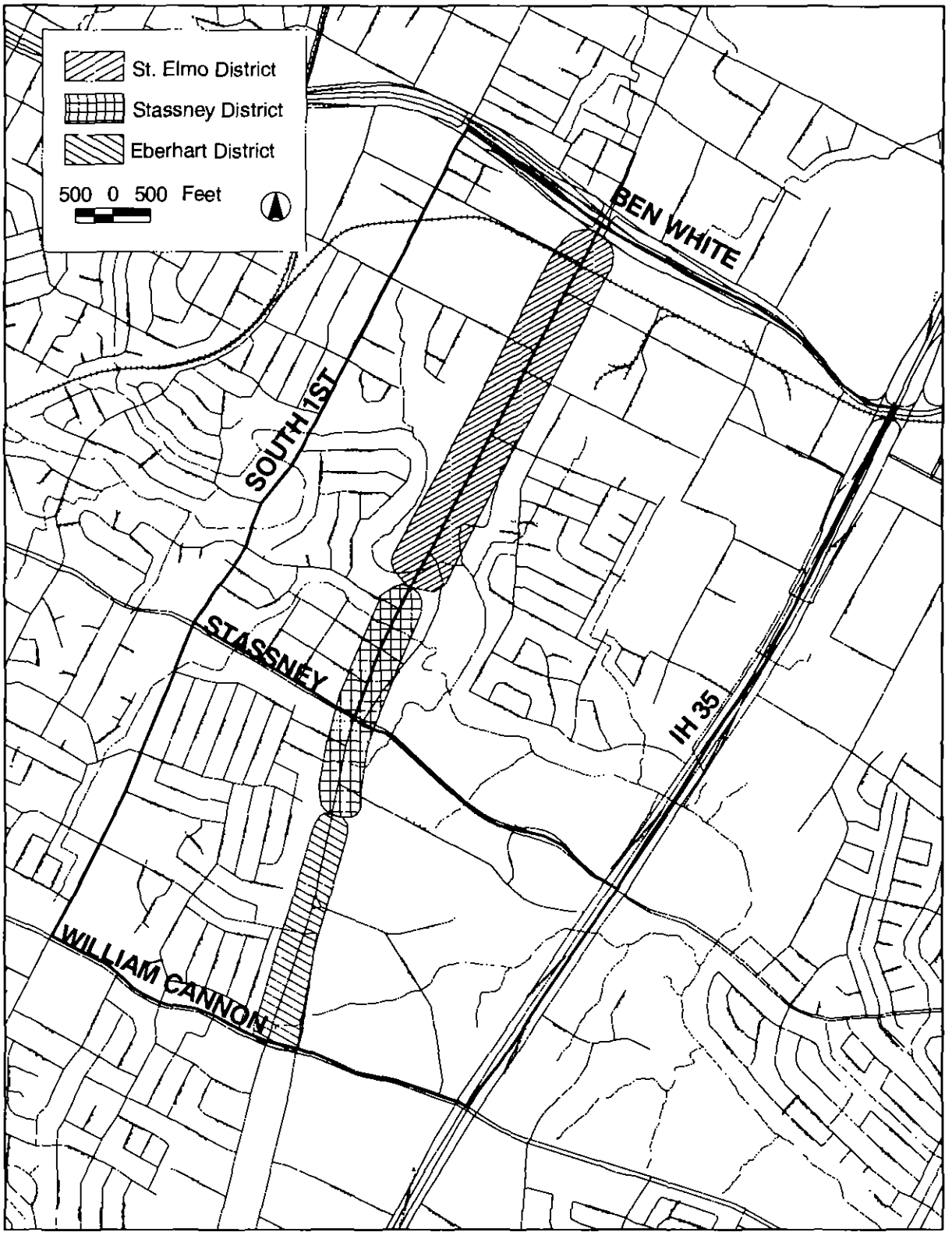


Figure 18
South Congress Districts

It should be clearly stated there is no intent under this plan to close any particular business or forcibly remove any through condemnation or eminent domain. The objective is to provide current property owners with the options to pursue development more suited to an urban corridor.

Finally, the Capital Metropolitan Transit Authority's All Systems Go Long-Range Transit Plan provides for a rapid bus line along South Congress Avenue. This system could be another catalyst for redevelopment along the street by providing an amenity and transportation alternative for current and future residents, as well as for area businesses and their employees.

The "Avenue"

The two-mile segment of South Congress Avenue bisecting the planning area serves as the central corridor of the SCCNPA. An examination of the roadway indicates there are three general districts (See map on page 51). Identified by the major intersecting street, they are:

- St. Elmo Road District
- Stassney Lane District
- Eberhart Lane District.

The three districts share general characteristics such as a prevalence of land uses not conducive to walking, an abundance of curb cuts—in those stretches where there are curbs, significant amounts of undeveloped or underdeveloped land, and long stretches of roadway without signalized crossings at intersections.

St. Elmo Road District (Ben White Boulevard to Williamson Creek)

This is the most vibrant commercial district of the three and is the only section where most of South Congress Avenue is curbed and guttered. Although there is a good deal of activity in this district, the majority of the commercial uses are not conducive to creating and sustaining a pedestrian-oriented environment. Regardless, participants in the planning process considered this segment of South Congress Avenue the segment likely to first see redevelopment and revitalization. The re-invigorated Hill's Café Bel Air Condominiums currently under construction could spur the renewal of the northern segment of South Congress Avenue.

Near the intersection of South Congress Avenue and Sheraton Drive facing southwest. These land uses typify the development pattern in the St. Elmo District.

Several other sites also provide opportunities for adaptive reuse—renovating or remodeling existing structures and sites for uses other than the original intent. These sites include the former Furrow's site, the potentially historic St. Elmo-tel, and several other motor courts. Moreover, most of the land in the St. Elmo District could be redeveloped into more urban and pedestrian-oriented sites.

Stassney Lane District (Williamson Creek to south of Little Texas Lane)
The middle section of South Congress, the Stassney Lane District, also provides significant opportunities for redevelopment. However, several factors dampen those opportunities. Among the most significant are the:

- **Current road configuration**—South Congress Avenue does not have a continuous turn lane south of Williamson Creek, creating hazardous left-turn situations and impeding the flow of traffic, particularly at Stassney Lane.

- **Lack of curbs, gutters, and sidewalks**—Pedestrians are forced to walk along the shoulder or in driveways and parking lots south of Williamson Creek.

- **Large automobile salvage yard**—Located on the east side of South Congress Avenue between the two branches of Williamson Creek, this facility has a significant amount of street frontage. This yard is an obstacle to new development along this segment of the street.

- **Williamson Creek's flood plain**—The flood plain occupies a sizable area of the vacant land in the Williamson Creek District, rendering significant areas unbuildable.

South Congress Avenue near Williamson Creek facing south. The lack of curbs and gutters along this segment are more akin to a rural highway rather than a major arterial road in a developed metropolitan area.

Eberhart Lane District (South of Little Texas Lane to William Cannon Drive)
The southern district along South Congress Avenue is most notable for two large undeveloped tracts of nearly five and six acres, respectively. Another vacant tract is located just east of South Congress Avenue between Stassney Lane and Little Texas Lane and falls within the boundaries of both Stassney and Eberhart Lane districts. Together, these sites are nearly 16 acres of undeveloped land and represent substantial development potential. Similar to the Stassney Lane District, there are several impediments to creating a more lively, urban corridor in this district, such as the lack of a continuous turn lane on South Congress Avenue, an incomplete sidewalk network, and land uses at odds with the vision for the street.

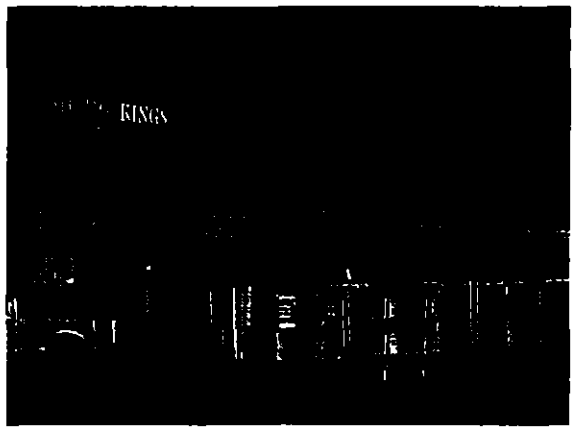
The intersection of William Cannon Drive and South Congress Avenue facing northwest. This small strip center provides some local retail services.

Objective 2.1
Create incentives and programs to promote a pedestrian-oriented corridor.

<u>Recommendation 1</u> Investigate the creation of programs or incentive packages to promote new pedestrian-oriented development or redevelopment. These may include public/private partnerships and/or changes to the land development code.

<u>Recommendation 2</u> Conduct a corridor study along South Congress Avenue to determine means to enhance the streetscape and street life. Improvements could include:

- Street tree plantings and maintenance of trees;
- Consolidation of curb cuts;
- Pedestrian-friendly amenities such as awnings and landscaping, pedestrian-scaled signs, and public art;
- Traffic safety improvements where appropriate.



St. Elmo District
The majority of the existing g businesses do not contribute to a more urban corridor. An exception is Hill's Café, which is an iconic South Austin restaurant and becoming an increasingly popular live music venue.

Such studies could occur over time as segments of the road redevelop. The study should also consider the effects of increased density on local traffic and identify methods of discouraging motorists from driving through adjacent single-family neighborhoods such as Greenwood Hills and Battle Bend Springs.

Recommendation 3 Denote commercial properties along South Congress Avenue with a mixed-use future land use notation to promote mixed-use development.

Recommendation 4 Denote residentially used properties along South Congress Avenue with a mixed-use future land use designation to allow for mixed-use development.

Recommendation 5 Create an association of businesses along the portion of South Congress Avenue within the planning area.

As more of the desired types of businesses locate along South Congress Avenue, such an association could help market the district as a unique destination for nearby residents, Central Texans, and out-of-town visitors.

Objective 2.2
Improve the infrastructure along South Congress Avenue to make it pedestrian friendly.

Upgrading the pedestrian environment is a safety issue and a means to create the vibrant, pedestrian-oriented district this plan envisions.

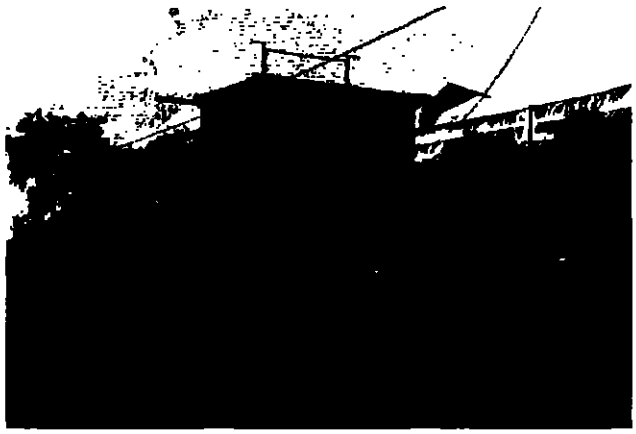
Recommendation 6 Consolidate curb cuts along South Congress Avenue and, where feasible, design joint access driveways as sites are developed or redeveloped.

Recommendation 7 Locate parking lots and parking structures beside, behind or beneath new commercial or mixed-use developments.

Recommendation 8 Orient new commercial or mixed-use development along South Congress Avenue toward the street and provide street trees and other amenities promoting a more pleasant pedestrian environment.

Recommendation 9 Create internal pedestrian and automobile circulation patterns reflecting traditional street networks in new commercial or mixed-use development on larger tracts located along South Congress Avenue.

Stassney District
The lack of sidewalks and curbs and gutters lends a rural feel to this segment of the South Congress Avenue corridor and hinders the development of a vibrant, urban street. However, the amount of vacant land and number of redevelopable sites offer many possibilities for significant redevelopment when improvements to South Congress Avenue are made.



Recommendation 10 Design and implement streetscape improvements to create a unique district along South Congress Avenue.

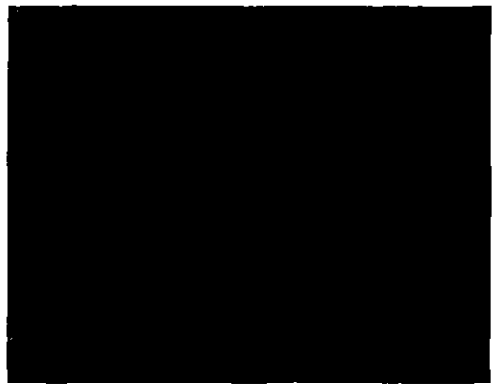
An interesting and innovative program of streetscape improvements would greatly enhance the pedestrian environment along South Congress Avenue and contribute to the character of a unique South Congress district. However, a current focus on basic infrastructure improvements is essential in laying the groundwork for this district's possibility.

Recommendation 11 Ensure that the street lighting along the corridor is both continuous and appropriately hooded so that the environment feels safe and is attractively lit at night.

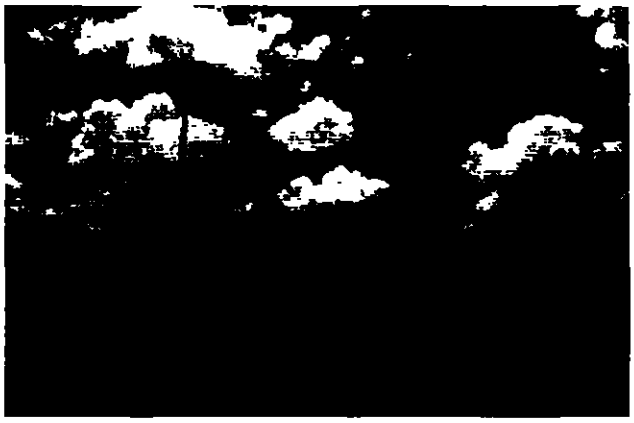
Objective 2.3
Commercial and mixed-use development along South Congress Avenue should not adversely affect adjacent neighborhoods.

Although there is broad support for recreating South Congress Avenue into a mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly destination for the city and the region, there are concerns about how this redevelopment will affect the adjacent residential areas (almost every neighborhood in the planning area abuts South Congress Avenue). The City of Austin Land Development Code addresses methods of mitigating the effects of commercial uses adjacent to and in close proximity to single-family properties; however, additional requirements may be appropriate.

Recommendation 12 Create parking areas for larger commercial and mixed-use developments of a sufficient size to avoid on-street parking in adjacent neighborhoods.



Eberhart District
There has been some recent development along this segment of South Congress Avenue. There remain several large vacant tracts and other sites with only modest improvements that could provide opportunities for new mixed-use or commercial development.



GOAL THREE
Focus mixed-use development and commercial uses along major commercial corridors and in specialized districts.

A different future is also envisioned for the other major thoroughfares in the planning area—Ben White Boulevard, Interstate Highway 35, Stassney Lane, William Cannon Drive, and South 1st Street. Each of these corridors should have a particular sense of place, whether it is a street with neighborhood-serving retail or a highway offering goods and services for the region. As development pressure in the SCCNPA increases, new growth, both residential and commercial, should be directed along these corridors.

The industrial district centered on St. Elmo Road between South Congress Avenue and Interstate Highway 35 is steadily evolving. It has become a central location for home improvement and contractor-oriented businesses, while a host of other eclectic businesses have also settled in, including a music recording studio and an industrial bakery. Recently, the major streets in the district were re-graded and resurfaced. This upgrade, along with several newly constructed warehouses, lend the impression of the area as a healthy economic hub.

Ben White Boulevard

The frontage road of Ben White Boulevard serves as the northern boundary for the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area. Traveling east toward Interstate Highway 35, it becomes apparent that the frontage road has two distinct sections, one west and one east, of South Congress Avenue. West of South Congress Avenue the frontage road is characterized by newer retail and single-story buildings, while east along the frontage road is older commercial uses dominate. As the Ben White Boulevard and Interstate Highway 35 interchange approaches completion, a unique opportunity emerges to redevelop this eastern portion of the frontage road as a dramatic gateway into Austin. The western portion should also benefit from the completed road construction and continue to redevelop with attractive, appropriately scaled commercial or mixed-use sites.

Objective 3.1

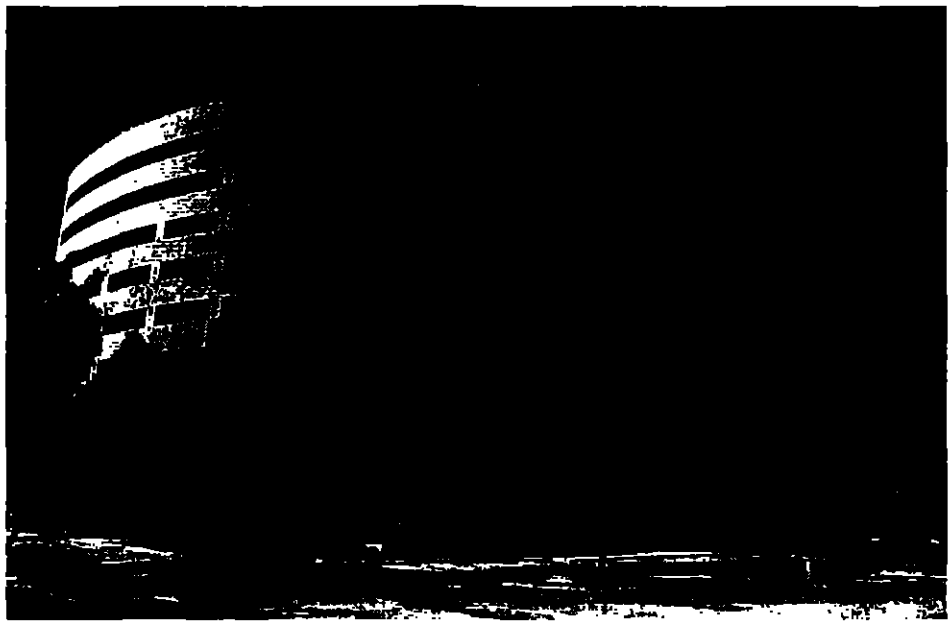
Encourage quality redevelopment along the eastbound frontage road of Ben White Boulevard.

Recommendation 1 Allow mixed-use and commercial land uses along the frontage road of Ben White Boulevard west of South

Congress Avenue to give flexibility to property owners and developers.

Recommendation 2 Allow greater heights and a wider variety of commercial and mixed-use land uses along Ben White Boulevard from South Congress Avenue to Interstate 35 and on Interstate 35 from Ben White Boulevard to St Elmo Road.

The intent of allowing more intense and a greater variety of land uses is to encourage development that more fully utilizes the highway frontage road lots. As the upgrade of Ben White Boulevard and the Interstate 35 interchange nears completion, pressure increases behind redeveloping this segment of the highway as part of a gateway into Austin. Potential redevelopments could include hotels that cater to business conventions, office towers with ground floor services, and other projects that demand heights appropriate along highways and that benefit from their proximity to both the airport and downtown.



The Southfield building located at the northwest corner of Ben White Boulevard and Interstate Highway 35 is an example of the type of building desired along the eastbound frontage road.

Interstate Highway 35

Interstate Highway 35 serves as the eastern boundary of the SCCNPA and has become an established "Motor Mile." Large auto dealerships line most of the frontage road from Ben White Boulevard to William Cannon. It should retain this character.

Automobile dealerships dominate the Interstate Highway 35 southbound frontage road in the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area.

Residents of nearby residential areas seek to establish agreements with the dealerships to discourage the high-speed test-driving along neighborhood streets.

Objective 3.2

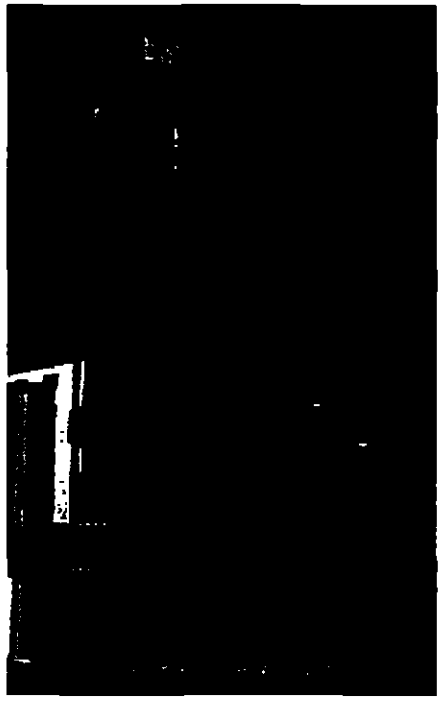
The frontage road of Interstate Highway 35 should continue as a "motor mile."

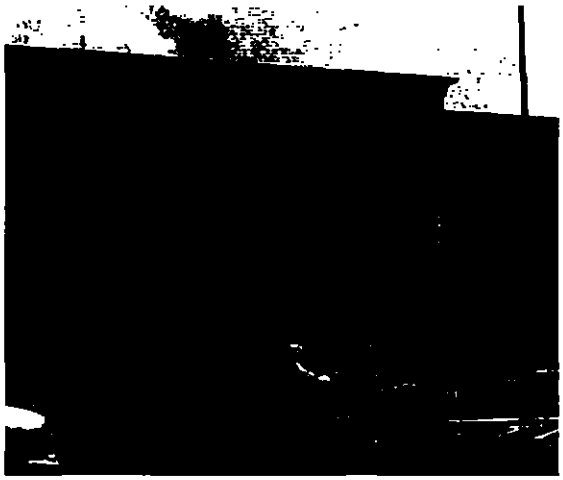
Recommendation 3	Maintain the current commercial land use pattern along this portion of Interstate Highway 35.
Recommendation 4	Establish agreements between the neighborhoods and the automobile dealerships to discourage the use of neighborhood streets for high-speed test-driving.

Stassney Lane

Stassney Lane is an important corridor in the SCCNPA. It bisects the planning area and serves as an important east/west corridor for South Austin. As it crosses the planning area, it changes significantly in character from a wide right-of-way with a generous planted median near Interstate Highway 35 to a smaller-scaled four-lane road with a modest esplanade west of South Congress Avenue.

Although recent development along the eastern segment of Stassney Lane provides many community-serving retail uses (restaurants, a grocery store, an optometrist, a health food store, etc.), the scale and design of the area is geared for people in cars. The restaurants and shopping centers are not easily accessible from the nearby neighborhoods without the use of an automobile. Moreover, once there, patrons have very limited pedestrian access across the street if they want to visit the commercial uses on either side of Stassney Lane. New development on the large vacant parcels along this segment of Stassney Lane—multi-family or commercial— should be designed to promote greater pedestrian accessibility.





Recent commercial development near the intersection of Interstate Highway 35 and Stassney Lane provides a variety of local-serving businesses. However, the shopping centers are scaled and designed for people in their cars and are only safely accessible from nearby neighborhoods by automobile.

Objective 3.3
New development along Stassney Lane between Interstate Highway 35 and South Congress Avenue should be more pedestrian-friendly.

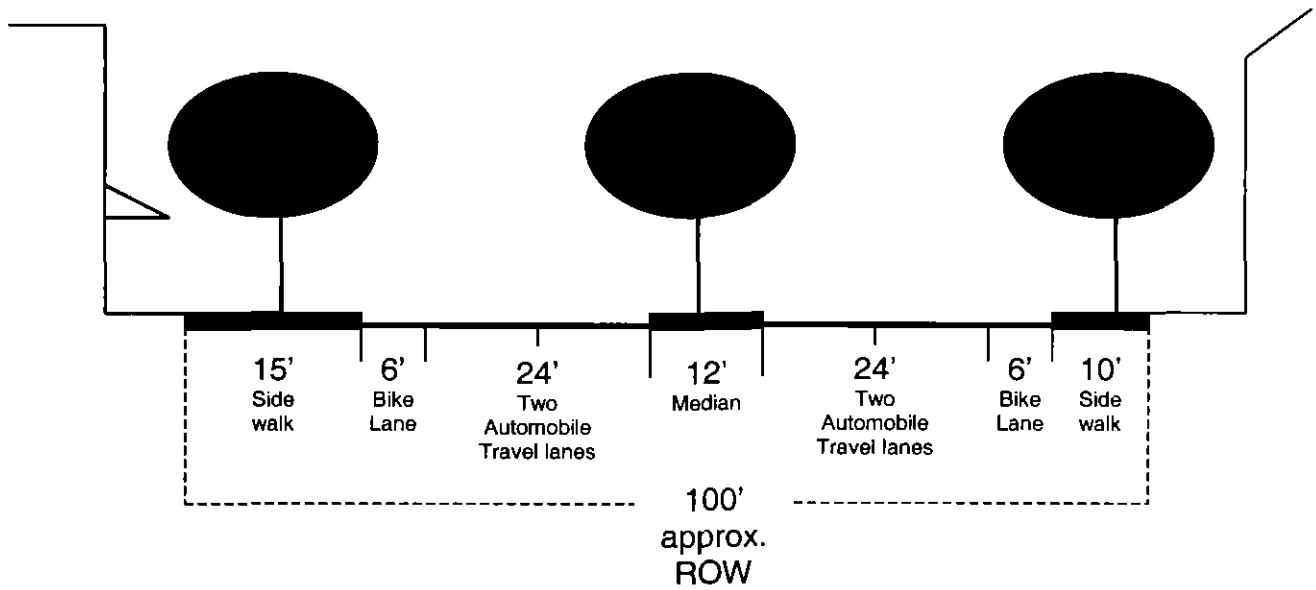
Recommendation 5	Assign the mixed-use future land use category to the vacant or easily redeveloped sites along Stassney Lane and Little Texas Lane to encourage vibrant, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development.

Objective 3.4
Stassney Lane from South Congress Avenue to South 1st Street should transition from the larger-scaled commercial areas east of South Congress Avenue to more neighborhood-scaled areas to the west.

Recommendation 6	Designate properties along Stassney Lane between South Congress Avenue and South 1st Street with the mixed-use future land use category.
Recommendation 7	Encourage the planting of hardwood trees near the right-of-way of Stassney Lane between South Congress Avenue and South 1st Street on both developed and newly developed properties. A tree-lined boulevard along Stassney Lane will signal motorists they have left a more automobile-dominated area and are entering an area where they share the right-of-way with bicyclists and pedestrians.

Objective 3.5
The intersection of the Stassney Lane and South 1st Street should become a neighborhood-serving commercial area.

Recommendation 8	Allow commercial mixed-use development on properties located at the intersection of South 1st Street and Stassney Lane.



Cross section line drawing of Stassney Lane looking west from South Congress Avenue. This graphic depicts what this segment of Stassney may look like if lined with street trees and developed with buildings located closer to the property lines.

William Cannon Drive

William Cannon Drive is the southern boundary of the SCCNPA and is one of the major arterial roads in South Austin. Currently, the majority of the commercial uses near the intersection of the Interstate Highway 35 southbound frontage road and William Cannon Drive are designed and oriented towards automobile travel (drive-through fast-food restaurants, large service station and auto parts stores, and a large shopping center). Market demand for these types of automobile-oriented uses at their current locations likely will not change in the intermediate future. They are necessary and convenient services; however, their current configuration does not easily lend itself to improvements that welcome pedestrians and create a more intimate scale

Further west, at the northeast corner of the intersection of William Cannon Drive and South 1st Street, is a large shopping center anchored by a large regional chain grocery store. The shopping center appears to remain economically viable; however, if it were to be redeveloped it could provide a good location for a large mixed-use project.

Objective 3.7

The Intersection of William Cannon Drive and the frontage road of IH 35 should serve the needs of travelers as well as those of residents.

Automobile-oriented development dominates the intersection of Interstate Highway 35 and William Cannon Drive.

Objective 3.8
The intersection of William Cannon Drive and South 1st Street should become more pedestrian-friendly.

Recommendation 9 — Allow mixed-use development on the commercial sites at the northeast corner of William Cannon Drive and South 1st Street and the nearby commercial property along South 1st Street.

If the shopping center located at the northeast corner of the intersection of William Cannon Drive and South 1st Street redevelops, it should become a mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly destination for surrounding neighborhoods.

South 1st Street

South 1st Street is a major north/south arterial through South Austin. The character of the street changes dramatically from north to south along the western edge of the planning area. The northern segment of the road, between Ben White Boulevard and St. Elmo Road, is characterized by small-scale commercial uses and modest multi-family uses. Due to the mix of these commercial and residential uses, this section of South 1st Street has the feel of a neighborhood "Main Street" where people can walk to a variety of offices and stores. This character should be maintained and strengthened with future

development and redevelopment. At the intersection of St. Elmo Road, there is a small local-serving shopping center and several small-scale automobile related uses.

The topography, limited sight distances, traffic speeds, and road width along the majority of the segment of South 1st Street between St. Elmo Road and Stassney Lane limits potential commercial redevelopment. Although not the ideal location for single-family houses, the current land use patterns represent, perhaps, the best use of the area at this time.

The commercial node located at the intersection of South 1st Street and Stassney Lane serves a larger area than the commercial areas located at the northern part of South 1st Street. Should the commercial areas on all four corners redevelop, mixed-use development is encouraged. Although two of the corners of this intersection fall outside of the SCCNPA, future planning efforts should consider replicating the mixed-use future land use designation on the east side of the street.

South of the intersection of Stassney Lane and South 1st Street are a number of single-family homes facing South 1st Street. Across the street there is a church and several apartment complexes. This, coupled with high traffic volumes along South 1st, could make these structures more conducive to uses other than the existing single-family use. Unlike the narrow segments of the road between Ben White Boulevard and Stassney Lane, the segment of South 1st Street between Stassney Lane and William Cannon Drive is a wide road with a center turn lane.

At the northeast corner of the intersection of South 1st Street and Eberhart Lane there is a vacant tract of land containing nearly four acres. A site plan for a commercial use was filed in the late 1980s, but that project never materialized. This site, surrounded by established single-family neighborhoods, could provide the location for a pioneering mixed-use project outside of Downtown or near the University of Texas.

The tract of land located at the northeast corner of the intersection of South 1st Street and Eberhart Lane would be an appropriate location for a mixed-use development.

Objective 3.9
The commercial corridor along South 1st Street between Ben White Boulevard and St. Elmo Road should retain its relatively modest scale and allow for a variety of local-serving uses.

Recommendation 10 — Allow mixed-use on the commercially zoned or occupied properties along South 1st Street between Ben White Boulevard and St. Elmo Road.

Objective 3.10
The intersection of Stassney Lane and South 1st Street should become a mixed-use intersection.

Recommendation 11 — Designate the commercial properties at the intersection of South 1st Street and Stassney Lane with the mixed-use future land use category to encourage mixed-use redevelopment, adding to the vitality of the corridor.

Redevelopment along South 1st Street between St. Elmo Road and Ben White Boulevard should reinforce the "main street" feel of the segment of the road.

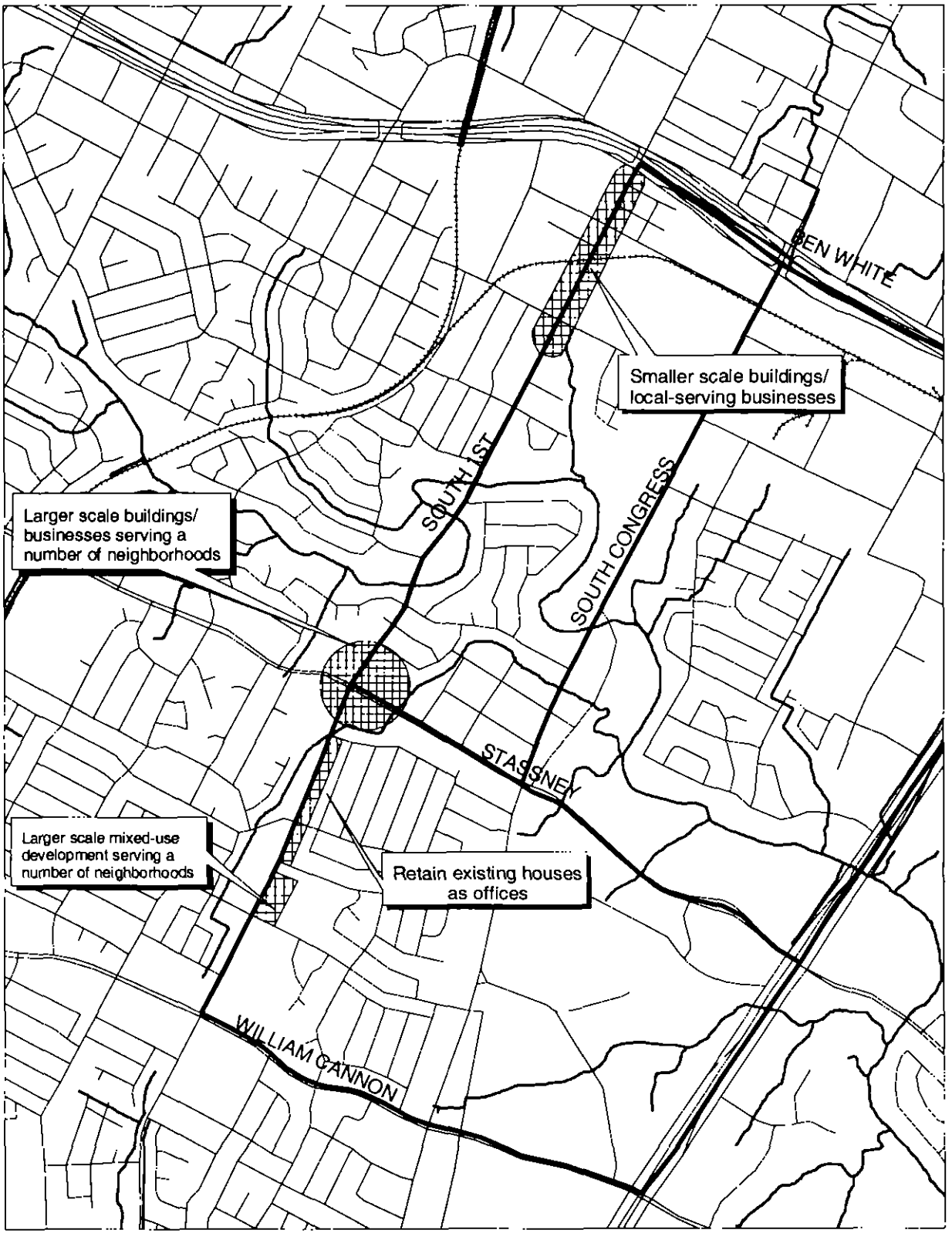
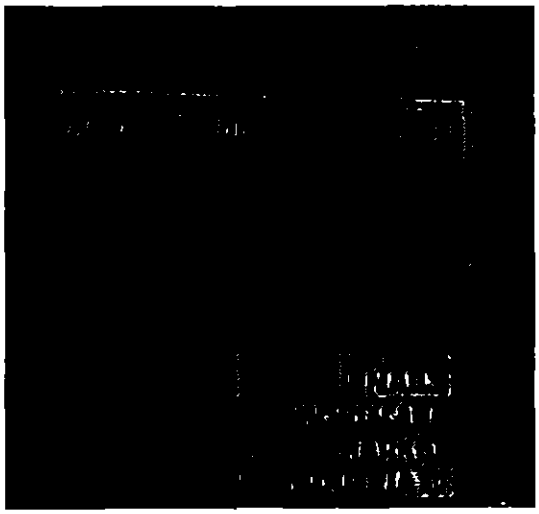


Figure 22
South 1st Street Business Districts



The northeast corner of the intersection of Stassney Lane and South 1st Street provides a variety of commercial services.

Objective 3.11
Promote low-intensity mixed-use development along South 1st Street between Blueberry Hill and Bramble Road.

<u>Recommendation 12</u> Allow mixed-use along South 1st Street between Bramble Road and Blueberry Hill, supporting mostly small-scale office and residential uses.

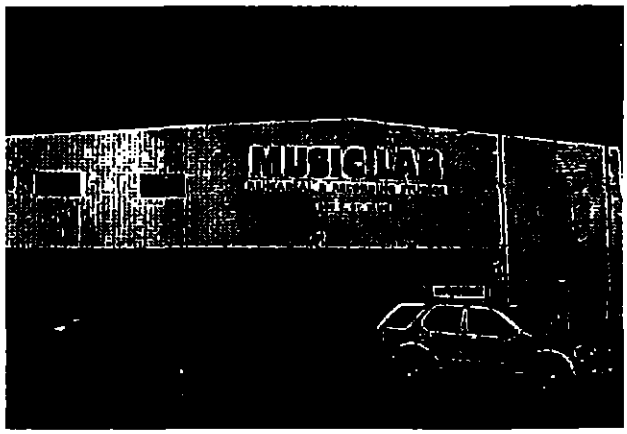
The busy segment of South 1st Street between Blueberry Hill and Bramble Road could transition from single-family homes to low-intensity commercial uses such as small offices.

The St. Elmo Industrial District

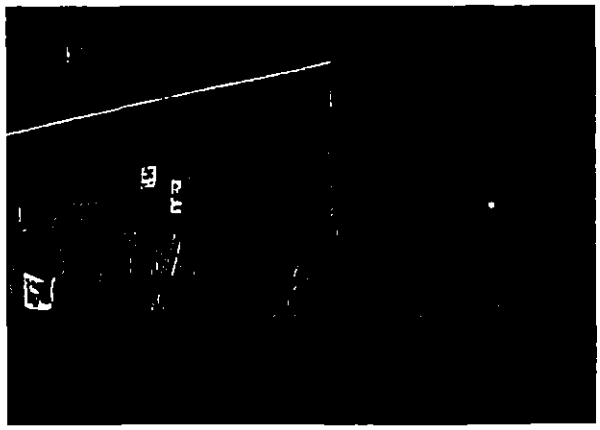
The St. Elmo Industrial District is becoming eclectic and more diverse. The wide variety of home improvement and music industry-oriented businesses makes it a vibrant district. Within a half-mile, there are twenty-two construction supply houses of various types and five plumbing supply houses. This area is also home to a several light manufacturing concerns. Throughout the planning process, it was noted that this area is an asset and is one of the few districts of its kind functioning well in the City. Although traffic is a concern, this area should continue to be utilized as a commercial and industrial district.

Objective 3.12

The St. Elmo Industrial District should be preserved and enhanced where appropriate.



The industrial district centered on St. Elmo Road east of South Congress Avenue is home to a cluster of contractor supply and home improvement outlets and a variety of other heavy commercial and industrial uses.



GOAL FOUR
Improve the accessibility, convenience, and safety for all forms of transportation.

Austin's quality of life, entertainment options, business and employment prospects, natural amenities, and educational opportunities have consistently placed the city on numerous national "best of" lists. This popularity has made Austin more attractive to greater numbers of people from across the country and overseas. However, as they continue to move to Central Texas an increased strain is being placed on the road and highway system. Consequently, the City of Austin is rapidly becoming one of the most congested cities of its size in the United States. According to the US Census Bureau, in 2003 Austinites spent an average of seven days in their cars coming and going to work (US Census Bureau). Adding additional capacity to area roadways can relieve some congestion. Promoting alternative modes of transportation by making them more attractive and available will improve mobility on a neighborhood, city, and regional basis.

The focus of the transportation element of the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (SCCNPA) plan is improving the local transportation network and creating more viable transportation options—making it easier to walk or bicycle to the park, bus stop, or nearby store. The recommendations also place the planning area in the context of regional networks, making recommendations to facilitate trips passing through the planning area and connecting to the city and region as a whole

Objective 4.1
Improve pedestrian connections throughout area.

Interstate Highway 35 Frontage Road
There are well-worn footpaths along the southbound frontage road of Interstate Highway 35 from Ben White Boulevard to Stassney Lane. Sidewalk ramps are in place, but there are no sidewalks or safe pedestrian crossings over Williamson Creek. Consequently, residents in nearby neighborhoods cannot safely walk or bicycle to restaurants and businesses located around the corner from them at the intersection of Stassney Lane and Interstate Highway 35. Those neighborhoods include Battle Bend Springs, Greenwood Hills, a number of multi-family developments, and a new subdivision at Colonial Park Boulevard currently under construction. The only current safe route is a long, roundabout one beginning at Sheraton Drive and continuing along South Congress Avenue to Stassney Lane.

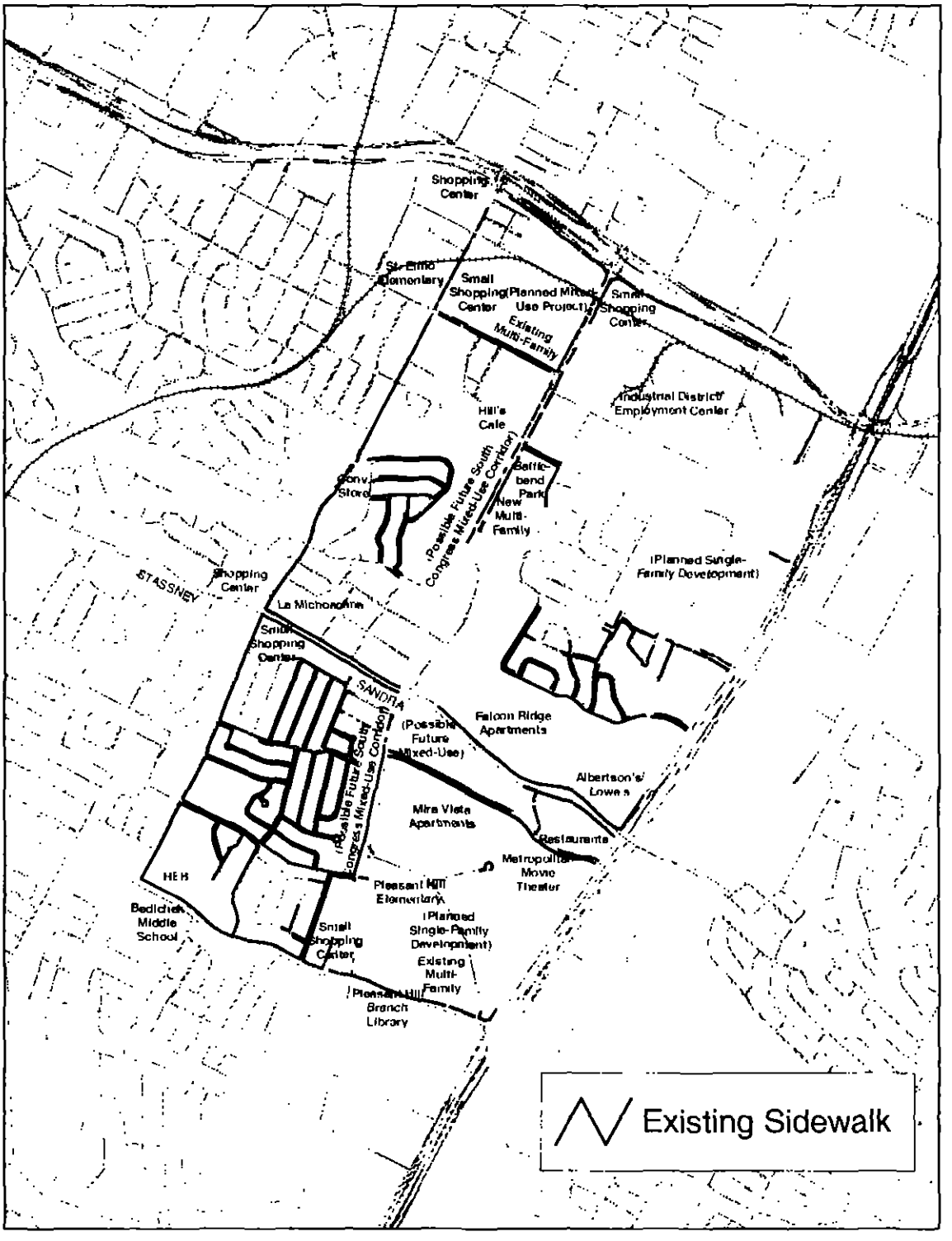


Figure 23
Current Sidewalk Network and Existing and Potential Local Attractors

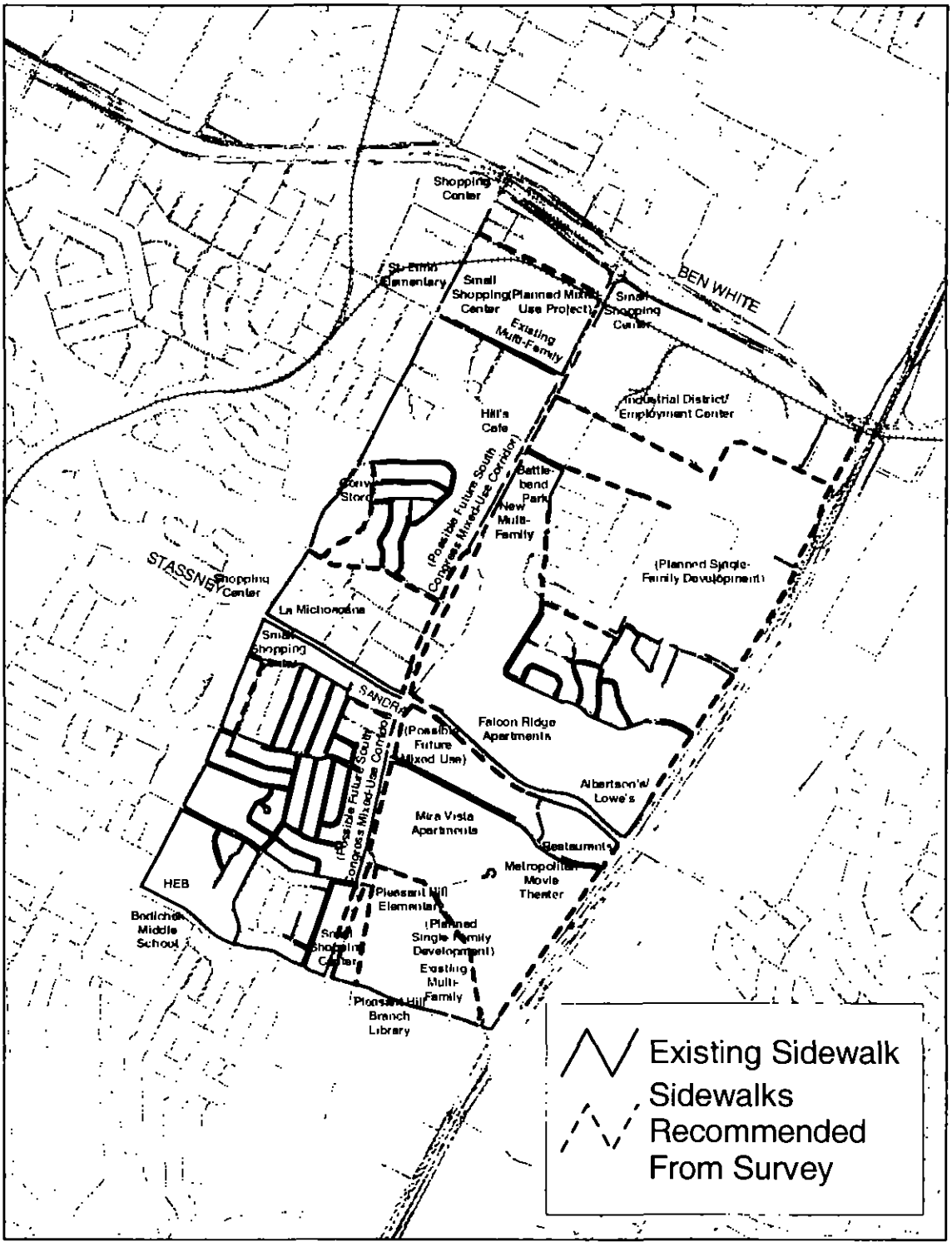


Figure 24
Proposed Sidewalk Network

Recommendation 1 Construct continuous sidewalks along the southbound frontage road of Interstate Highway 35 between Ben White Boulevard and Stassney Lane, including a pedestrian bridge over Williamson Creek.

Recommendation 2 Construct continuous sidewalks along the southbound frontage road of Interstate Highway 35 between Stassney Lane and William Cannon Drive.

*The frontage road bridge over Williamson Creek **(above)** does not have a dedicated space for pedestrians. To cross the bridge, people must walk on the edge of the outside lane with or against the flow of fast-moving, continuous traffic.*

*Worn paths **(right)** indicate pedestrians are walking along this segment of the southbound frontage road of Interstate Highway 35.*

Interstate Highway 35 Frontage Road and William Cannon Drive
The current configuration of the intersection of William Cannon Drive and the southbound frontage road of Interstate Highway 35 does not provide safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists to the retail centers south of William Cannon Drive or those on the east side of Interstate Highway 35. Planned and future residential development along nearby North Bluff Lane could generate increased pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile traffic to these commercial areas.

Recommendation 3 Ensure that there are adequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities to serve the area around the intersection of William Cannon Drive and North Bluff Drive and the intersection of William Cannon Drive and Interstate Highway 35.

The intersection of Interstate Highway 35 and William Cannon Drive lacks pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The lack of these facilities makes crossing the overpass a hazardous trip for people not traveling by car.

Ben White Boulevard
Ben White Boulevard should serve as one of several gateways into Austin from the Austin Bergstrom International Airport. Currently, one-story buildings of varying age and condition characterize the eastbound Ben White Boulevard frontage road. The proposed changes to land use and zoning along this segment from commercial and industrial to mixed-use could promote significant redevelopment.

Recommendation 4 Improve the pedestrian facilities along the eastbound Ben White Boulevard frontage road between South 1st Street and Interstate Highway 35 by providing the following as redevelopment occurs:

- Widened sidewalks.
- A grassy strip between the sidewalk and the curb.
- Species of street trees providing a significant canopy at maturity.

South Congress Avenue

The pedestrian infrastructure for South Congress Avenue in the SCCNPA is best characterized as fragmented. Sidewalks are installed along the street from Ben White Boulevard to Williamson Creek, but the number of curb cuts and wide driveways contribute to a disjointed pedestrian environment. South of the creek, the sidewalk network is, at best, incomplete. Pedestrians are often forced to walk along the shoulder of the road or in parking lots and driveways.

Looking south from Williamson Creek down South Congress Avenue. The lack of sidewalks, curbs, and gutters may be a significant impediment to redevelopment along portions of South Congress Avenue.

<u>Recommendation 5</u> Complete the sidewalk network along the east and west sides of South Congress Avenue from Williamson Creek to William Cannon Drive.

Other Commercial Corridors

The majority of the other commercial corridors in the SCCNPA have sidewalks, with two significant exceptions. The first is the majority of the south side of Stassney Lane between South Congress Avenue and the frontage road of Interstate Highway 35. The second are the streets that run east/west through the St. Elmo industrial district. Adding sidewalks in these two areas would improve pedestrian safety and accessibility in the planning area.

<u>Recommendation 6</u> Install a pedestrian crossing, if warranted, on Stassney Lane between South Congress Avenue and Mira Drive.

When the tracts of vacant land south of Stassney Lane are developed, the need for better pedestrian connectivity will become more important. Regardless of how this property is developed—mixed-use or as apartments—the internal pedestrian network should connect all parts of the

development and promote accessibility to the nearby stores and restaurants.

Recommendation 7 Build a sidewalk along St. Elmo Road linking the frontage road of Interstate Highway 35 to South Congress Avenue.

Neighborhoods

Sidewalk networks of various quality serve the different residential neighborhoods in the SCCNPA. The Sweetbriar, Battlebend Springs, and Fairview neighborhoods have good sidewalk networks, whereas the Greenwood Hills and Pleasant Hill neighborhoods do not. The gaps in existing sidewalk networks should be filled sidewalk and connections should be created where there currently are none.

Recommendation 8 Build new sidewalks along local neighborhood streets in the following locations:

West Congress Neighborhood Planning Area

- Build a sidewalk on Mockingbird Lane from Harvest Lane to South Congress Avenue.
- Build a sidewalk on the south side of Ramble Lane from South 1st Street to South Congress Avenue.
- Build a sidewalk along Creekline Drive between Heartwood Drive and Ramble Lane.

East Congress Neighborhood Planning Area

- Complete sidewalk on north side of New Castle Drive and west side of Sussex Drive to connect with sidewalks to be built by developers of vacant properties on the north side. *If a route on the opposite side is determined to be more desirable or more cost efficient, consider adding a sidewalk to the south side of New Castle Drive, the west side of Sussex Drive, and the south side of Colonial Park Boulevard between Sussex Drive and Weidermar Lane.*
- Build a sidewalk on west side of Suburban Drive from Battlebend Park to Westmoreland Drive.
- Build a sidewalk along Sheraton Avenue from Suburban Drive/Lucksinger Lane to connect with the new construction at the eastern edge of Sheraton Avenue.
- Build a sidewalk along Westmoreland Drive from Suburban Drive to Fort Clark Drive; Fort Clark Drive to New Castle Drive; New Castle Drive to Colonial Park Boulevard.

Sweetbriar Neighborhood Planning Area

- Build a sidewalk along North Bluff Drive (preferably the south side) from South Congress Avenue to William Cannon Drive.
- Build a sidewalk along Blythewood Drive between Treys Way and Bramble Road.
- Build a sidewalk along Sandra Street between Glen Meadow Drive and South Congress Avenue.
- Build a sidewalk along Bramble Drive from Cedardale Drive to South First Street.

Objective 4.2
Improve the regional and local bicycle network throughout the area.

The CAMPO 2030 plan establishes an arterial bicycle network designating bike lanes on all arterials. Bicycle lanes along some of the SCCNPA arterials are incomplete and some have no connections to other routes. The following recommendations focus on improving the bicycle infrastructure within the planning area.

Recommendation 9 Create striped bicycle lanes along South Congress Avenue from Williamson Creek to William Cannon Drive.

South of Williamson Creek there are no curbs or gutters. When the road is eventually widened, bicycle lanes should be added.

Recommendation 10 Create a continuous bike route on William Cannon Drive, and consider the feasibility of filling the gap between South First Street and South Congress Avenue.

Recommendation 11 Ensure that bicycle lanes along arterials in the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area are clearly identified and maintained.

Street improvements or alterations, signs, pavement markers, or other means of clarifying the bicycle routes should be considered.

Recommendation 12 Determine the feasibility of creating an off-street pathway connecting the neighborhoods north of Williamson Creek to the businesses along Stassney Lane.

Residents of Battle Bend and Greenwood Hills neighborhoods desire a more direct route to the businesses along Stassney Lane and Little Texas Lane, including restaurants, a grocery store, smaller shops and offices, and a movie theatre. Currently, residents walking or bicycling to reach these areas must either take a hazardous route or a long and circuitous one.

Recommendation 13 Investigate establishing an off-street east-west pathway connecting the Battle Bend and Greenwood Hills neighborhoods to South Congress Avenue.

Currently residents have only one option to access South Congress by foot or bicycle—the same as they would in a car—Sheraton Avenue. Creating a second access point to South Congress Avenue could help integrate the neighborhoods with current and future businesses. This connection will become more important as redevelopment occurs along South Congress Avenue.

Objective 4.3
Improve transit service and increase ridership in the area.

The land use recommendations in this plan could result in a dense, urban corridor along South Congress Avenue. Increased transit service along the street could promote new development and redevelopment and provide an important transportation option for future area residents, as well as businesses.

Recommendation 14 Support the implementation of a rapid bus route along South Congress Avenue as proposed in the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (CMTA) **All Systems Go** plan, adopted in 2004.

Recommendation 15 Determine the feasibility of creating bus pullout bays at strategic or congested stops along South Congress Avenue.

Recommendation 16 Determine the feasibility of creating bus pullout bays at strategic or congested stops along South 1st Street.

Recommendation 17 Add covered shelters to bus stops where appropriate.

Objective 4.4
Improve traffic flow, safety, and ease of travel throughout the area while discouraging the use of neighborhood streets by through traffic.

Commercial Corridors

Recommendation 18 Widen South Congress Avenue between Williamson Creek and William Cannon Drive to allow for four travel lanes, a continuous turn lane, and bicycle lanes.

Recommendation 19 Undertake a study of the intersection of William Cannon Drive and North Bluff Lane to improve safety, visibility and functionality for motorists.

The turn lane funneling traffic from Interstate Highway 35 onto westbound William Cannon Drive is noted for the high number of automobile accidents. Improving safety should be considered as part of this study.

Recommendation 20 Conduct a study of the intersection of Mira Drive and Stassney Lane to improve safety, visibility, and usability for automobiles as development in the area increases.

Neighborhood Streets

Recommendation 21 Consider the suitability of conducting a traffic calming study in the West Congress Planning Area, examining the effects of through traffic on Ramble Lane from South 1st Street to South Congress Avenue.

Recommendation 22 Consider the suitability of conducting a traffic calming study in the Sweetbriar Planning Area, examining the effects of through traffic on Eberhart Lane from South 1st Street to South Congress Avenue.

Recommendation 23 Consider the suitability of conducting traffic calming studies and implementing such measures in the Greenwood Hills and Battle Bend Springs neighborhoods in the East Congress Planning Area.

Recommendation 24 Investigate widening North Bluff Drive to accommodate the increased in traffic from development.

Recommendation 25 Investigate methods to mitigate traffic congestion around Pleasant Hill School during drop-off and pick-up times.

Sources

US Census Bureau. 2005. *American Community Survey: Average Travel Time to Work of Workers 16 Years and Over Who Did Not Work at Home* (Minutes)http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Ranking/2003/pdf/R04T160.pdf Accessed on March 31, 2005

GOAL FIVE

The public open spaces should be preserved and enhanced.

Objective 5.1
Battlebend Park should be enhanced.

Battlebend Park, located southwest of the intersection of Sheraton Avenue and Suburban Drive, is the only park in the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (SCCNPA). This 4.9-acre park has a limited number of amenities, particularly when compared to similarly sized or smaller parks in Austin. The park currently features a children's playscape, a gazebo, a multi-purpose field, a basketball court with one overhead light, two picnic tables, and one barbeque pit. Improvements to the park would allow it to be used by a greater number of people at any given time.

The basketball court is a popular attraction at Battlebend Park.

<u>Recommendation 1</u> Install restroom facilities at Battlebend Park.

<u>Recommendation 2</u> Increase the frequency of Austin Park Police and the Austin Police Department patrols in Battlebend Park as resources allow.

Residents have noted an increase in the number of transients camping in the park creating a situation that discourages its use by residents for its intended purpose. This has also increased the volume of litter and trash in the park.

Recommendation 3 Increase the number of tables and barbeque pits in Battlebend Park.

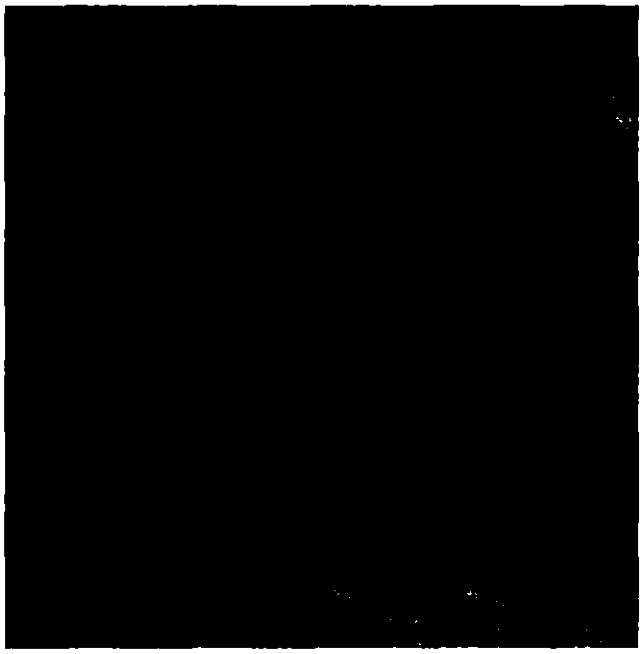
Recommendation 4 Increase the number of significant shade trees in Battlebend Park.

Additional trees should be strategically located to provide cover for amenities added to the park.

Objective 5.2
Williamson Creek should be maintained in a natural state.

Williamson Creek creates a continuous green stretch through the middle of the planning area and serves as a preserve for wildlife. Like the Bull Creek and Walnut Creek Greenbelts, the Williamson Creek greenbelt is an impressive concentration of green space in an increasingly urbanizing area. The residents of the SCCNPA value the open space and any improvements made to the creek should respect its wooded nature.

The City of Austin has been acquiring property along the creek for the past two decades. One goal of this property acquisition is to possibly create a greenbelt with a primitive trail linking areas west of Interstate Highway 35 to McKinney Falls State Park to the east. Recently the City acquired a 7.9-acre property on Wasson Road adjacent to the creek. This site could potentially serve as a staging area for a trail. There are significant gaps in a future Williamson Creek Greenbelt within the combined planning area. In order for the greenbelt to be successful, these need to be eliminated, either through property acquisitions, purchase of easements and rights-of-way, or through grants of easements or rights-of-way.



The course of Williamson Creek through the SCCNPA remains largely undeveloped. Long-term plans to construct a primitive trail system along its banks, eventually linking to McKinney Falls State Park, would preserve the greenbelt and provide an amenity to the City of Austin.

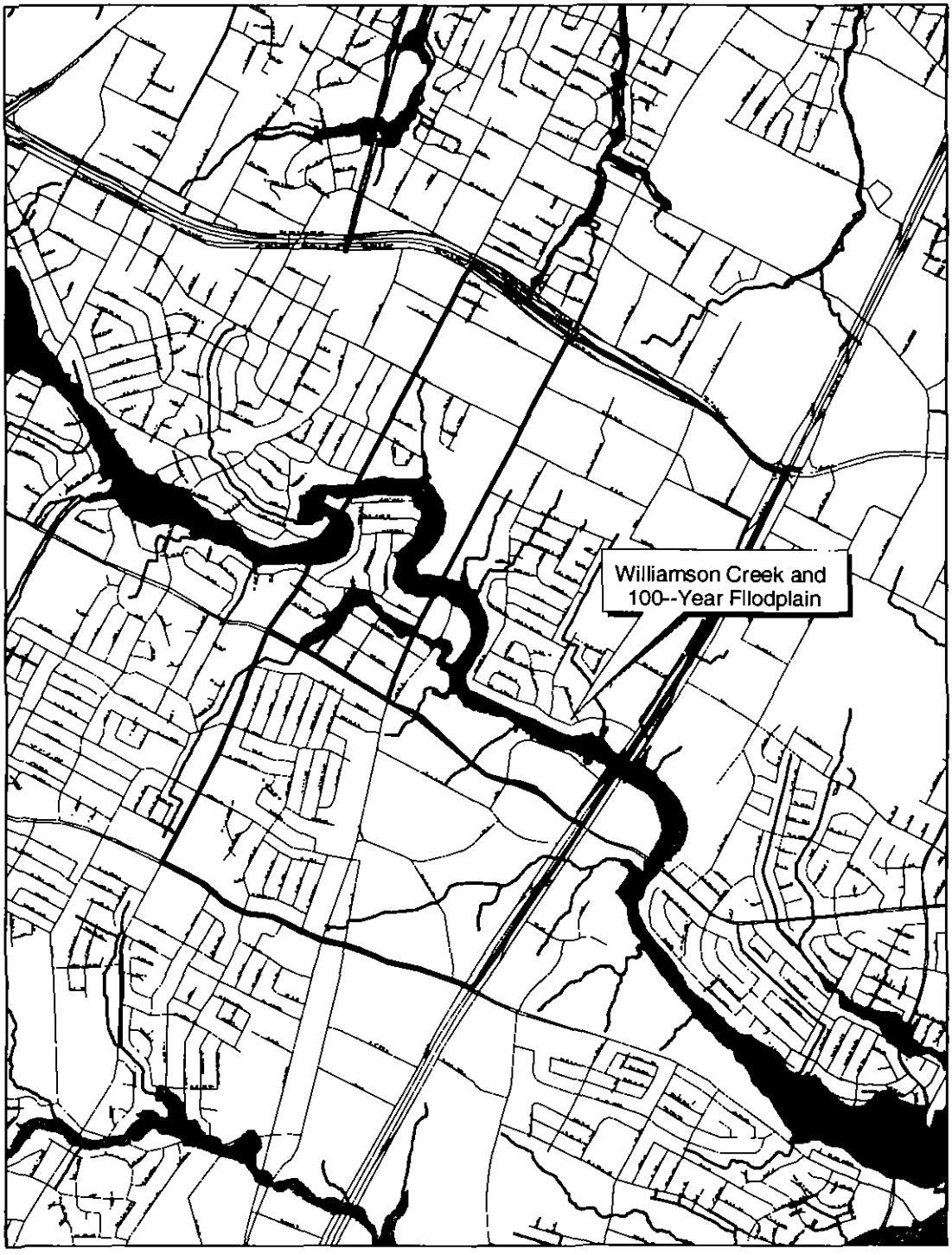


Figure 25
Possible Greenbelt along Williamson Creek through the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

Recommendation 5 Investigate creating a primitive trail system along the segment of Williamson Creek within the planning area, with the goal of connecting it to the trail planned along Williamson Creek east of Interstate Highway 35.

The residents and stakeholders in the planning area will play an important role in the development of the Williamson Creek greenbelt. They should work closely with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department, and other involved parties, to determine a final plan.

Recommendation 6 Engage developers and property owners with property in or along the 100-year flood plain of Williamson Creek and its tributaries early in the development process, working with them to set aside greenbelt and open space parcels for trail construction and parkland.

Objective 5.3
The large tract of land on South 1st Street between Ramble Lane and Heartwood Drive should become a neighborhood park.

South Austin has very few small neighborhood parks. The addition of this site as a park would be an asset to the surrounding neighborhoods, both in and out of the planning area. This park could also serve as a trailhead for a Williamson Creek trail. Parking for this proposed park and trailhead could be located on the City of Austin-owned property on the west of South 1st Street and be connected to the park via a path along the creek under the bridge. This park should have strong connections to South 1st Street and nearby residential areas.

Currently vacant, this tract of land owned by the City of Austin should be developed into a park for neighborhood use and as a trailhead for a primitive trail along Williamson Creek.

Recommendation 7 Develop the City of Austin-owned property on the east side of South 1st Street south of Heartwood Lane into a neighborhood-friendly open space with passive uses These uses would include areas for quiet contemplation. The area should be mowed up to the distinctly denser greenbelt along the creek, and native flora and trees should be left intact. Other amenities may include:

- Benches or tables to be used for reading, sunning, or eating lunch.
- Exercise stations such as pull up bars and inclined sit up benches.
- Open space for flying a kite or kicking a soccer ball.

South Congress Neighborhood Urban Design Guidelines

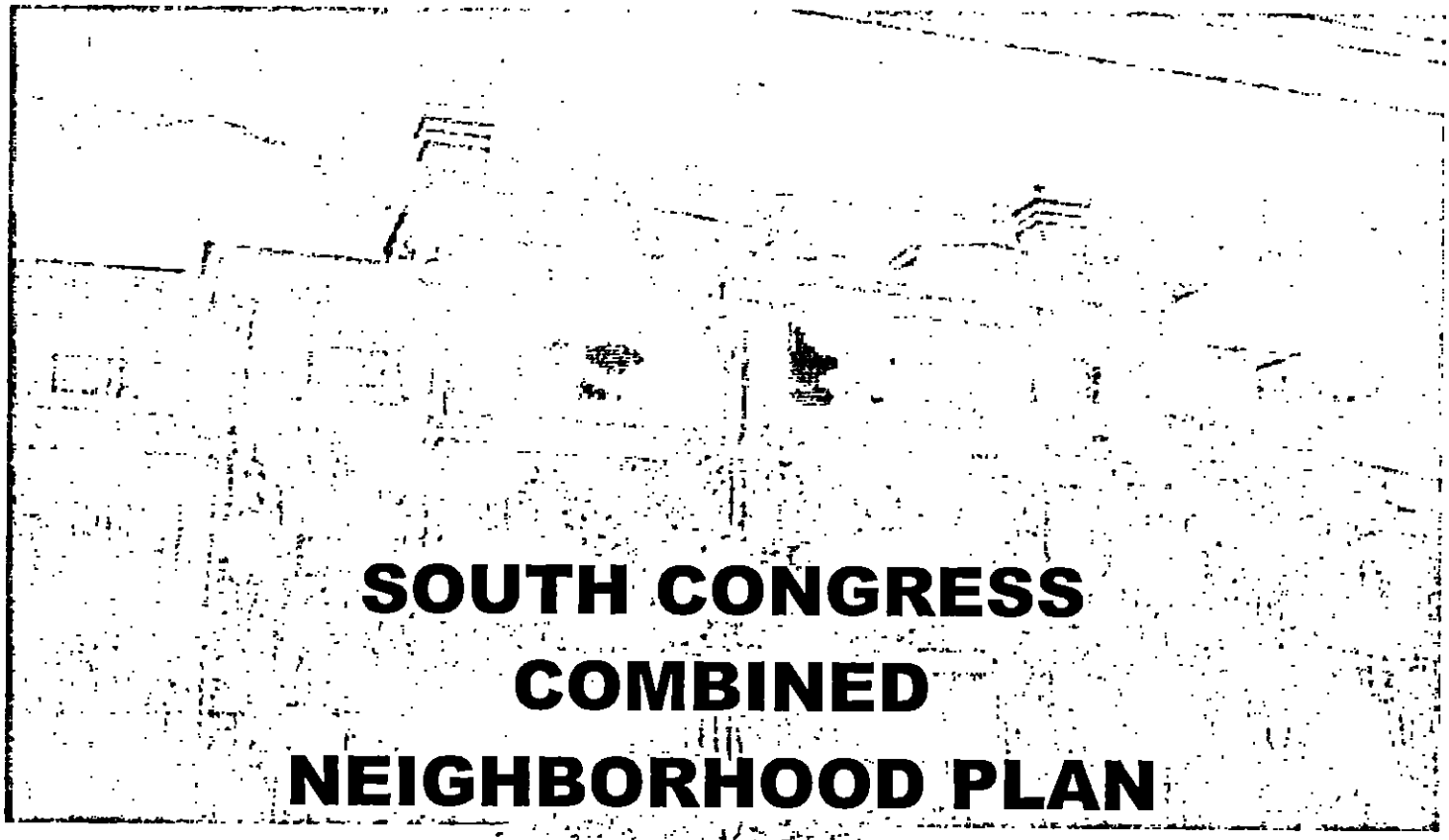
The Neighborhood Urban Design Guidelines provide a common basis for making consistent decisions about building and streetscape design affecting the character of the neighborhood. ***Adherence to the guidelines is voluntary****. They are not intended to limit development within the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area. The intent is to provide ideas for the appearance of new development, redevelopment, or remodeling. These guidelines primarily focus on the streetscape—the publicly viewed area between the front of the building and the street. This area includes the streets and sidewalks (public rights-of-way), front yards, building facades, porches, and driveways (private property).*

The following three general goals provide the foundation for the neighborhood design guidelines within City of Austin neighborhoods.

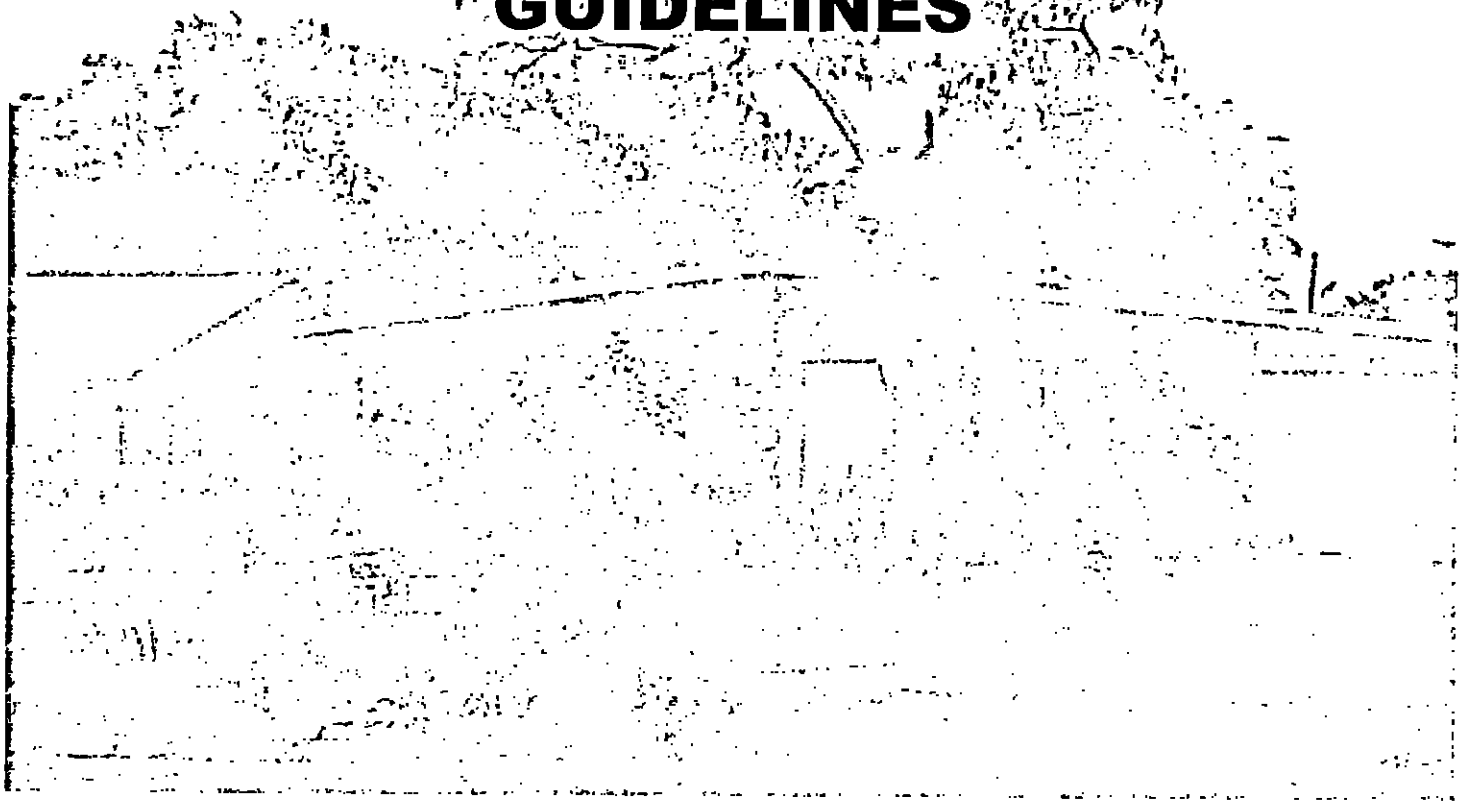
Goal 1: Respect and enhance community character.
The Guidelines aim to reinforce the positive elements and patterns characterizing the neighborhood and to help create a unique sense of place within the city, particularly as they relate to the residential areas. In some instances, the Guidelines provide an outline for changes the community would like to see. These desired changes often occur along commercial corridors or on vacant tracts of land. The Guidelines serve as a framework for new development and provide suggestions as to how it may fit into the area in terms of scale, mass, building patterns, and details. Application of the Guidelines promotes maintenance and preservation of the existing character and ways to enhance the community through new development.

Goal 2: Ensure compatibility between adjacent land uses.
The Guidelines may indicate a neighborhood's preference for increasing or decreasing the occurrence of certain types of land uses. Examples of this are "encouraging more mixed-use development" or "encouraging small-scale retail or grocery stores."

Goal 3: Enhance and enliven the streetscape.
The Guidelines also promote the design of safe, comfortable, and interesting streetscapes to encourage walking, biking, and transit use. Key to achieving this goal is creating a sense of human scale in the buildings defining the streetscape. This is also achieved by providing accessible, adequately-sized and protected pathways. Additionally, increasing visibility from buildings to the sidewalk and street can enhance safety. This is often called "the eyes on the street".



SOUTH CONGRESS COMBINED NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES



Residential Urban Design Guideline 1

New multi-family development should reinforce an urban pattern.

New multi-family development should feel as if it a part of the community. Even if a new multi-family development is a large complex, the buildings and internal street network should be designed as if the project is part of a traditional neighborhood, such as the photographs to the right and below. This design creates an urban pattern, as opposed to the meandering designs prevalent in most larger multi-family developments.

Often apartment communities are separated from surrounding development and are discontinuous with adjacent neighborhoods. Multifamily housing should blend with nearby development. The circulation pattern of multifamily communities should continue the pattern of the established neighborhood or a grid pattern and should have multiple connection points for vehicles and pedestrians. Gated communities should be discouraged.

Residential Urban Design Guideline 2
New multi-family development should be attractively landscaped to de-emphasize security features.

When walls, fences, and other security devices are installed surrounding multifamily developments, landscaping with native materials should be used to screen and enhance their appearance.

Residential Urban Design Guideline 3
Native stone and masonry should be the primary building materials.

Using high-quality materials suited to the environment minimizes maintenance.

Residential Urban Design Guideline 4
Significant remodeling or new development in single-family neighborhoods should complement or reflect the dominant architectural style of the neighborhood.

SOUTH CONGRESS COMBINED NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Commercial Urban Design Guidelines

The urban design guidelines for the commercial corridors in the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area will address the **Local Commercial** corridors (South Congress Avenue, South 1st Street, William Cannon Drive, Stassney Lane, and Ben White Boulevard from South 1st Street to South Congress Avenue) and **Gateway** corridors (Ben White Boulevard from South Congress Avenue to the southbound IH 35 frontage road and the frontage road to St Elmo Road).

The commercial corridors in the SCCNPA were designed for people in their cars, not for pedestrians and bicyclists. A goal for the guidelines, particularly the Local Commercial guidelines, is to offer suggestions to make these roads more pedestrian-friendly and create a built environment defining the area as a unique district within Austin.

South Congress Avenue—Keep It "funky"

Keeping South Austin "funky" is a major design theme for the redevelopment of the street. Each site and building should be thought of not as a singular project, but as part of the larger urban fabric. As South Congress takes on a decidedly more urban feel, it is vital to encourage new development to enhance the sense of place unique to South Austin. The urban design guidelines for South Congress Avenue set out to create a distinctive district with a "funky, Austin-centric" feel. This development should not be a replication of other areas of Austin; rather, a new expression of the energy, culture, and individuality embodied in the slogan: "Keep Austin Weird". New development and redevelopment should build upon local and vernacular styles to bring forth a vibrant area reflective of those people who choose to live, work, and do business along South Congress Avenue.

Other Local Commercial Corridors—South Congress Avenue, South 1st Street, William Cannon Drive, Stassney Lane, and Ben White Boulevard from South 1st Street to South Congress Avenue

These corridors should take on a more pedestrian-friendly feel. Mixed-use development should be encouraged where possible. The character of development should be similar to South Congress, but on a more neighborhood scale. Again, the vision is to create spaces designed to allow people to be comfortable outside of their automobiles, and to enhance the mobility choices in the planning area.

Ben White Boulevard—A Gateway to Austin

The long-awaited completion of the interchange with Interstate Highway 35 and the anticipated upgrade of Ben White Boulevard to a limited access highway connecting to Austin-Bergstrom International Airport give the section of Ben White Boulevard east of South Congress an opportunity to be redeveloped as a highway commercial district of offices and hotels. Large-scale retail development is hampered due to the limited depth of the lots. The use of good urban design principles will assist in the transformation of this area, making it compatible with surrounding development, and creating a distinct gateway into the city.

Commercial Urban Design Guideline 1—Local Commercial

Building designs should be uniquely designed to create interest and positively contribute to the urban fabric.

The **local commercial** corridors should become higher-intensity, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented places. "Corporate" or "Pre-fab" architecture is discouraged; rather, buildings designed with details—such as cornices, pediments, and pilasters—should be found along South Congress. The use of durable, high-quality materials native to the area is preferable to low-quality, generic building materials. Care should be taken by designers to create authentic buildings and spaces, avoiding caricatures of buildings that seeming "cartoonish" or forced.

Commercial Urban Design Guideline 2—Local Commercial
Buildings should be designed to an appropriate scale.

In creating a pedestrian-oriented environment, it is imprtant to design sites and buildings to a pedestrian scale. Buildings should be close to the street and designed with visual interest at a pedestrian level, such as shop windows. Although buildings may be multi-story, they should have a sidewalk presence, as illustrated below, to put them in scale with pedestrians at street level.

Commercial Urban Design Guideline 3—Local Commercial
Sites should be designed keeping the climate of Austin and the local environment in mind.

Taking into account the orientation of a building makes it not only more comfortable to people, but is also more cost-efficient. Landscaping materials should be well-suited or native to the climate to minimize watering and create shade for buildings and pedestrians. Awnings are attractive not only for the way they frame windows and entryways, but also for the reduction in heat and cooling costs they provide. Windows should be positioned to maximize light and minimize heat.

Commercial Urban Design Guideline 4—Local Commercial

Large signs should not dominate the landscape.

Signs are important to successful business districts; however, they must not become "visual clutter" and detract from an area's appearance. Signage should primarily be attached to buildings and designed as "people-speed" signs, rather than "car-speed" signs. Creative signage is encouraged, such as 3-D signs and the use of neon and other unique treatments.

Commercial Urban Design Guideline 5—Local Commercial

Outdoor activities should be designed for and encouraged.

Amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists should be provided. Public plazas and open spaces should be a part of the variety of buildings and uses on South Congress Avenue. People should be moved by thoughtful design to take advantage of the generally favorable weather Austin enjoys throughout the year, by walking, biking, jogging, and participating in street fairs and festivals. Such amenities would include landscaping, benches, bike racks, shower and locker facilities, and pedestrian-oriented lighting.

Commercial Urban Design Guideline 6—Local Commercial

Parking in front of buildings should be reduced or eliminated

Although, South Congress Avenue is envisioned as a pedestrian-oriented district, most people will utilize cars to come to the area. Ample off-street parking should be provided. However, creative parking solutions, such as shared parking, should be explored to minimize the visual impacts of automobiles. Parking should be located behind, to the side, or under buildings.

Commercial Urban Design Guideline 7—Local Commercial
The principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) should be utilized to create a sense of safety and security.

The built environment should be both attractive and safe. Sound design should incorporate the tenets of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design to develop a safer area for all users.

Commercial Urban Design Guideline 8—Local Commercial
Sites should be designed to maximize connections and circulation.

Shared access between sites for vehicles and pedestrians should be encouraged and driveways onto South Congress Avenue should be minimized. Bicycle and pedestrian connections should be provided from sidewalks to buildings. Clearly marked pathways should direct people from parking areas to buildings. Sites should be designed to move vehicles, both motorized and non-motorized, and pedestrians efficiently.

Commercial Urban Design Guideline 9—Gateway
Buildings should be unique and well-designed.

As a gateway connecting the City of Austin to Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, this area should serve as a "calling card" or "front door" to the city. Therefore, the buildings should be a positive statement to those traveling through the corridor. Buildings should be designed with architectural features to create interest. Where appropriate, colorful lighting should be employed to signify the area's "funky" character.

Commercial Urban Design Guideline 10—Gateway
The impact of signage should be minimized.

Signs are critical to directing customers to businesses; however, they need not dominate the landscape. As a highway corridor, it will be important to have signs oriented to high-speed traffic traveling along a multi-lane roadway. Instead of pole-mounted signs exceeding forty feet in height, an alternative would be to utilize attached signage on buildings exceeding three stories or design buildings distinctive enough to function as signs. Free-standing signs should be limited to monument signs.

Commercial Urban Design Guideline 11—Gateway
Parking in front of buildings should be limited.

Because new development will likely be more intense than the existing development, ample parking must be provided. Vast amounts of surface parking should be discouraged, particularly in front of buildings. Structured parking, where necessary, should be encouraged and located to the side of or behind buildings, and not facing Ben White Boulevard.

Commercial Urban Design Guideline 12—Gateway
A special gateway streetscape treatment should be installed along Ben White Boulevard.

Although not a pedestrian-oriented district, the streetscape is still important because of the numerous vehicles and their occupants who will be traveling along Ben White Boulevard. Consideration should be given to a landscape design, unique light fixtures, and banners to set the area apart as a high-profile corridor.

Appendix A
Initial Survey Results

The number after the response indicated the number of responses as of 6-14-04. A total of 88 survey responses were received.

Quality of Life/Land Use/Transportation

1.) In what neighborhood planning area do you live, own property, work, or operate a business?

- East Congress: 32
- Sweetbriar: 26
- West Congress: 29
- Other: 0

2.) In the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area you...

- Own a house: 65
- Rent a house or apartment: 9
- Own a business: 5
- Work: 8
- Own property but do not live in the planning area: 11
- Other: 4

3a.) What aspects of your neighborhood do you like the most? (Top five responses)

- Mature trees: 55
- Easy access to freeways: 42
- Close to neighborhood stores and services (auto repair, restaurants, dry cleaning, etc.): 41
- Reasonably priced housing: 38
- Access to public transportation: 36
- "Other" responses
  - Close to downtown and 78704
  - No main street within one block of where I actually reside
  - Proximity to downtown
  - Centralized location
  - Access to downtown
  - Location is easy for customers to find.
  - The larger-sized lots.
  - You seem to be focusing on the residential attributes and ignoring the commercial development in the area
  - Fairly close to downtown
  - Big lot
  - Easy access for people to find us

- Wild places
- Close to downtown Austin
- Traffic control
- Bike lanes on Congress
- Open land behind Falcon Ridge apartment complex

3b.) Which of those do you wish your neighborhood had? (Top 5 responses in addition to the "Other" category)

- Sidewalks: 42
- Quiet: 40
- Sense of community: 38
- Historic character: 36
- Well maintained front yards: 33
- "Other" responses
  - More housing
  - Entertainment
  - More restaurants
  - More sidewalks
  - Wish there were more speed humps
  - Better street lighting
  - Less noise from IH 35
  - Adequate drainage
  - Upgrade park facilities
  - South Congress at least 4 lanes
  - Open all year swimming-ex: Stacey pool
  - Community playground and civic center for youth
  - speed bumps on S.1st
  - Direct access south to Stassney and shopping without going on the freeway frontage road
  - *No individual illegal* fireworks every July 4th
  - Parking for Hills Cafe so it does not "park the neighborhood" for an event
  - Direct street going north and south behind the car lots so they don't drive through the neighborhood to go around
  - Less seedy apartments
  - Less seedy hotels
  - More new residential development
  - Separation from commercial zones
  - Reduced noise from IH 35
  - Reduced traffic from IH-35 & local businesses
  - A swimming pool for the kids in the neighborhood
  - Social services
  - NO businesses operating out of homes!
  - A neighborhood pool -- *closest one is Garrison*
  - No cars parked in front yards
  - Clean from litter
  - No graffiti
  - Keep drainage area cleaner.
  - Diversity of

businesses.
- Cleaner and better
- Maintained area.
- Better neighborhood traffic control
- A lot of seniors live in area - we need transportation within the neighborhood. How do seniors get to the closest grocery store, library, and clinic?
- Need sidewalks repaired
- Better traffic control
- Bike lanes
- Slower traffic
- Closer public park
- Less traffic noise and
- Overhead light pollution
- Bicycle paths on major roadways
- Access to rapid transit service (such as the DART system in Dallas)
- Community greenbelt area
- Police patrols
- Street lights
- I do not feel I am in a neighborhood, but rather have metal buildings on a major artery, zoned commercial, very near a major freeway and adjoining a railroad
- Commercial
- Development on Major Roads
- Better Street Lighting
- Speeding rules enforced
- Turn signal on stoplight at S. First and St. Elmo
- Bike routes
- Speed bumps on St. Elmo
- Less apartments, more homes
- Fewer abandoned cars traffic calming
- Free of clutter and debris, and trash
- No homeless people living under the bridges
- More bright lighting sidewalk on Congress
- TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNAL LIGHT SO CONGRESS/RAMBLE LANE
- HAPPY WITH NEIGHBORHOOD
- Cycle paths
- Newer/better maintained playground
- Public swimming pool
- Speed slowing devices
- Neighborhood watch
- Posted speed limits/bumps
- Wild places protected well maintained
- Existing businesses
- more wildflower areas swimming pool in Battlebend Park
- crosswalks to Battlebend park
- I don't have #5--your questionnaire made me list a fifth one. Grrrr.
- Fewer rental properties
- Safe pedestrian access
- Well defined intersections
- Leashed dogs for safety while walking in neighborhood

- Less cut through traffic from So First to Stassney & vice versa
- Speed bumps
- Neighborhood organization!
- More bike lanes!
- Less cut-through traffic
- Assurance that open land wont be destroyed

4.) What aspects of your neighborhood do you like least? (Top five choices in addition to three other responses that relate to the state and appearance of multi-family and commercial property.)

- Cut-through traffic on residential streets: 45
- *Traffic noise*: 43
- Deteriorating single-family property (including houses and duplexes): 40
- Commercial encroachment into residential areas: 38
- Lack of sidewalks: 35
- Appearance of commercial corridors: 29
- Deteriorating commercial property: 27
- Deteriorating multi-family property (including triplexes, duplexes, and apartments): 24
- "Other" responses
  - watershed is inadequate
  - double parking on sidewalk
  - entrance ramp to freeway closed.
  - high cable costs, due to monopoly of time warner cable
  - congress being only 2 lanes
  - limited library and swimming pool access
  - neighborhood streets used as test-drive track by Motor Mile dealerships
  - perpetual road work on Congress, Ben White and I-35
  - broken down cars in front yards
  - people driving too fast and no speed bumps
  - drainage area filled with debris and not kept clean by city.
  - Junkyard at Little Texas and Congress
  - overhead light pollution at night
  - Transients
  - Noise (especially dogs)
  - once again your questions are totally ignoring the commercial/industrial character of this area
  - S. Congress only two lanes
  - noisy neighbors
  - Lack of nice trees, ie, pecan, oak, elm
  - litter from apartment complexes
  - Numerous rental properties, which aren't well kept
  - trash in yards/carports
  - motor mile test drivers
  - industrial noise at NIGHT!
  - the damn ice cream men!!

5.) What are the most important land use issues affecting your neighborhood? (Top five responses)

- Preserving/enhancing environmental features: 43
- Commercial uses adjacent to residential areas: 40
- Preserving the character of the neighborhood: 33
- Lack of parks: 28
- Lack of pedestrian friendly commercial corridors: 27
- "Other" responses
  - Condition of existing houses
  - Lack of proper drainage
  - We could walk to Stassney stores if there was access across Williamson creek - even just pedestrian access and walking the frontage road across the creek bridge is a nightmare
  - Apartments adjacent to single family
  - Business operating out of private homes (roofing)
  - Dilapidated areas along S Congress between Ben White and Wm Cannon
  - Drainage.
  - Unattractive commercial business - junk cars - pawnshops
  - Maintaining attractive greenbelt
  - Do you have a different questionnaire for owners of commercial properties?
  - Lack of Commercial investment
  - Too many apartments
  - Cut-through traffic
  - Appearance of Commercial Properties
  - The open space on S. Congress and Ramble was supposed to become a park 35 years ago. The builder Walter Carrington used this as a selling pitch when selling homes at that time. It's a dumping site for debris and it's all overgrown with trees and shrubs. It's depressing. I have lived in this area since I was 6 years old and it saddens me to see the area trashed out and dirty.
  - Save and preserve wild areas
  - Commercial/multi use
  - New zoning for multi family on So. Congress

6.) What are the most important localized transportation issues affecting your neighborhood.

(Top six responses in addition to Other" category)

- Lack of sidewalks: 36
- Dangerous intersections: 35
- Unsafe for pedestrians: 35
- Lack of bicycle trails and/or lanes: 34
- Lack of walking trails: 28

- Sidewalks in poor condition: 24
- "Other" responses
  - Frontage road on William canon needs a U-turn because traffic is always backed up.
  - Cut through traffic
  - Congress reducing to two lanes by elementary school
  - Lack of representative government due to at large city council elections
  - South Congress 2-lane segment
  - Prolonged road construction
  - Walking along the frontage road (or bicycling) is extremely difficult
  - You must access either Congress or the frontage road *northbound to return* home if you go to Stassney to shop
  - Roads are not very wide (S. 1st)
  - Constant road construction
  - Apartments generating additional traffic
  - Speeding in residential areas
  - Use of streets as I-35 cut-through
  - speeding cars
  - speeding on Congress.
  - no access to rapid transit service
  - Speeding in residential areas
  - Good roads with capacity
  - Access to railroad
  - Synchronized traffic signals
  - S. Congress only two Lanes
  - Cut-through and overflow traffic
  - Fine the way it is
  - We have Good Transportation Arterials
  - Poor Visibility from hills on S. First
  - Traffic Backs up on S. First/Congress at Peak hours
  - Invasive traffic from car dealerships
  - Business traffic speeding thru
  - Dangerous intersections (1st & Ramble)
  - Dangerous intersections (S. Congress & Ramble)
  - Dangerous intersections (Hearwood & First)
  - Lack of curb & gutter
  - No bus svc to westlake where I work
  - Cut-through traffic
  - SPEEDING
  - Proximity of car dealerships creates high-speed test-drive traffic

Vision

Below are the top responses from the "Vision" section of the initial survey. These responses, in addition to the survey responses listed above, were used to fashion a draft vision statement (below) for the planning area.

- *Quiet, safe, and well-lit street: 66*
- *Well-maintained neighborhood: 60*
- *Pedestrian and bike friendly neighborhood with tree-lined streets and sidewalks: 51*
- *Preserve and enhance local parks, trails, and other public green spaces: 48*
- *A neighborhood safely traveled through: 43*
- *Neighborhood friendly businesses: 33*
- *Preservation of character of residential neighborhoods: 31*
- *Protect, preserve, and enhance environmental features and natural areas: 30*
- *Revitalize existing commercial corridors: 28*
- *Safe, accessible and efficient public transportation system: 27*
- *A neighborhood with a strong sense of community that is active in neighborhood affairs: 25*
- *"Other" responses*
  - A commitment from Campo and the City to complete the Congress Ave renovations through this area
  - Money to complete the south ramps at I-35 and Ben White
  - Clean up existing apartments and hotels in area
  - Cleaning up the streets trash and litter
  - Well-maintained drainage ditches.
  - Quiet, safe and appropriately lit streets
  - Removal of conditions / businesses which seem to attract transients
  - Adequate utilities
  - Buffer from residential properties
  - Reasonable tax values and rates for industrial users
  - That the residential area recognize the need for industrial uses near railroads and major roadways
  - That residential property owners in the area recognize that their taxes will go up if industrial/commercial uses are forced out of the city of Austin
  - That commercial/industrial users don't have their zoning taken away from them
  - That commercial/industrial users are encouraged to improve their properties with expedited approvals
  - Lighted, clean, safe sidewalk on S. Congress to Hill's Café
  - Get the men out from under the bridges on S. 1st 4800 block, and near Ramble and S. Congress bridge.
  - TRAFFIC CONTROL
  - SPEEDING TRAFFIC ON RAMBLE LANE
  - SPEED HUMPS ON RAMBLE LANE
  - Business friendly

- Less commercial noise at night and less motor mile/cut-through traffic
- NO THRU TRAFFIC, ESPECIALLY FOR VEHICLES FROM NEARBY CAR DEALERSHIPS.

Appendix B
Strengths, Opportunities, and Challenges (SOC) Exercise Results

South Congress Combined Neighborhood Planning Area
First Community Workshop ("Workshop I")
Bedichek Middle School
Saturday, June 26, 2004
Attendance: 25
Small Group Exercise
"Strengths, Opportunities, and Challenges (SOC)"

Objectives
- Identify issues that can be addressed through the neighborhood planning process
- Identify aspects of your neighborhood you do and do not like

Definitions
strengths: attributes that contribute positively to the character of the neighborhood—things that you like and want to preserve
opportunities: An area where there is a prospect for improvement
challenges: issues that require a concerted effort from multiple groups to resolve.

Parameters
Focus on land use, transportation, and urban design issues

Strengths
Commercial
- Businesses at S. 1st and William Cannon are good (H.E.B., etc)
- Shopping centers along IH-35, Little Texas, and Stassney provide entertainment, services, retail, etc. in close proximity (commercial areas on Stassney and Little Texas have particularly desirable services)

Commercial Corridors
- S. Congress (strength, as well as opportunity and challenge)

- Small businesses and residential along S. 1st between Ben White and St. Elmo has personality; the corridor has tradition-history (i.e. Hill's Café)

Civic
- ACC scheduled to be built just west of South 1st St.
- Schools and churches
- South Austin Hospital in close proximity

Industrial
- Industrial area along Industrial and St. Elmo provides a variety of nearby services
- Industrial area has a series of small industrial businesses (vs. huge ones)

Multi-family
- Apartments and residential on north side of St. Elmo between S. Congress and S. 1st
- New townhomes on south side of St. Elmo near S. 1st (can they change their color?)

Open Spaces and Parks
- Area around Sussex and Fort Clark streets has a quiet and secure natural area that is "tucked away," yet accessible
- Battlebend Park
- Creek creates a boundary around Fairview
- Creeks (Williamson)
- Electric utility easement provides buffer between houses and commercial at William Cannon and S. 1st
- North Bluff area is rural and has scenic trees
- North Bluff Dr. area is unique and should be protected; is rural and has scenic trees
- Presence of nature (wild spaces important)

Single-family
- Affordability of neighborhoods
- Battlebend is stable, has a strong neighborhood association, has deed restrictions, and is neighborly
- Community's eclectic nature
- Community's proximity to downtown
- Cul de sac areas (quiet, secure)
- Diversity of neighborhood
- Fairview has homeowner pride and is nice for walking
- Greenwood Hills neighborhood
- Homeowner pride
- Neighborhood between St. Elmo and creek crossing, just east of S. 1st is stable

- Single family areas are multicultural, diverse, established, and friendly
- Single Family neighborhood general layout
- Sweetbriar neighborhood is established

Transportation

bus

- Bus Service on S. 1st and S. Congress is good
- Bus system is good

pedestrian

- Nice areas to walk

roads

- Streets in industrial area were improved recently

Opportunities

Commercial

- Commercial near creek crossing at S. 1st did not build parking....
- Encourage Whole Foods bake house to have a retail outlet
- More local stores
- Underutilized commercial node at S. Congress and Stassney: could be an *attractive node to serve immediate neighborhood and broader South Austin*; geographically it is an urban crossroads
- Work with businesses along IH-35 motor mile and the S. Congress corridor south of St. Elmo to ensure the noise levels of their parties are acceptable to themselves and to adjacent neighbors

Commercial Corridors

- Commercial in the area could use a "facelift": businesses along S. Congress and IH-35, if possible
- S. Congress no longer "far south," so opportunity to develop it in a new fashion ....central city-style development can follow
- S. Congress south of Ben White Blvd. becoming urbanized, so opportunity to improve density of development (and simultaneously improve tax base)
- Residential along S. Congress could be office

Civic

- Identify location for library?
- Vacant property on west side of S. Congress north of Ramble could become park, open space, or community center for kids

Industrial

- Improve industrial area's look
- Some assets of industrial area (along Industrial Blvd. and St. Elmo) are eclecticism and places of employment: the marketplace could enhance its development over time

Multi-family

- Could be higher density of residential on north side of Sheraton by Industrial area
- Mobile home parks provide areas of affordable housing and are important features of the City. Keep them. Perhaps enhance aesthetics and ensure that they are evenly dispersed rather than concentrated.
- New condos just south of Battlebend Park
- Opportunity to maintain/clean up multifamily on Weidemar at Colonial Park
- Pull PUD plan on vacant property across street from Alexan Properties on Little Texas

Open Space and Parks

- City owns vacant property adjacent to Wasson road on east side
- Greenbelt or bike route could be established along Williamson Creek; include tributaries as part of trail system
- Introduce neighbors to North Bluff and other wild spaces in the community, important features that enhance their quality of life; create advocates for their preservation
- Preserve some of the woody character of vacant lot north of Colonial Park (Battlebend Neighborhood)
- Turn wild spaces into preserves or community parks, whichever is appropriate: undeveloped area at S. 1st and Williamson Creek crossing could be made into a park or playground
- Vacant property between Blueberry Hill and Eberhart could be a park or open space
- Vacant property on west side of S. Congress north of Ramble could become park, open space, or community center for kids

Single-family

- SF Create better sense of boundary between Greenwood Hills/Battle Bend Neighborhoods and industrial area to the north
- SF or MF Check to see if subdivision plans exist for vacant property north of Colonial Park; opportunity for single family here
- SF or MF Opportunity for accessible, affordable, smaller housing integrated through South Congress Combined's neighborhoods
- SF or MF Opportunity for community's neighborhood associations to meet and combine efforts
- SF Village neighborhood node at Ben White and S. 1st is an ideal location for those accessibility challenged and those who have the greatest need for a hospital in close proximity; City Market is across S. 1st as well as other businesses and the established neighborhood feels like a pocket village or cottage community that is close knit and safe

Transportation

bike

- Bike route could be established along North Bluff
- Greenbelt or bike route could be established along Williamson Creek; include tributaries as part of trail system
- Cut through Keep traffic to Ben White Blvd. (vs. cutting through n'hood)
- Rail line spur north of Burleson to Bergstrom airport could become an active Commuter Rail line

bus

- Improve bus stops in certain locations

pedestrian

- Repair sidewalks in Sweetbriar neighborhood
- Fence and cliff blocking access from Battle Bend neighborhood to shopping center at Stassney: create paths
- Fill in sidewalk gap in front of apartments on north side of Stassney
- Highlight and communicate need for sidewalks
- Linear pedestrian pathways could follow creek lines to improve pedestrian connectivity
- Ped walkway along IH-35 needed in front of businesses at creek crossing
- Pedestrian network could be created to access H.E.B., entertainment areas (Metropolitan movie theater), restaurants, etc.

roads/ street connectivity

- Create street connectivity from Sheraton in Greenwood Hills neighborhood to business along IH-35
- Focus attention on enhancing S. Congress as a vital commercial corridor (S. 1st, on the other hand, is narrow); opportunity to focus energy on project that would have the greatest effect on enhancing the community
- Realignment of North Bluff
- S. Congress no longer "far south," so opportunity to develop it in a new fashion. ...central city-style development can follow

Challenges

<u>Commercial / Commercial and Residential mix</u>

- Area bound by Stassney, IH-35, North Bluff, and S. Congress a challenge: how the mix of uses interact; compatibility, lack of complete plan for how area will develop, balance of residential and commercial, SMART housing opportunity
- Adjacent commercial corridors create noise issues community-wide
- Hill's Café has parties and functions- this creates parking challenges, noise issues, and also some dumping
- Rather than attend themselves, non-resident property owners may send representatives: could be a challenge when crafting land use recommendations.
- How to develop North Bluff area in a coherent, unified style with so many individual property owners?

Commercial Corridors

- IH-35 commercial between St. Elmo and Shelby needs clean-up
- Junk yard, pawn shop, used car dealership at S. Congress and Ramble
- Roadwork on S. 1st and S. Congress (seems endless): hinders progress and opportunity for land use changes; roadwork on S. 1st is currently between Ben White and Williamson Creek crossing
- IH-35 car lots create traffic noise and general noise- residences need mitigation

Creeks

- Creeks need clearing of debris after flooding
- Erosion along creek

General Observations

- A lot of people won't participate in the process, but will object at the end
- A particular S. Congress commercial project did not come through on verbal agreement with Mockingbird, other neighbors regarding its development: neighbors no longer trust property owners and developers
- Finding funds to make improvements will be tough
- Natural forces of market are going to effect development of area

Industrial

- Creeping of industrial to Ben White frontage
- Emissions from concrete plant in industrial area
- Industrial areas at intersection of S. 1st and Stassney need cleaning up
- Junkyard and perhaps mobile home parks need cleaning up
- Junkyard at Stassney and S. Congress

Service Issues

- Gangs and crime in industrial area
- Homeless camps along Williamson Creek (campsites are a danger to those living there and to adjacent property owners feel uncomfortable)
- Transients camping under bridges
- Transients in general
- Vacant lot =north of Colonial Park Rd. needs clean-up
- Junkyard needs cleaning up
- Mobile home parks would be better neighboring uses if cleaned up
- Flooding at creek crossing at S. Congress
- Flooding in Fairview neighborhood
- Flooding in North Bluff area
- Drainage ditch at Williamson Creek just west of IH-35 not maintained/cleaned; flooding in this area , especially north between IH-35 commercial and residences

Single- and Multi-family (Residential combined)

- *Area bound by Stassney, IH-35, North Bluff, and S. Congress a challenge*: how the mix of uses interact; compatibility, lack of complete plan for how area will develop, balance of residential and commercial, SMART housing opportunity
- Houses along Mockingbird and adjacent streets need protection
- Neighborhoods need mitigation of noise from major corridors
- One run-down residential area in South Congress Combined.....
- Poor maintenance in Fairview
- Neighborhoods need mitigation of noise from major corridors

Transportation

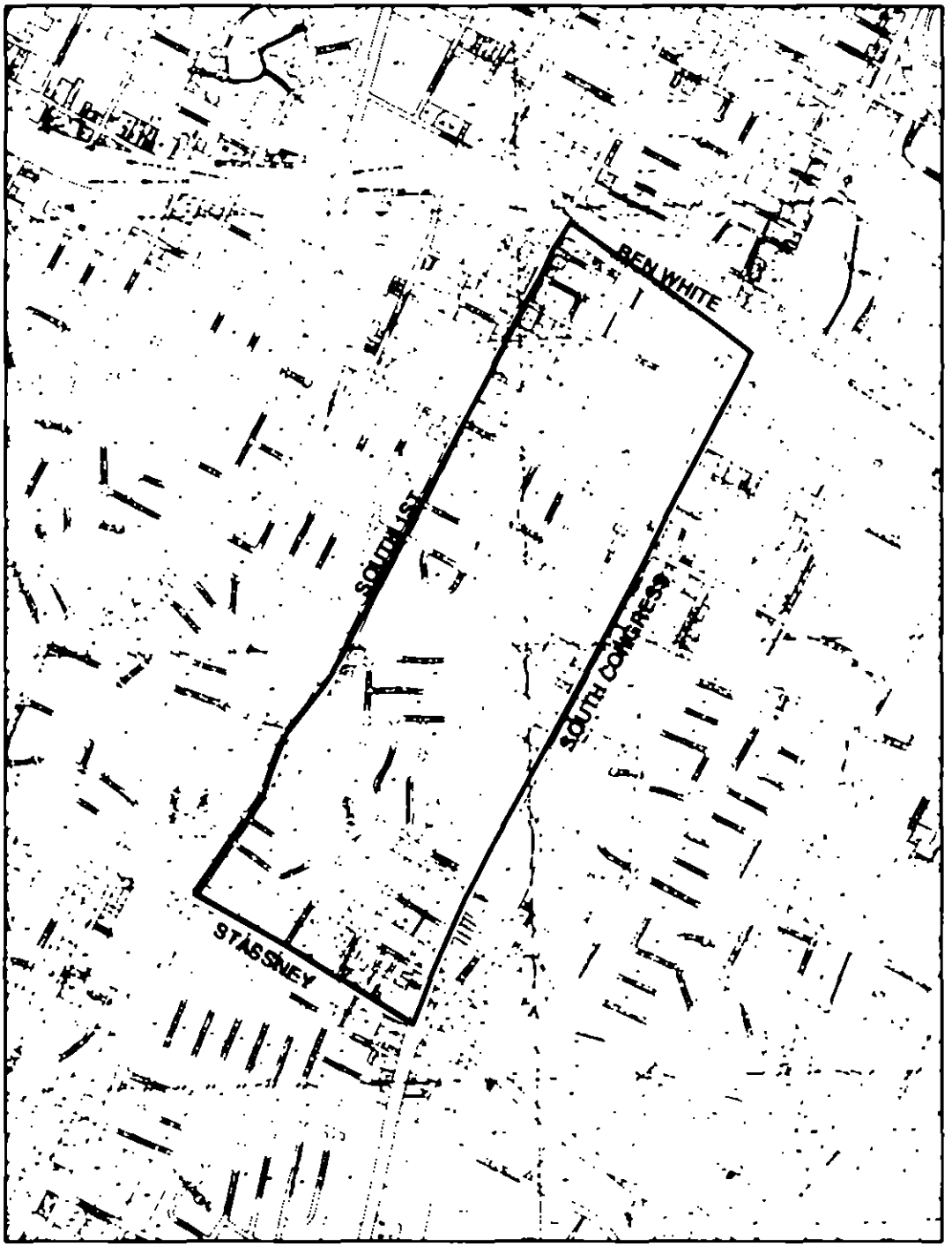
pedestrian

- Fairview needs sidewalks
- Lack of sidewalks
- Lack of sidewalks on S. 1st between Eberhart and William Cannon (mobility issues)
- lots of pedestrian traffic to Pleasant Hill Elementary: need traffic lights at North Bluff and S. Congress, improved safety, and sidewalks
- No sidewalk along part of S. Congress at Ramble

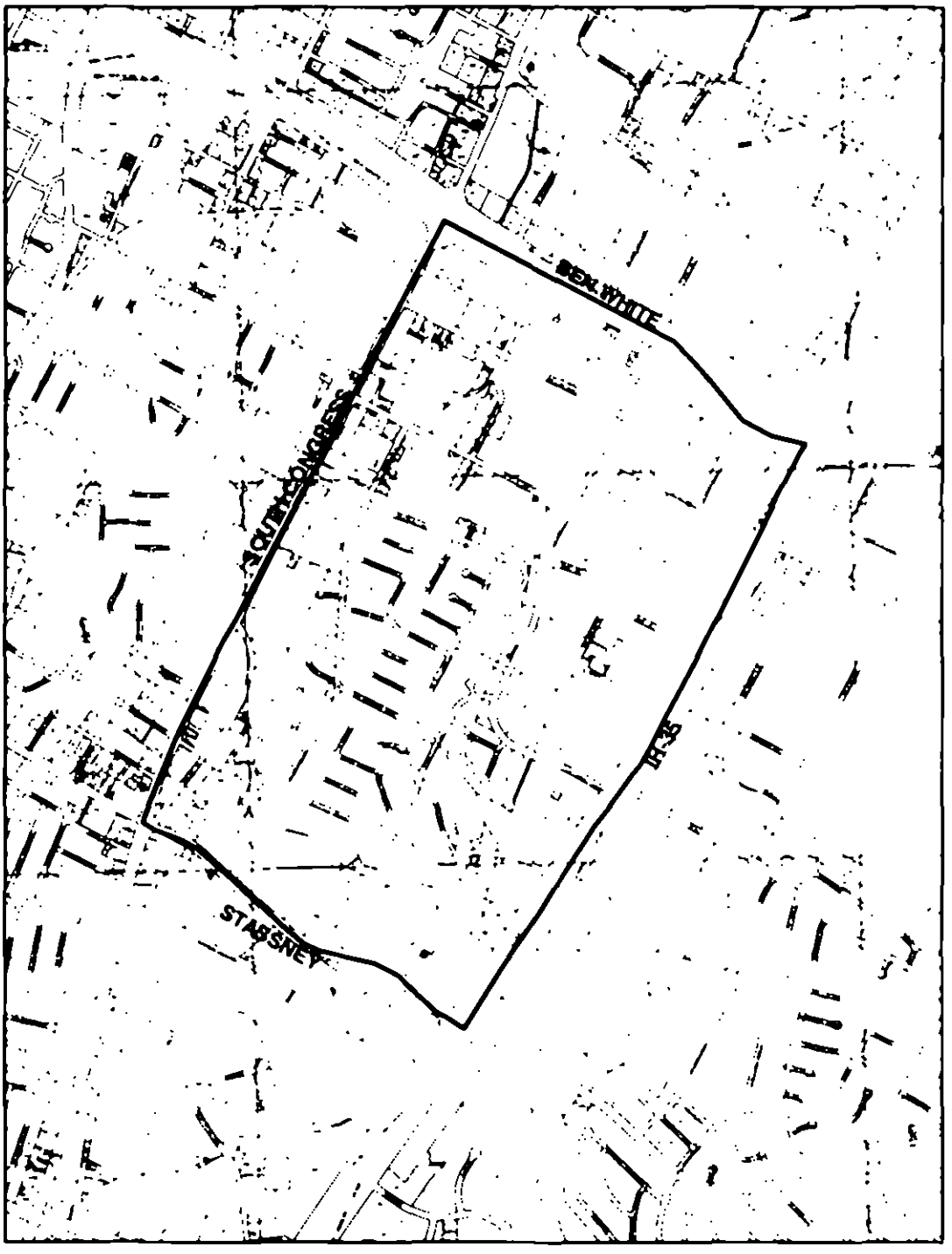
Roads/connectivity/traffic

- Access problems through Fairview
- Roadwork on S. 1st and S. Congress (seems endless): hinders progress; roadwork on S. 1st is currently between Ben White and Williamson Creek crossing
- Fairview has limited-to-no access to arterials with lights at intersections: increasing number of wrecks
- Traffic on S. 1st (a narrow road)
- neighborhoods totally contained by corridors
- Construction on S. Congress causing cut-through in Battlebend
- Customers testing cars from IH-35 dealers: speed in them through Battlebend neighborhood
- Cut-through traffic in Fairview and Battlebend neighborhoods
- Cut-through traffic on Ramble road in Fairview
- Speeding traffic along Mockingbird

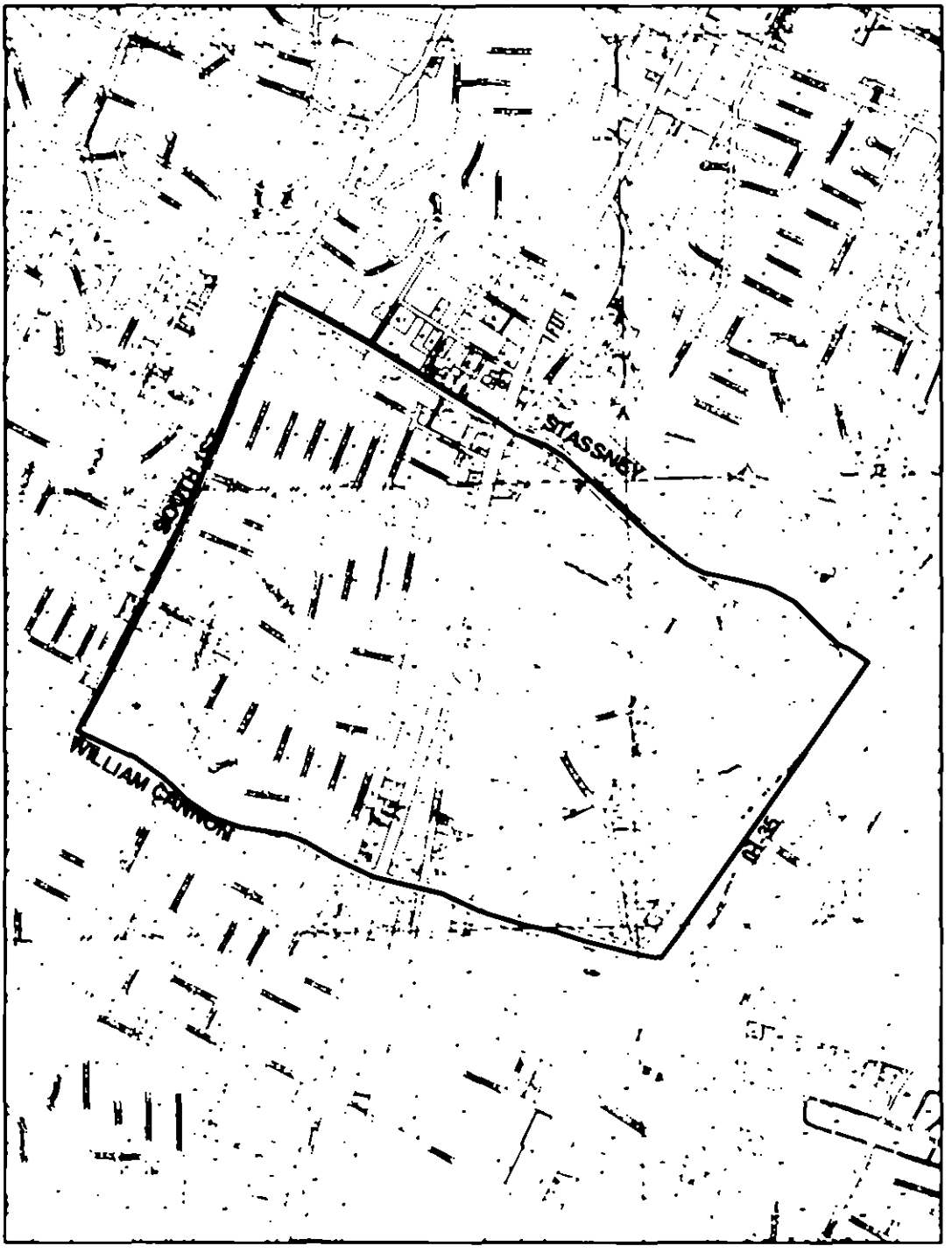
Appendix C
Current Zoning Maps



West Congress Neighborhood Planning Area



East Congress Neighborhood Planning Area



Sweetbriar Neighborhood Planning Area

Appendix C
Affordability Impact Statement

City of Austin **MEMO**

P.O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767
www.ci.austin.tx.us

Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Office
Paul Hilgers, Community Development Officer
512-974-3105 Fax 512-974-3112, paul.hilgers@ci.austin.tx.us

Date	August 22, 2005
To	Alice Glasco, Director Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department
From	Paul Hilgers, Community Development Officer Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Office
Subject	Affordability Impact Statement: South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan

The zoning and land use recommendations of the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan provided to NHCD in July, 2005 have the potential for a positive impact on housing affordability.

The proposed combined neighborhood plan would:

- Allow "Secondary Apartment" on lots smaller than 7,000 square feet in several subdistricts.
- Apply to the North Bluff subdistrict the Cottage Lot, Urban Home, and Residential Infill special uses.
- Application of Neighborhood Mixed Use Building and Neighborhood Urban Center special uses to commercially zoned properties in the neighborhood.
- Establishment of a PDA permitting residential (among other uses) on properties that currently have industrial zoning, and
- Rezoning of properties on commercial corridors to add Mixed Use Combining District (MU).

Please contact Gina Copic at 974-3180 if you need additional information.

Paul Hilgers
Community Development Officer

cc: Gina Copic, NHCD
Ricardo Soliz, NPZD
Jackie Chuter, NPZD

Appendix E
Plan Ordinance