

# Downtown Austin Plan



Adopted by the Austin City Council

December 8, 2011



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Adopted by the Austin City Council

by Ordinance No. 20111208-093

December 8, 2011



## Importance of Downtowns in the 21st Century

I do not know what the future of downtown is, but here is what I am certain of:

- If we are to have an effective environmental policy, downtowns are important.
- If we are to have an effective transportation policy, downtowns are important.
- If we are to have meaningful historic preservation, downtowns are important.
- If we want Smart Growth, downtowns are not only important but also irreplaceable.
- If a local official wants to claim the treasured mantle of fiscal responsibility, downtown revitalization is imperative.
- If we want to avoid Generica, downtown is essential to establish differentiation.
- If the community is trying to compete in economic globalization without being swallowed by cultural globalization, downtown revitalization has to be central to the strategy.
- If new businesses, innovative businesses, and creative businesses are going to be fostered and encouraged, a community will need a downtown where that can take place.
- If we are able to have buildings with meanings, buildings with value, buildings with values, they will be downtown.
- If we are to have public places of public expression, we need a downtown.
- If a community is going to embrace diversity instead of hide from it, celebrate diversity instead of deny it, then that has to take place downtown, it ain't gonna happen anywhere else.

(Donovan Rypkema, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Winter 2003.)

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## SUPPORTING PLAN DOCUMENTS

(These documents are located at <http://www.austintexas.gov/downtownplan>)

- A: DAP Transportation Framework Plan
- B: DAP Parks and Open Space Plan
- C: Waller Creek District Master Plan
- D: Northwest District Plan
- E: Core/Waterfront District Plan



*Second Street District, Austin*

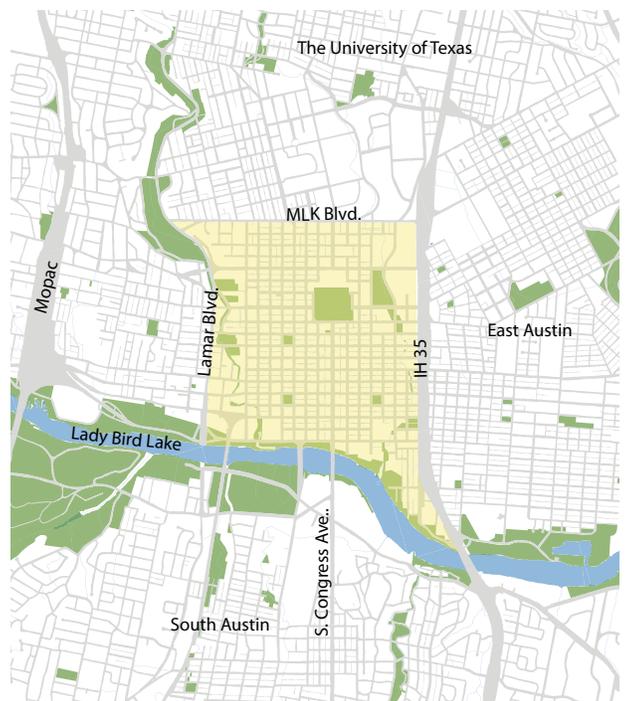
# Introduction

Over the past ten years, Downtown Austin has undergone an amazing transformation. 6,000 new residents have moved to Downtown, inhabiting the many new buildings that have dramatically transformed the skyline and energized its streets and public spaces. Downtown is no longer just a place for conducting business or enjoying live music or dining out. It has become a neighborhood in its own right - a place where people are living, working and playing - a place that offers new lifestyle choices - a place that is contributing to a longstanding vision of a mixed-use urban district at the heart of a sustainable region.

In addition to the influx of new residents, considerable progress has been made in other regards. Second Street has emerged as an urban promenade and an exciting day and night-time destination. The cultural life of Austin has been enriched with new institutions, like the Long Center, the Blanton, the Bob Bullock Museum, the MACC, Arthouse and others. The expansion of the Convention Center and the addition of over 1,500 new hotel rooms have strengthened the Downtown's viability as a national and regional destination. And the introduction of commuter rail service represents a significant step toward a more sustainable transportation system.

In spite of - or in some cases because of - this progress, Downtown faces some critical challenges. There is concern over the loss of local businesses and historic buildings, that live music and the arts are being "priced-out" by higher paying activities, that housing is affordable only to the affluent, that parks continue to decline and that Downtown's auto-dominated streets do not support the kind of urban public life that its citizens envision.

*The Downtown Austin Plan (DAP) encompasses an approximately 1,000-acre area bounded by Martin Luther King Blvd., IH 35, Lady Bird Lake and Lamar Blvd.*



The Downtown Austin Plan (DAP) provided the opportunity for the community to refine its vision for Downtown and to formulate an action plan that addresses these challenges, while building on the momentum of the past ten years. The DAP is the result of a three-year dialogue with the general public and the Downtown community and stakeholders. It involved six Town Hall meetings and scores of smaller meetings and workshops, soliciting input on a wide range of issues and geographic subareas.

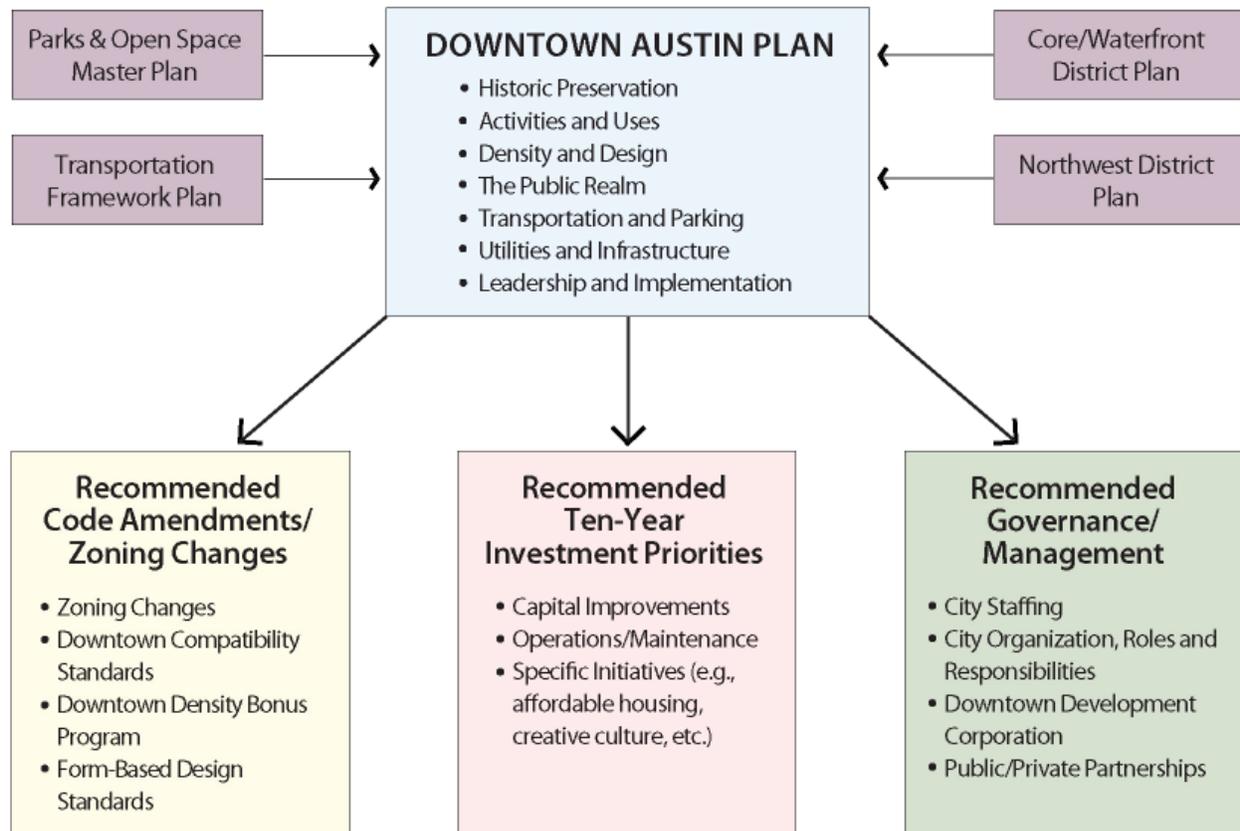
The planning process began with a nine-month “diagnostic” phase to assess existing conditions, analyze opportunities and constraints, identify priorities and craft the work program for subsequent phases of the project. The resulting “Downtown Austin Plan Issues and Opportunities”<sup>1</sup> report was presented to the community and City Council in February 2008.

In 2008 - 2009, the City Council acted to advance specific elements of the DAP, including a Downtown Transportation Framework Plan and an Urban Rail Study, a Downtown Affordable Housing Strategy, a Downtown Density Bonus Program and a Downtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan. Additional studies include reports on historic preservation, the character and form of the various “districts” or subareas of Downtown, creative community strategies, design and development standards, and a program for upgrading utilities and infrastructure. In addition, District plans for three of the nine districts established by the Plan have been developed, including the Waller Creek District Master Plan, the Core/Waterfront District Plan and the Northwest District Plan.

*Over the past ten years  
Downtown has gone through  
a remarkable transformation.*



The community input involved in assembling these reports and plans have informed and contributed to this, the final draft of the Downtown Austin Plan. The Plan was adopted as an amendment to the City’s Comprehensive Plan. After City Council adoption, City staff will initiate the various recommendations of the Plan. As shown in this chart, implementing the DAP will involve three categories of actions: code amendments and zoning changes, governance and management changes and a commitment to an initial ten-year investment plan.



The DAP is intended as a “living” plan – one that will be amended and updated through time. The document is organized into three parts:

**Part I: Executive Summary**, highlighting the community’s vision for Downtown, the findings of the diagnostic phase and a summary of Plan goals and recommendations.

**Part II: Downtown Districts**, describing the diverse issues and opportunities of Downtown’s sub-areas and stakeholder priorities for the improvement of these areas; and

**Part III: The Plan Elements**, providing goals and recommendations for the seven elements of the Plan and the implementing actions necessary to achieve them.



*Downtown Austin Skyline*

# Part One: Executive Summary

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*View from Congress Avenue, Downtown Austin*

# Executive Summary

Downtown Austin is everyone’s neighborhood. It is the place where people gather for special events and celebrations, the place where we exercise our most basic American freedom of public speech, and the place we come to meet one another - both by plan and by chance. It is a place where we make that vital connection with one another as part of the larger community. Downtown conveys our values and aspirations, both to ourselves and to the outside world. As a place, Downtown is perhaps the most vivid and authentic expression of our history and culture: it is the “soul” of our region, a place like no other.

In recognition of this unique role, the Austin City Council passed a resolution in 2005 calling for the development of a plan to guide the City and the community in achieving a shared vision for Downtown. The resolution recognized the importance of Downtown in reinforcing the City’s fundamental goals of economic and environmental sustainability, affordability, livability and diversity. (See Appendix A)

More specifically, the resolution reiterated the goal of 25,000 residents living Downtown in 10 years and therefore, the need to plan for passenger rail; to increase funding for Great Streets, drainage and flood control improvements; to revise and update regulations consistent with more dense urban development and infill; to develop a strategy for affordable workforce housing; and to explore redevelopment of government-owned land.

*Downtown is the place where we make that vital connection with one another as part of the larger community.*



## THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

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Over a three-year planning process of the Downtown Austin Plan (DAP), a vision has emerged for Downtown Austin. At its Bicentennial in 2039, Downtown will be at the heart of one of the most sustainable cities in the nation with:

- A dense and livable pattern of development that supports a vibrant day and nighttime environment;
- An interconnected pattern of streets, parks and public spaces that instill a unique sense of place and community;
- A multi-modal transportation system that is convenient, sustainable, affordable and a viable alternative to the automobile;
- A beloved fabric of historic places, buildings and landscapes that celebrate the unique journey Austin has taken over the past 200 years;



- A variety of districts and destinations that support the creative expression of its citizenry through art, music, theater, dance and performance;
- A green “necklace” of trails extending from Lady Bird Lake, and along Waller and Shoal Creeks into surrounding neighborhoods;
- A wide range of housing choices for individuals and families with diverse social and economic backgrounds; and
- An array of innovative businesses – small and large - that are attracted to the Downtown by its rich human capital and unique sense of place.

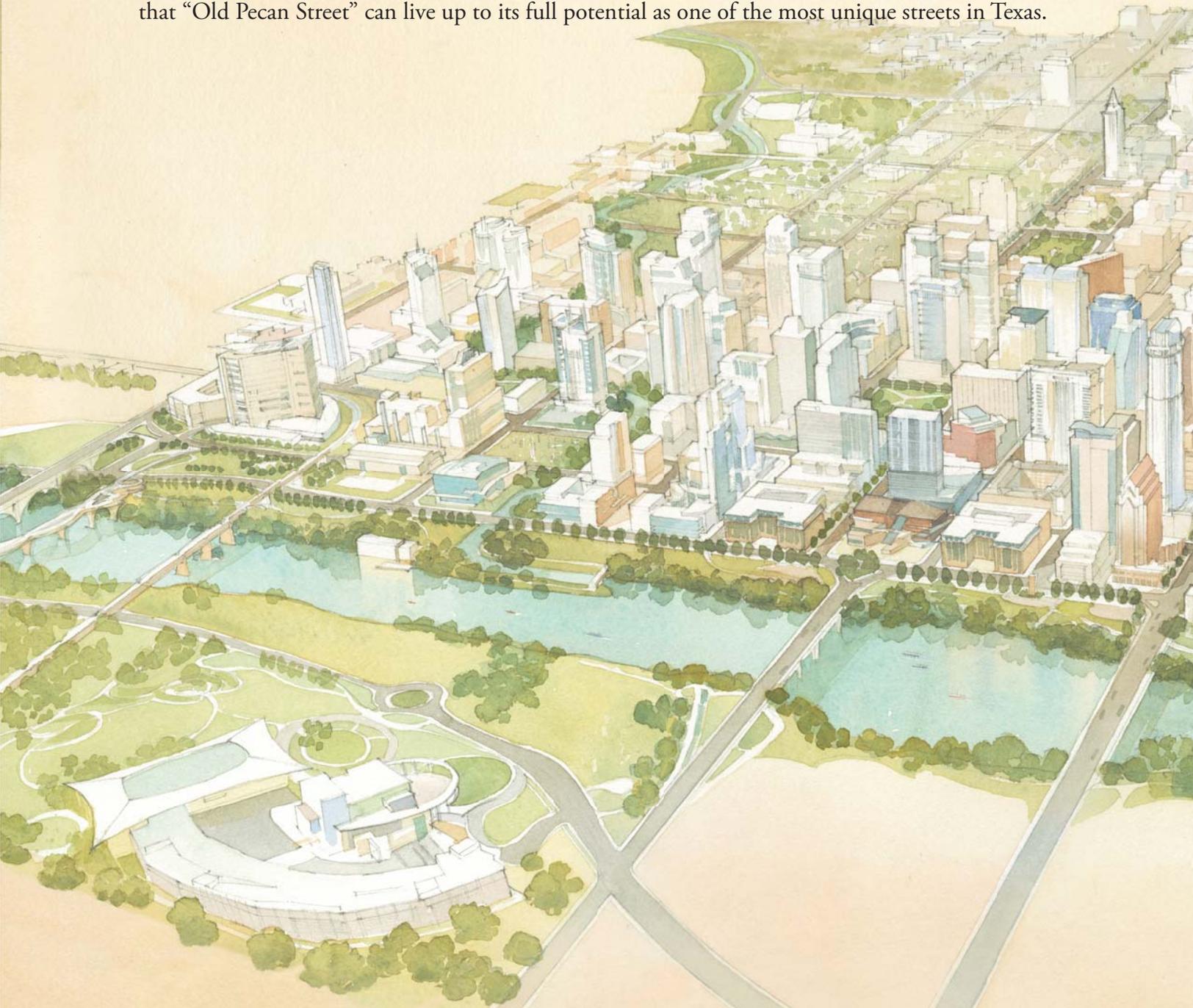


## SEVEN TRANSFORMATIVE STEPS IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS

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The DAP proposes seven transformative actions that can help realize the community's vision. These and other recommendations are elaborated in the Leadership and Implementation chapter.

1. **Initiate a new generation of downtown signature parks.** Complete Waller Creek as a linear park between Lady Bird Lake and UT, along with Palm and Waterloo parks to provide a green “necklace” that can support the revitalization of Downtown’s east side.
2. **Complete the first phase of urban rail.** Connect Downtown, the Capitol Complex, UT and the East Riverside Corridor. Enhance Congress Avenue - “the Main Street of Texas” - and other urban rail streets to promote transit as a high quality mode of choice.
3. **Re-imagine East Sixth Street as a destination for everyone.** Improve the pedestrian environment, diversify activities, protect the unique historic character and provide for coordinated management, so that “Old Pecan Street” can live up to its full potential as one of the most unique streets in Texas.



4. **Provide permanent supportive housing.** Construct and manage safe, secure and affordable long-term housing and services for those who face the complex challenges of homelessness, substances abuse, mental illness or physical disability.
5. **Invest in Downtown infrastructure.** Make utility and drainage improvements that address existing deficiencies and that support positive development in a sustainable way. Establish flexible funds and the leadership that can respond to development opportunities dynamically.
6. **Amend the Land Development Code.** Revise regulations for the downtown area to promote a mix of uses, incentivize well-designed dense development, preserve unique districts and destinations and result in buildings that contribute to a vibrant public realm.
7. **Establish a “Central City Economic Development Corporation”.** City government cannot do all this alone. A special entity should be created to leverage actions by both public and private sectors to develop projects that benefit the community, such as affordable housing, parks, cultural facilities and public infrastructure.



## WHY IS DOWNTOWN IMPORTANT?

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The success of Downtown is tied to the community's larger vision of a city and region that is economically and environmentally sustainable, a vision that is currently being reaffirmed and focused in the *Imagine Austin* update of Austin's Comprehensive Plan.

***An Economically-Healthy Downtown Benefits all of Austin's Citizens.*** We should care about Downtown, because its economic success is central to the prosperity of the city and the region. Taxes generated in Downtown pay for City services well beyond its boundaries: as much as 80% of property taxes generated in Downtown are "exported" to other parts of the City to cover the costs of community services, parks and infrastructure.<sup>2</sup>

- Downtown's land area is 0.6% of the total land area of the City, yet it constitutes approximately 5% of the City's property tax base, about 3.4 billion dollars. An area eight times the size of Downtown is needed to generate the same average taxable value.<sup>3</sup>

*Taxes generated Downtown pay for City services well beyond its boundaries.*

- The per capita cost of building infrastructure in Downtown is considerably less than that of a typical area outside Downtown. To serve an equivalent population of employees and residents in the outlying parts of Austin, we need more land, more miles of streets, water lines and sewers, more parks, more schools, more police stations, more fire stations, etc.



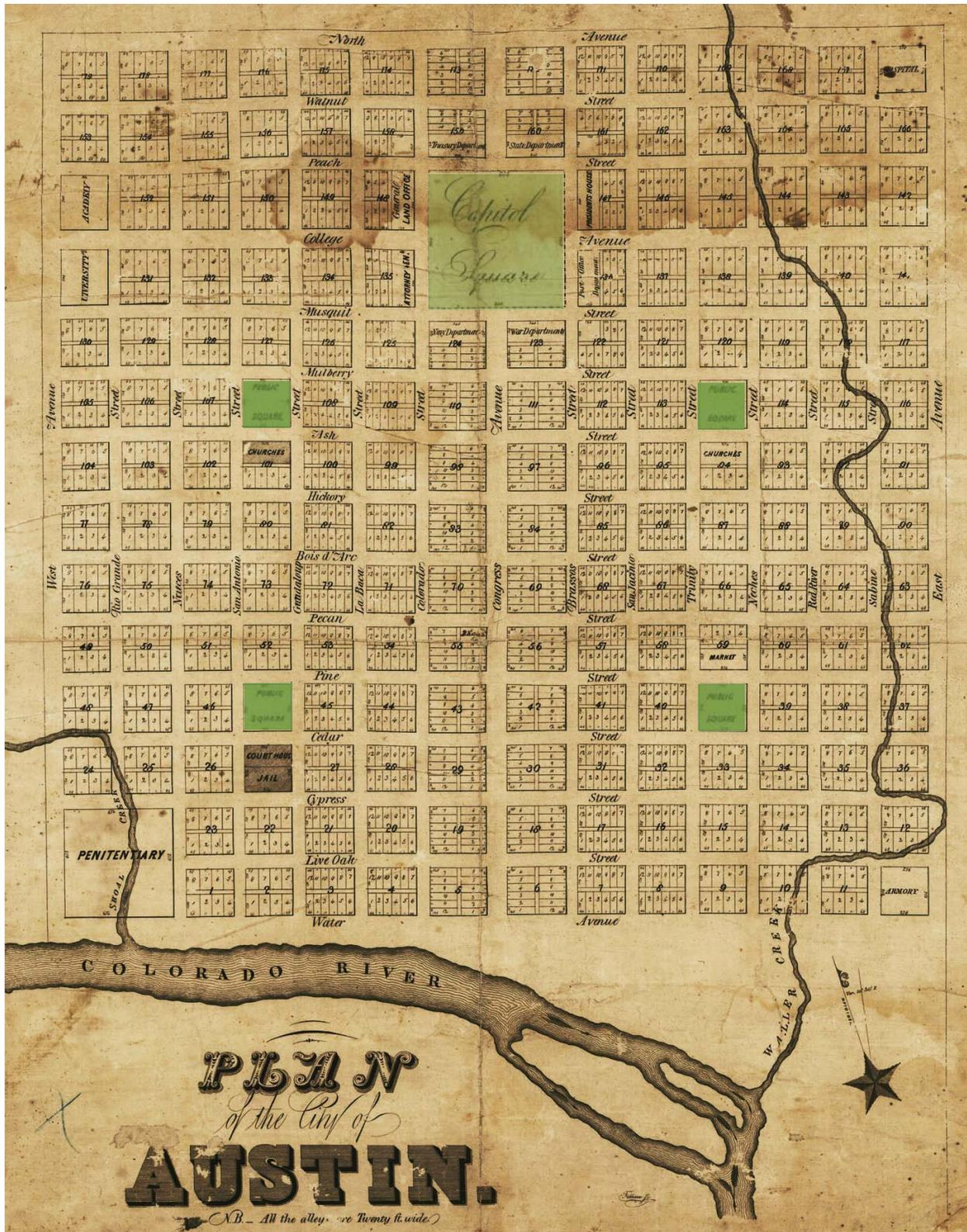
- The cost of providing public services to each new Downtown resident and worker is much less than the cost of serving new residents and employees in less central locations, since the initial infrastructure investment has already been made.
- Downtown is also the focus of live music and culture which city-wide, contributes more than \$2.2 billion annually to the economy, forging Austin's identity and reputation as one of the nation's most vibrant creative-class cities.<sup>4</sup>
- An economically-healthy Downtown is one of the main criteria for how future employers and employees decide whether to invest in our community. Even if they plan to locate in another part of Austin, the vitality and attractiveness of Downtown is a critical factor in choosing Austin as a place for their business and home.

***Downtown is Key to the Region's Environmental Sustainability Goals.*** A compact and dense downtown is a model of sustainability. In addition to being less costly and more efficient to provide services, Downtown has a much smaller carbon footprint than outlying neighborhoods of Austin. Its continued growth and success is key to the community's goals for climate protection and environmental sustainability:

- Development in Downtown is much less land-consumptive than that in the outlying parts of the City, and a compact downtown helps to reduce suburban sprawl that is overtaking the countryside and our environmentally-sensitive lands of the "Drinking Water Protection Zone";
- With a more compact land area than suburban neighborhoods, Downtown needs many fewer roads and sidewalks to support the same number of people, and is therefore helping to reduce: the amount of impervious surface area that brings contaminated stormwater into our creeks and rivers; the number of "vehicle miles traveled" (VMT) that leads directly to the deterioration of air quality; and the acres of pavement and asphalt that create "heat islands".
- By comparing a "green" urban development of 200 residential units to a typical suburban single-family project with the same number of units, the benefits of the urban development become readily apparent:<sup>5</sup>
  - The typical urban project uses less than 3/4 of an acre of land, while the suburban project consumes as much as 70 acres.
  - Impervious cover of the suburban project is thirty times as great (26 to 32 acres compared with 3/4 acres).
  - Landscape water usage for the suburban project can be as much as 15.6 million gallons per year, compared with little or no consumption for the urban project.
  - Monthly electricity usage for the suburban project is five to ten times greater than the urban development (i.e., \$100 to \$300/unit versus \$10 to \$60/unit).
  - The taxable value of the "green" urban project is considerably greater than its suburban counterpart (\$80 to \$150 million/acre depending on the unit value, compared with \$700,000 to \$1.2 million/acre, assuming an average home value of \$200,000).

*Development in Downtown is much less energy, water and land-consumptive than that in outlying areas.*





1839 Waller Plan of the City Austin

## DOWNTOWN YESTERDAY

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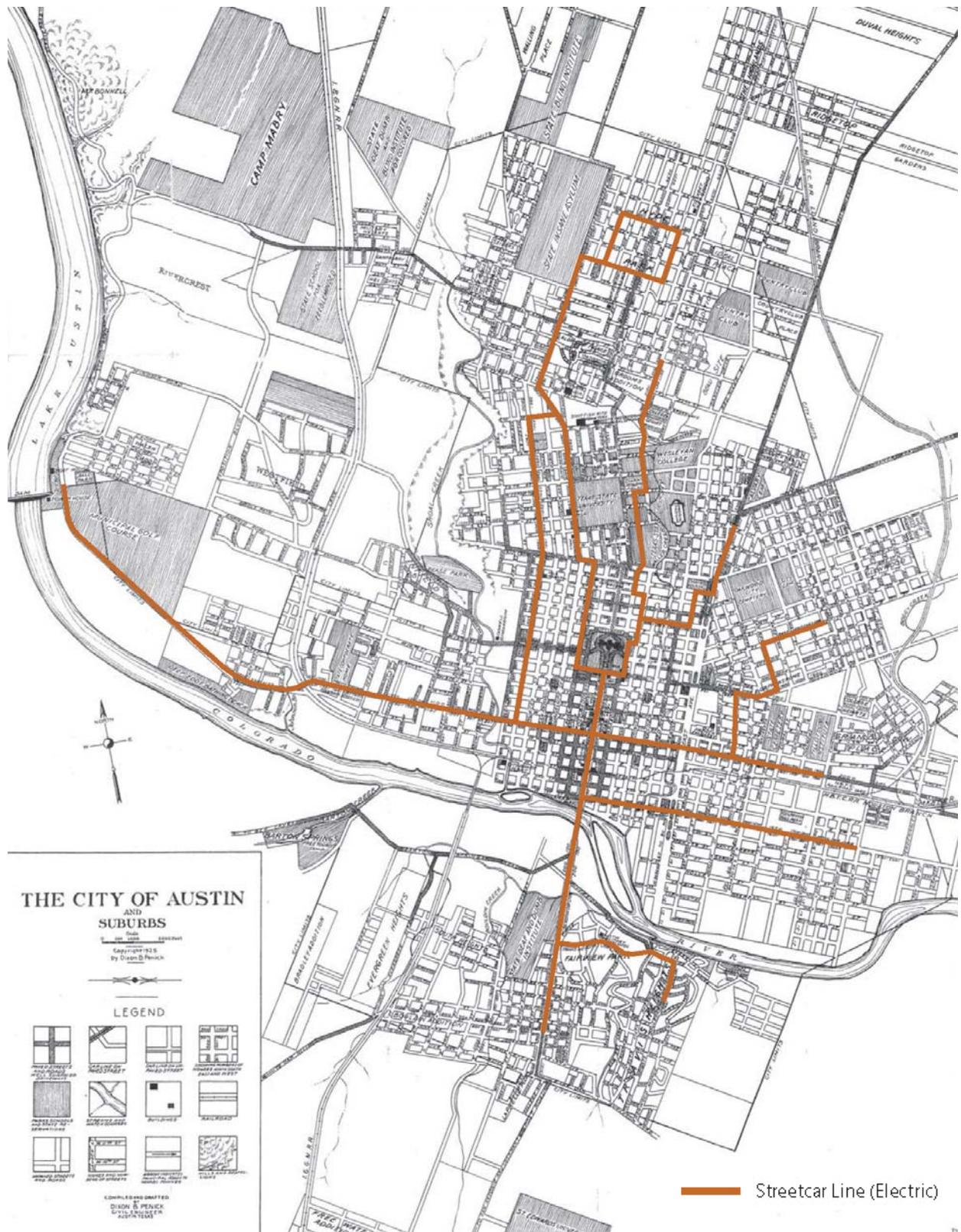
Downtown Austin is the original city of Austin. The shape and form of Downtown dates from 1839, when Edwin Waller laid out the simple grid plan of the original city with its four public squares and Capitol square. The Capitol Building would be constructed at the head of Congress Avenue to serve as a focal point for the city from the Colorado River. The buildings in Downtown represent all of the periods of Austin history and development, including the fine Greek Revival homes designed by architect-builder Abner Cook in the 1850s, the masonry commercial buildings of the Victorian era, the Chicago Style skyscrapers of the early 20th century, and the striking architectural landmarks of today, such as Austin’s City Hall.

In order to fully appreciate the context within which we find ourselves, it is important to understand the forces that have shaped the city. Seven transformative events, not all of them positive, have given Downtown the form and character that we experience today. These include:

- The 1839 Waller Plan (left), which has established a lasting imprint and the basic “DNA” of the city: its block sizes, street grid and public open spaces;
- The introduction of passenger rail in 1871, including an urban streetcar system that led to Austin’s first neighborhoods beyond Downtown: Travis Heights and Hyde Park. The streetcar system, with its 23 miles of lines converging on Congress Avenue, was abandoned in the 1940s for buses and automobiles, but provides a model for a new generation of transit service that is being contemplated today.
- The damming of the Colorado River in 1893, which removed the recurring threat of flooding and ultimately led to the creation of a necklace of recreational “lakes” and to the beautification of Lady Bird Lake - the “jewel” of Austin’s park system. Lady Bird Lake has served as Downtown’s principal amenity and one of the most powerful catalysts for new residential and commercial investment.

*The introduction of urban rail in 1871 (left) and the damming of the Colorado River in 1893 (right) were formative events in the City’s history.*





1925 Austin Streetcar Map

- The City Plan of 1928 was the City’s first formalized attempt to guide growth and public investment, establishing zoning and a parks and recreation department. However, on the negative side, the Plan promoted race segregation of neighborhoods and districts, creating divisions and inequities that still exist today.

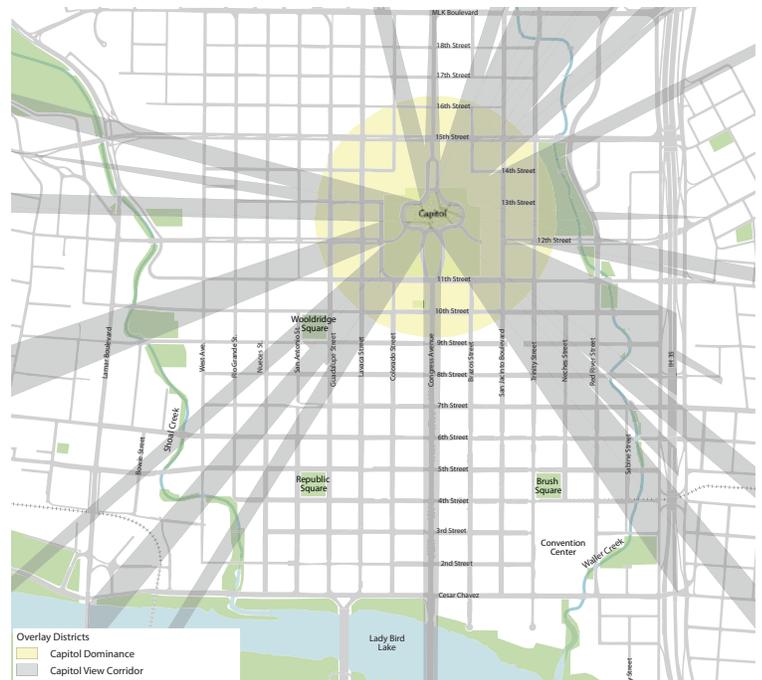


*IH 35, completed in the 1970s, created a significant barrier between Downtown and East Austin.*

- The construction of the Interstate Highway system of IH 35, cutting through the urban core in the 1960s contributed to the economic development of the city and the nation, but tore the fabric of the eastern edge of Downtown, creating economic barriers and racial divisions with East Austin. The visual and physical effect of the elevated freeway is still strongly felt.
- Shortly after the highway was constructed, urban renewal swept the northern and eastern quadrants of Downtown, where the State and UT considerably expanded their holdings, removing single-family neighborhoods. Single institutional uses, such as the Federal Building and State office buildings and their parking garages followed along with university facilities. While many of these uses are positive, the lack of residential and commercial uses nearby or within, has left this large part of Downtown with little vitality.

- The 1984 Capitol View Corridor Legislation has been highly effective in preserving key public views to the Capitol building and dome, and in doing so, the image and identity of Austin as the capital city of Texas. Responding to community concerns that new high-rise development was beginning to overshadow and obstruct views to the Capitol, the City and State adopted several ordinances and legislation: a Congress Avenue Overlay District, requiring setbacks for buildings along the central avenue, a Capitol Dominance Zone limiting building height within a certain radius of the Capitol, and the Capitol View Corridors (CVCs), protecting 35 different viewpoints to the Capitol through specific height limits. These ordinances are playing a significant role in shaping the form of the Downtown skyline.

*The 1984 Capitol View Corridor legislation has been effective in preserving views to this historic resource.*



## DOWNTOWN TODAY

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**The Good News:** Downtown is evolving as a great place to live, work and play. Over the past 10 years, considerable progress has been made toward the realization of some of the community's aspirations for Downtown:

- **People want to live Downtown.** More than 6,000 new residents have moved into new condominiums, apartments and townhouses - a remarkable growth rate of 40% since 2000.<sup>6</sup>
- **There is a greater diversity of land uses.** Over 400,000 square feet of new retail shops, nightclubs and restaurants have opened to serve residents, visitors and employees, bringing more life to the streets. Concentrations of restaurants and shops in the 2nd Street District and around the Whole Foods World Headquarters in the Market District have strengthened Downtown as a regional destination.
- **Job growth has been robust.** Over 6,000 new jobs have been created in Downtown, with an addition of 1.7 million square feet of new office space.<sup>7</sup>
- **Visitors continue to view Downtown Austin as an attractive destination.** Over the past 10 years, more than 1,500 hotel rooms have been constructed Downtown<sup>8</sup>; occupancy and rental rates are the highest in the region, and more than seven million people visit annually, contributing over \$2.8 billion to the economy.<sup>9</sup>

*Downtown is re-emerging as a place to live, shop and play, as well as work.*



- **There is a clustering of cultural venues** (museums, theaters, galleries, live music clubs, etc.) that provide destinations for residents and visitors.
- **The pedestrian environment is improving.** With the initiation and implementation of the Great Streets Program, 70 blockfaces of tree-lined sidewalks have been created in the past 10 years.
- **Bicyclists are safer and more welcome,** with the construction of the Lance Armstrong Bikeway and over 15 miles of new bike facilities within, and leading to, Downtown.
- **Rail transit has arrived,** with Capital Metro’s 32-mile commuter rail service (“MetroRail”) between Leander and Downtown. Lone Star Rail between San Antonio and Austin is in the planning stage, and the City is evaluating plans for a 16.5-mile urban rail system that will extend the reach of the commuter rail to many central Austin destinations.
- **Flood control improvements for Waller Creek are now underway,** which will remove 28 acres of Downtown real estate from the floodplain, create a new open space resource for the community and set the stage for positive redevelopment.
- **There is still significant potential for growth.** There are approximately 100 acres of assembled vacant or underutilized property of a quarter-block area or greater in Downtown poised for redevelopment. Given existing entitlements, this could more than double the size of Downtown, from approximately 26 million square feet to more than 60 million square feet of floor area.<sup>10</sup> This estimate of the potential for Downtown growth is purely a ‘capacity’ analysis (i.e., how many additional square feet of development could be accommodated) and is not an estimate of whether, when, or how much square footage the market will produce.

*Commuter rail service has been initiated and the pedestrian environment is improving.*



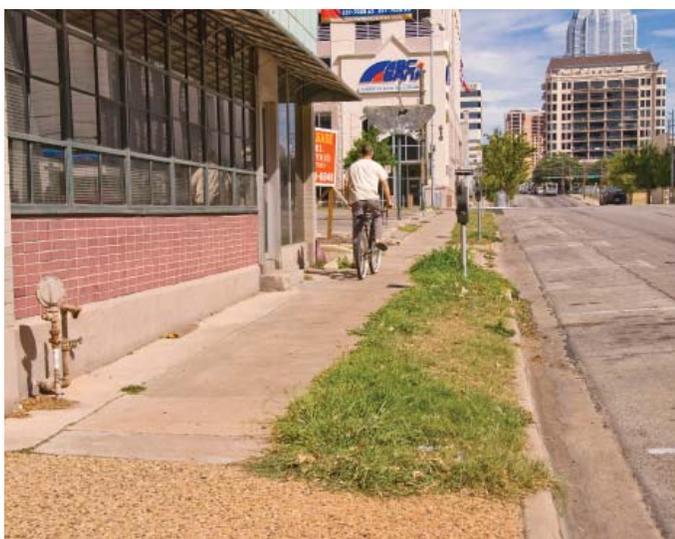
## WHAT IS AT RISK?

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In spite of this progress, Downtown faces significant challenges and risks:

- **The automobile still dominates.** Lack of mobility options continue to threaten both the economic and environmental well-being of Downtown, as well as its visual attractiveness and quality of life. Since there are few reasonable and sustainable ways to increase the capacity of the vehicular network leading to and within Downtown, continued growth is dependent upon a significant investment in transit and other alternatives to the automobile. That investment has yet to be made.
- **The quality of streets and parks is lacking.** The “public realm”, the system of publicly-used streets and open spaces which make up 50% of Downtown’s land area, is in deteriorating condition. Most streets are still uncomfortable places for people to walk or linger. Due to limited funding, Downtown parks are poorly maintained and are often occupied by the homeless, making them uncomfortable for others to enjoy. Significant public and private investment is critical to enhance the quality of life in Downtown, and its appeal as a place to live, work, play and visit.
- **There is a lack of support services for the homeless and very low-income populations.** There are an estimated 3,500 homeless individuals in Austin at any one time, and about 900 of these are chronically-homeless. Despite the needs for transitional and permanent supportive housing, there are no permanent supportive housing units in Downtown.<sup>11</sup>
- **Some local and “iconic” businesses are being priced out.** Some longtime businesses, that have given Austin and its downtown an authentic charm and a level of affordability, have been forced out by new development and rising rent levels. There is concern that Downtown could become a place dominated by national chains.

*The automobile is still the dominant mode of transportation in Downtown. Many streets are uncomfortable places to walk or linger.*



- **Downtown’s role as the region’s center of live music is in danger of being displaced by redevelopment.** Venerated music destinations along Red River Street are at risk of being displaced by new development along Waller Creek. East 6th Street no longer lives up to its identity as a live music district, and the increasing number of Downtown residents has created new issues of compatibility.
- **Downtown’s historic fabric is at risk of being demolished.** More than 150 potentially significant historic properties, identified in Austin’s 1984 Cultural Resources Survey, have been demolished in Downtown over the past 35 years. Some distinctive areas of Downtown – like the Warehouse District – have no protections and are in danger of being lost to redevelopment.
- **Development sites are becoming more constrained.** With fewer half and full-block building sites remaining, new development projects will need to be more efficient with parking and more cognizant of their relationship with adjacent buildings. More specific form-based regulations, with increased levels of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access and shared parking, will be needed to achieve the full potential of a high-density downtown that is livable.
- **The development of Downtown is only beginning to mature.** Compared to other cities in the south and west, Austin’s downtown is in its infancy. Although it has grown substantially in the last decade, Downtown Austin remains in the lowest third of southern and western cities in terms of population density per square mile and land prices remain substantially lower than other cities.
- **Downtown’s share of the regional office and employment market has declined** to less than 20% of the region’s supply. Downtown is no longer the principal employment center of the region, and it has not been the location of choice for the primary tenant drivers of the office market, such as technology companies.<sup>12</sup>

*Unique areas of Downtown including the Warehouse District (left) and the Red River Music District (right) are at risk of being displaced.*



## THE SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN

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The Downtown Austin Plan (DAP) encompasses an approximately 1,000-acre area bounded by MLK Boulevard on the north, IH 35 on the east, Lady Bird Lake on the south and Lamar Boulevard on the west. The DAP is a policy document aimed at addressing the above opportunities and challenges. Like the many neighborhood plans, it was adopted as an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan. Subsequent to City Council's adoption of the DAP, implementation of the various recommendations of the plan will be initiated, such as adoption of new policies, budget and staffing allocations, re-zonings, code amendments, process improvements, etc. The DAP will be a "living" plan – to be amended through time with the approval of the Planning Commission and City Council.

*The DAP process has included six Town Hall Meetings and over 80 smaller focus group meetings on a variety of topics.*



While the planning horizon for the DAP is over the next 25 years, the Plan includes a shorter-term implementation program that focuses on actions to be taken in the next 10 years: 2012 to 2021. The Plan provides a foundation for more specific initiatives (e.g., Downtown density bonuses, affordable housing policies, creative community policies, historic preservation programs, form-based development

standards, etc.), as well as more detailed district plans for the defined sub-areas of Downtown. The district plans provide specific policy guidance for the nine defined character districts of Downtown (see Part Two: Downtown Districts).

### ***The Planning Process***

The DAP is the product of a three-year dialogue with the general public and Downtown community and stakeholders. It involved six Town Hall meetings and scores of smaller meetings and workshops, soliciting input on a wide range of issues. (See Appendix B which describes the meetings held and the people involved.)

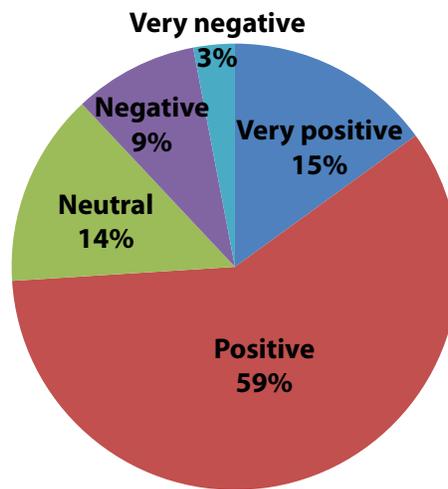


The DAP was guided by senior City staff, by Downtown stakeholders and by the City's Downtown Commission, whose members represent other key boards and commissions.<sup>13</sup> The planning process began with a nine-month "diagnostic" phase to assess existing conditions, analyze opportunities and constraints, identify priorities and craft the most relevant work program or scope for the second phase. It concluded with the "Issues and Opportunities" report to the City Council in February 2008.

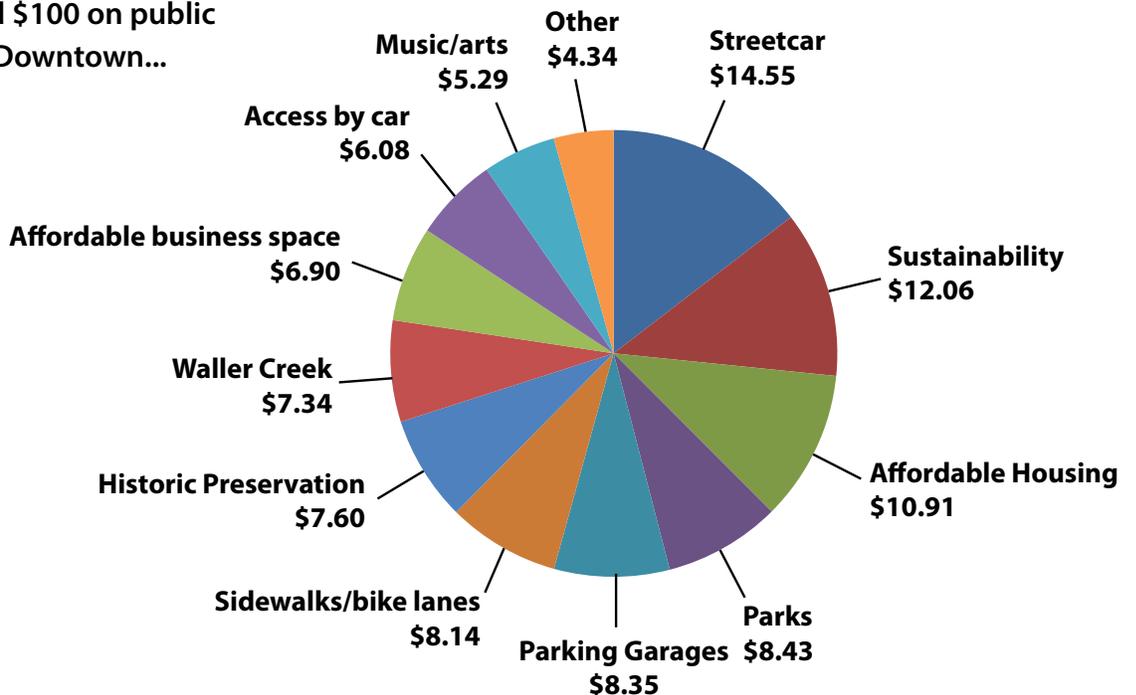
The planning process involved many separate planning studies, all of which have informed the policies of this, overall Downtown Austin Plan. In March 2008, the City Council acted to advance specific elements of the DAP, including: a Downtown Transportation Framework Plan and an Urban Rail Study, which has provided the basis for current transportation and rail transit planning by the City; a Downtown Affordable Housing Strategy to provide policy direction and to optimize public investment toward a more affordable and diverse Downtown; and a Downtown Density Bonus Program to provide an equitable and transparent system of awarding additional density. These reports were finalized in 2009, and with additional public input, have been incorporated into the policies of this Plan.<sup>14</sup>

*A survey completed by over 3,500 respondents asked community members to express their feelings about Downtown.*

**All things considered, I feel \_\_\_\_\_ about Downtown Austin.**

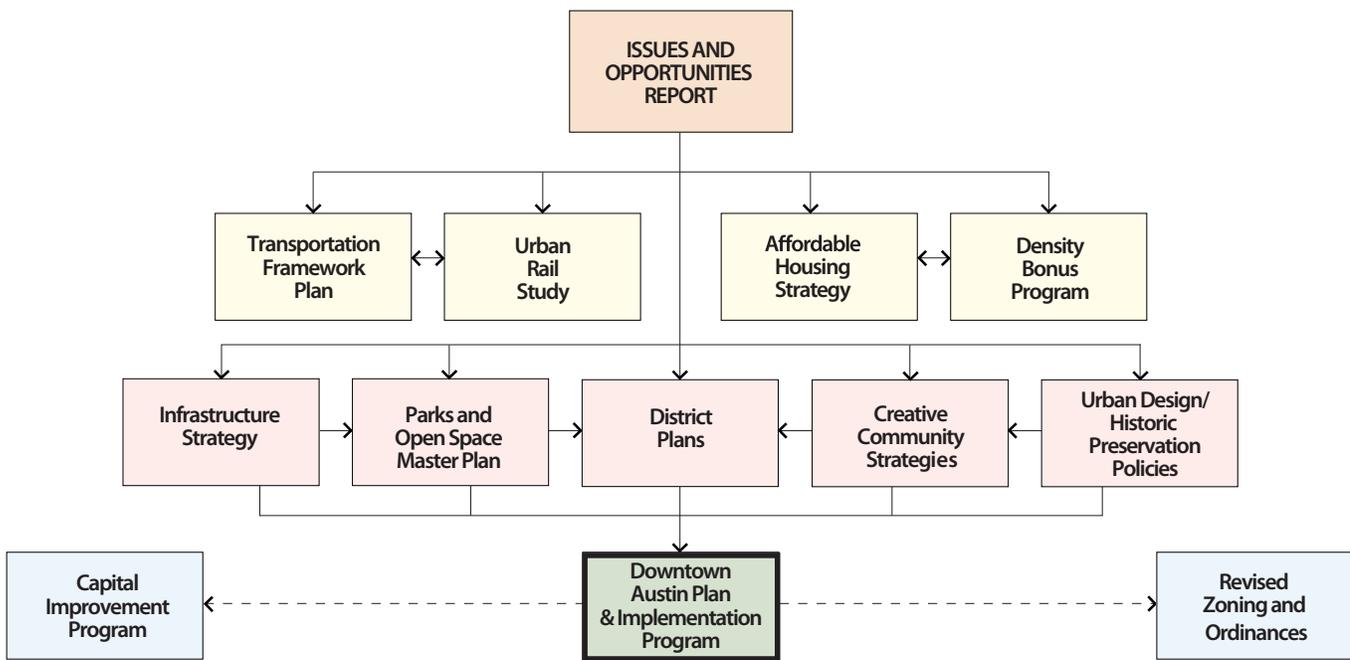


**If I had to spend \$100 on public improvements Downtown...**



Over the past year, the planning process has produced additional separate studies and reports on historic preservation, the creative community, form-based development standards, and utilities and infrastructure. The Downtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan was completed in January 2010 and endorsed by the Parks and Recreation Board in May 2010. In addition, individual district “spreads” were created that capture the essential character-defining elements of each district, along with their key goals and priorities.<sup>15</sup>

Three “district plans” have been completed, beneath the umbrella of the Downtown Austin Plan, including the Waller Creek District Plan, the Core/Waterfront District Plan and the Northwest District Plan. Each involved extensive stakeholder and community input to establish policy direction and development standards for these particular areas of Downtown. The Waller Creek District Master Plan was adopted by City Council in June 2010, and the other two draft district plans have been incorporated within the DAP.<sup>16</sup>



## Organizational Chart of DAP Elements

## *The Planning Context*

Over the past 15 to 20 years, the community has engaged in a dialogue to understand where Downtown Austin has been, and to better shape where it is going. Some of the key guiding plans and documents include several R/UDAT (Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team) analyses and recommendations developed for Downtown, which led to the creation of the Downtown Austin Alliance.

Further, the Design Commission's 2000 Downtown Austin Design Guidelines and its sequel, the 2009 Urban Design Guidelines, provide important perspective and guidance on how both public and private sector development should promote Downtown as a dense, compact and sustainable place.<sup>17</sup>

The City's former Smart Growth Program and ongoing Great Streets Development Program also have contributed to the place-making of Downtown, creating incentives for the private sector to build toward a shared vision of a great downtown.

The Envision Central Texas (ECT) plan, completed in May 2004, sets forth a far-sighted vision for our five-county area, emphasizing the importance of the Downtown as a dense, walkable, mixed-use district at the heart of a multi-centered region served by transit.<sup>18</sup>

An intensive community-based planning process is now underway to update the City's Comprehensive Plan. Known as "Imagine Austin"<sup>19</sup>, the process is building on the work of the ECT Plan to set a policy framework for future conservation, growth and investment. (See Appendix C for Imagine Austin Vision Statement.)

Parallel and in concert with this effort and with the Downtown Austin Plan are several transportation initiatives, including the City's Strategic Mobility Plan and Urban Rail Program<sup>20</sup> which define a long term plan and near-term strategies for implementation. The policies and recommendations of the Downtown Austin Plan build on and reinforce this planning context, toward the vision of an economically and environmentally sustainable region.

*The Envision Central Texas Plan emphasizes the importance of Downtown as the heart of a multi-centered region.*



## SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Downtown Austin Plan is written as an action-oriented document to assist City government, its staff and leadership, and its potential partners in implementing the DAP. For this reason, the recommendations are organized into seven subject areas that relate closely to those City departments, divisions and programs that will undertake their implementation. These elements are:

- Historic Preservation (HP)
- Activities and Uses (AU)
- Density and Design (DD)
- The Public Realm (PR)
- Transportation and Parking (TP)
- Utilities and Infrastructure (UI)
- Leadership and Implementation (LI)



The handbook-style format and the succinct language of the Plan are meant to facilitate action. Each of the seven elements has an over-arching goal or broad intent, followed by a series of specific recommendations formulated as objectives, with sufficient explanation to convey key considerations for final implementation. The spectrum of recommendations include actions regarding the City's and its partners' policies, staffing, programs, process improvements and physical improvement projects.

Approximately 100 recommendations have been developed throughout the DAP planning process described above, and are the result of balancing stakeholder concerns and preferences with best professional planning practices. Some recommendations are actionable immediately, others will require further study and stakeholder input as they are refined and readied for final action. For example, Council adoption of the DAP could initiate the staff action necessary to finalize code amendments and zoning changes and ready them for a series of individual public hearings and adoptions.

The following provides a summary of the Plan's goals and recommendations and serves as a snapshot of the overall Downtown Austin Plan. The full description of these recommendations can be found in Part Three: The Plan Elements.



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

*Preserve and enhance the unique historical and cultural heritage of Downtown.*

### HP-1. PRESERVATION PLAN

**HP-1.1:** Update and disseminate the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey and Preservation Plan, beginning with Downtown, and plan for periodic updates.

### HP-2. DESIGN STANDARDS

**HP-2.1:** Adopt form-based development standards to protect and complement the unique character of historic downtown buildings, streets, and districts.

**HP-2.2:** Adopt standards and incentives to protect the Warehouse District.

**HP-2.3:** Introduce setback provisions and other design standards for building additions within the East 6th Street National Register District.

**HP-2.4:** Introduce setback provisions for new buildings and building additions within the Congress Avenue National Register District.

### HP-3. ADMINISTRATION

**HP-3.1:** Improve the capacity of the City's Historic Preservation Office (CHPO) and that of the Historic Landmark Commission.

**HP-3.2:** Create a historic preservation funding source and incentives to encourage preservation projects available to both public and private property owners, as well as tenants.



## ACTIVITIES AND USES

*Ensure that Downtown's future growth supports a vibrant, diverse and pedestrian-friendly urban district.*

### **AU-1. MIXED USE**

- AU-1.1:** Replace single-use zoning districts with downtown mixed-use zoning designations.
- AU-1.2:** Prioritize or incentivize certain uses in certain districts of Downtown.
- AU-1.3:** Prioritize and incentivize certain ground-level uses along certain streets.
- AU-1.4:** Explore ways to mitigate the potential negative effects of an over-concentration of cocktail lounges, which can discourage establishing a more balanced set of uses, particularly daytime uses that add to the vitality of Downtown.

### **AU-2. HOUSING**

- AU-2.1:** Support the production of affordable housing.
- AU-2.2:** Leverage redevelopment of public lands to contribute to affordable housing production.
- AU-2.3:** Provide for permanent supportive housing.
- AU-2.4:** Promote affordable housing for artists and musicians.
- AU-2.5:** Make downtown housing more family-friendly.

### **AU-3. RETAIL AND ENTERTAINMENT**

- AU-3.1:** Reinforce existing retail and entertainment districts.
- AU-3.2:** Promote ground-level retail and restaurant uses along particular Downtown streets.
- AU-3.3:** Establish retail, entertainment and cultural uses in City-sponsored redevelopment projects.

### **AU-4. LIVE MUSIC, CULTURAL, AND CREATIVE USES**

- AU-4.1:** Encourage Downtown museums and other cultural institutions that serve the entire city.
- AU-4.2:** Provide for the creation of new cultural facilities and live music venues.
- AU-4.3:** Support cultural district planning and marketing of Downtown arts and cultural organizations.
- AU-4.4:** Provide incentives and programs for the protection of the Red River Street music district.
- AU-4.5:** Build on the East 6th Street brand and improve it as a high-quality destination.
- AU-4.6:** Allow restaurants in certain downtown districts to have outdoor music venues with the same sound levels as cocktail lounges.
- AU-4.7:** Increase the capacity of the City staff to act as an advocate for the creative community.

### **AU-5. OFFICE AND EMPLOYMENT USES**

- AU-5.1:** Provide incentives for Downtown office and employment uses.

### **AU-6. HOTEL AND VISITOR USES**

- AU-6.1:** Provide incentives for Downtown hotel uses.
- AU-6.2:** Support the development of an additional "headquarter" hotel in close proximity to the Convention Center.

### **AU-7. PUBLIC SERVICES**

- AU-7.1:** Enhance and expand the range of downtown social services in a manner that is compatible with other land uses and the public realm.
- AU-7.2:** Promote educational and child care facilities that make the Downtown more family-friendly.
- AU-7.3:** Improve fire and police facilities.



## DENSITY AND DESIGN

*Ensure that Downtown can evolve into a compact and dense urban district, with new buildings contributing positively to sustainability, quality of life and the Downtown experience.*

### DD-1. HEIGHT AND DENSITY

- DD-1.1:** Maintain existing height and density limits as a baseline with some adjustments based on the surrounding context.
- DD-1.2:** Finalize and adopt a Downtown Density Bonus Program that allows developers and the community to equitably share the benefits of additional height and density above the existing regulations.
- DD-1.3:** Employ additional density incentives to achieve specific community objectives.
- DD-1.4:** Establish specific scale-compatibility standards that are tailored to the downtown context.

### DD-2. STREETFRONT RELATIONSHIPS

- DD-2.1:** Require setbacks and build-to lines that are appropriate to the form and character of the street.
- DD-2.2:** Allow additional setbacks if these provide publicly-accessible open space.
- DD-2.3:** Limit curb cuts, drop-offs and porte-cocheres that interrupt the continuity of the pedestrian path and experience.
- DD-2.4:** Establish standards for the treatment of commercial building fronts.
- DD-2.5:** Establish standards for the treatment of new residential building fronts.

### DD-3. BUILDING DESIGN

- DD-3.1:** Promote a compatible relationship between new and historic buildings.
- DD-3.2:** Create buildings that provide spatial definition of streets.
- DD-3.3:** Step towers back from the streets.
- DD-3.4:** Provide space between towers.
- DD-3.5:** Encourage tall and slender towers.
- DD-3.6:** Prohibit highly-reflective glass cladding on buildings.
- DD-3.7:** Integrate parking garages into the architecture of a building.
- DD-3.8:** Establish an acceptable level of green building consistent with overall city goals to be established in the updated Comprehensive Plan, and consistent with City of Austin's evolving goals, standards and initiatives.



## THE PUBLIC REALM

*Interconnect and enhance Downtown's network of public parks, open spaces and streets.*

### PR-1. PUBLIC PARKS

- PR-1.1:** Provide adequate funding for the maintenance and operation of all City-controlled Downtown parks.
- PR-1.2:** Program and design parks to serve the diverse needs of Downtown residents, families, workers and visitors.
- PR-1.3:** Improve Downtown's urban greenways and adjoining public parks as natural refuges and pathways.
- PR-1.4:** Improve the historic squares of the original City Plan.
- PR-1.5:** Improve the PARD-owned Old Bakery and Emporium and surrounding parkland on Congress Avenue.
- PR-1.6:** Pursue public/private funding sources and management structures for improving and maintaining Downtown parks.
- PR-1.7:** Special entities, such as non-profit conservancies, should be encouraged to assist with park improvements, operations, management and maintenance.
- PR-1.8:** Allocate additional sources of public funding to Downtown parks.

### PR-2. OPEN SPACE

- PR-2.1:** Provide incentives and design criteria that promote high quality open space within private developments.

### PR-3. STREETSCAPES

- PR-3.1:** Maintain, extend and restore Downtown's grid system of streets and alleys.
- PR-3.2:** Require all new development to build Great Streets sidewalks or contribute to the Great Streets Development Program fund.
- PR-3.3:** Streamline the license agreement process for Great Streets improvements.
- PR-3.4:** Ensure that planned transit facilities, including urban rail, incorporate Great Streets improvements.
- PR-3.5:** Improve East 6th Street as a mixed-use, pedestrian-priority, entertainment street that appeals to a greater diversity of people.
- PR-3.6:** Improve Congress Avenue in keeping with its role as the Main Street of Texas.
- PR-3.7:** Improve Sabine Street, from 3rd to 7th Street as a bicycle-friendly, pedestrian promenade, paralleling Waller Creek.
- PR-3.8:** Explore the creation of a 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor linking Republic Square to Saltillo Plaza.
- PR-3.9:** Establish a public restroom program in Downtown.



## TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

*Develop a multi-modal transportation system that improves access to and mobility within the Downtown.*

### TP-1. STREETS

- TP-1.1: Improve pedestrian facilities in all streets and implement the Great Streets Master Plan.
- TP-1.2: Convert certain Downtown streets to two-way operation.
- TP-1.3: Maintain alleys as the principal means of loading, servicing and parking access.
- TP-1.4: Reduce or remove the barrier of the IH 35 edge.
- TP-1.5: Establish a comprehensive way-finding system for all modes of transportation.

### TP-2. TRANSIT

- TP-2.1: Establish an urban rail system to connect Downtown with other Central Austin destinations and the existing and passenger rail system.
- TP-2.2: Concentrate major bus routes along designated Downtown corridors.
- TP-2.3: Create high-quality, state-of-the-art transit stops and transfer areas.

### TP-3. BICYCLES

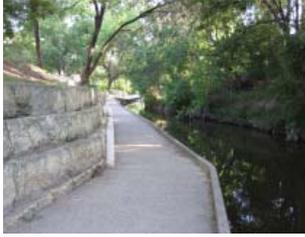
- TP-3.1: Establish bicycle priority streets that provide facilities for all levels of bicyclists along key north-south and east-west corridors.
- TP-3.2: Introduce shared lane markings (“sharrows”) on streets where cyclists can safely share the lane with automobiles.
- TP-3.3: Create a more continuous system of off-street bikeways and multi-use trails.
- TP-3.4: Increase bicycle parking in Downtown.
- TP-3.5: Require shower and locker facilities in office developments.
- TP-3.6: Introduce bike-sharing.
- TP-3.7: Ensure that urban rail facilities promote bike safety.

### TP-4. PARKING

- TP-4.1: Manage and coordinate Downtown parking.
- TP-4.2: Promote public/private partnerships to provide shared parking facilities within new development.
- TP-4.3: Establish an in-lieu fee system that allows developers to contribute to centralized off-site parking as an alternative to providing parking on site.
- TP-4.4: Provide incentives for on-site, car-share spaces and recharging facilities.
- TP-4.5: Manage on-street parking and loading areas in a more efficient manner.
- TP-4.6: Create a way-finding system and real-time parking displays that guide visitors to key public parking facilities.

### TP-5. TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

- TP-5.1: Assist in establishing a Central City Transportation Management Association.



## UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

*Provide for phased utility and infrastructure upgrades that address existing deficiencies and that support future redevelopment.*

### UI-1. COORDINATION AND PRIORITIZATION

- UI-1.1:** Consolidate utility coordination efforts under executive-level leadership to coordinate and facilitate the planning and construction of proposed utility and roadway-related infrastructure projects.
- UI-1.2:** Expand and refine the City's use of the *Envista* system.

### UI-2. WATER/WASTEWATER

- UI-2.1:** Dedicate adequate funding annually to Austin Water Utility's (AWU) "CIP-dedicated funds".
- UI-2.2:** Require developers to submit their Service Extension Requests (SERs) for proposed projects in advance of their site development permit applications to allow time for AWU to assess needs and, if applicable, develop cost-participation agreements.

### UI-3. WATERSHED PROTECTION

- UI-3.1:** Develop a Downtown Drainage Master Plan and extend that plan to adjacent urban redevelopment areas as feasible.
- UI-3.2:** Continue to allocate funding annually to departmental "CIP-dedicated funds" for use in upgrading City storm sewer mains through developer participation programs or for CIP projects, on an as-needed basis.
- UI-3.3:** Increase watershed maintenance of Shoal and Waller creeks.
- UI-3.4:** Construct the Little Shoal Creek flood control project.
- UI-3.5:** Implement the Lower Shoal Creek Restoration Project.
- UI-3.6:** Develop a flood control plan for Shoal Creek in conjunction with a Shoal Creek Greenway improvement plan.
- UI-3.7:** Create a Water Quality Program for Downtown.

### UI-4. ELECTRIC UTILITY

- UI-4.1:** Acquire a site for a future electric substation.
- UI-4.2:** Austin Energy should develop design and location options for electric vaults, including underground and alleyway options, to better achieve goals of pedestrian-oriented, ground-floor uses and facades.

### UI-5. DRY UTILITY

- UI-5.1:** Require that "dry" utility franchises go through a City review process to receive approval for alignments and/or relocations.

### UI-6. ROADWAY

- UI-6.1:** Continue to prioritize maintenance improvements to Downtown streets and alleys, and coordinate and fund "complete" street reconstruction.



## LEADERSHIP AND IMPLEMENTATION

*Implement the Downtown Austin Plan, within the resources and priorities of the community.*

### **LI-1. GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATION**

- LI-1.1:** Establish a Central City Economic Development Corporation.
- LI-1.2:** Encourage and support public/private partnerships and conservancies aimed at building and operating parks and open space improvements.
- LI-1.3:** Organize City government to provide for the effective implementation of the Downtown Austin Plan.

### **LI-2. REGULATORY AMENDMENTS**

- LI-2.1:** Adopt the Downtown Austin Plan as an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- LI-2.2:** Finalize and adopt a Downtown Density Bonus Program by ordinance. (See Appendix H.)
- LI-2.3:** Refine the recommended form-based development standards as part of the ordinance preparation and amendment process. (See Appendix I.)
- LI-2.4:** Amend the zoning ordinance within the Land Development Code in a phased way that allows for further stakeholder involvement and refinement, as appropriate.
- LI-2.5:** Make amendments to other plans, as appropriate.

### **LI-3. DOWNTOWN INVESTMENT AND ACTION PLAN**

- LI-3.1:** Adopt a ten-year action plan for implementation.
- LI-3.2:** Upon adoption of a finalized Implementation Program, EGRSO should lead City departments in the development of a financing plan for these priority actions.



*Littlefield Building, Downtown Austin*





**AMERICAN RAGS & vtech**  
PRESENT

**FIFTEEN MAGAZINE'S**



<b>THURSDAY</b> 7:00pm - 11:00pm 10:00pm: <i>Midnight</i> 10:30pm: <i>Black &amp; White</i> 11:00pm: <i>Black &amp; White</i> 11:30pm: <i>Black &amp; White</i> 12:00am: <i>Black &amp; White</i> 12:30am: <i>Black &amp; White</i> 1:00am: <i>Black &amp; White</i> 1:30am: <i>Black &amp; White</i> 2:00am: <i>Black &amp; White</i> 2:30am: <i>Black &amp; White</i> 3:00am: <i>Black &amp; White</i>	<b>FRIDAY</b> 7:00pm - 11:00pm 10:00pm: <i>White Line</i> 10:30pm: <i>Rainforest</i> 11:00pm: <i>Let's Get the Party</i> 11:30pm: <i>The Whig</i> 12:00pm: <i>Wild Light</i> 12:30pm: <i>Arms N' Legs</i> 1:00pm: <i>But For Leather</i>	<b>SATURDAY</b> 7:00pm - 11:00pm 10:00pm: <i>Red Eye</i> 10:30pm: <i>RASA</i> 11:00pm: <i>Flamenco</i> 11:30pm: <i>Aski Seka</i> 12:00pm: <i>Chica</i> 12:30pm: <i>Chicklet</i> 1:00pm: <i>Black &amp; White</i> 1:30pm: <i>Black &amp; White</i> 2:00pm: <i>Black &amp; White</i>
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Warehouse District, Austin

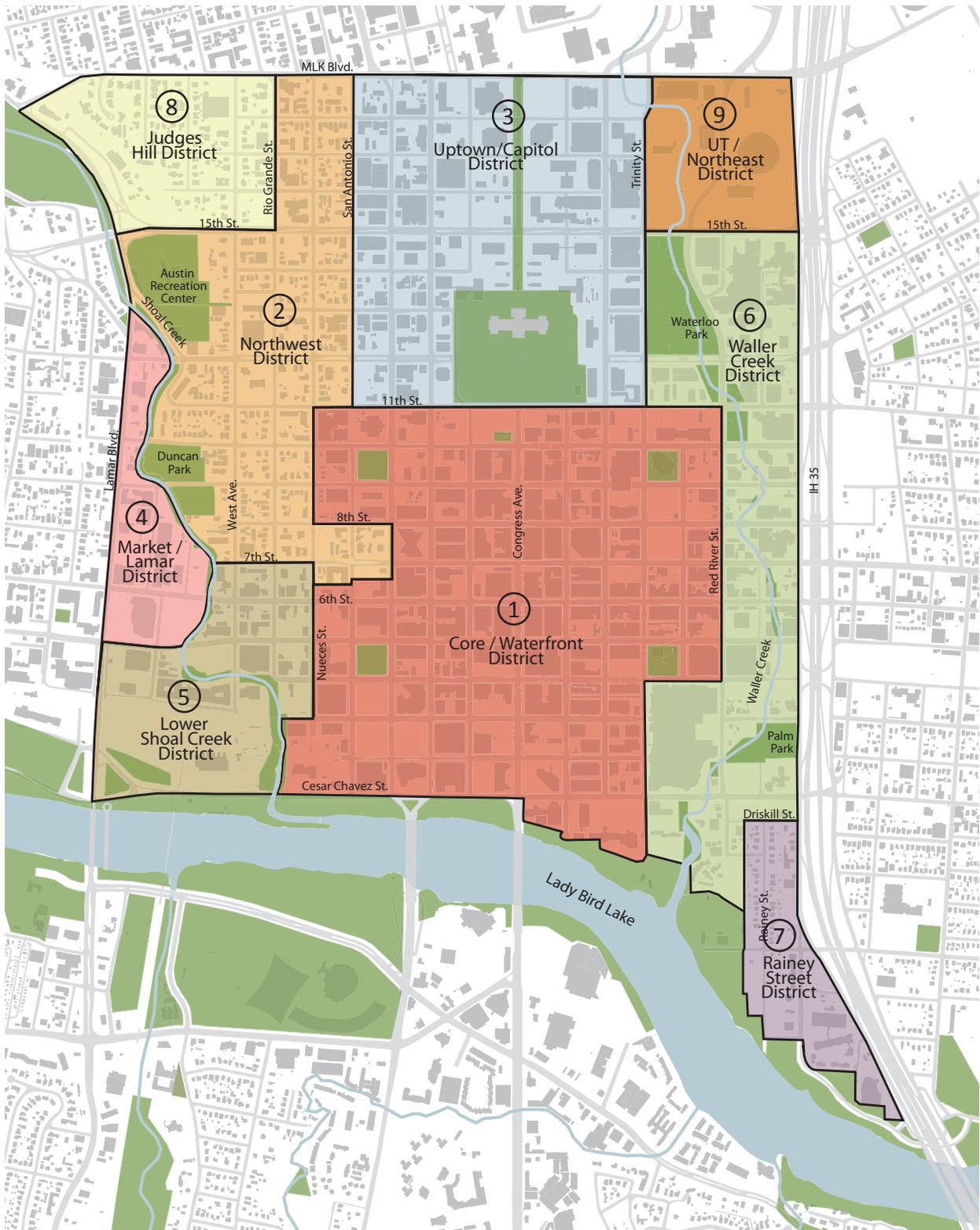
# Downtown Districts

Downtown is not a monolithic or homogenous place: it is a series of sub-areas or districts that have evolved differently since Austin's beginnings in 1839 - with different uses and activities, building types and heights and property ownership patterns. The character of Downtown ranges from the skyscrapers of Congress Avenue to the single-family neighborhood of Judges Hill. This diversity gives Downtown an authentic sense of place - a unique character that fosters district pride, enjoyment and investment, as well as visitor appeal.

As part of the Downtown Austin Plan, nine such districts have been identified as areas that share common characteristics in terms of their built form and scale, activities and uses and the issues and opportunities that they face. Delineating these areas as districts has allowed their stakeholders to convene and discuss those characteristics, to understand what is important to preserve, where and what kinds of new development should be encouraged, and the kinds of public improvements that should be given the highest priority.

This section of the DAP provides a summary of the issues, opportunities and priorities of the districts, except for the single-family neighborhood of Judges Hill and The University of Texas-owned Northeast/UT District, both of which will be the subject of future planning processes. Three of the Downtown districts – the Northwest, the Core/Waterfront and the Waller Creek districts have been developed as District Plans, with more detailed recommendations that have informed the recommendations of the DAP. (The Waller Creek District Plan<sup>21</sup>, adopted by the City Council in June 2010, was part of a separate planning effort guided by an advisory committee and resulting in a master plan for the design of the creek corridor and surrounding area.). As additional district plans are completed, it is anticipated that the overall DAP will be refined and amended accordingly.

In the meantime, the following district summaries may be used to help guide preservation, development and investment in each district, or simply to convey an overall picture of each of these unique areas.



**Downtown Districts Map**

## SUMMARY OF DISTRICT GOALS

### 1 CORE/WATERFRONT DISTRICT

- Enhance the Core as the premier employment, cultural and visitor center of the region.
- Improve the quality of the pedestrian experience.
- Make it easier to get to Downtown and move around without a car.
- Restore and activate the historic squares.
- Ensure that the District is a welcoming and affordable place for all.
- Preserve the historic building fabric.

### 2 NORTHWEST DISTRICT

- Preserve neighborhood's historic residential character.
- Bring residents back to neighborhood.
- Preserve existing tree canopy along streets.
- Preserve and enhance existing open space.
- Improve pedestrian environment.
- Improve conditions for bicycling.
- Improve Shoal Creek and improve quality and accessibility of its creekside trail.

### 3 UPTOWN/CAPITOL DISTRICT

- Promote broader diversity of uses.
- Encourage redevelopment of underutilized properties and parking garages along the Lavaca/Guadalupe and San Jacinto/Trinity Street transit corridors.
- Enhance State Capitol campus along Congress Avenue, consistent with the 1989 Texas Capitol Master Plan.
- Enhance streets to be pedestrian/bicycle-friendly and to link better with Downtown and UT.

### 4 MARKET/LAMAR DISTRICT

- Strengthen area as compact, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use district, with retail and restaurant uses.
- Improve quality and safety of pedestrian environment, particularly along Lamar Boulevard, 5th and 6th streets.
- Enhance streets to be more bicycle-friendly.
- Enhance Shoal Creek, addressing flood control and improving continuity and accessibility of trail.
- Promote appropriately-scaled new development to transition to neighborhoods west of Lamar.

### 5 LOWER SHOAL CREEK DISTRICT

- Improve Creek as open space amenity, and improve continuity and accessibility of trail.
- Improve flood capacity and riparian character of Creek corridor.
- Extend street grid to create stronger bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular linkages to Core/Waterfront.
- Promote mix of residential, commercial, cultural and visitor-oriented uses that contribute to the day and nighttime life.

### 6 WALLER CREEK DISTRICT

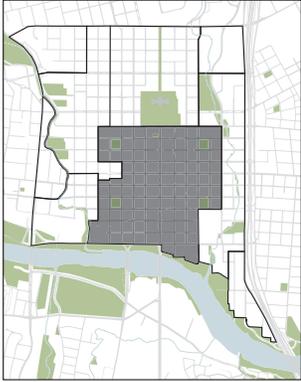
- Transform Creek into urban greenway and linear open space that connects surrounding community.
- Create continuous pedestrian and bicycle access between Lady Bird Lake and UT in/near Creek corridor.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections between East Austin, UT, Waller Creek and Core/Waterfront.
- Maintain and enhance environmental and habitat value of Creek as a riparian corridor.
- Encourage new development that promotes area as diverse, livable, and affordable mixed-use district with a distinctly local feel.
- Establish activities along Creek that contribute to its safety and vitality and to area's economic revitalization.
- Promote as a place for creative and cultural activities, including live music venues, galleries, studios, etc.
- Improve Palm and Waterloo parks to better serve adjacent neighborhoods and to provide opportunities for community-wide events and recreation.

### 7 RAINEY STREET DISTRICT

- Allow for orderly transition from single-family enclave to high density, mixed-use neighborhood.
- Establish infrastructure master plan to promote an adequate roadway, pathway and utility network.
- Create stronger pedestrian and bicycle linkages to CBD, Lady Bird Lake, Waller Creek and East Austin.
- Create improved roadway connectivity to IH 35 frontage road and Cesar Chavez.
- Preserve existing tree canopy along Rainey Street to the maximum extent possible.

### 8 JUDGES HILL DISTRICT - No proposed changes

### 9 UT/NORTHEAST DISTRICT - No proposed changes



## CORE/WATERFRONT DISTRICT

(See also detailed district plan at <http://www.austintexas.gov/downtownplan>)

### *District Specific Goals:*

1. Enhance the Core/Waterfront as the premier employment, cultural and visitor center of the region.
2. Improve the quality of the pedestrian experience.
3. Make it easier to move around without a car.
4. Restore and activate the historic squares.
5. Ensure that the District is a welcoming and affordable place for all.
6. Preserve the historic building fabric.

### *Top Three Public Improvement Priorities (per 256 responses from 2009 survey):*

1. Great Streets (72%), particularly Congress Avenue and East 6th Street
2. Existing open space improvements (46%), including the historic squares
3. Public parking facility (33%)

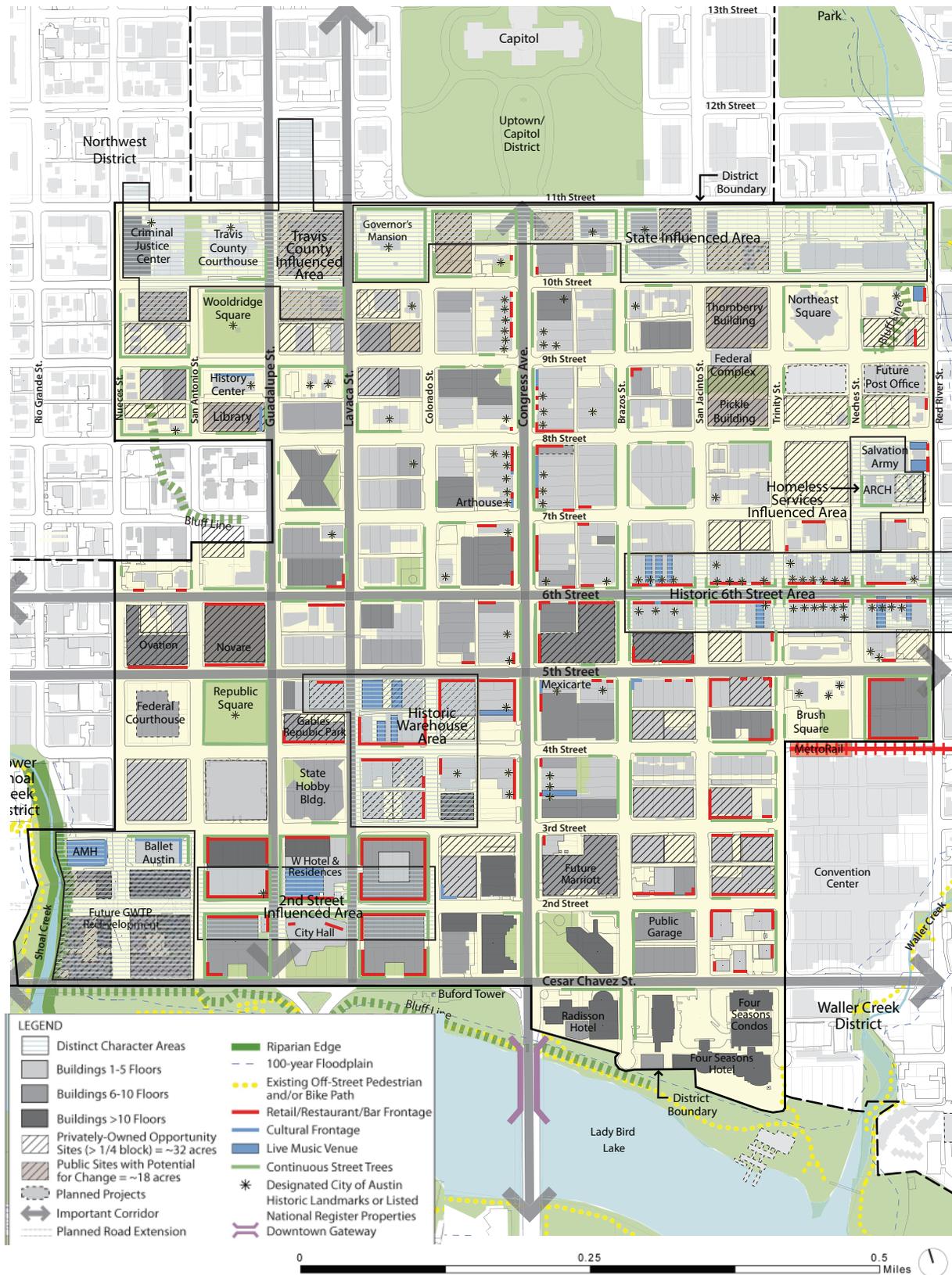
### *Existing Form and Character:*

- The Core/Waterfront is the most intensely developed and urbanized district of the city. Focused along Congress Avenue between Lady Bird Lake and the Capitol, it has a strong and memorable identity that is recognizable throughout the region.
- The area consists of numerous sub-districts, each with its own unique identity, including: Congress Avenue, East 6th Street, the Warehouse District, the three historic squares, 2nd Street, the Waterfront and the Convention Center area.
- The District faces and embraces Lady Bird Lake, the region’s pre-eminent open space and one of the community’s most beloved gathering places.
- The Core is the principal address for corporate office users and for major “flagship” hotels.

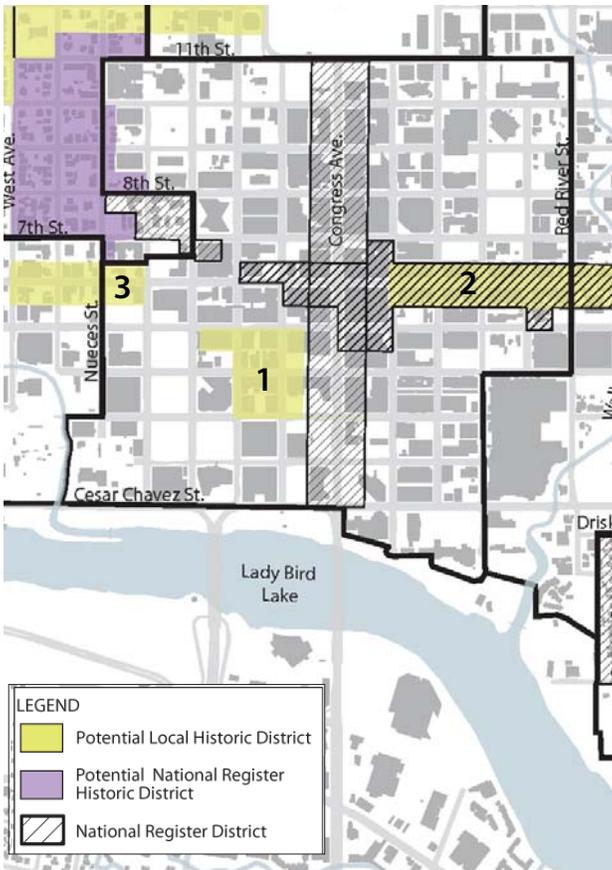
*Congress Avenue the, “Main Street of Texas”, is the principal axis of the Core/Waterfront District.*



- Downtown’s waterfront has emerged as a high-density residential and mixed-use area.
- The eastern portion of the Core is least developed, characterized by underutilized parcels, parking lots and a concentration of social services.



## Core/Waterfront District Form and Character Analysis



### Existing and Potential Historic Districts

*The sites shown in brown represent approximately 14.4 million square feet of future potential development.*



### Historic Resources Identification:

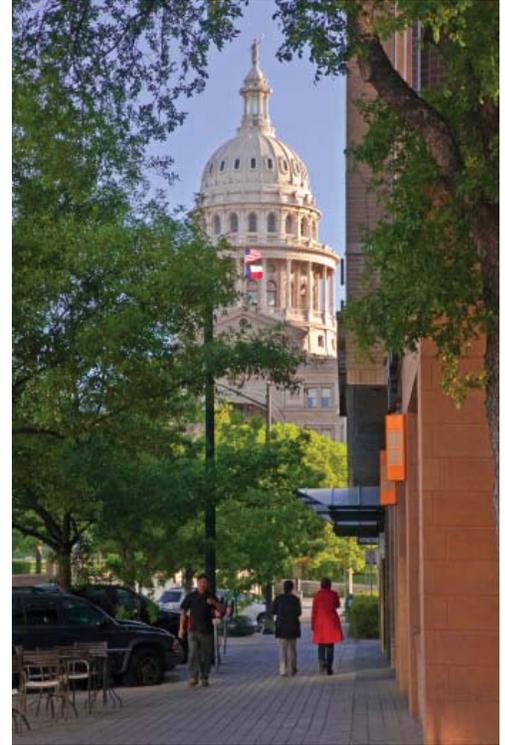
- On the basis of windshield surveys and the City’s 1984 Cultural Resources Survey, several sub-areas of the Core/Waterfront District have been identified as potential historic districts, subject to further study and property owner interest. These are:
  1. A possible Local Historic District (LHD) in a portion of the railroad-oriented warehousing district which began to develop in the 1870s. The focus of this district is Colorado Street, between West 3rd and West 5th, between Lavaca Street and the north-south alley immediately west of Congress Avenue.
  2. A possible Local Historic District could be created within the existing East 6th Street National Register Historic District (NRHD); and
  3. A possible Local Historic District is identified along the segment of West 6th Street, between San Antonio Street and West Avenue.

### Development Opportunity Sites:

- There are 63 properties, totaling about 50 acres that have been assembled to a quarter-block or greater. (See Form and Character Analysis map on p. 35.)
- These “opportunity sites” are relatively unconstrained and could likely develop over the next five to 15 years, representing approximately 14.4 million square feet of development.

### Urban Design Priorities:

- Incentivize office and hotel uses to bolster the Core/Waterfront as the premier office employment district and visitor destination of the region.
- Improve the pedestrian environment and streetscape throughout the District and especially along Congress Avenue and East 6th Street.
- Establish a better mix of ground-level retail uses throughout, particularly along Congress Avenue, 2nd Street and East 6th Street.
- Ensure a concentration of live music venues, but control the number of cocktail lounge uses.
- Promote redevelopment and revitalization of the east side of the Core/Waterfront, with catalyst public projects and improvements (e.g., Waller Creek, East 6th Street and Congress Avenue streetscapes, Brush Square, affordable/supportive housing).
- Promote publicly-accessible plazas and pocket parks on private land.
- Create form-based design standards that promote compatibility between new buildings which are adjacent to historic structures or along designated historic street frontages (e.g., Warehouse District).
- Establish development standards that allow for multiple towers to be constructed on one block (e.g., tower spacing and setback requirements).
- Require or incentivize some percentage of below-grade parking.
- Preserve Red River Street Entertainment District as a live music district that fosters innovation.
- Explore the creation of a 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor linking Republic Square to Saltillo Plaza.



*Congress Avenue should be enhanced as a green boulevard with active pedestrian-oriented uses.*

*East Sixth Street (left) and Second Street (right) are also major pedestrian activity spines within Downtown.*





## NORTHWEST DISTRICT

(See also detailed district plan at <http://www.austintexas.gov/downtownplan>)

### *District-Specific Goals:*

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

### *Top Three Public Improvement Priorities (per 36 responses from 2009 survey):*

1. Great Streets (64%)
2. Off-street multi-use trails (47%)
3. Creek stabilization and flood improvements (42%)

### *Existing Form and Character:*

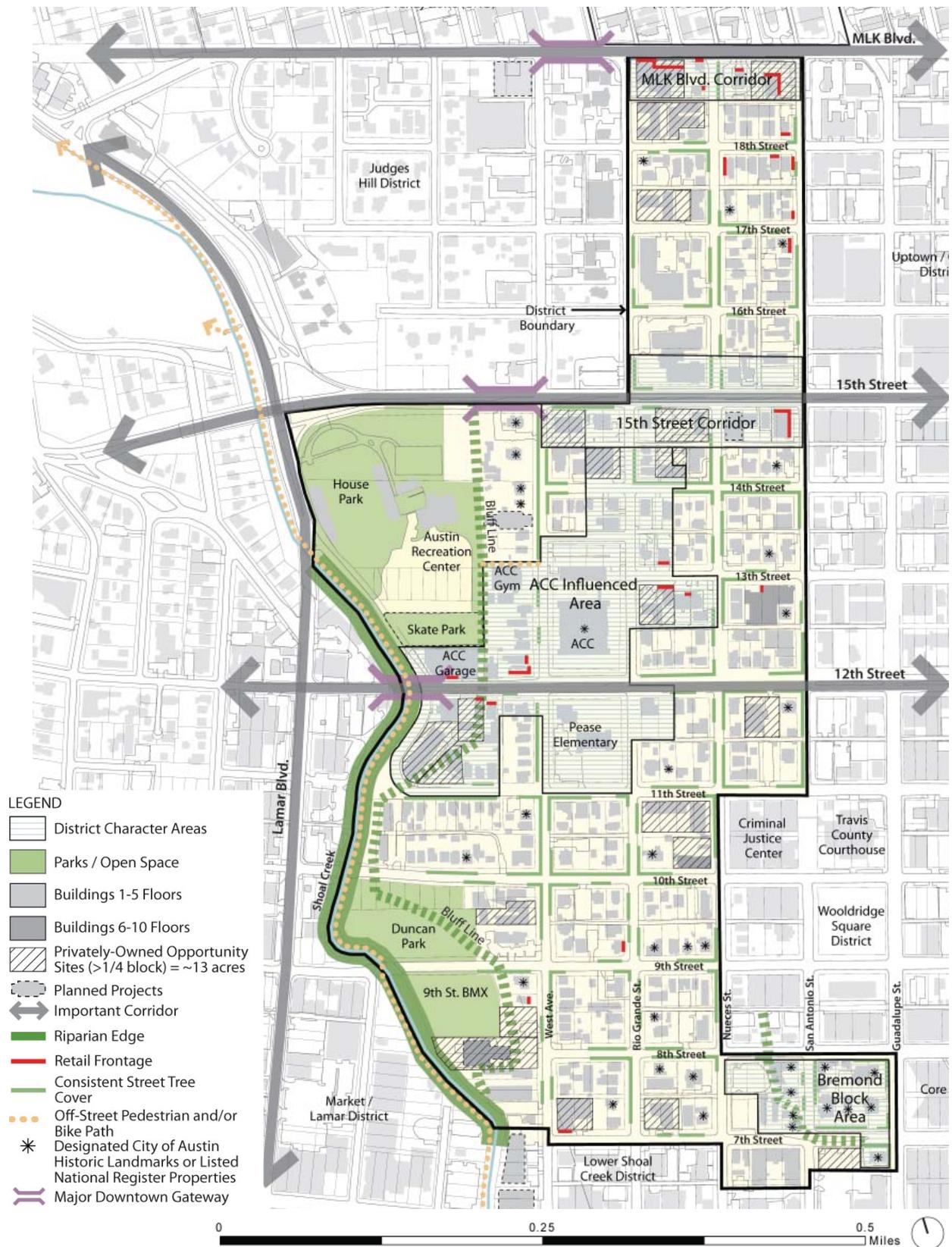
- Most of this area was developed as Austin's first residential neighborhood, with houses of prominent citizens dating back to the mid-19th century.
- The historic residences are typically one and two floors and include front porches set back from the sidewalk by 10 to 15 feet. The Bremond Block Historic District is an exceptional collection of some of the largest historic houses.
- The mature streetyard tree canopy throughout the District contributes greatly to the character of the area, as well as to the city's urban forest.
- Many of the homes have been restored, but few are currently in residential use. Most have been rehabilitated for office use, including many law offices, which benefit from their proximity to the County Courthouse and Capitol.
- There is little night-time activity in this area and few commercial (retail, restaurant) offerings. (Zoning within the District is predominantly LO,

Limited Office, and GO, General Office, which precludes multi-family residential use.)

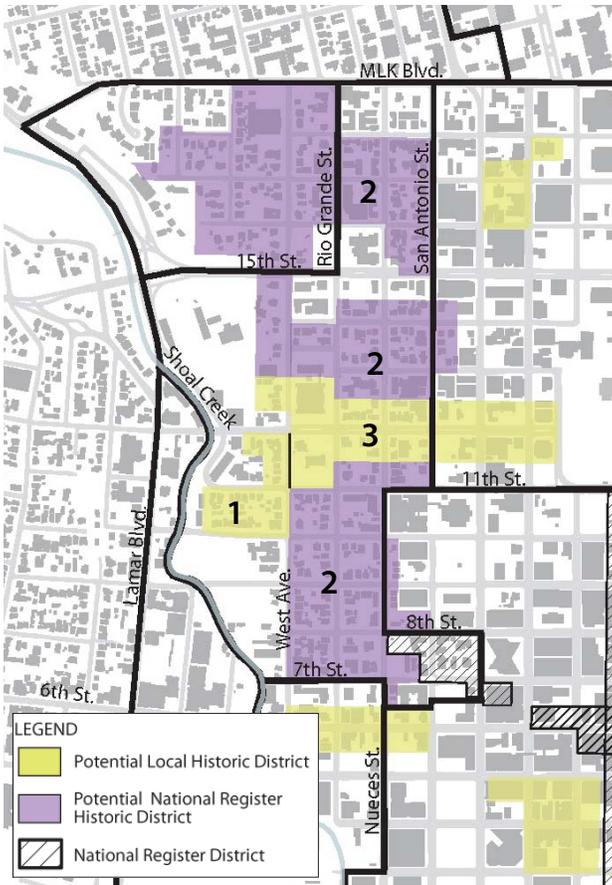
- The principal public open spaces of the neighborhood, Duncan Park/BMX Park and House Park, are located along Shoal Creek.
- The historic school structures at the heart of the neighborhood, now occupied by Austin Community College (ACC) and Pease Elementary School, create a campus environment and a center of activity. There are some small, neighborhood-serving retail uses nearby along 12th Street.

*The Northwest District was Austin's first residential neighborhood.*





## Northwest District Form and Character Analysis



### Existing and Potential Historic Districts

*Infill development should respect the scale of the historic houses and preserve the tree canopy, like this example in Vancouver's West End neighborhood.*



- The MLK edge of the neighborhood is immediately opposite the University Neighborhood Overlay (UNO), occupied by a mix of uses, including “strip-commercial”, multi-family housing, bed-and-breakfast and office.

#### *Historic Resources Identification:*

- On the basis of windshield surveys and the City’s 1984 Cultural Resources Survey, the following three sub-areas of the Northwest District have been identified as potential historic districts, subject to further study and property owner interest.
  1. A possible Local Historic District (LHD) is identified in the block between West Avenue and Shoal Creek, West 10th and 11th streets, and the east half of the block between West Avenue and Shoal Creek, 11th and 12th streets. The old West Austin Public School, now Pease Elementary, could also be included in this LHD.
  2. A possible National Register Historic District (NHRD) is identified along West Avenue, Rio Grande, Nueces and San Antonio streets. Portions of this area may also be incorporated into a LHD, associated with the district currently being contemplated by the Judges Hill Neighborhood.
  3. A possible Local Historic District (LHD) is identified along the West 12th Street. This street is presently and historically a significant “gateway” corridor into the original city, as it is one of the axial approaches to the Capitol Building.

*The sites shown in brown represent approximately 1.0 million square feet of potential future development.*



#### *Development Opportunity Sites:*

- There are 21 assembled properties, totaling about 13 acres. (See Form and Character Analysis map on p. 39.)
- These “opportunity sites” are dispersed throughout the District, are relatively unconstrained and could likely develop over the next five to 15 years, representing approximately 1.0 million square feet of development, under existing entitlements

#### *Urban Design Priorities:*

1. Amend zoning to allow a broader range of uses including multi-family residential.
2. Encourage neighborhood-serving retail and commercial uses along 12th Street and around the ACC campus.
3. Concentrate medium-density, mixed-use development along MLK Boulevard, West 15th Street, Lamar Boulevard and in the southern portions of the area south of West 8th Street.
4. Establish form-based design standards to promote compatibility with the historic neighborhood fabric.
5. Develop design standards for properties adjacent to Shoal Creek that will promote views and access to the creek.
6. Discourage or minimize above-grade parking.
7. Develop Nueces and Rio Grande streets as a “bicycle boulevard”, linking Lady Bird Lake, Downtown and UT.



## UPTOWN / CAPITOL DISTRICT

### *District-Specific Goals:*

1. Promote a broader diversity of uses beyond office to contribute to a more vibrant mixed-use district.
2. Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized properties and parking garages along the Lavaca/Guadalupe and San Jacinto/Trinity Street transit corridors.
3. Enhance the State Capitol campus north of the Capitol along Congress Avenue, consistent with the 1989 Texas Capitol Master Plan.
4. Enhance streets to be more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly and to create stronger linkages with other parts of the downtown and UT.
5. Provide a framework for direct coordination between the City and the State of Texas Facilities Commission to achieve mutually beneficial objectives.

### *Top Three Public Improvement Priorities (per 39 responses from 2009 survey):*

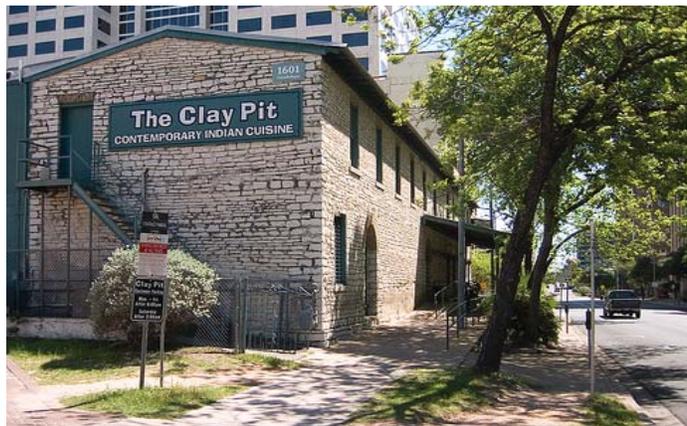
1. Great Streets (69%)
2. New parks, pocket parks or plazas (51%)
3. Public parking facility (33%)

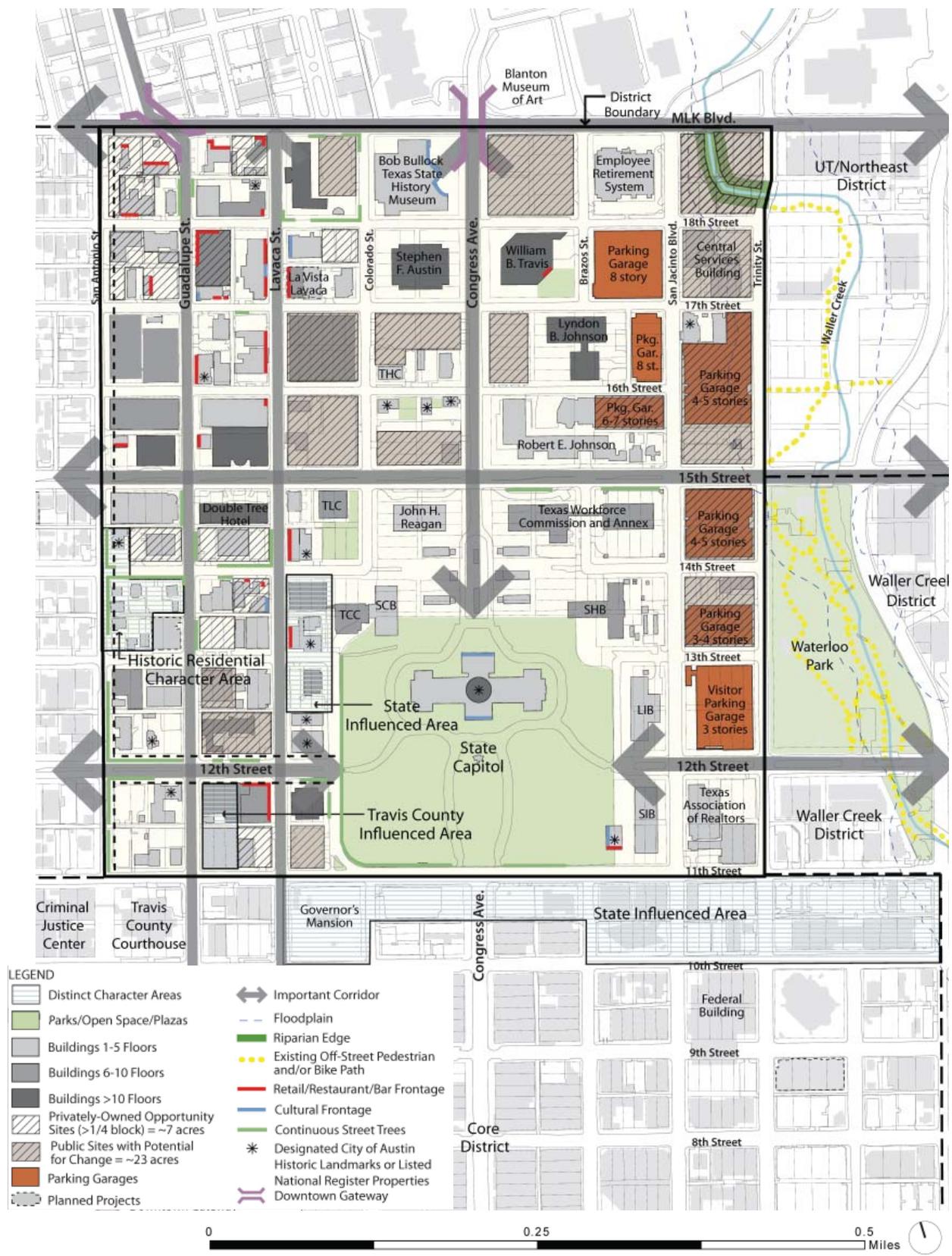
### *Existing Form and Character:*

- The Uptown/Capitol District is anchored by the historic Capitol Building and Square and provides a transition between The University of Texas and the Central Business District.
- The area has a concentration of parking garages, particularly along San Jacinto and Trinity streets, creating an eight-block “dead” zone. Most of the State office buildings and their streetscapes need revitalizing.
- The Lavaca/Guadalupe Street corridor lacks a cohesive identity and contains a mix of building types, including high-rise office and residential buildings, historic single-family houses, single-story restaurants, fast food and art galleries.
- The western edge of the district along San Antonio Street is characterized by some historic buildings and by a mature tree canopy.

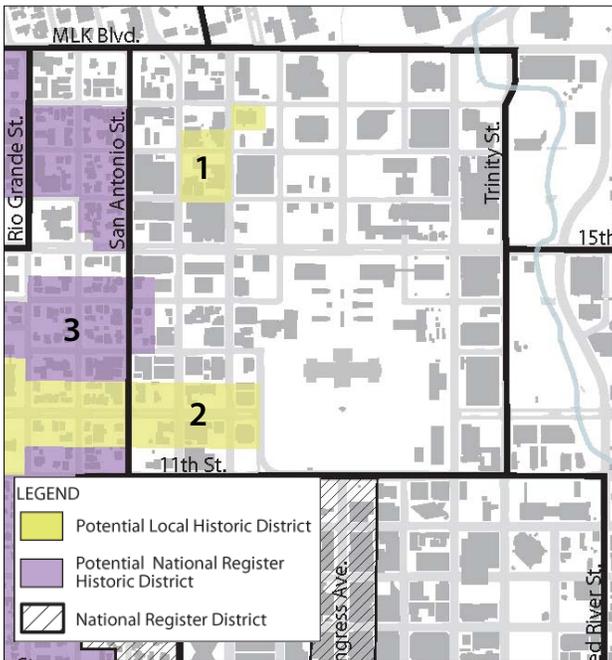
*The Capitol is Downtown's most prominent building (left).*

*Neighborhood-oriented retail and restaurant uses between 17th and 18th streets (right).*





## Uptown / Capitol District Form and Character Analysis



### Existing and Potential Historic Districts

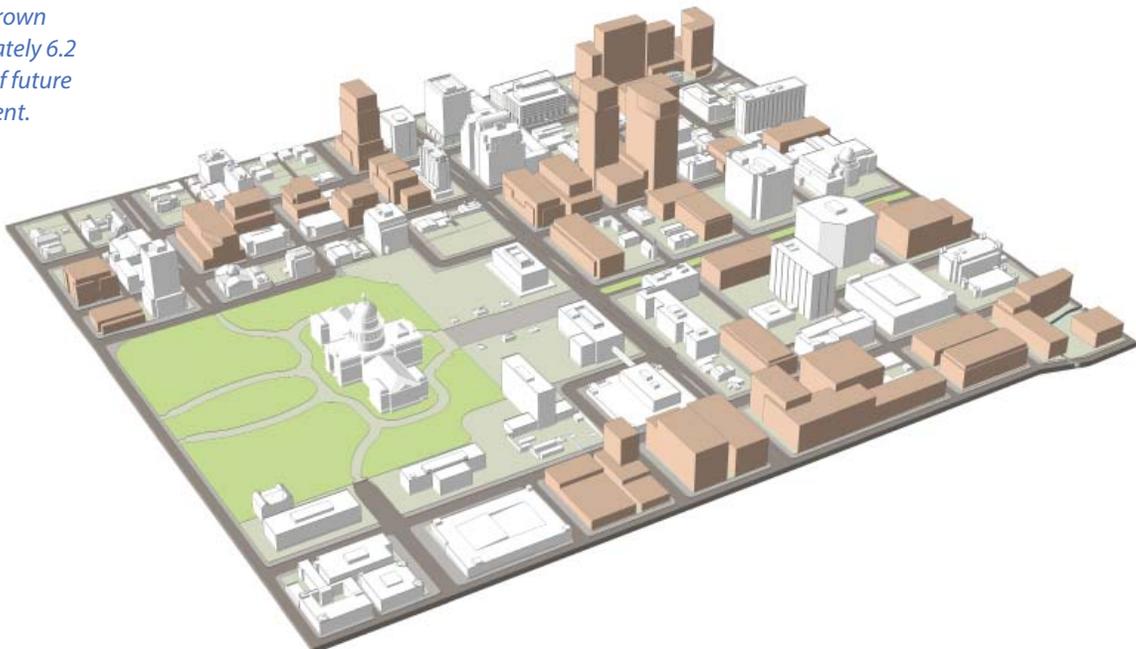
#### Historic Resources Identification:

- On the basis of windshield surveys and the City's 1984 Cultural Resources Survey, several sub-areas of the Uptown/Capitol District have been identified as potential historic districts, subject to further study and property owner interest. These are:
  - A possible Local Historic District (LHD) along Guadalupe and Lavaca streets, between West 16th Street and midblock between West 17th and West 18th streets.
  - A possible Local Historic District along West 12th Street, between West Avenue and Colorado.
  - A possible National Register Historic District (NHRD) along West 13th and West 14th, west of the midblock between San Antonio and Guadalupe streets.

#### Development Opportunity Sites:

- There are 28 properties, totaling 30 acres, which have been assembled to one-quarter-block or greater; many of these could redevelop over the next five to 15 years. (See Form and Character Analysis map on p. 43.)
- The opportunity sites include approximately 23 acres of publicly-owned (State) land, much of which is occupied by stand-alone parking garages constrained by Capitol View Corridors. These sites represent approximately 6.2 million square feet of development, given existing entitlements.

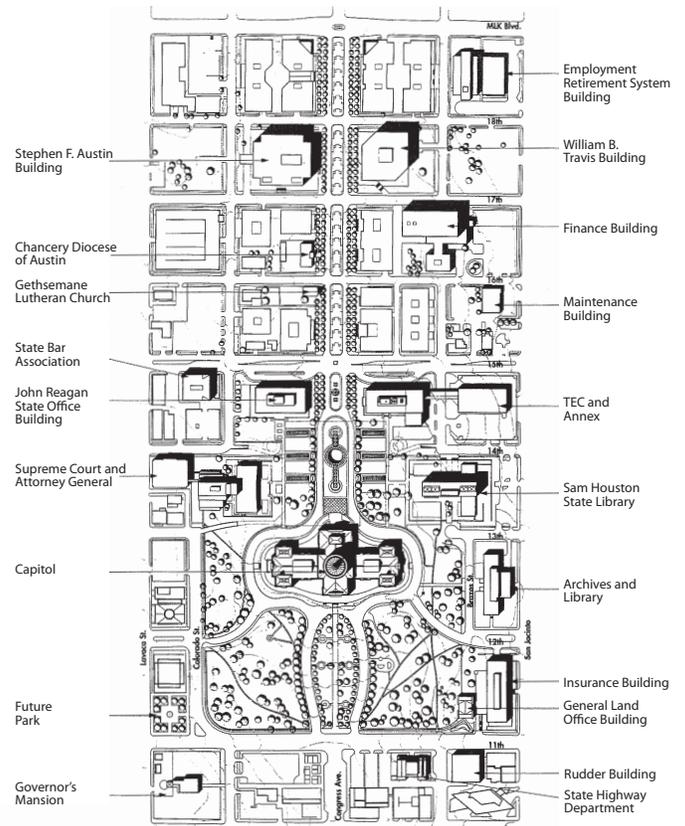
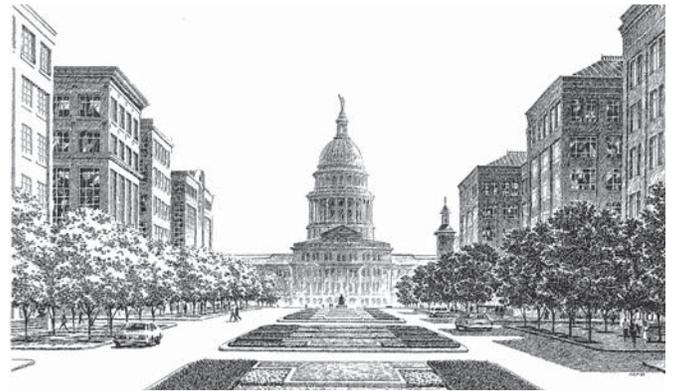
*The sites shown in brown represent approximately 6.2 million square feet of future potential development.*

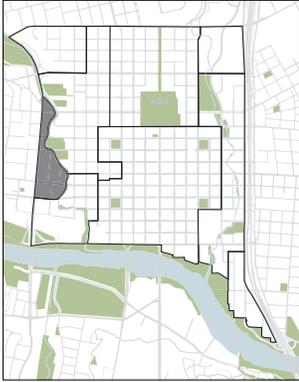


### Urban Design Priorities:

- Improve North Congress Avenue as a landscaped civic axis, linking the Capitol and University of Texas campus.
- Consistent with both the 1956 and 1989 Capitol Area Plans, concentrate new State of Texas buildings along North Congress Avenue to create a civic mall, with minimum setbacks from North Congress Avenue of 40 feet.
- Explore potential for a major cultural use (museum) at the corner of MLK and Congress to expand an emerging museum district.
- Implement Great Streets improvements along Lavaca and Guadalupe streets.
- Promote a mix of higher density commercial and residential uses along the Lavaca/Guadalupe and Trinity/San Jacinto Street corridors.
- Establish form-based design standards for new development adjacent to or within potential historic districts.
- Encourage active, pedestrian-oriented uses, particularly adjacent to existing and planned transit routes along Guadalupe/Lavaca streets and San Jacinto/Trinity streets.
- Encourage additional retail and restaurant uses in the vicinity of 17th and 18th streets along Guadalupe and Lavaca streets to create a district activity center. Focus these uses around/adjacent to a new public open space.
- Encourage shared parking in private and public garages for special events along Waller Creek and UT.
- Promote workforce-affordable housing on publicly-owned parcels.

*The 1989 Master Plan for the Capitol calls for the enhancement of North Congress Avenue as a civic spine extending to MLK Boulevard.*





## MARKET / LAMAR DISTRICT

### *District-Specific Goals:*

1. Strengthen the area as a compact, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use district, with ground level retail and restaurant uses.
2. Improve the quality and safety of the pedestrian environment, particularly along the major arterials of Lamar Boulevard, 5th and 6th streets.
3. Enhance streets to be more bicycle-friendly.
4. Enhance Shoal Creek, addressing flood control and improving the continuity and accessibility of its creekside trail.
5. Promote new development that creates an appropriate scale transition to the neighborhoods west of Lamar Boulevard.

### *Top Three Public Improvement Priorities (per 35 responses from 2009 survey):*

1. Great Streets (71%)
2. Off-street trails (51%)
3. Creek stabilization/flood control (40%)

### *Existing Form and Character:*

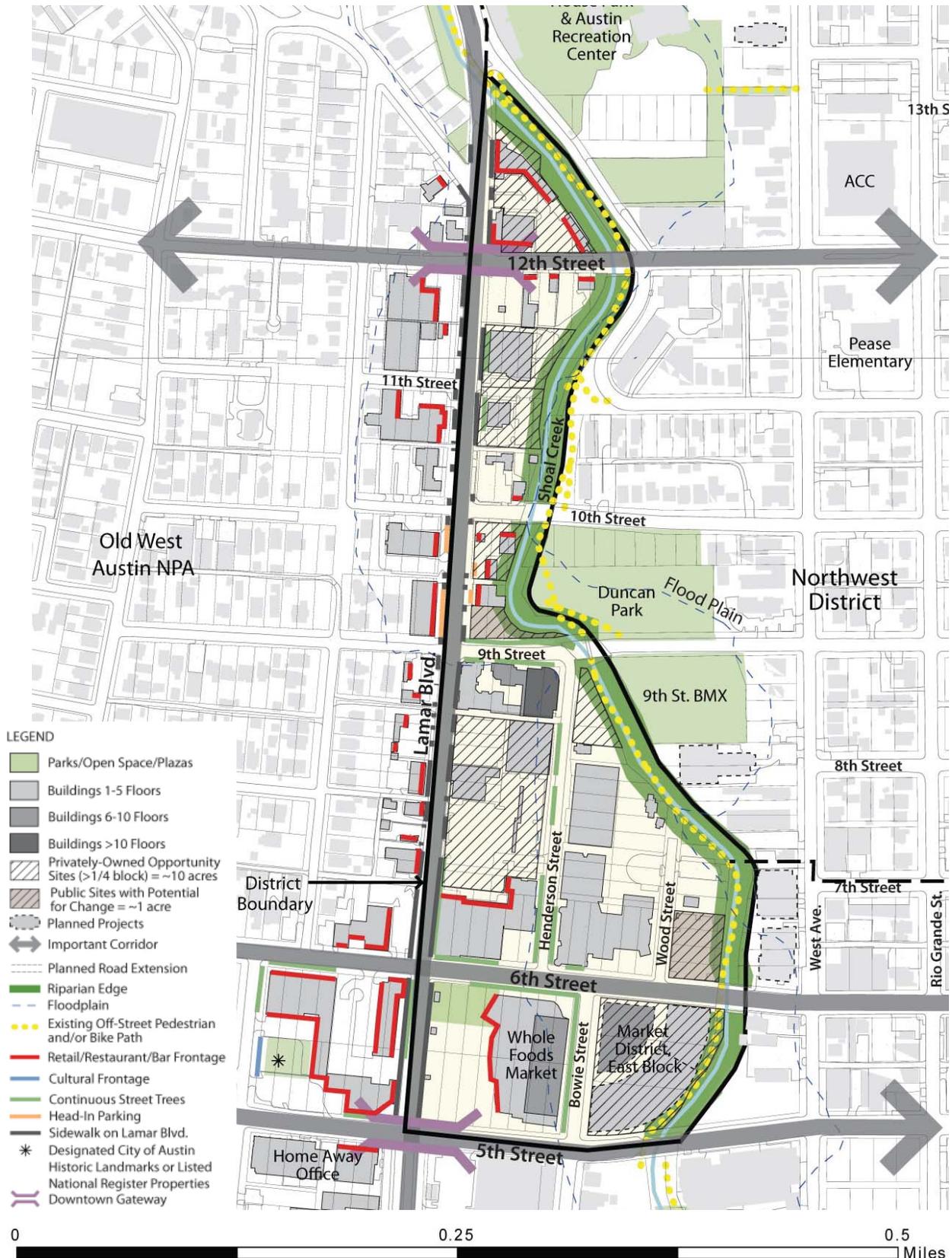
- The district is bordered by the Old West Austin Neighborhood Association (OWANA) on the west, Shoal Creek on the east and north, and Lower Shoal Creek District to the south.
- The OWANA neighborhood shares a rear property line with commercial uses along Lamar Boulevard.
- Along Lamar Boulevard, retail is the predominant land use.
- Lamar Boulevard has high vehicular traffic volumes and a poor pedestrian and bicycle environment, with its many curb-cuts and surface parking lots.
- The 100-year floodplain of Shoal Creek impacts a large portion of the district east of Henderson Street and north of 9th Street.

### *Historic Resources Identification:*

- On the basis of windshield surveys and the City's 1984 Cultural Resources Survey, no sub-areas of the Lamar/Market District have been identified as potential historic districts warranting further study.

*Lamar Boulevard is characterized by new development in close proximity to small-scale commercial and residential uses.*





### Market / Lamar District Form and Character Analysis



*Curb cuts, parking lots, power poles and driveways along Lamar Boulevard interrupt pedestrian and bike circulation (above). Like Shoal Creek Saloon, new development should create a positive relationship with the creek (below).*

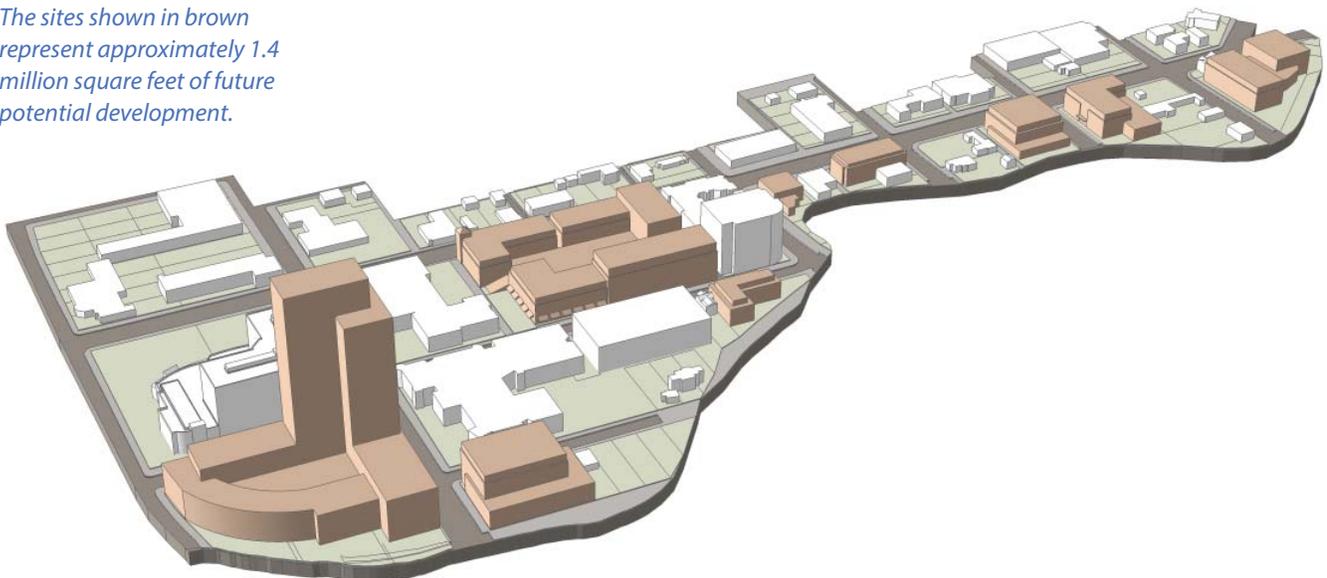
#### *Development Opportunity Sites:*

- There are nine assembled properties, of a quarter-block or greater in area, totaling about 11 acres. (See Form and Character Analysis map on p. 47.)
- These “opportunity sites” are relatively unconstrained and could develop over the next five to 15 years, representing approximately 1.4 million square feet of development under existing entitlements, however, flood levels limit the ability to do creek-level development and below-grade parking. They are located primarily along Lamar Boulevard and Shoal Creek.

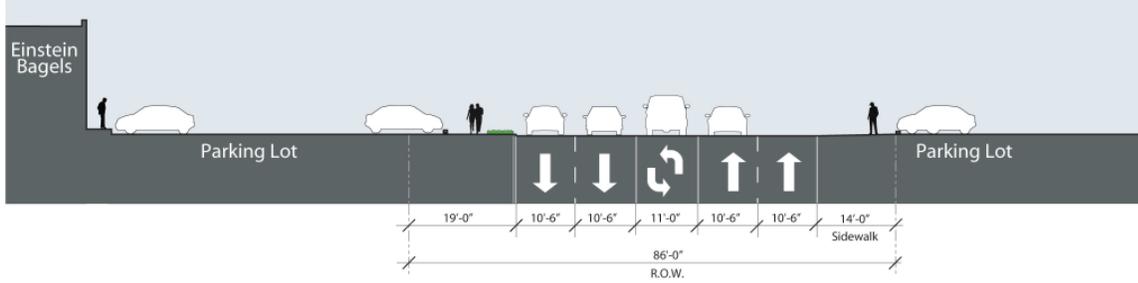
#### *Urban Design Priorities:*

- Promote active, pedestrian-oriented uses, particularly along Lamar Boulevard, West 6th and West 5th streets. Encourage ground-level residential units with street entries along other streets. Improve pedestrian environments along these streets.
- Develop urban design regulations to better address compatibility with adjacent single-family buildings.
- Improve Duncan Park as a neighborhood-serving open space.
- Assure Shoal Creek trail continuity and maintenance, and define a flood control project for Shoal Creek.
- Encourage pedestrian-oriented uses that open onto Shoal Creek.
- Establish public access easements and specific creekside design regulations for properties abutting Shoal Creek.
- Limit exposure of above-grade parking garages along Shoal Creek.

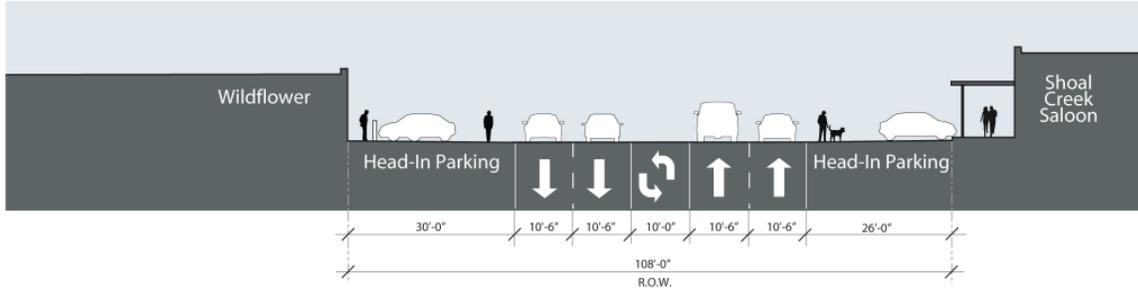
*The sites shown in brown represent approximately 1.4 million square feet of future potential development.*



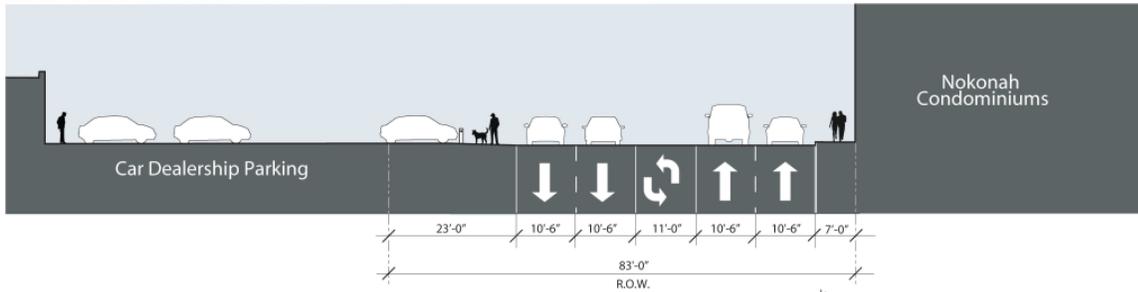
Lamar Between 11th and 12th Streets



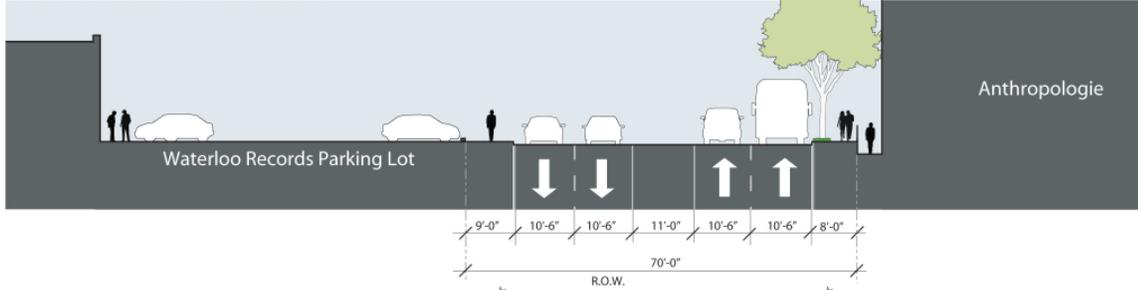
Lamar Between 9th and 10th Streets



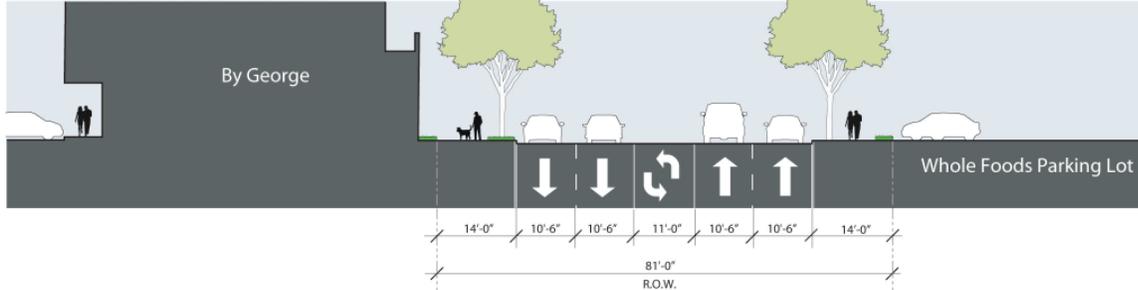
Lamar Between 8th and 9th Streets



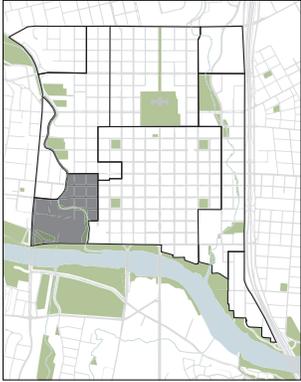
Lamar Between 6th and 7th Streets



Lamar Between 5th and 6th Streets



Lamar Boulevard Between 5th and 12th Streets: Existing Conditions



## LOWER SHOAL CREEK DISTRICT

### *District-Specific Goals:*

1. Improve Shoal Creek as the central open space amenity of the District, and improve the continuity and accessibility of its creekside trail. Improve the flood capacity and the riparian character of the corridor.
2. Extend the street grid to create stronger bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular linkages to the Core and Waterfront.
3. Promote a mixture of residential, commercial, cultural and visitor-oriented uses that contribute to the day and night-time life of the District.

### *Top Three Public Improvement Priorities (per 52 responses from 2009 survey):*

1. Great Streets (60%)
2. Off-street hike and bike trails (54%)
3. Creek stabilization and flood control improvements (40%)

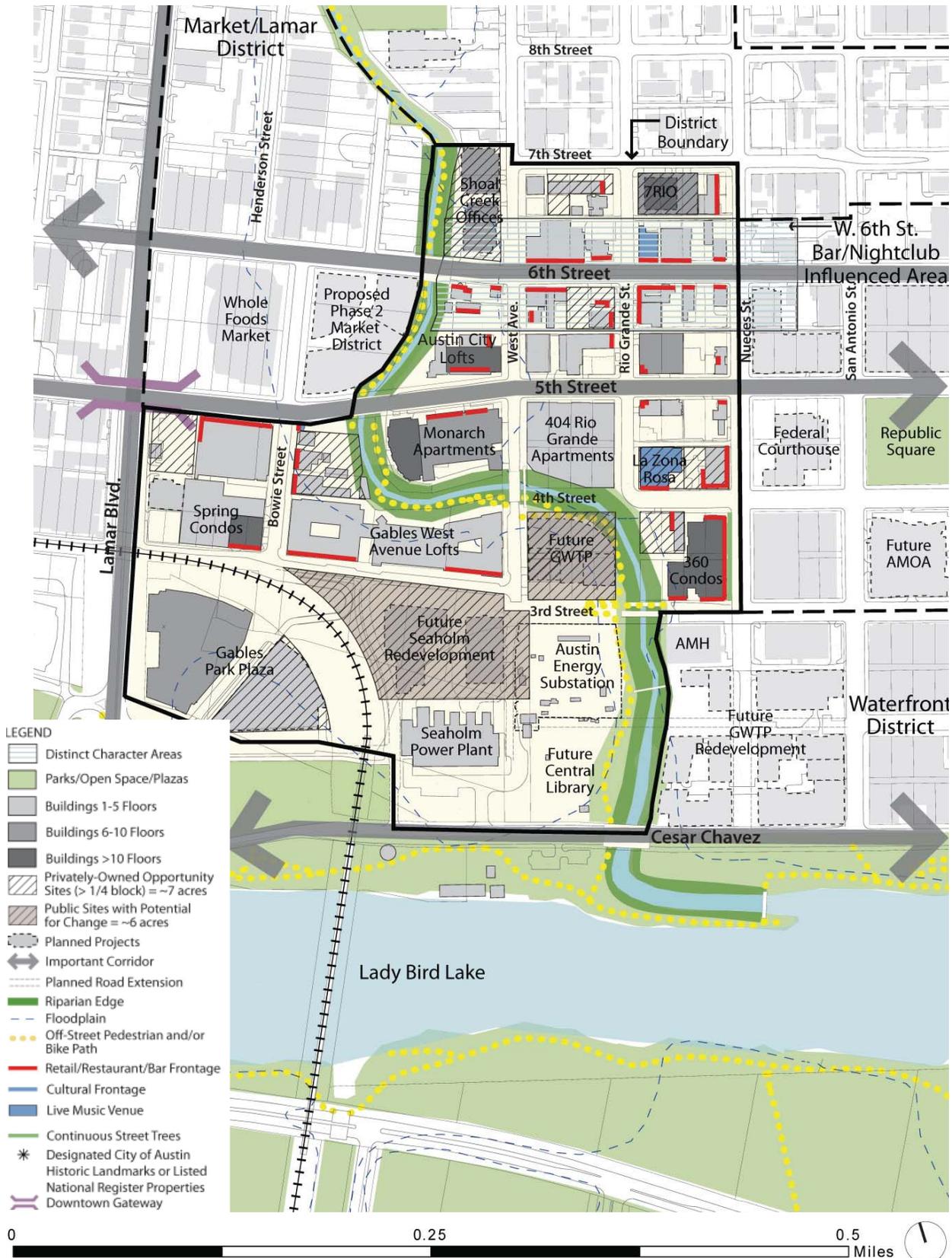
### *Existing Form and Character:*

- Shoal Creek, with its steep banks and mature vegetation, bisects the District, giving it a highly distinctive image and identity.
- The area is currently undergoing significant transition from an industrial and warehouse district to a high-density, mixed-use neighborhood. Several major residential developments have recently been completed (360 Condos, Monarch Apartments, Gables Park Plaza, Spring Condos).
- The planned Green and Seaholm redevelopments, and the new Central Library, will create a significant activity center and linkage to the CBD.
- Connections between Downtown and the southern portion of the District are interrupted by Shoal Creek.

*The Lower Shoal Creek District is emerging as a dense mixed-use neighborhood.*



- The area includes a concentration of bars and nightclubs along West 6th Street and drive-through banks along West 5th Street. These streets have narrow sidewalks interrupted by many curb-cuts and driveways.



Lower Shoal Creek District Form and Character Analysis



*New uses in the historic Seaholm Power Plant building will anchor adjacent hotel, office, civic and residential development.*

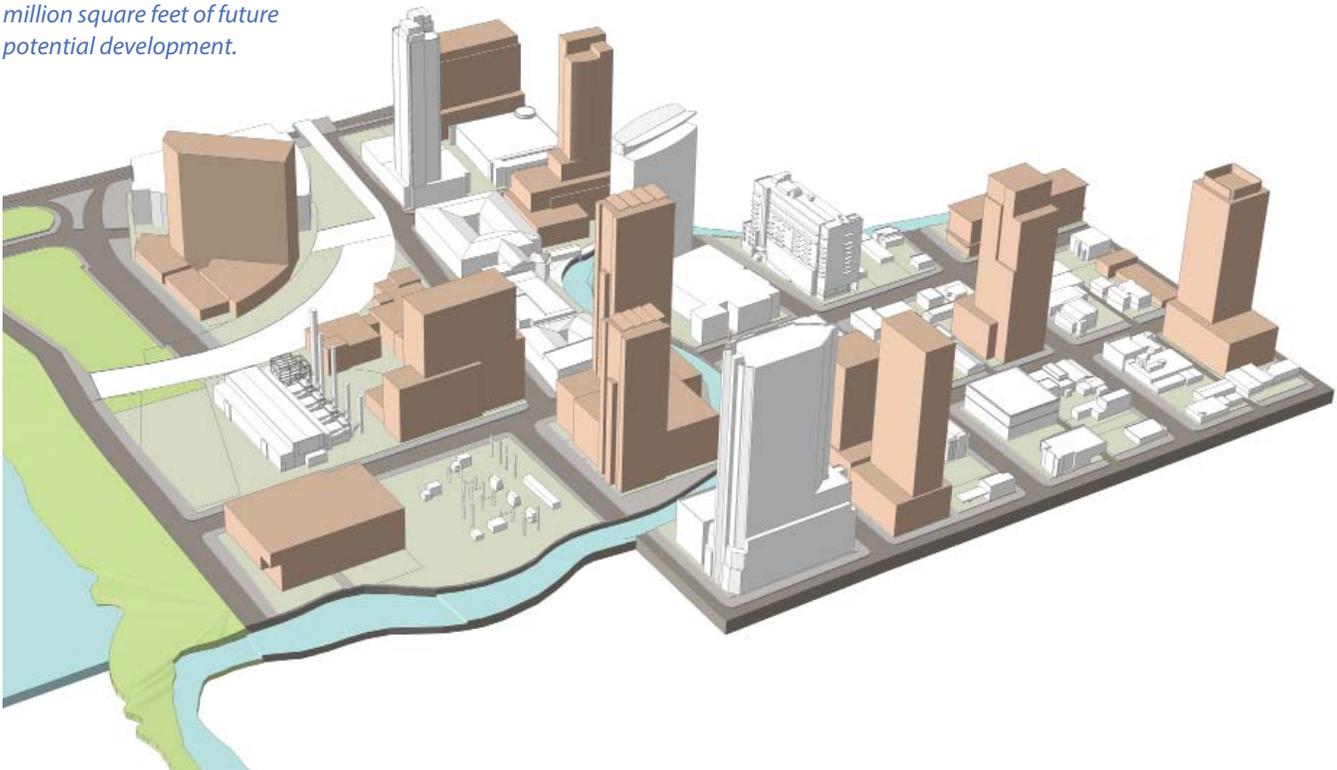
**Historic Resources Identification:**

- On the basis of windshield surveys and the City’s 1984 Cultural Resources Survey, one possible Local Historic District has been identified, subject to more detailed study and property owner interest. It is located along the segment of West 6th Street between San Antonio Street and West Avenue.
- Shoal Creek includes some historic artifacts including the wooden rail trestle bridge at West 3rd Street. Mirabeau B. Lamar’s first cabin was located at the mouth of Shoal Creek, which warrants an interpretive treatment, since Lamar was one of Austin’s founding fathers and a leading proponent for Austin as the seat of Texas government.

**Development Opportunity Sites:**

- The area is largely built out or planned.
- There are 12 assembled “opportunity sites”, totaling about 13 acres.
- These “opportunity sites” are relatively unconstrained and could develop over the next five to 15 years, representing approximately 3.0 million square feet of development.

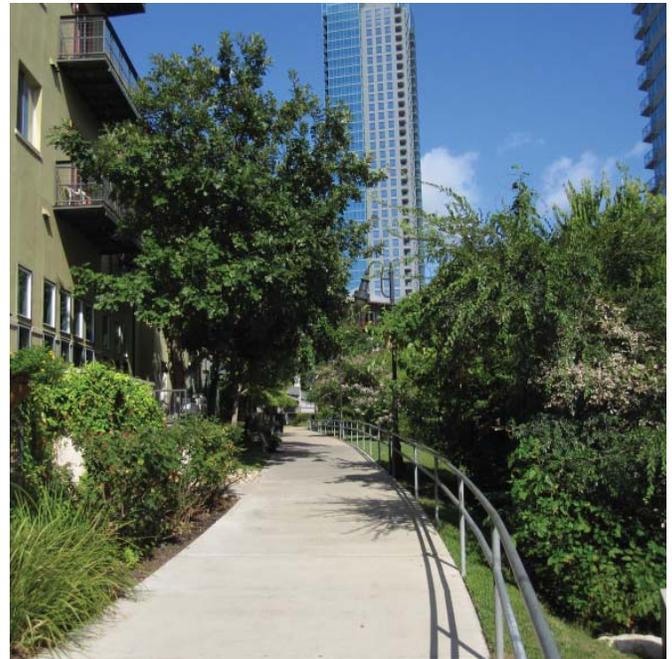
*The sites shown in brown represent approximately 3.0 million square feet of future potential development.*

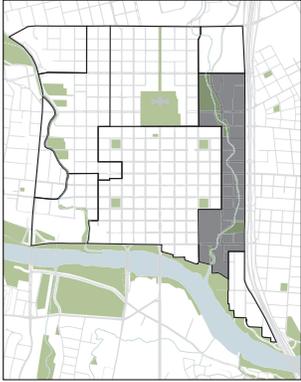


*Urban Design Priorities:*

- Implement the Seaholm and Green Water Treatment Plant redevelopment projects to link the District with the Core and Waterfront.
- Complete the Pfluger Bridge and associated Sand Beach Park to link this area with the Lady Bird Lake trail system and to the South Shore.
- Promote streetscape, creekscape, trails, promenade and open space improvements that establish stronger relationships to Downtown, Lady Bird Lake and Shoal Creek.
- Buildings abutting Shoal Creek should be subject to specific setback and other design requirements.
- Promote high levels of density, consistent with existing base zoning, while ensuring appropriate transitions to the Core/Waterfront and neighborhoods to the west.
- Promote building forms that preserve views to the Lake and reinforce their waterfront setting.
- Require ground-level treatments that reinforce the pedestrian realm, including active, pedestrian-oriented uses along key linking streets (i.e., West 5th, 6th, 3rd, Bowie streets).
- Discourage or prohibit any new automotive uses, drive-through services and exposed parking structures that compromise the pedestrian life and orientation of the area.
- Explore the potential for additional pedestrian bridges across and connecting both sides of Shoal Creek.
- Extend the Cesar Chavez Promenade westward to the Pfluger Bridge.

*Buildings with a positive relationship to Shoal Creek include Garrido's Restaurant (left) and the West Avenue Lofts (right).*





## WALLER CREEK DISTRICT

(See also detailed district plan at <http://austintexas.gov/department/waller-creek-0>)

### *District-Specific Goals:*

1. Transform Waller Creek into an urban greenway and linear open space that connects the surrounding community.
2. Create continuous pedestrian and bicycle access between Lady Bird Lake and UT in/near the Creek corridor.
3. Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections between East Austin, UT, Waller Creek and the Core and Waterfront.
4. Maintain and enhance the environmental and habitat value of the creek as a riparian corridor.
5. Encourage new development that promotes the area as a diverse, livable, and affordable mixed-use district with a distinctly local feel.
6. Establish activities along the Creek that contribute to its safety and vitality and to the area's economic revitalization.
7. Promote the District as a place for creative and cultural activities including live music venues, galleries, studios, etc.
8. Improve Palm and Waterloo parks to better serve their adjacent neighborhoods and to provide opportunities for community-wide events and recreation.

### *Top Three Public Improvement Priorities (per 57 responses from 2009 survey):*

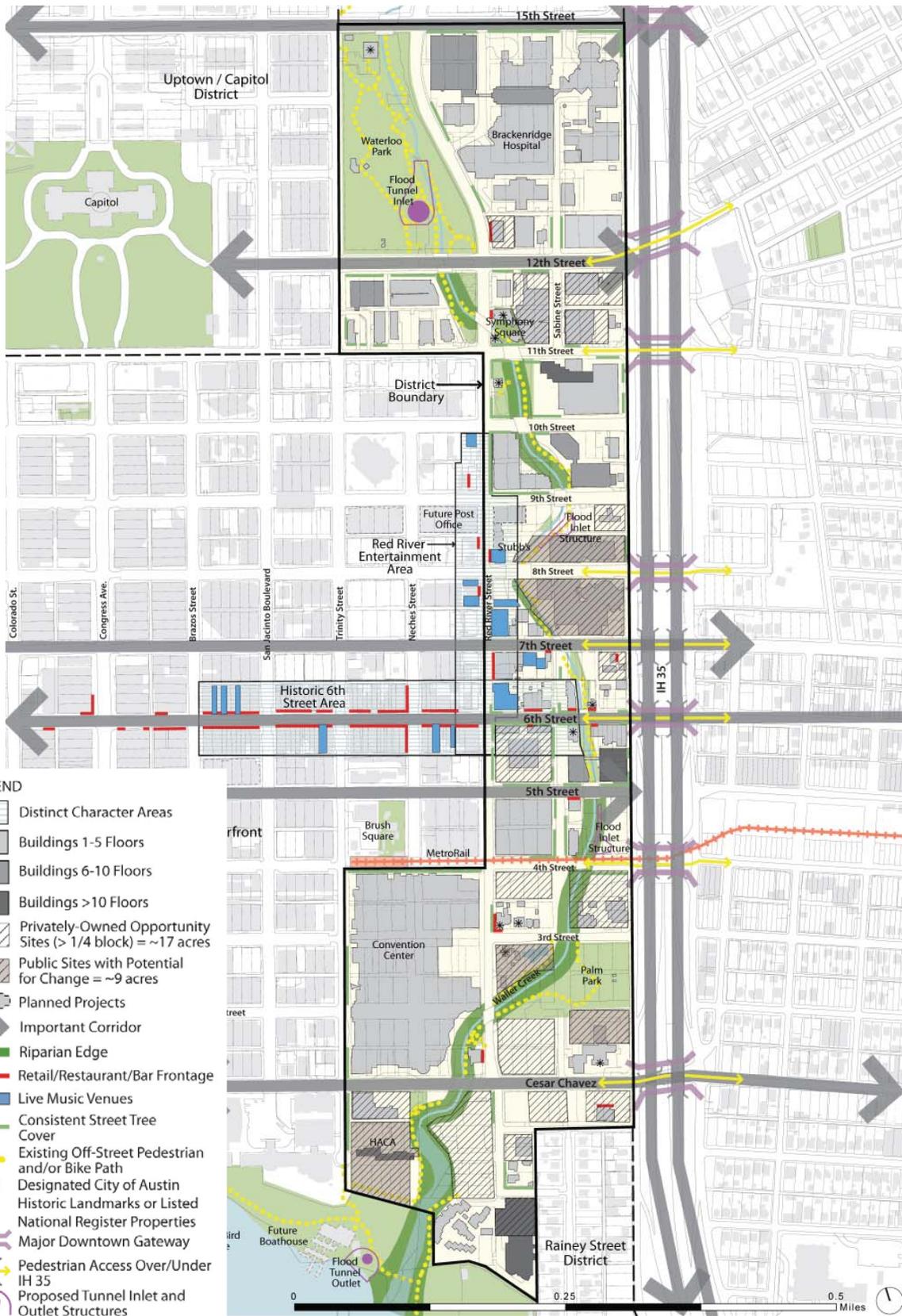
1. Great Streets (65%)
2. Off-street hike and bike trails (54%).
3. Creek stabilization and flood control improvements (47%)

### *Existing Form and Character:*

- Development within the Waller Creek District is restricted by 13 Capitol View Corridors (CVCs), five of which originate from IH 35. Height limits beneath the CVCs range from 25 to 150 feet.
- The district is centered on Waller Creek, which links UT with Lady Bird Lake.
- Most development backs on to Waller Creek, rather than addressing it. The paths along the creek are discontinuous and in poor condition; some of the creek banks are eroding, homeless encampments exist throughout the corridor, particularly under bridges.
- The District includes two special areas: the East 6th Street National Historic Register District and the proposed Red River Live Music District.

*There is a lack of public access along Waller Creek.*





- LEGEND**
- Distinct Character Areas
  - Buildings 1-5 Floors
  - Buildings 6-10 Floors
  - Buildings >10 Floors
  - ▨ Privately-Owned Opportunity Sites (> 1/4 block) = ~17 acres
  - ▨ Public Sites with Potential for Change = ~9 acres
  - ⊞ Planned Projects
  - ↔ Important Corridor
  - ▬ Riparian Edge
  - ▬ Retail/Restaurant/Bar Frontage
  - ▬ Live Music Venues
  - ▬ Consistent Street Tree Cover
  - ⋯ Existing Off-Street Pedestrian and/or Bike Path
  - \* Designated City of Austin Historic Landmarks or Listed National Register Properties
  - ↔ Major Downtown Gateway
  - ↔ Pedestrian Access Over/Under IH 35
  - Proposed Tunnel Inlet and Outlet Structures

Waller Creek District Form and Character Analysis



*Paths along the creek are discontinuous and in poor condition.*

- The District is characterized by low-intensity development, underutilized lots, a concentration of social services and entertainment and bar uses.
- Many of the bridges and properties are historic and contribute greatly to Waller Creek’s unique character.

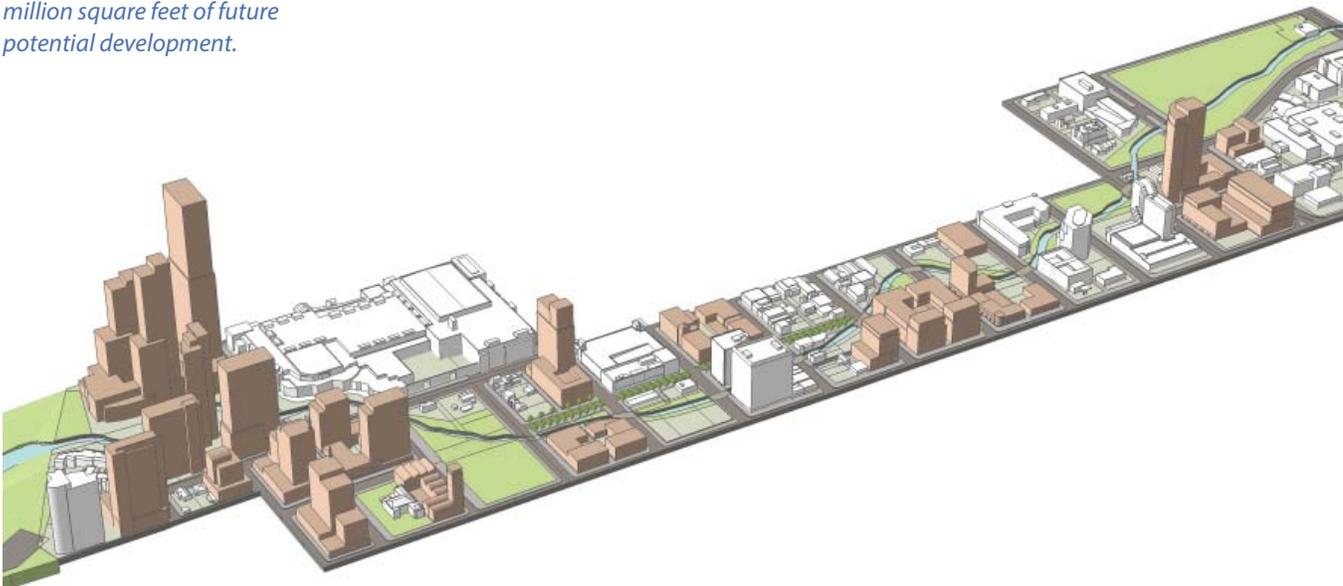
*Historic Resources Identification:*

- On the basis of windshield surveys and the City’s 1984 Cultural Resources Survey, two sub-areas of the Waller Creek District have been identified as potential Local Historic Districts, subject to further study and property owner interest. This includes the north and south blockfaces of East 6th Street between IH 35 and Trinity Street and the northern blockface on East 3rd Street between Red River and the Sabine Street right-of-way.

*Development Opportunity Sites:*

- There are 21 assembled properties of a quarter-block or greater, totaling about 26 acres, representing approximately 7.6 million square feet of development, under existing entitlements.
- These “opportunity sites” are relatively unconstrained (with the exception of Capitol View Corridors) and could develop over the next five to 15 years.
- The opportunity sites include approximately nine acres of publicly-owned land, including the Austin Police Department (APD) facility, the Municipal Courts and Travis County’s facility in the historic Palm School.

*The sites shown in brown represent approximately 7.6 million square feet of future potential development.*



### Urban Design Priorities:

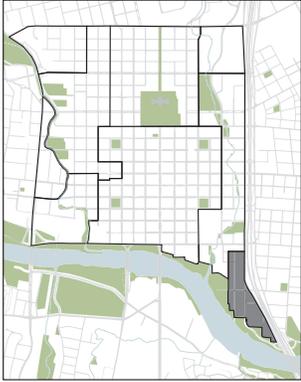
- Implement creekscape, trail and open space improvements as an integral part of the Waller Creek Tunnel project.
- Provide incentives to retain and expand live music venues.
- Promote a pattern of development that re-engages Waller Creek with the surrounding downtown, and creates a positive and sustainable greenway between UT and Lady Bird Lake.
- Enhance connections to the Convention Center, 6th Street, and Red River Street to create a premier visitor/tourist destination.
- Revitalize Palm Park as a family-friendly, water-oriented place that reflects its importance to the Hispanic community.
- Promote development opportunities at a variety of scales, including mid-rise development on small parcels.
- Promote the development of facilities for the creative community (e.g., workspace, rehearsal space, galleries, etc.).
- Control the number and intensity of bars and cocktail lounge uses, particularly along East 6th and Red River streets.
- Require ground-level space suitable for active, pedestrian-oriented uses, including retail, particularly along Red River, East 6th and Sabine streets.
- Establish a program for off-site parking (e.g., in-lieu fees and centralized public/private parking facilities) that can reduce the need for on-site parking, create opportunities for affordable housing, and allow smaller parcels to redevelop more effectively.
- Explore the creation of a 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor linking Republic Square to Saltillo Plaza.

*A continuous trail is envisioned between Lady Bird Lake and UT.*



### Waller Creek Master Plan





## RAINEY STREET DISTRICT

### *District-Specific Goals:*

1. Allow for the orderly transition of the District from a single-family enclave to a high density, mixed-use neighborhood.
2. Establish an infrastructure master plan to promote an adequate roadway, pathway and utility network.
3. Create stronger pedestrian and bicycle linkages to the CBD, Lady Bird Lake, Waller Creek and East Austin.
4. Create improved roadway connectivity to the IH 35 Frontage Road and Cesar Chavez Boulevard.
5. Preserve the existing tree canopy along Rainey Street to the maximum extent possible.

### *Top Three Public Improvement Priorities (per 25 responses from 2009 survey):*

1. Great Streets (84%)
2. New parks, pocket parks or plazas (40%)
3. Public parking facility (40%)

### *Existing Form and Character:*

- This area contains a concentration of single-family houses and bungalows along Rainey Street on small parcels 120-feet deep and less than 50-feet wide. The properties within the area have recently been rezoned to CBD. Several have recently converted to nightclubs and bars.
- High-rise buildings have been constructed and/or planned along the Lady Bird Lake edge of the District.
- The mature street yard tree canopy throughout the District contributes greatly to the character of the area, as well as to the City's urban forest.

*The Rainey Street District is characterized by new development in close proximity to older single-family homes.*





### Rainey Street District Form and Character Analysis



Small businesses have located in several of the original houses of the Rainey Street District.

- Streets in the District are not well connected to the surrounding downtown, limiting pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular access and making the area feel isolated.

*Historic Resources Identification:*

- A National Register Historic District currently exists along Rainey Street, but the recent rezoning of this area from SF-3 to CBD could promote demolition of existing single-family houses.

*Development Opportunity Sites:*

- There are nine assembled properties of at least one-quarter block each, totaling about six acres and representing approximately 2.9 million square feet of development.
- These “opportunity sites” are relatively unconstrained and could develop over the next five to 15 years. Other smaller sites exist, particularly along Rainey Street, but will need to be assembled if they are to be redeveloped.

The sites shown in brown represent approximately 2.9 million square feet of future potential development.



### *Urban Design Priorities:*

- Promote streetscape, creekscape, bridges, trails, promenade and other open space improvements that establish a more direct relationship with Lady Bird Lake and Waller Creek.
- Encourage new residential and other uses that can complement the existing, quiet neighborhood character. Limit the number of cocktail uses allowed.
- Encourage neighborhood-serving retail and commercial uses along Cesar Chavez and the IH 35 frontage road.
- Promote the highest levels of density in the Rainey Street District, consistent with existing base zoning and the to-be-determined density bonus provisions of the Waterfront Overlay District.
- In order to ensure compatibility with the existing low-rise pattern of houses, require mid- and high-rise new development buildings to have a streetwall and setback that is compatible with the existing low-rise pattern.
- Promote creekside development that addresses the creek, maintains appropriate setbacks and enhances its ecological integrity.
- Promote building forms that preserve upland views to the lake.
- Require any above-grade parking garages along Rainey Street to be lined with upper-level residential, hotel or offices uses.
- Require ground-level space suitable for active, pedestrian-oriented uses, including retail, or ground level residential units with street entries.
- Better connect the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) to Downtown and East Austin.



*The Rainey Street District is home to the MACC (above) and is emerging as a unique district of bars, cafes and live music (below).*



*Texas Capitol, Downtown Austin*

# Part Three: The Plan Elements

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## THE SEVEN ELEMENTS OF THE DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN



### HISTORIC PRESERVATION

*Preserve and enhance the unique historical and cultural heritage of Downtown.*



### ACTIVITIES AND USES

*Ensure that Downtown's future growth supports a vibrant, diverse and pedestrian-friendly urban district.*



### DENSITY AND DESIGN

*Ensure that Downtown can evolve into a compact and dense urban district, with new buildings contributing positively to sustainability, quality of life and the Downtown experience.*



### THE PUBLIC REALM

*Interconnect and enhance Downtown's network of public parks, open spaces and streets.*



### TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

*Develop a multi-modal transportation system that improves access to and mobility within the Downtown.*



### UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

*Provide for phased utility and infrastructure upgrades that address existing deficiencies and that support Downtown redevelopment.*



### LEADERSHIP AND IMPLEMENTATION

*Implement the Downtown Austin Plan, within the resources and priorities of the community.*

# The Plan Elements

The Downtown Austin Plan is written as an action-oriented document to assist City government, its staff and leadership and its potential partners in implementing its recommendations. As such, this part of the Plan is organized into seven subject areas, or elements, that relate closely to those City departments, divisions and programs that will undertake their implementation. These elements are:

- *Historic Preservation*, focusing on the preservation and enhancement of Downtown’s unique cultural and historic resources;
- *Activities and Uses*, presenting policies and actions aimed at promoting a vibrant, diverse and pedestrian-friendly district;
- *Density and Design*, setting forth policies that guide development toward the community’s vision of a sustainable, compact and engaging environment;
- *The Public Realm*, describing improvements and initiatives that will enhance the quality and upkeep of Downtown’s parks, open spaces and streetscapes;
- *Transportation and Parking*, providing a program to improve access and mobility for all modes within Downtown;
- *Utilities and Infrastructure*, describing policies and initiatives for phased upgrades and improvements in support of Downtown redevelopment; and
- *Leadership and Implementation*, describing the actions required to realize the recommendations of the Plan, such as changes in governance and organization, amendments to existing regulations, and a ten-year priority action plan.

Each of the seven elements has an over-arching goal or broad intent, followed by a series of specific recommendations formulated as objectives, with sufficient explanation to convey key considerations for their final implementation. The spectrum of recommendations include actions regarding the City’s and its partners’ policies, staffing, programs, process improvements and physical improvement projects. Approximately 100 recommendations have been developed, based upon stakeholder input and preferences and best professional planning practices formulated through the lens of the do-able. Some recommendations are actionable immediately, while others will require further study and stakeholder input as they are refined and readied for final action.



*Littlefield Building, Austin*

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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***Overall Goal: Preserve and enhance the unique historical and cultural heritage of Downtown.***

Historic preservation is important if Downtown is to continue to develop in a way that is authentically and uniquely Austin - where the history of place is evident and celebrated. Downtown Austin's sense of place is built to a great extent on its unique collection of historic buildings and landscapes. The Warehouse District, Congress Avenue, East 6th Street, the Bremond Block and the Northwest District neighborhood are not just artifacts of interest, they are physical manifestations of the community's collective identity and values - living stories of the path that the community has taken since its founding 170 years ago.

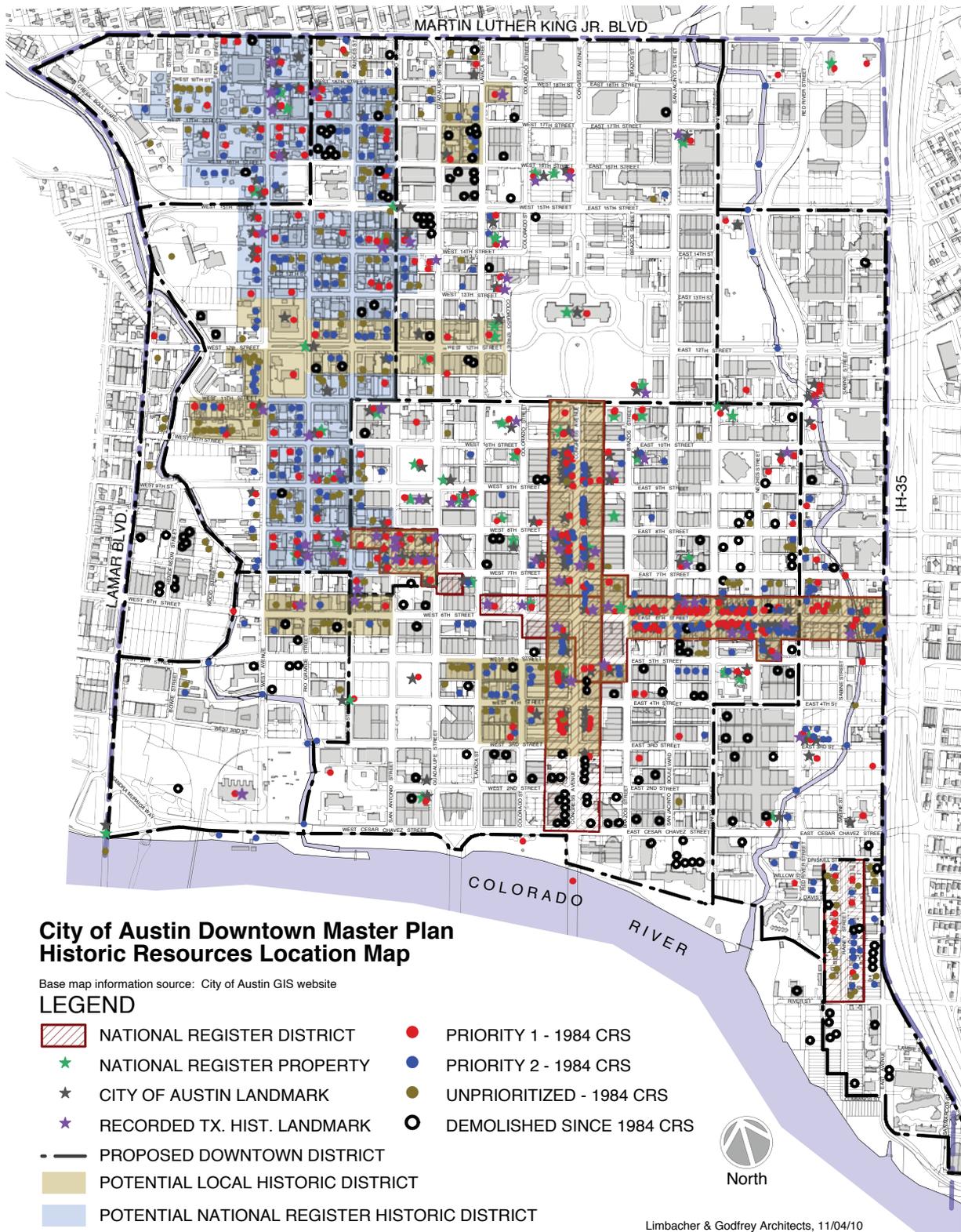
Preservation is also consistent with Austin's value of sustainability. The conservation and improvement of existing built resources, including re-use of historic and existing buildings, greening of the existing building stock, and reinvestment in older and historic districts, are key elements of a sustainable downtown.

Austin has taken bold steps over the past 30 years to preserve its cultural resources, from protecting views to the Capitol to establishing historic districts along Congress Avenue, East 6th Street and the Bremond Block. These actions have helped to shape the urban experience of Downtown and have directly contributed to its economic vitality and success.

It is important to build on these actions and to address some of the critical risks and challenges that are facing Austin's historic core. The DAP recognizes the importance of the historic fabric of the original city and has identified nine individual "districts" that are generally cohesive in character, in terms of building form and scale, which is often a result of their historical development. (See Form and Character Districts.)

*Downtown's fabric of historic residential and commercial structures creates a unique identity. (Excerpt of 1897 Augustus Koch map)*





Limbacher & Godfrey Architects, 11/04/2010

**Downtown Historic Resources Map**

**HP-1. PRESERVATION PLAN:** *Preservation of Downtown’s historic buildings and districts should be guided by an updated, city-wide Preservation Plan that is based upon a current inventory of cultural resources.*

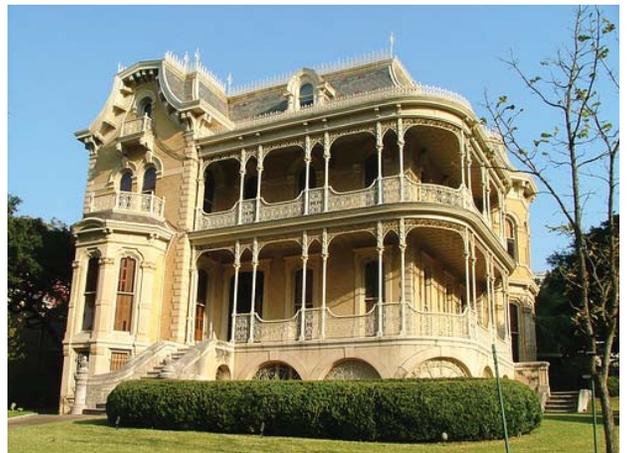
The City’s Preservation Plan and its Comprehensive Cultural Resource Survey (CCRS) - two key planning tools that guide a city to make appropriate policies and decisions about historic preservation are both over 30 years old, and so are of limited relevance today. The Preservation Plan is a resource manual, with recommendations intended to guide the work of the City, the Historic Landmark Commission and the preservation community in Austin. It is the best practices “roadmap” of what resources are important to preserve. It is based on a comprehensive understanding of the historical and cultural resources, their physical condition, their “story” or historical associations and their relative value or priority to the community. Austin’s Comprehensive Cultural Resource Survey, published in 1984 and never updated since, provides an inventory with priorities established for further research.

The Downtown Historic Resources Map (left) compiles in graphic form what the 1984 CCRS listed as those properties warranting further research in order to ascertain their priority for preservation. Evident on this map are the structures that have been demolished since that time. The City should update both the CCRS and the Preservation Plan, in conjunction with, or following the City’s “Imagine Austin” Comprehensive Plan update, which is now underway.<sup>22</sup>

**HP-1.1: Update and disseminate the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey and Preservation Plan, beginning with Downtown, and plan for periodic updates.**

- The Preservation Plan should set clear goals, policies and priorities and guide historic preservation efforts into the future. Per City Code, the Historic Landmark Commission is charged with proposing amendments to the Preservation Plan, so the preparation of an updated plan is consistent with that requirement. As was done in 1981, a professional preservation consultant should be commissioned to prepare the updated plan, as well as to update the 1984 Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey.
- The CCRS and the Preservation Plan should be made available on the City’s website in a user-friendly form that allows the public to understand properties and resources with historic significance, as well as the preservation goals associated with these.
- Periodic updates to the CCRS and the Preservation Plan should be budgeted and scheduled every five years, synchronized with the City’s Comprehensive Plan updates, since historic preservation is a required element of the Comprehensive Plan.

*The John Bremond House is the most prominent structure in the Bremond Block NRHD.*



**HP-2. DESIGN STANDARDS:** Standards and policies should be strengthened to ensure that new development respects the scale and character of historic buildings, districts and landscapes.

Today, Austin’s Land Development Code contains very few standards or regulations that require new buildings to be compatible with adjacent historic places, nor are there actual code regulations for new additions or modifications to existing historic buildings or for signage in historic districts. With the exception of a 45 foot height limit along East 6th Street, there are only guidelines, such as those for East 6th Street and the State Capitol Complex, as well as the more general *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.<sup>23</sup> While Austin’s guidelines are well-conceived, they have not been consistently followed or enforced, as evidenced by additions and alterations to various East 6th Street buildings and by new development within the Capitol Complex.

**HP-2.1: Adopt form-based development standards to protect and complement the unique character of historic downtown buildings, streets and districts.**

- The City should adopt form-based development standards to provide more specific guidance on the relationship of new development to historic buildings and districts. These standards, including height, setback and massing regulations, should be developed as part of the individual district plans to address specific issues and conditions. Signage regulations specific to each historic district should be included. (See Appendix I: DAP Proposed Building Design Standards.)

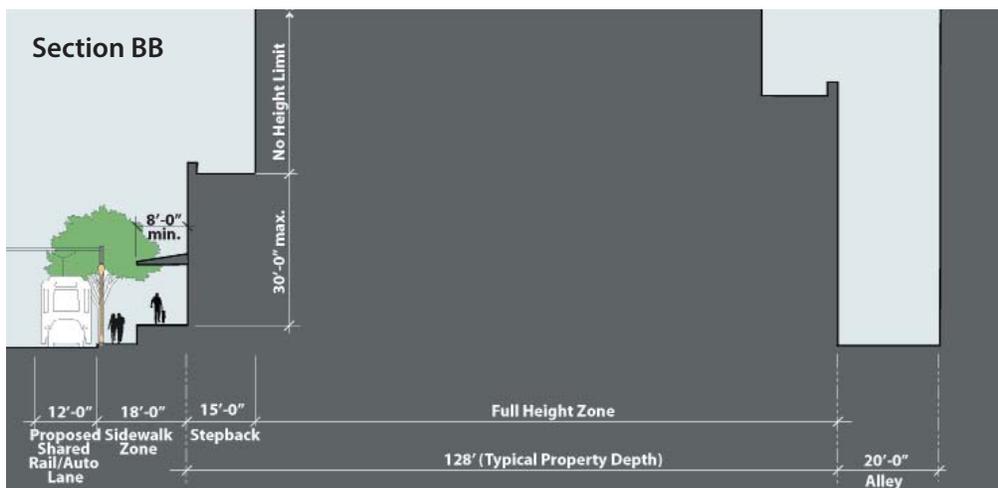


**Proposed Warehouse District**

### HP-2.2: Adopt standards and incentives to protect the Warehouse District.

The Warehouse District has become one of Austin’s most popular districts and destinations, known for its unique bars, cafes and entertainment venues, all housed in 19th and early 20th century buildings with loading docks now serving as public sidewalks. The area has not been designated as an historic district, and as such, has no official protection and is at risk of being lost to new high-rise development. The City should develop specific standards to protect the District, including:

- City staff should explore additional tools for preserving the historic character of the Warehouse District without imposing a strict height limit. Such tools could include: an overlay; design standards; review of permits by the Historic Landmark Commission; or context sensitive development standards.
- Form-based standards that require new buildings within the Core Preservation Zone and adjacent blocks to step back from the street to maintain the scale of the warehouse buildings of the area, and to preserve and introduce special elements that give the area its unique character, including elevated sidewalks and projecting canopies.



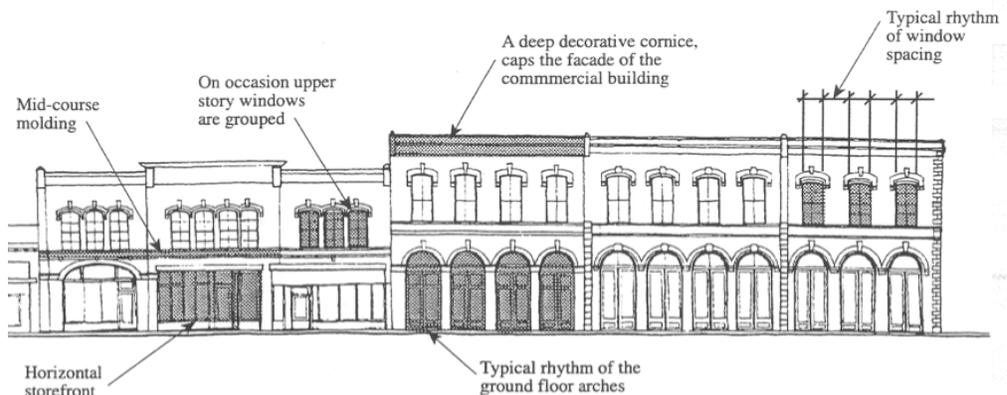
### Proposed Warehouse District Height and Stepback Zones

- To provide an incentive for preservation, the Plan recommends that the City adopt a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program that would allow Warehouse District property owners to sell unused development rights (available under existing zoning entitlements and those within the proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program) to other properties within Downtown that may be seeking greater density. The TDR program and the recommended development standards are described in detail in the Downtown Density Bonus Program report.<sup>24</sup>
- The City should support efforts by the Heritage Society of Austin and property owners to establish the Warehouse District as a National Register Historic District and as a Local Historic District. The City's Historic Preservation Office (CHPO) has already compiled documentation of the development of a more extensive warehouse area, much of which has already been demolished. The CHPO could complete the application for the Warehouse District to be certified as a National Register District, which would be an important first step in assisting in its preservation. To become a Local Historic District, however, 51% of District property owners must agree to being part of such a district, so the CHPO's efforts and those of the Heritage Society should be focused on working with property owners to understand the benefits of the LHD designation.

**HP-2.3: Introduce stepback provisions and other design standards for building additions within the East 6th Street National Register Historic District.**

East 6th Street is one of the largest concentrations of 19th and 20th century mercantile buildings in the State of Texas and is Austin's (and perhaps Texas') most celebrated entertainment district. Many buildings along this historic street between IH 35 and Lavaca Street, are designated city historic landmarks. The area is part of the East 6th Street National Register Historic District (NRHD), most of which is subject to a 45-foot height limit established by code as the Pecan Street Overlay District. In 1994, a set of architectural design guidelines was adopted for use by the CHPO and the Historic Landmark Commission in their project reviews to determine the appropriateness of new construction or modifications within the District.

*Excerpt from East 6th Street  
NRHD Design Guidelines*



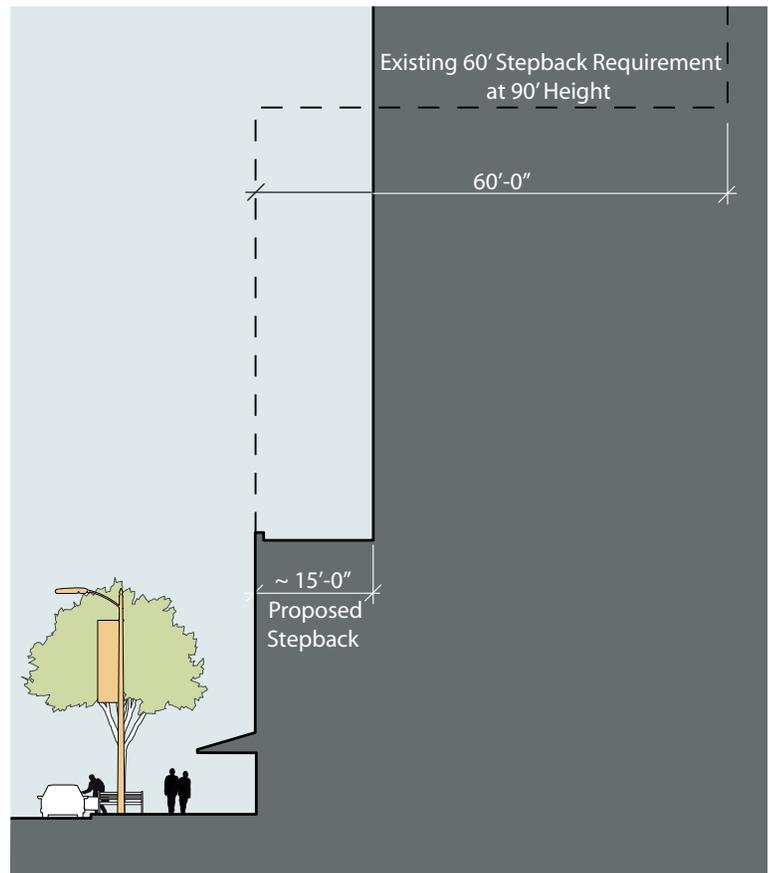
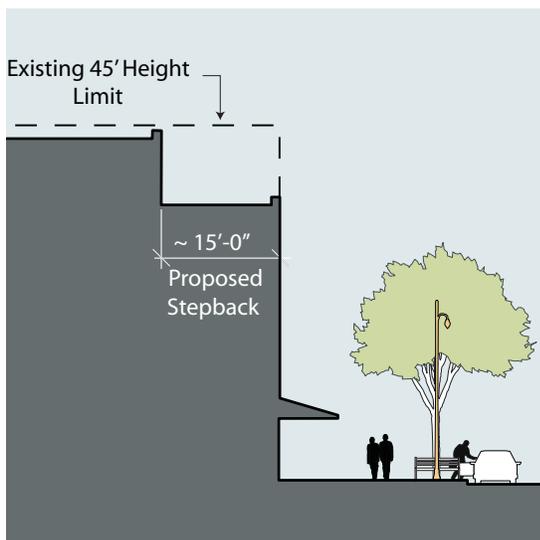
- The City should maintain these as design standards, but also require rooftop additions on historic buildings to be stepped back from the front façade of the original, historic structure by approximately 15 feet. This would help maintain the original building’s distinct form, silhouette and prominence, while allowing for compatible roof terraces and/or additional stories.
- The *Sixth Street Austin* Public Improvement District (PID) should be tasked with developing appropriate rooftop terrace and signage standards and with enforcing these.



*The character of the East 6th Street NRHD has been diminished by ad hoc rooftop additions.*

**HP-2.4: Introduce setback provisions for new buildings and building additions within the Congress Avenue National Register Historic District.**

Properties along Congress Avenue are currently under the protection of a NRHD, a Capitol View Corridor and the Congress Avenue Overlay District. The Overlay requires new buildings (or additions) to step back by 60 feet starting at a height of at least 30 feet, but no greater than 90 feet. This required setback of 60 feet is greater than necessary to protect the historic character and symbolic significance of Congress Avenue since existing tall buildings (e.g., along the east side of Congress Avenue) have already shaped the street. In addition, there are no regulations to guide the construction of additions to existing buildings on the Avenue, which is especially important when these are historically significant.



**Proposed Stepback Provision for East 6th Street and Congress Avenue NRHDs**

- The City should require building additions to historic structures to be stepped back from the Congress Avenue-facing façade by approximately 15 feet. In addition, the City should consider relaxing the 60-foot setback requirement of the Congress Avenue Overlay District.

***HP-3. ADMINISTRATION:*** *The City should intensify its role in managing and funding Downtown preservation.*

Currently the City’s Historic Preservation Office has three full-time staff, which is not adequate to accomplish much beyond the monthly administration of Historic Landmark Commission meetings. The CHPO is not funded to engage in more proactive planning efforts, required updates, public outreach and education, website development, etc., nor does it have the ability to support high-priority preservation projects. There are also no sources of capital funding for needed renovations of key Downtown historic resources, including publicly-owned parks and park structures, bridges, etc. The few grant programs available for historic preservation are generally small and reserved for local government organizations.

The City’s seven commissioners on the Historic Landmark Commission are called upon to interpret federal, state and local standards for designation of landmarks and districts, and to do so objectively, fairly and consistently. They must review building permit and Certificate of Appropriateness applications and determine whether the work proposed is consistent with best preservation practices and federal, state and local standards for preservation, rehabilitation and restoration. It is important that there be sufficient staff capacity to advise the Commission, and that the Commission be reinforced with members who have technical expertise, including preservation architects and architectural historians, who could continue to provide informed and effective review of project applications.

*Restoration of Downtown’s historic public infrastructure, such as bridges and parks, is needed.*



**HP-3.1: Improve the capacity of the City’s Historic Preservation Office (CHPO) and that of the Historic Landmark Commission.**

- The City should augment CHPO staff with professional-level staff (architects and architectural historians) to perform functions vital to Downtown and city-wide preservation, including management of the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey, the Preservation Plan, historic district applications, website, etc.
- The City Council should require that some members of the Historic Landmark Commission be architects trained in and/or practicing in the field of historic preservation.

**HP-3.2: Create a historic preservation funding source and incentives to encourage preservation projects available to both public and private property owners, as well as tenants.**

- The City should establish a funding source(s) that can provide capital to a number of key Downtown projects and initiatives, e.g., historic bridge restoration, heritage tourism initiatives, façade restorations.
- The City should explore the development of a City-owned and operated “TDR bank”, focused first on purchasing the development rights from willing property owners within the Warehouse District’s Core Preservation Zone.
- The City should develop a façade rehabilitation grant or revolving, low-interest loan program for commercial historic properties, building on the success of the current Heritage Grants Program for non-profits.
- The City should dedicate bond funds for preserving historic resources Downtown, prioritizing the rehabilitation of City-owned resources, such as the historic squares and Palm Park.
- The City should participate in the Certified Local Government (CLG) grants program to provide funding for CHPO local preservation projects.

*The 1930s restroom building in Palm Park is in need of restoration.*





Mixed Use Street, Amsterdam

## ACTIVITIES AND USES

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***Overall Goal: Ensure that Downtown’s future growth supports a vibrant, diverse and pedestrian-friendly urban district.***

Over the past decade, Downtown has continued to evolve beyond that of a “central business district” to an urban neighborhood: a place to live, shop, visit and play - as well as work. This evolution is taking place in spite of the City’s zoning ordinance, which includes a complex array of special districts and overlays. Major parts of Downtown are subject to zoning districts that disallow residential as a primary use, others that do not allow offices, and others include zoning designations that permit uses that undermine the health and vitality of a pedestrian-oriented district. This is not consistent with the community’s vision for a diverse and mixed-use Downtown. While mixed-use is desirable throughout Downtown, certain uses should be prioritized or incentivized in particular districts, and along certain streets to achieve the particular goals of that district and to reinforce Downtown as a viable and attractive destination. The following policies are aimed at fulfilling the vision of an inclusive, mixed-use Downtown with a thriving pedestrian environment.

*San Jacinto Street, now lined with parking garages, is envisioned as a mixed-use, pedestrian and transit-oriented street.*



***AU-1. MIXED USE: Downtown should have a full mix of urban uses that reinforce an active and engaging pedestrian environment.***

An appropriate mix of residential and non-residential uses should be allowed in all parts of Downtown, except for Judges Hill, which should generally be preserved as a single-family residential neighborhood.

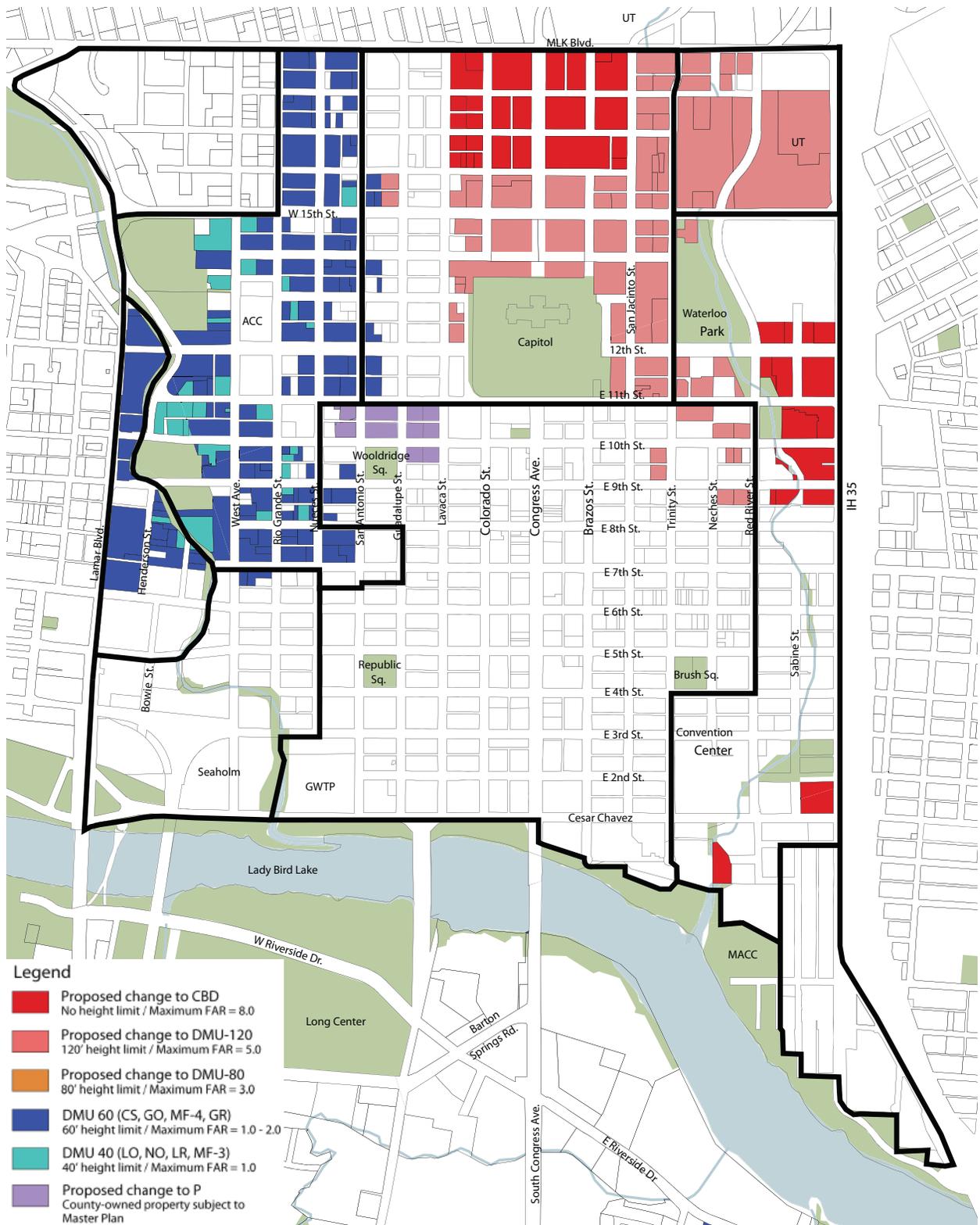
**AU-1.1: Replace single-use zoning districts with downtown mixed-use zoning designations.**

Some of the zoning districts within Downtown restrict the full range of residential and non-residential uses that are desirable for a healthy urban district. For example, properties with Commercial Service (CS) and General Office (GO) designations are prohibited from constructing residential units, and those with Multi-Family (MF) zoning do not allow office uses.

- The City should establish two new downtown mixed-use zoning districts, “DMU-40” and “DMU-60”, to replace these single-purpose zoning districts and provide for a broader mix of residential and commercial uses.
- DMU-40 should replace existing zoning districts that have a 40-foot height limit (e.g., LO and MF-4), and DMU-60 should replace those with a 60-foot height limit (CS, GO, MF-5, MF-6). The intent of these new zoning districts is to promote a mixture of uses at a scale that is appropriate to their context, providing a transition from “DMU-120” (currently “DMU”) to surrounding single-family neighborhoods and lower intensity districts.
- The specific provisions of these new zoning districts, including the list of permitted and conditional uses, should be established as part of detailed District Plans within Downtown.<sup>25</sup>

**AU-1.2: Prioritize or incentivize certain uses in certain districts of Downtown.**

- The support documentation developed in the District Plans should be used to encourage particular uses that are deemed to be important in achieving the community’s vision and to correct any imbalances that may have occurred over the past decades. For example, the Northwest District Plan provides incentives for residential development in a part of Downtown that was once Austin’s first residential neighborhood, but that is now substantially in office use. The District Plan recommends that residential infill development that complies with the Plan’s form-based standards be allowed to be built to an increased density.<sup>26</sup> See DD-1.3.
- Provide incentives for neighborhood-serving commercial uses in certain activity areas of the Northwest District. A concentration of neighborhood serving retail businesses should be encouraged along MLK Boulevard, 12th Street west of West Avenue, and 15th Street east of Rio Grande Street. To encourage retail shops and restaurants along these designated frontages, the floor area of these particular uses should be exempted from the FAR density calculation.



## Proposed Downtown Zoning Changes

- As other future District Plans are prepared, priority uses should be identified.

**AU-1.3: Prioritize and incentivize certain ground-level uses along certain streets.**

In order to realize the community’s goal of a vibrant and pedestrian-oriented downtown, and to avoid inappropriate use and treatment of ground-level streetfronts, the City should adopt more specific regulations regarding streetfront uses along certain streets. Two types of streets are recommended:

- “Downtown Mixed Use Streets”, allowing for a wide range of pedestrian-oriented uses including office, retail and residential uses; and
- “Pedestrian Activity Streets” for certain streets that are regional destinations, and where a more defined set of pedestrian-oriented activities like retail, restaurant and cultural uses are desired.

District Plans should be used to establish specific locations, regulations and requirements for these street frontages.<sup>27</sup>

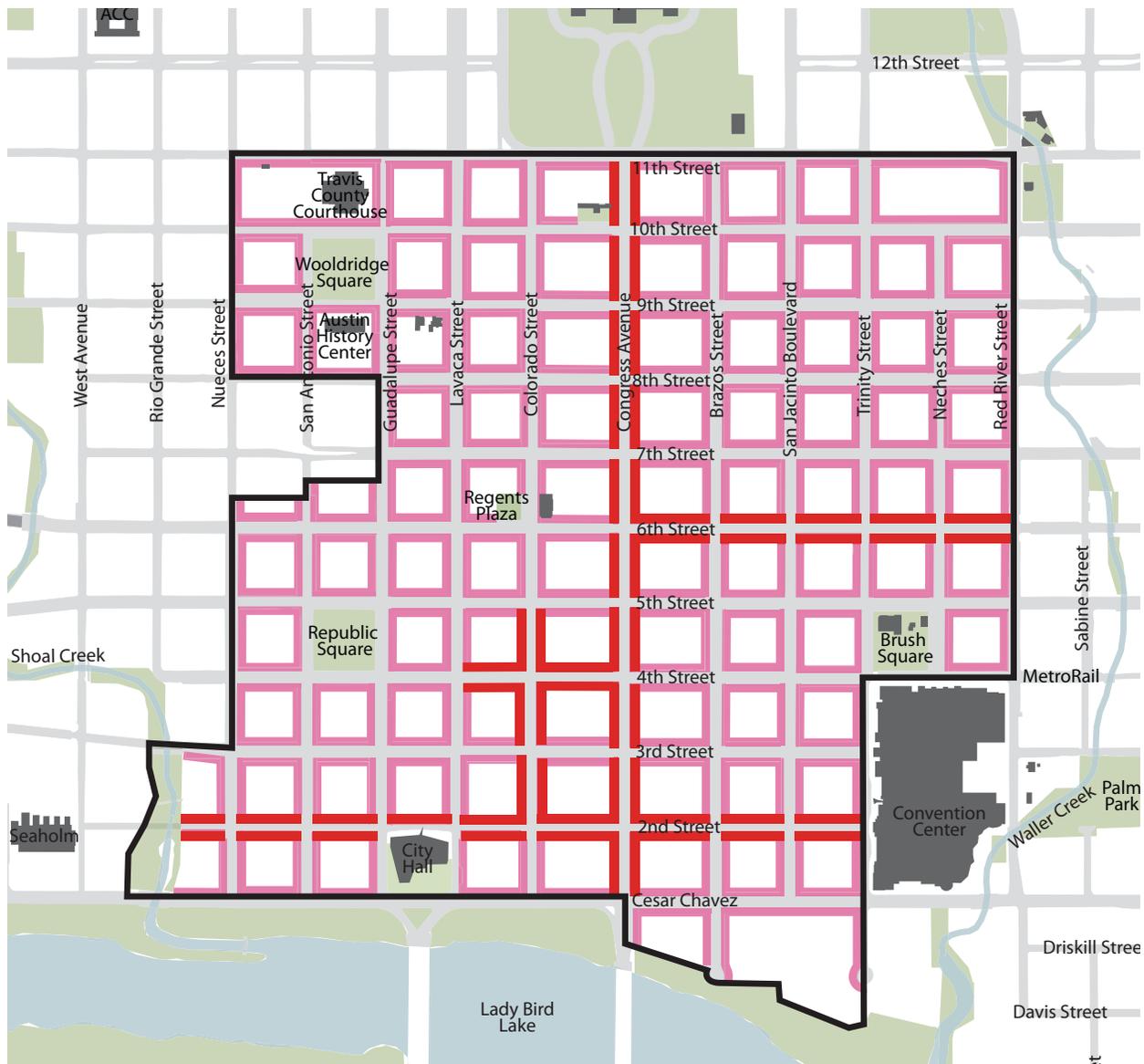
**AU-1.4: Explore ways to mitigate the potential negative effects of an over-concentration of cocktail lounges, which can discourage establishing a more balanced set of uses, particularly daytime uses that add to the vitality of Downtown.**

An over-concentration of bars in a single location can cause ill effects. It can cause that location to have a “closed up” feel during non-evening hours; and it can prevent or discourage that location from having a dynamic and pedestrian friendly feel. Public order problems have sometimes arisen due to poor management of some cocktail lounge uses. The City should explore ways of addressing these issues.

Because the Land Development Code treats ‘cocktail lounge’ as a permitted use in the CBD zoning district, there is no current regulatory tool to prevent over-concentrations of bars. Through additional analysis and community input, the City should seek to identify and implement tools that address this issue. One of the tools that should be explored is making Cocktail Lounge a conditional use. If those

*An over-concentration of bars can threaten the viability of certain Downtown areas.*





**Legend**

- PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY STREET**
  - 75% of parcel frontage in active commercial or civic use including:
    - "Commercial Uses": Art Gallery, Art Workshop, Cocktail Lounge, Consumer Convenience Services, Food Sales, General Retail Sales, Hotel-Motel, Liquor Sales, Personal Services, Restaurant, Theater
    - "Civic Uses": Cultural Services
- MIXED USE STREET**
  - 60% of parcel frontage in the above active commercial or civic use and the following:
    - All zoning "Residential Uses"
    - "Commercial Uses" includes: Financial Services, Food Preparation, Indoor Entertainment, Indoor Sports and Recreation, Laundry Services, Personal Improvement Services, Pet Services
    - "Civic Uses" includes: Clubs or Lodge, College or University Facilities, Day Care services, Public and Private Education Facilities, Religious Assembly

**Pedestrian Activity and Mixed-Use Streets for the Core/Waterfront District**

tools were to include criteria associated with evaluating cocktail lounge uses, those criteria might include: hours of operation criteria – ensuring both a daytime and nighttime presence; compliance with all codes and regulations; and security and other staffing criteria.

With regard to public order issues, the City and the community should explore whether current enforcement efforts and mechanisms are adequate, and if not, identify and implement improvements.

The City should also explore incentives that would promote the development of other (non-cocktail lounge) uses, such as: use of the Business Retention and Enhancement loan program; City participation in utility infrastructure improvements; and expedited review of permits.

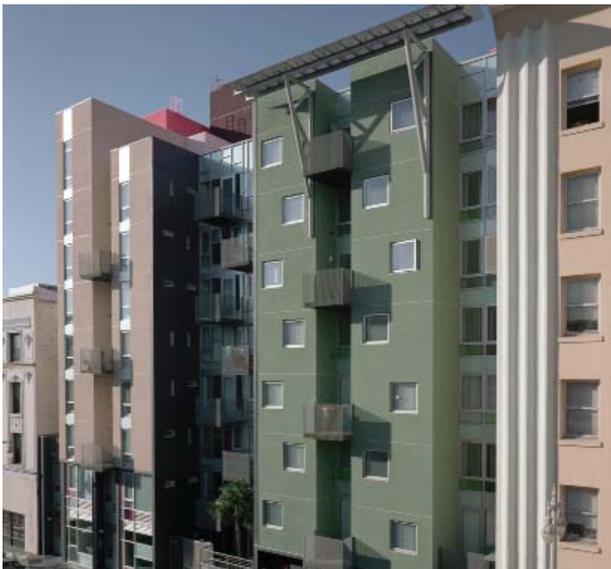
**AU-2. HOUSING:** *Downtown and the areas immediately around it should have a greater socio-economic diversity of residents.*

Ensuring that the supply, type and cost of housing provides opportunities for a wide range of Austinites to live Downtown is crucial to achieving the community’s vision of an inclusive and diverse district. Housing in Downtown should be available to a wide range of income groups and lifestyles, including special needs residents, singles and families, Downtown workers and those who contribute to the arts and music community. Housing should be available within or in proximity to Downtown, in order to support public transit, provide housing near jobs and to create an adequate market base for retail, arts, culture and entertainment uses.

*Affordable housing at a variety of densities should be accommodated in and within reach of Downtown (below low and mid-rise projects in San Francisco by David Baker Partners).*

**AU-2.1: Support the production of affordable housing.**

Most Downtown workers cannot afford to live Downtown, as units are typically far less affordable and therefore less diverse. The cost of producing high-rise housing is high, and therefore the subsidies needed to reduce market-rate housing to affordable levels are significant.



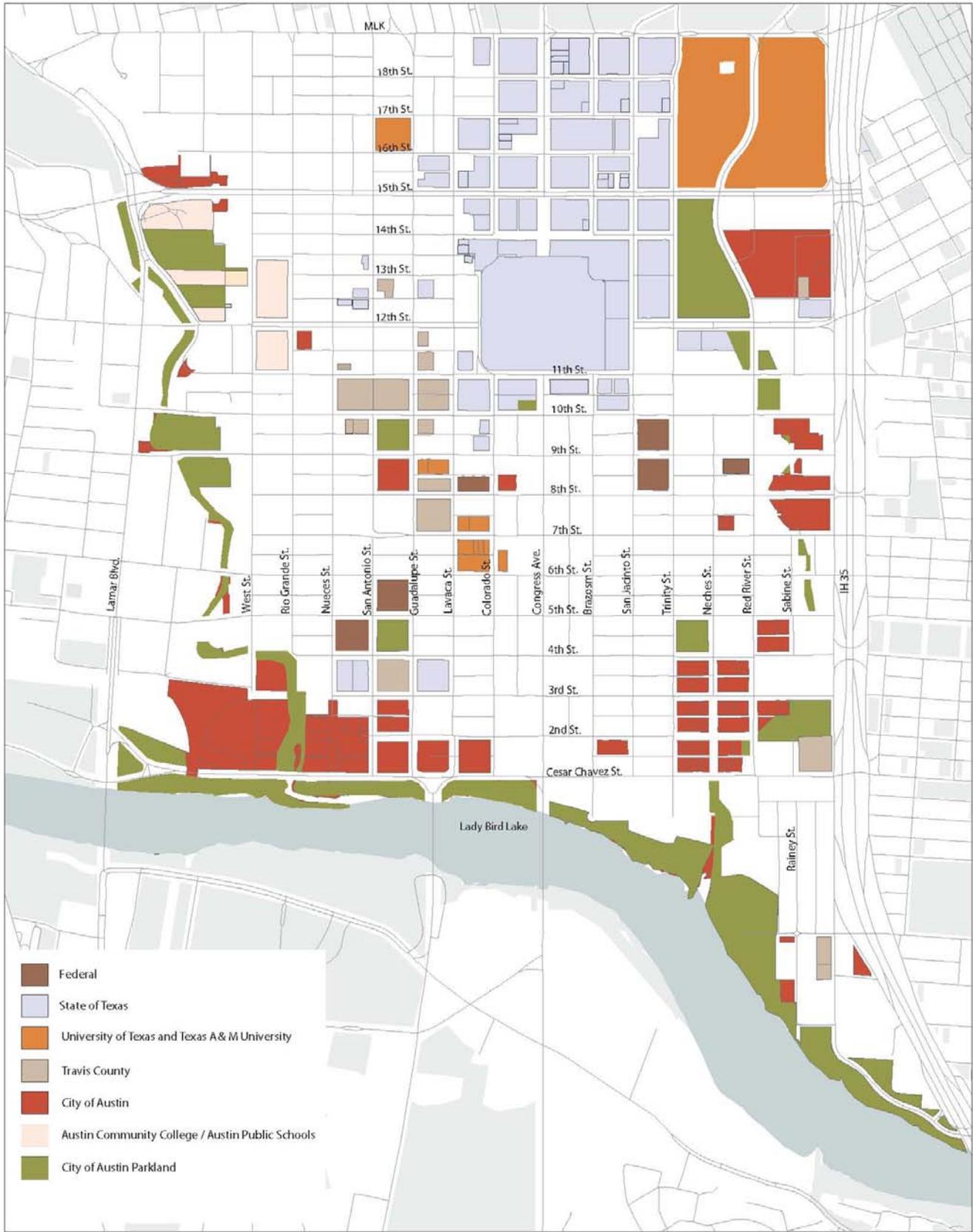
- City staff should explore potential funding mechanisms to support affordable housing and supportive services in and around Downtown. Such tools could include: the 40% allocation currently in place on properties previously owned by the City; other tools drawing on the tax base associated with particular projects; fees associated with events; and other potential tools based on best practices in other cities.
- The City should support the production of very low, low, and moderate-income units in and within reach of Downtown, including rental units affordable to families earning below 60% of MFI (median family income) and ownership units affordable to families earning below 80% of MFI. The lower cost of creating affordable housing in the areas surrounding Downtown, coupled with its transit accessibility, makes it a fiscally-prudent alternative to meeting some of Downtown’s affordable housing needs. Specifically, creating affordable housing options in neighborhood planning areas within a two-mile radius of 6th Street and Congress Avenue can provide cost efficient, transit-accessible units in close proximity to Downtown.
- Opportunities for achieving very low, low and moderate income housing within Downtown should also be maximized in areas where height limits result in lower costs of construction, and where affordable unit construction can be required as part of the redevelopment of government-owned land. (See AU-2.2 below.)
- These goals could be accomplished through a number of short-term strategies that can be achieved in the current market environment - primarily with public subsidy - as well as long-term strategies that leverage a framework of funding sources and changing market conditions, such as: proceeds from a Downtown Density Bonus Program, creation of a Workforce Housing Corporation to provide centralized funding, abatement of taxes for projects achieving threshold requirements for on-site affordable housing and the expansion of SMART Housing fee waivers and economic development grants.<sup>28</sup> In the long term, a non-profit Workforce Housing Corporation could leverage a range of public and private sources to create centralized financing programs for the creation of affordable housing.
- The City should help to reduce the substantial cost of structured parking by both “decoupling” the sale or rental of parking from that of an affordable unit and by developing a supply of centralized, off-site parking that can be leased as needed. (See Transportation and Parking.)

*Public land like the Green Water Treatment Plant (above) can be leveraged to contribute to downtown affordable housing.*



**AU-2.2: Leverage redevelopment of public lands to contribute to affordable housing production.**

Of the approximately 180 acres of publicly-owned land



## Publicly-Owned Land

*Approximately 180 acres of land are publicly-owned.*



Downtown, 32 acres have short or mid-term redevelopment potential. This includes properties owned by the City of Austin, Travis County, the State of Texas and the federal government. Some of these properties may be redeveloped in the future for a mix of non-governmental uses, including housing.

*Aerial views of the existing Capitol Complex (left) and redevelopment potential (right) as portrayed by Texas Facilities Commission.*

- The City should work in partnership with other governmental entities, such as the Texas Facilities Commission, that could be engaged in redevelopment of Downtown land to promote affordable housing goals. The City already has an established policy that directs 40% of the property tax from redeveloped City-owned property to the Housing Trust Fund. The City should consider additional leverage in the redevelopment of City lands, including provision of free or discounted land in exchange for on-site affordable housing and requirements for on-site affordable housing units, as in the Mueller Redevelopment and Project Green.
- The Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) controlled sites present additional opportunities for partnership. There is potential to increase density and create more than 3,500 additional units on the eight HACA sites in Downtown and in the areas surrounding it. The City should partner with HACA to prioritize the intensification of its sites, in order to increase availability and improve quality of housing in and around Downtown.

*Permanent supportive housing is aimed at helping the chronically homeless transition to more stable lives. (Delancy Street Foundation Housing, San Francisco)*

**AU-2.3: Provide for permanent supportive housing.**

The City of Austin and other providers have strived to address the immediate needs of sheltering the homeless; however, progress is needed to provide permanent supportive housing that can help people transition to more stable and independent lives. To this end, the City Council in March 2010 passed a resolution prioritizing local and federal resources administered by the City’s Health and Human Services and Neighborhood Housing and Community Development departments in order to create 350 units of permanent supportive housing in the next four years.



Permanent supportive housing is a cost-effective way of addressing the needs of those who face the most complex challenges: individuals and families confronted with homelessness who also have very low incomes and significant barriers to obtaining housing, including criminal histories, substance abuse addictions, mental illness, or other mental and physical challenges. Such housing combines a place to live with social services, such as job and life skills training, alcohol and drug abuse programs and counseling. Permanent supportive housing is intended to help people recover and succeed while reducing the public's overall cost of care. Goals of the City of Austin's Permanent Supportive Housing Strategy include geographically dispersing a diverse housing stock; creating units with high quality design; establishing effective property management; developing partnerships with non-profit and private developers and agencies; and supporting tenant's choice and fair housing principles.

The City should commit to the creation of approximately 225 units of housing in Downtown to address the needs of very low-income persons, some of which may be single-room occupancy (SRO) or other appropriate permanent supportive housing, in conjunction with non-profit partners that can provide needed services. The location of these units should be carefully considered; sites near the already-burdened area surrounding the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless should be avoided.

#### **AU-2.4: Promote affordable housing for artists and musicians.**

The City should assist in the creation of affordable housing and live-work spaces for artists and musicians, through partnerships with non-profit developers, contribution of affordable housing bond monies and/or the discounting of public lands, as appropriate.

#### **AU-2.5: Make Downtown housing more family-friendly.**

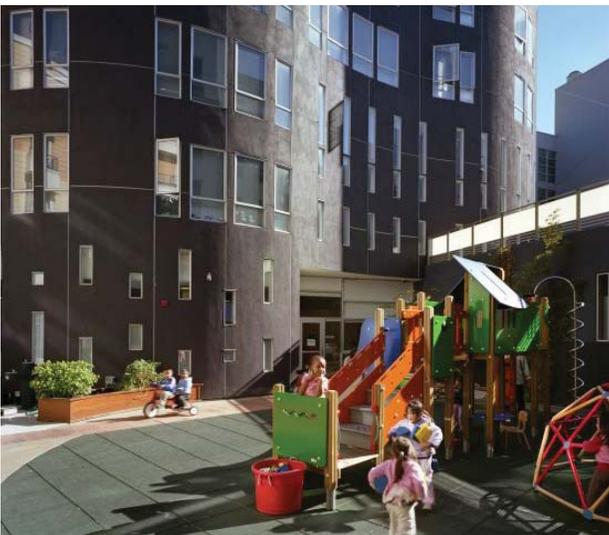
Families with children contribute significantly to the growth, diversity, vibrancy, and economic vitality of a city. Joel Kotkin writes in the Wall Street Journal, "If you talk with recruiters and developers in the nation's fastest growing regions, you find that

the critical ability to lure skilled workers, long term, lies not with bright lights and nightclubs, but with ample economic opportunities, affordable housing and family-friendly communities not too distant from work."<sup>31</sup>

The City of Austin's Families and Children Task Force report provides a comprehensive series of policy recommendations to make Austin a more family-friendly city. These recommendations, which deal with housing, child care, park and public space design and transportation, are consistent with the community's vision of a diverse and inclusive Downtown.<sup>32</sup>

While many families will choose to live elsewhere, Downtown should provide opportunities for affordable and suitable housing for families. In this regard, the City should:

*Downtown housing should provide protected play areas for children.*



- Introduce incentives through the Downtown Density Bonus Program to encourage the production of affordable, family-sized dwelling units with three bedrooms or more.
- Ensure that required on-site open space within multi-family residential developments of a particular size (e.g., greater than 40 units) include space suitable for families with children, such as protected courtyards and play areas, child care facilities, recreation rooms, etc.

**AU-3. RETAIL AND ENTERTAINMENT:** *Downtown should be the most desirable retail and entertainment destination in the region, for both residents and visitors.*

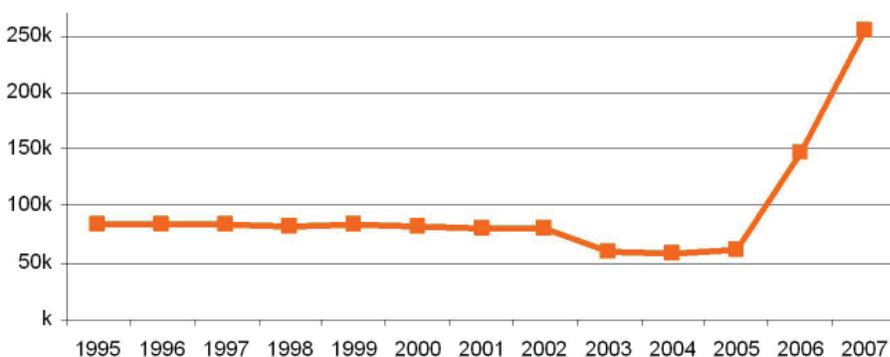
Retail, restaurant and entertainment uses are critical to achieving the community’s vision of a vibrant and pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use district. A thriving and diverse retail core, including shopping, dining and entertainment, as well as a diverse range of cultural activities (see AU-4), is important for the continued growth and vibrancy of Downtown. Retail promotes street activity, encouraging residents and visitors alike to spend time and money Downtown. Local-serving retail attracts and supports the growing number of households seeking a unique urban and pedestrian-oriented lifestyle.

Like most American cities, Downtown’s role as the region’s central shopping district was eclipsed in the 1960-70s by suburban shopping centers which represented a new paradigm in merchandising. Downtown is no longer a destination for “comparison retail”, but instead, is emerging in a role as a specialty and lifestyle shopping destination, with the influx of new residents and the creation of the 2nd Street District, the Market District and initiatives by the Downtown Austin Alliance in partnership with the City to introduce new retail businesses along Congress Avenue and East 6th Street.

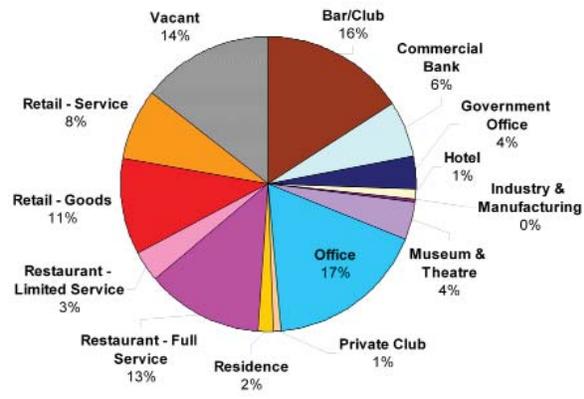
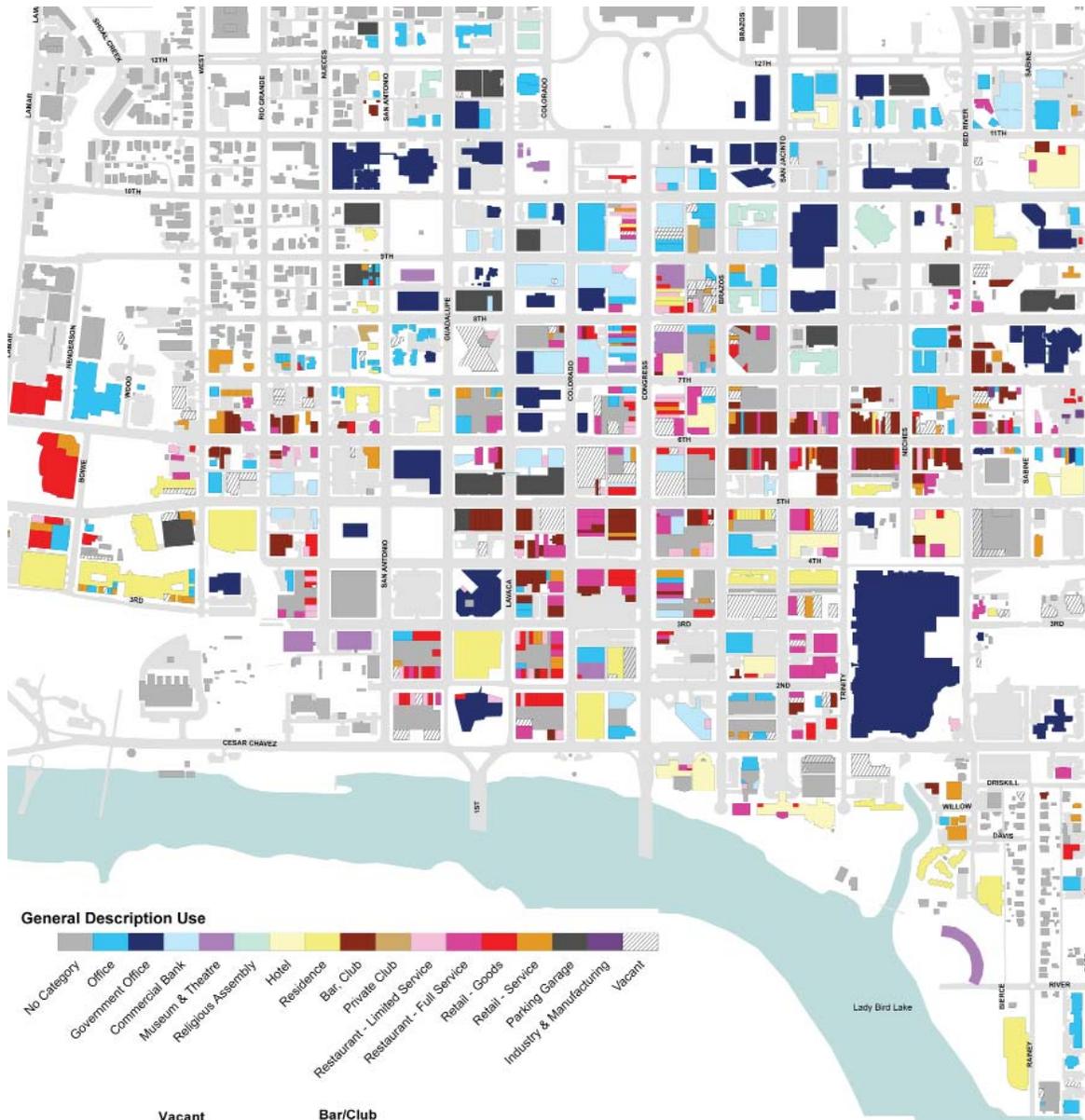
Downtown’s role as an entertainment district has also grown over the past 10 years, enhancing the competitiveness and attractiveness of Downtown as an office and employment center, as well as a residential district. During 2005 to 2007,

**Total Occupied Retail Space Downtown, sq ft**

*numbers in thousands*



*During 2005 - 2007 retail space increased 400% to over 250,000 square feet.*



General Description Use	Number of Outlets	Total Square Footage
Bar/Club	132	433,386
Commercial Bank	35	168,538
Government Office	43	104,243
Hotel	11	32,088
Industry & Manufacturing	3	4,420
Museum & Theatre	13	111,322
Office	128	486,930
Parking Garage	16	0
Private Club	3	21,860
Religious Assembly	8	0
Residence	41	43,710
Restaurant - Full Service	92	357,104
Restaurant - Limited Service	63	88,811
Retail - Goods	97	290,763
Retail - Service	79	217,137
Vacant	108	396,048
<b>Total</b>	<b>872</b>	<b>2,756,360</b>
	<b>Average Size of Spaces</b>	<b>4,287</b>
	<b>Median Size of Spaces</b>	<b>2,785</b>
Smallest Space	1108 Lavaca, Suite 118 (Vacant)	162
Largest Space	Whole Foods Grocery Store	90,000

## Ground Floor Retail in Downtown

Source: Downtown Austin Alliance, 2009

new construction increased the total amount of occupied retail space Downtown fourfold, from 61,883 square feet to 254,567 square feet.<sup>33</sup> Recent studies have projected an unmet demand of 500,000 square feet of new retail.<sup>34</sup> However, Downtown still represents only about 1% of the total occupied retail space in Austin.

The City should adopt land use policies that encourage a critical mass of retail and entertainment uses in Downtown that are focused along key, pedestrian-oriented streets.

### **AU-3.1: Reinforce existing retail and entertainment districts.**

Existing concentrations of retail and entertainment uses have emerged in certain areas of Downtown, including: the Market District at Lamar and West 6th Street; the 2nd Street District, the Warehouse District, East 6th Street, Congress Avenue and Red River Street. These key districts should be reinforced.

- A retail recruitment program is currently being implemented by the DAA for Congress Avenue and East 6th Street. These efforts should be bolstered by the City and private sector partners to attract businesses that create synergy and critical mass within specific sub-areas of Downtown. The City’s existing Business Retention and Enhancement (BRE) Program should continue to assist displaced, new and expanding businesses on East 6th Street and Congress Avenue.
- Development incentives should be provided for a desired balance of retail and entertainment uses in certain parts of Downtown, including density bonuses and “free” or exempted FAR (floor area ratio).



*Jo’s is a successful example of one of the locally-owned businesses in the City-sponsored 2nd Street District.*

### **AU-3.2: Promote ground-level retail and restaurant uses along particular Downtown streets.**

- Pedestrian-oriented space suitable for retail, restaurant or entertainment uses should be required along key street frontages designated as “Pedestrian Activity Streets” within Downtown (see AU-1.3 above).

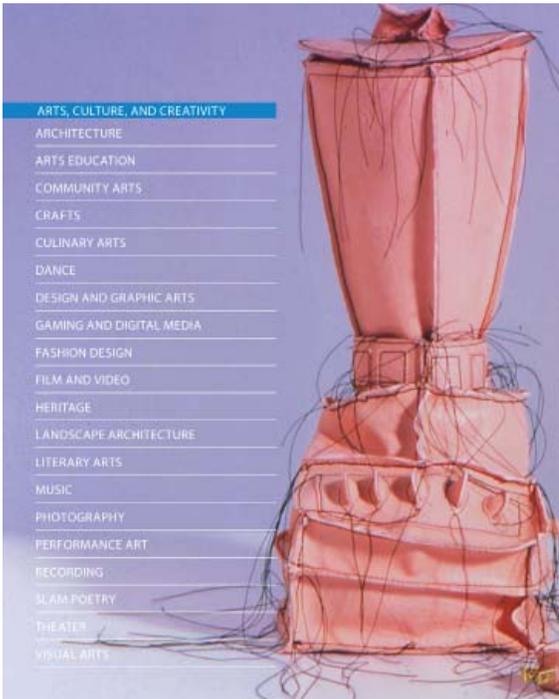
*New retail uses are strengthening Congress Avenue as a shopping destination.*

### **AU-3.3: Establish a concentration of retail, entertainment and cultural uses in City-sponsored redevelopment projects.**

- Downtown redevelopment projects on City-owned land, such as Project Green and Seaholm, should continue to include significant retail, restaurant, entertainment and cultural uses to create a strong regional destination and a complementary “anchor” for both the 2nd Street District and the Market District.



- A significant portion of these businesses should be locally-owned to contribute to an authentic, diverse and affordable Downtown.



*The Create Austin Plan recognizes the diversity of players who contribute to Austin's creative community.*

**AU-4. LIVE MUSIC, CULTURAL AND CREATIVE USES:** *Austin's creative community and Downtown's concentration of live music and other cultural destinations should be nurtured and expanded.*

Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* ranks Austin as second only to San Francisco in US creative class cities. The creative community contributes significantly to the vitality, livability and distinct character of Austin and Downtown. If Austin is to continue "being Austin", the city must sustain and enhance the vibrancy of culture, arts and music. Creativity is perhaps the most character-defining element of Austin's culture - one that has both a national and international reputation.

A recent economic benefit study estimates that Austin's creative industry generates \$2.2 billion of economic activity annually, almost half of which can be attributed to live music.<sup>35</sup> There is a wide variety of players who contribute to Austin's creative economy, including dancers, performers, sculptors, photographers, filmmakers, musicians, painters,

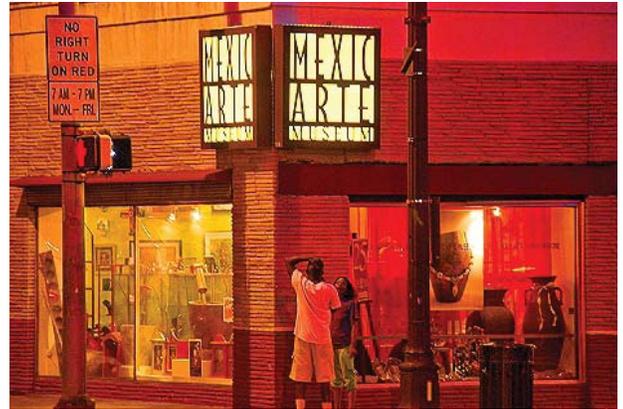
writers, poets, printmakers, fashion designers, industrial designers, web designers, sound engineers, multi-media and interactive artists, videographers and graphic designers. The list is enormous, as is their contribution to Austin's identity.

But many in Austin's creative class do not feel adequately supported by City government: there is a lack of "creative culture" leadership at the City and, as a result, a lack of support. Some even feel that City bureaucracy creates barriers and added expense, particularly in the realms of events and building permitting. Resources to help artists, musicians and other creative individuals develop their talents and grow their careers in Austin are lacking. Many artists find their careers stalling once they achieve a certain threshold of success and feel compelled to move to Nashville, Los Angeles or New York to receive adequate compensation and to continue their career trajectories. This should be recognized as an economic development opportunity to expand Austin's creative economy and help the struggling creative class stay in Austin.

It is critical that Downtown be the area where art in all its forms lives, on the streets and in public spaces, as well as in new and existing developments. The following policies build on the recommendations of the Live Music Task Force,<sup>36</sup> the Create Austin Plan<sup>37</sup> and the DAP report entitled "Strategies and Policies to Sustain and Enhance Austin's Creative Culture".<sup>38</sup>

**AU-4.1: Encourage museums and other cultural institutions that serve the entire city to be located in or very near Downtown.**

Recognizing that cultural institutions are key economic anchors for Downtown, the City should continue to take a proactive role in ensuring that one-of-a-kind cultural institutions, such as museums, galleries, planetariums, major performing arts venues, etc., are located Downtown. These types of institutions flourish in the dense, mixed-use setting of a downtown environment. When located within walking distance of one another, visitors are able to access multiple destinations easily, increasing the length of visitor stays and the amount of visitor dollars into the downtown economy.



*The City should help to ensure that one-of-a-kind cultural institutions are located in or very near Downtown. (Mexicarte, above and The Blanton below)*

**AU-4.2: Provide for the creation of new cultural facilities and live music venues.**

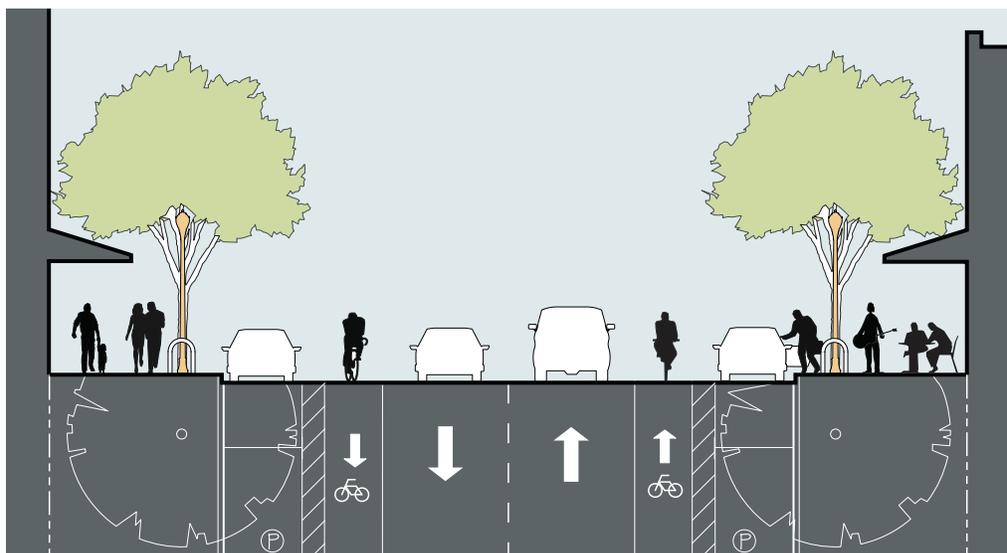
- Create an inventory of publicly-owned lands and buildings in and near Downtown that could accommodate incubator spaces, rehearsal and performing spaces, artist studios, artist live/work spaces, live music venues or other creative culture uses and businesses. Maintain the inventory for possible public/private partnership opportunities. Examples of such publicly-owned assets include the Palm School, the Castleman-Bull House, the Old Bakery and the Seaholm Power Plant Turbine Hall and Water Intake Structure.
- The City should take a proactive role in incentivizing both retention and creation of cultural facilities and live music venues by:
  - Continuing to provide capital funding for the construction, renovation and expansion of major cultural facilities, like the support given to the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican-American Cultural Center (MACC), Zachary Scott Theater, Mexicarte, Asian-American Cultural Center and the Long Center;
  - Presenting the City's existing incentives clearly and comprehensively, so developers, tenants and property managers are made aware of these opportunities and may leverage them with other incentives available through federal and local historic preservation grants and tax credits, affordable housing tax credits, the Density Bonus Program, the Business Retention and Enhancement Program, etc. The City's incentives that benefit the creative community should be rebranded as such, and widely disseminated;
  - Creating incentives for property owners to develop affordable creative spaces in underutilized or unoccupied areas of a building,



such as upper stories, particularly along Congress Avenue and East 6th Street;

- Using the existing City incentives and regulations to create and/or re-imagine these under a creative community “brand”;
  - Providing a density bonus to developers constructing or retaining live music venues or cultural uses; and
  - Allowing developers to exempt floor area of approved cultural uses, including live music venues, from the FAR calculation in particular districts or sub-districts of Downtown.
- 
- The City should explore the feasibility of a “Cultural Mitigation Fund” within the Waller Creek Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, which would assess new development to create a fund to support cultural activities and facilities in Downtown, as well as mitigate any negative effects of redevelopment on existing live music venues. Such an assessment may be justified given the significant public investment being made in the Tunnel Project, the potential “windfall” that property owners will receive from this improvement and the economic and cultural benefits that accrue to the City from cultural uses and live music venues. The fee should be calibrated so that it is not a deterrent to redevelopment and investment in the area.
  - Uses for this fund should prioritize the preservation and creation of “certified” live music venues within the Red River Live Music District (see AU-4.4 below), and other creative community uses and needs, including the creation of rehearsal space, galleries, non-profit arts-related office space, artist promotions, etc. (Certified live music venues should be those that meet a set of minimum building and operational standards, e.g., sound-proofing, number of shows per

*Red River Street can accommodate both dedicated bicycle lanes and drop-off/parking lanes on both sides.*



**Red River Street Proposed Cross-Section**

week, presence of sound engineer, etc. The City should work with acoustical and sound engineers to develop cost-effective building standards or code associated with live music and performance venues.)

#### **AU-4.3: Support cultural district planning and marketing of Downtown arts and cultural organizations, businesses and live music venues.**

A “cultural district” is a well-recognized, branded, mixed-use area in which there is a high concentration of cultural assets serving to anchor the district. In Texas, there is a State-designated cultural district program which promotes consistent branding and marketing and sustained commitment to cultural district vitality.

- The City and its cultural partners should establish such districts in Downtown, where appropriate, and commit resources to their enhancement. Potential existing cultural districts include Congress Avenue, Red River Street, East 6th Street and the Uptown Arts District.



*The Red River live music district is at risk of being displaced by redevelopment.*

#### **AU-4.4: Provide incentives and programs for the protection of Red River Street as an authentic live music district.**

This nationally-acclaimed live music district is at risk of being displaced by the redevelopment resulting from the Waller Creek Tunnel Project which will be completed in 2014.

- The City should designate the 600 to 900 blocks of Red River as Austin’s premiere “live music district” and provide incentives for the retention, renovation and addition of live music venues. Incentives could include those currently being explored through the Waller Creek implementation, such as the use of “Cultural Mitigation Funds” and other grant funding. (See AU-4.2.)
- Ensure that drop-off and parking lanes are retained on both sides of Red River Street within the District, to provide for musician loading and parking.
- Consider expanding the Business Retention and Enhancement Program (BRE) to support the retention and creation of live music venues along Red River Street.

#### **AU-4.5: Build on the East 6th Street brand and improve it as a high-quality daytime and night-time entertainment and visitor destination.**

While historic East 6th Street is touted to be Austin’s premiere entertainment district, on weekends it can devolve into a disorderly and unattractive street, with its over-concentration of student-oriented bars and dance clubs spilling out onto the sidewalk. The lack of public order is off-putting to many, including the large visitor population generated by the nearby Convention Center and hotels.

*Sixth Street Austin*, the manager of the street’s public improvement district, has taken great strides to develop a vision for the street that would cater to a much

broader demographic (including residents, workers, tourists and conventioners) and that would include a mix of day and night-time uses, including cultural activities, restaurants, retail, etc. To help bring about this vision, the City should:

- Implement the recommendations of the Responsible Hospitality Institute’s 2009 report on 6th Street: “Action Plan: Managing the Nighttime Economy”.<sup>39</sup>
- Enhance the retail recruitment efforts of the DAA as recommended in the “6th Street - Urban Entertainment and Retail Strategy” and “Congress Avenue - Retail Strategy” reports by ERA/Downtown Works (2007).
- Give the highest priority to streetscape improvements that can change the character of the street, handle pedestrian volumes with wider sidewalks, provide space for outdoor cafes and reduce the need for weekend street closures that impact businesses and encourage negative social behavior.
- Control the proliferation of poorly-managed cocktail lounge uses by instituting specific conditions to their approval and continued operation (see AU-1.4).
- Work with Austin Police Department (APD) and *Sixth Street Austin* to establish the design and management criteria necessary to allow the street to remain open to car traffic on typical weekend nights.
- Build on the live music brand of East 6th Street and reposition it through a coordinated promotional program through the Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB) and *Sixth Street Austin*.
- The City should explore the feasibility of constructing an “experience-based”

*“Sixth Street Austin” is promoting a vision for the street that includes wider sidewalks, a mix of day and nighttime uses, cultural activities and public art.*



visitor center that could showcase the best of Austin live music, arts and cuisine, as well as fulfill the existing functions of ACVB’s “Grove Drugs” Visitor Center site. Such an exciting new facility located near Waller Creek at IH 35 could provide a needed anchor and attraction where the street loses energy due to lack of active uses. This facility could also help to link the street to its segment immediately east of IH 35, where a new restaurant and entertainment district has recently emerged, as well as to the Red River Live Music District

**AU-4.6: Allow restaurants in certain Downtown districts to have outdoor music venues with the same sound levels as cocktail lounges.**

- The City’s noise ordinance allows outdoor amplified music up to 85 decibels for cocktail lounge uses within CBD-zoned areas, yet Downtown restaurants in the same zoning district are limited to 70 decibels, if they have an outdoor music venue. The City should allow CBD-zoned restaurants to fall under the same 85 decibel sound limit. Simultaneously, the City should institute requirements and/or incentives for soundproofing hotel and residential units.

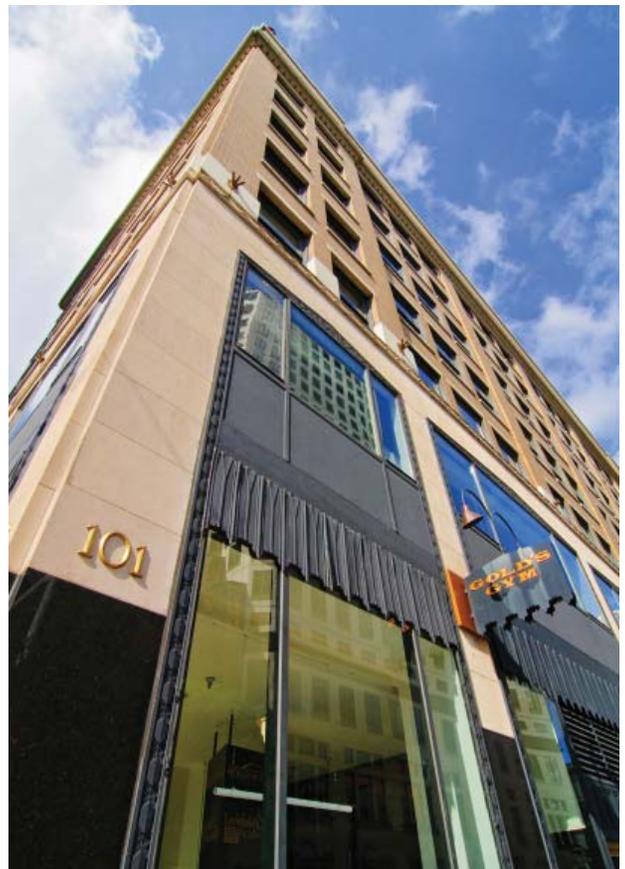
**AU-4.7: Increase the capacity of City staff to act as an advocate for and ambassador to the creative community.**

- Many creative community members have expressed the desire for the City to provide a single point of entry to facilitate and streamline the processes and permits required for the full range of cultural pursuits, from holding a public concert or event, to selling food and drink in a park, to performing in the parks or on the street (i.e., busking), to obtaining building permits and inspections. Oftentimes, the requirements of numerous City departments create unintended barriers for the creative community. A City staff member or members should be dedicated not only to assist the creative community in these processes, but act as liaisons to the creative community. This may require some staff focused on issues related to live music and other(s) on performing and visual and other arts, as some of the needs and interests of these groups vary considerably.

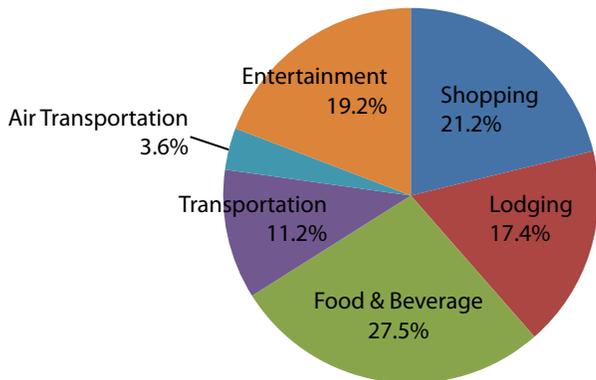
*Downtown should maintain its historic role as the region’s premiere office district (Scarborough Building at 6th and Congress).*

**AU-5. OFFICE AND EMPLOYMENT USES: Downtown should maintain its role as the region’s premiere employment center.**

It is important for Downtown to maintain its role as the premiere employment district of the region, since it is best served by public transit and existing infrastructure, and since a thriving downtown business environment is key to a city’s economic success. Today, Downtown accounts for only 20% of the overall regional office



**Travel and Tourism Spending:  
Austin 2006**



Source: Global Insight, D.K. Shifflet & Associates

inventory. During the past decade, and particularly in the last four years, millions of square feet of additional supply have been developed outside Downtown, with a much smaller proportion constructed in Downtown.<sup>40</sup> Although Downtown has been out-performing other parts of the region in terms of rental return due to its growing vibrancy as a mixed-use urban district, it continues to lose ground to other locations in the region.

**AU-5.1: Provide incentives for Downtown office and employment uses.**

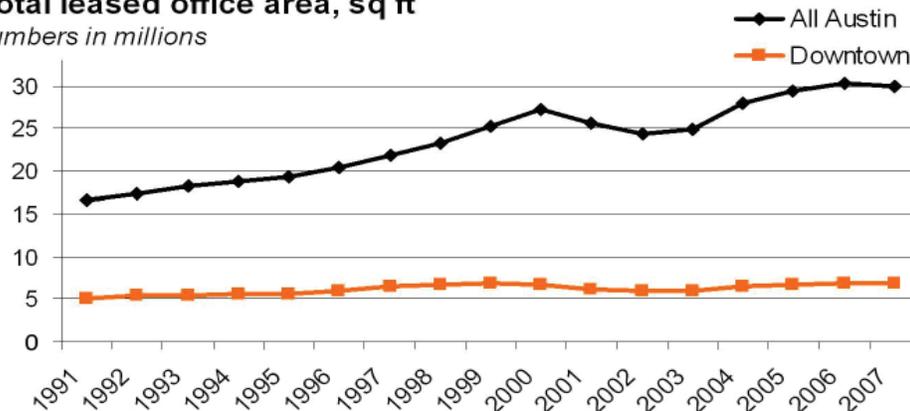
- As part of the Downtown Density Bonus Program, the City should incentivize office and employment uses in certain districts, by offering a 50% density bonus above existing zoning (baseline) maximums. In addition to responding to economic development goals, this policy is based on the economic analysis undertaken as part of the

Density Bonus Program that found that payment of a fee for additional office density cannot be consistently supported by increased economic return.<sup>41</sup>

*Downtown accounts for only 20% of Austin's office share.*

Source: Capitol Market Research, 2007

**Total leased office area, sq ft  
numbers in millions**



**AU-6. HOTEL AND VISITOR USES: Downtown's position as the principal visitor destination of the region should be maintained.**

Tourism is a key economic anchor for Austin, and Downtown is the epicenter of this industry. As a result the robust annual visitation and the thriving festival and convention market, Austin's hotel sector is the strongest in Texas, with the highest nightly rates and occupancy levels in the State. Convention-goers and visitors to Austin each year support more than 75,000 jobs, and they bring more than \$200 million in revenues to local governments.

After experiencing a large increase in supply mid-decade, Downtown has absorbed the additional rooms successfully and has been outperforming the rest of the region

during the current recession. Despite healthy occupancies and strong rates, no new hotels have opened in Downtown since 2006.<sup>42</sup>

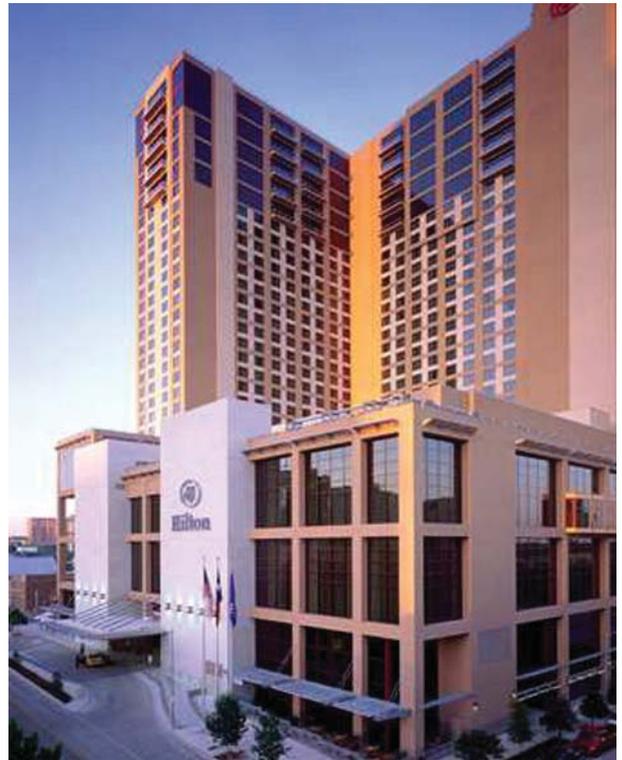
*A second flagship hotel is under construction to support increasing Convention Center demand.*

**AU-6.1: Provide incentives for Downtown hotel uses.**

As part of the Downtown Density Bonus Program, the City should incentivize hotel uses by offering a 50% density bonus above existing baseline maximums. In addition to responding to economic development goals, this policy is based on the economic analysis undertaken as part of the Density Bonus Program development that found that payment of a fee for additional hotel density does not consistently result in greater developer return.<sup>43</sup>

**AU-6.2: Support the development of an additional “headquarter” hotel in close proximity to the Convention Center.**

The Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau reports that growth in the Convention Center’s business is constrained by the maximum available block of 1,500 rooms, allocated across numerous properties and brands. It projects that 38% of business lost to other locales is due to the lack of hotel rooms or facilities, and recommends another large headquarter hotel of 1,000 rooms to address this shortcoming. The City should provide economic development incentives and other support to attract a suitable flagship hotel.



**AU-7. PUBLIC SERVICES:** *Downtown should provide high-quality public and social services in a manner that complements other uses and the public realm.*

Public services – parks and open spaces, cultural and educational facilities, and public safety and social services – are an essential part of making Downtown a livable place that can continue to support economic growth. (DAP policies for parks and open spaces are described in The Public Realm chapter below, and recommendations for the retention and enhancement of Austin’s creative culture are outlined above.) The following policies focus on educational facilities, police and fire facilities and social services that provide aid to populations in need.

**AU-7.1: Enhance and expand the range of Downtown social services in a manner that is compatible with other land uses and the public realm.**

Downtowns, with their typically higher level of transit accessibility and easy access to public services, have traditionally been the natural location for social service providers and homeless shelters. However, the concentration of such services immediately adjacent to the East 6th Street and Red River entertainment districts has created problems of crime and disinvestment. Some of the adverse impacts of

*Housing for the chronically homeless should include support services and be designed to complement the surrounding area.  
(Christ Church Cathedral Outreach Center)*



this over-concentration are due to the lack of comprehensive facilities and services, particularly, permanent supportive housing, where access to counseling and many programs are available in the same building as the housing units. This has resulted in camping, loitering, public disorder, outdoor toileting, panhandling and some criminal behavior - the latter primarily from those who prey on the area's homeless. Therefore, it is important that permanent housing for the chronically homeless include support services and that these facilities be located, designed and equipped to maximize effectiveness and to complement other activities in Downtown.

- The City should develop a comprehensive plan for social service delivery and housing to guide decision-making and investment in addressing homelessness.
- The City should make improvements within and around the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH) to better provide for the comfort and needs of its clients. Provision of a sheltered and supervised courtyard area within the boundaries of the property should be considered to accommodate more dignified queuing and waiting away from the

public sidewalk area that is protected from the elements. Restrooms and adequate places for people to sit and rest should be provided within this area.

- The City should give the highest priority to the creation of a state-of-the-art, single-room occupancy (SRO), permanent supportive housing project Downtown. This facility should provide housing for the chronically-homeless, coupled with support and special needs assistance, including job and life skills training, alcohol and drug abuse treatment and other health services. (See AU-2.3.)

*Child care facilities will make Downtown a more family-friendly place.*

**AU-7.2: Promote educational and child care facilities that make the Downtown more family-friendly.**



- The City should work proactively with the Austin Independent School District (AISD) and other institutions to ensure that the short and long-term educational needs of Downtown residents are being met. Schools with special curricula in the areas of art, music, science and the performing arts should be encouraged and the potential for Downtown partners and sponsors explored. Locating such facilities in close proximity to public open spaces should be given a high priority, both to serve the needs of schools and to provide activity and sponsorship of the parks.

- As proposed in the DAP Downtown Density Bonus Program, incentives should be given to projects that incorporate child-care facilities within private residential or commercial development.

**AU-7.3: Improve fire and police facilities.**

Appropriately-located and state-of-the-art fire and police emergency facilities are important to serve the growing resident, visitor and employee populations of Downtown. The existing Downtown police and fire facilities are well over 30 years old and should be upgraded and expanded over the next decade. As facility improvements are evaluated for both the Fire and Police, the City should give high priority to the relocation and/or redevelopment of both facilities to create a more engaging public environment in their place.

*The Art Deco Fire Station in Brush Square should be re-purposed as a cafe or other public-oriented facility.*

- Fire Station #1, which occupies most of the western half of Brush Square, should be relocated to another downtown site that meets the response time needs of AFD and can also accommodate AFD Headquarters and other City departments. The Art Deco building constructed in 1939 should be repurposed as a visitor-oriented facility, such as a museum and provide an outdoor dining terrace overlooking the open space. A public process should be initiated to determine how best to reuse the building, and a public-private partnership should be established to implement the re-use vision.



- In the short term, the City should work with AFD to reduce the footprint of the fenced parking lot in order to provide for a larger lawn area within the park.
- Opportunities should be pursued for consolidating the APD headquarters facility and its parking garage on a more compact footprint, either on its existing site along Waller Creek, or in another location within or near Downtown. The redevelopment of the APD site should consider opportunities for enhanced open space along the eastern banks of Waller Creek, consistent with the Waller Creek District Master Plan.

*The Austin Police Department building and parking garages should be relocated from this prime creekside location.*





*Las Ramblas, Barcelona*

## DENSITY AND DESIGN

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***Overall Goal: Ensure that Downtown can evolve into a compact and dense urban district, with new buildings contributing positively to sustainability, quality of life and the Downtown experience.***

Downtown is an area of the City that benefits greatly from density. The close proximity of buildings and activities to one another provides a unique vibrancy, creative energy and a distinctive sense of place. The concentration of economic activity contributes to the fiscal viability and health of the City, and a compact and dense Downtown is a keystone of regional sustainability.

There is significant opportunity for additional infill development within Downtown on assembled sites greater than one-quarter block that are vacant or underutilized. Under existing entitlements, it is estimated that 37 million square feet of additional floor area could be created Downtown, if these sites were to redevelop. This represents an increase of over 240% from the existing 26 million square feet of floor area. This estimate of the potential for Downtown growth is purely a “capacity” analysis (i.e., how many additional square feet of development could be accommodated) and is not an estimate of whether, when, or how much square footage the market will produce. Additional density could be achieved with the use of density bonuses.

As Downtown becomes more intense, however it is increasingly important for individual buildings to create a positive relationship with one another, the fabric of historic buildings and with the public realm of streets and open spaces. This is critical not only to maintaining Downtown’s unique identity and its livability, but also to enhancing the value of individual properties and in achieving the full growth potential of Downtown. It is important that individual buildings contribute to a coherent, pleasing urban form, and that they be designed in a way that does not preclude adjacent properties from developing to their full potential.



2010



2039

**Existing and Potential Build-Out of Opportunity Sites**

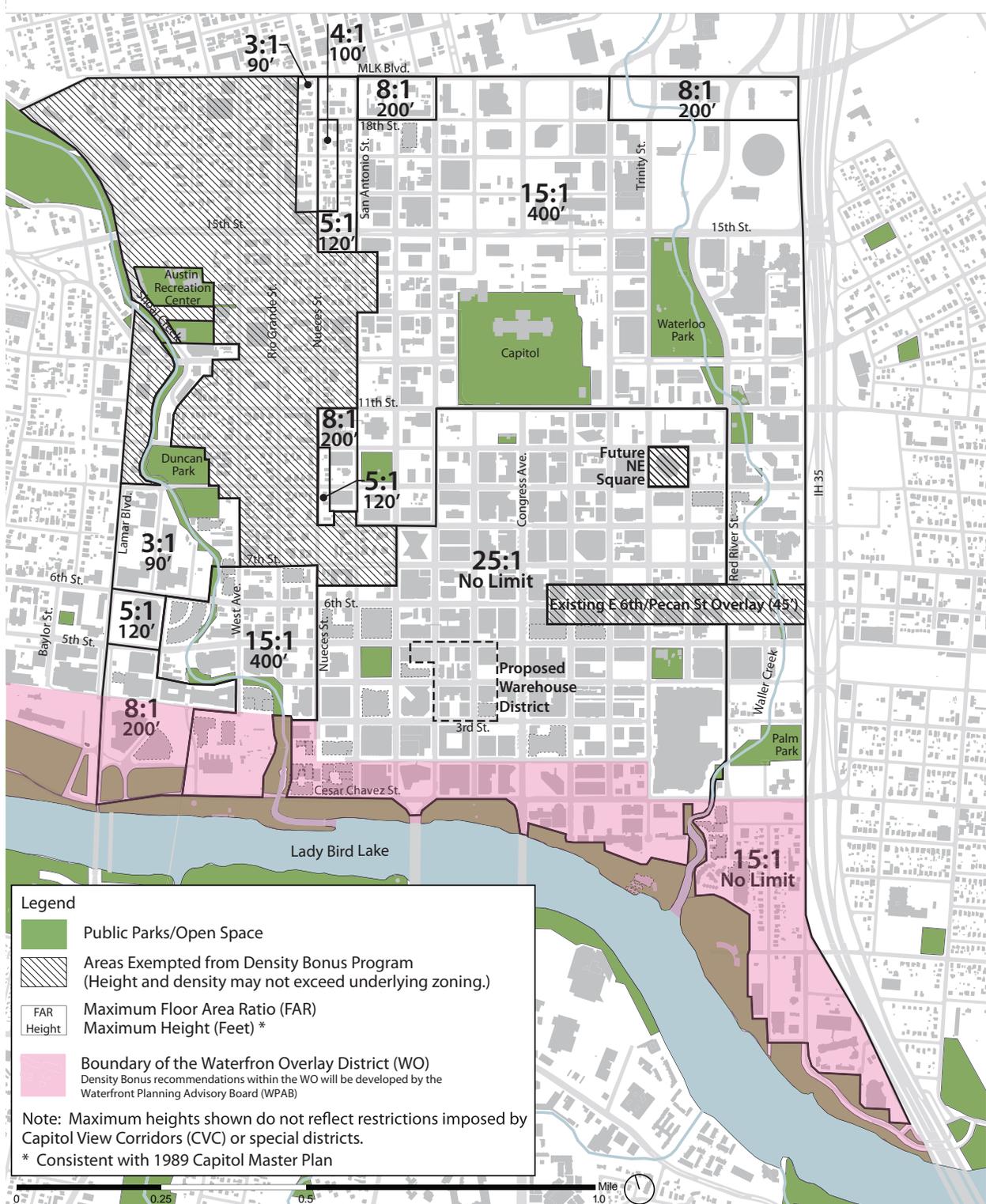
***DD-1. HEIGHT AND DENSITY: Dense development that respects the context of Downtown's diverse districts should be encouraged.***

Downtown is a part of the city that can support well-designed buildings of significant height and density. The City should continue to encourage high-density development that contributes to the economic vibrancy of the region and that helps to achieve other Downtown objectives related to diversity, affordability, quality of life, historic preservation and sustainability.

**DD-1.1: Maintain existing height and density limits as a baseline with some adjustments based on the surrounding context.**

Properties in Downtown have Floor Area Ratio (FAR) limits ranging from 8:1 in the Central Business District (CBD) to less than 1:1 in the single-family neighborhood of Judges Hill. ("FAR" is amount of building square footage divided by amount of site square footage. It is the typical measure to describe building density). Height limits transition upward from 35 feet in Judges Hill and the portions of Northwest District to unlimited height on properties designated with CBD zoning. These limits have helped to shape Downtown and have provided a level of certainty in terms of real estate value. The Downtown Austin Plan calls for these limits to be substantially maintained with the following proposed adjustments:

- The City should increase the baseline height and density on certain properties where existing zoning is not consistent with surrounding development. For example, properties with a Commercial Services (CS) zoning designation aimed at promoting auto-oriented, non-residential uses with low height limits and densities are no longer appropriate for a downtown environment and should be re-designated to DMU or CBD zoning that allows for higher density, mid and high-rise development. (The Proposed Downtown Zoning Changes map on p. 79 outlines properties recommended for an increase in height and density.)
- Consistent with its goals for historic preservation and the policies above, the City should decrease the allowable building height within the single, "core" block of the Warehouse District (i.e., properties along West 4th Street between Lavaca and Guadalupe streets) to 45 feet, as a means of preserving this last vestige of one and two-story warehouse buildings. In conjunction with this reduced height limit, the City should establish a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) system to allow Warehouse District property owners to sell unused floor area up to a maximum of 25:1 FAR to property owners in other parts of Downtown wishing to obtain additional density above the baseline. (See Policy HP-2.2.) The Downtown Density Bonus Program<sup>44</sup> report provides a more detailed description of this policy recommendation.



## Proposed Density Bonus Program

**DD-1.2: Finalize and adopt a Downtown Density Bonus Program that allows developers and the community to equitably share the benefits of additional height and density above the existing regulations.**

In 2008, the City Council directed the Downtown Austin Plan to develop a transparent and understandable density bonus program to support growth in Downtown and promote clear community benefits. A draft Downtown Density Bonus program, based on extensive stakeholder input and economic analysis, was completed in July 2009.<sup>45</sup> The program provides a menu of specific community benefits to which developers seeking additional density can contribute, including requirements for on-site affordable housing or payment of an in-lieu fee. The report provides a detailed description of the proposed program. Since then, the recommendations have undergone additional review by a sub-committee of the Planning Commission and interested stakeholders, and refined by Council direction provided in conjunction with adoption of the DAP.

- The City should finalize and adopt the Downtown Density Bonus Program as an integral part of the DAP and proceed with the preparation of the necessary code amendments that will update the interim ordinance that has been in place since January 2008. The following findings of the DAP study should be considered:
  - ***The density bonus system should ensure that developers are incentivized to use it.*** “Charging” for additional density, whether through on-site benefits or as a fee-in-lieu, can be justified only where sufficient incremental value is created for a private developer to take on the additional risk of building a larger project. The public may feasibly exact a portion, but not all, of the incremental value created from bonus density. In order to incentivize use of a density bonus, private developers must be left with some measure of incremental value for choosing to build the additional density. The economic analysis that accompanied the DAP Density Bonus Report concluded that additional office and hotel density does not create sufficient incremental value to warrant a fee, and recommended that an affordable housing in-lieu fee apply only to residential development, which consistently accrues additional economic value from additional height and density. In light of the economic events of the past several years, the economic analysis that formed the basis for the Density Bonus provisions regarding fee in lieu, community benefits, etc. should be re-calibrated prior to the adoption of a Density Bonus code amendment, so as to ensure that those provisions reflect current economic conditions.
  - The existing CURE re-zoning process has proven to be a convenient alternative to the existing interim Density Bonus Program; so convenient in fact that it has rendered the interim Program ineffective. No developer has utilized the “interim” Downtown density bonus program since its inception in 2008. Rather than adhering to the prescribed program of density bonuses, developers seeking additional density have all gone through the discretionary CURE process with City Council. The Central Urban Redevelopment (CURE) ordinance allows rezonings of Downtown properties

to increase entitlements as well as get relief from certain regulations on a case-by-case basis. The proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program should be revised so that CURE is no longer available as a means of achieving additional height and/or density (FAR) Downtown. The Density Bonus Program should allow limited flexibility with regard to the types and amount (in excess of the ‘floor’) of community benefits provided by the applicant. A “floor” should be set with respect to the Downtown Density Bonus based on the value of 100% of the affordable housing fee-in-lieu as prescribed by the Program. If the applicant chooses not to proceed with the administrative process by simply paying 100% of the fee-in-lieu as prescribed by the Density Bonus Program, or providing on-site affordable housing based on the Program’s parameters, or by providing some combination of the other community benefits options in accordance with the Program, then the applicant is responsible for demonstrating that the monetized value of the offered community benefits is equal to or exceeds the value of the “floor.” Staff will administratively evaluate the proposal to make sure that the offered community benefits meet or exceed the value of the “floor.” At least one half of the fee-in-lieu amount must be for affordable housing. The balance may be for other preferred community benefits. If the “floor” is met or exceeded per staff evaluation, the City Council will consider the density bonus proposal.

- The “Sustainability” component of Downtown Density Bonus Program should be modified to move 2-Star Austin Energy Green Building (AEGB) rating from the list of Sustainability options to a “Gatekeeper” requirement. In other words, a 2-Star rating would be required for all projects that seek to participate in the Density Bonus Program. The Gatekeeper Requirements for the Density Bonus Program are:
  - Complete design plans and perspectives
  - Great Streets
  - Substantial compliance with Urban Design Guidelines
  - 2-Star AEGB Rating

The bonus provisions for “Sustainability” should be:

- 20% bonus for a 3-star rating
- 25% bonus for a 4-star rating
- 30% bonuses for 5-star rating

As the Density Bonus code amendments are developed, these recommended ratings and percentages will continue to be evaluated in light of work flowing from the updated Comprehensive Plan, and the City of Austin’s evolving sustainability goals, standards and initiatives.

- The “Family-Friendly Housing” component of the proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program should be modified so that the 150 square feet of bonus space awarded for each bedroom over two bedrooms in a unit shall be granted only when that unit conforms with the affordability requirements as set forth on page 24 of the ‘Downtown Density Bonus Program’ report (Appendix H to the DAP).
- The ‘Publicly Accessible Open Space’ component of the Downtown Density Bonus Program should be modified so that a participant in the Program can achieve bonus square footage either by providing on-site open space that is publicly accessible and that meets well-defined criteria or by paying a fee-in-lieu that could be used to improve Downtown parkland. The fees-in-lieu

should go into a trust fund similar to the Housing Trust Fund. This trust fund should supplement, not supplant, the Parks and Recreation Department budget. Improvements made using money from this trust fund should be limited to the Downtown area and should be spent within two to three years of receipt. Money from this trust fund should be available both for capital improvements and operations and maintenance purposes. The amount of the open space fee-in-lieu should be determined during the process of calibrating the overall community benefits of the Density Bonus Program.

- In developing the code amendments that put in place the proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program, City staff should modify the structure of the Program so that residential and non-residential projects must follow the same ‘pathway’ to achieve additional square footage. Initially, non-residential projects that comply with the Gatekeeper Requirements shall be entitled to a 50% increase in their “base” density (e.g., an increase from an FAR of 8:1 to 12:1) by paying an affordable housing fee-in-lieu that shall be set at \$0/square foot of bonused area. Non-residential projects seeking square footage beyond 50% of the base density (e.g., from base FAR of 8:1 to an FAR of 16:1), shall be required to participate in the Density Bonus Program on an equal footing as residential projects for the portion of the requested additional square footage beyond 50% of base FAR. The re-calibration to be conducted by staff (concurrent with developing the code amendments) shall include an evaluation of whether non-residential projects that seek additional density can support an increased level of fee for any additional square footage.
- Where density bonuses are permitted on properties zoned H-Historic, development using a density bonus shall maintain the architectural integrity of the historic landmark, as determined by the Historic Landmark Commission. Density bonuses shall not be permitted for projects that would substantially modify the exterior of the historic structure visible to public view, excluding historic reconstruction rehabilitation façade restoration.
- The ‘Historic Preservation’ component of the proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program shall allow for contributions towards on-site or off-site historic preservation exceeding applicable legal requirements.
- ***The Density Bonus Program should be recalibrated at five-year intervals.*** A mechanism for calibration and recalibration of the bonuses needs to be established to ensure that the fees and community benefits associated with the Program maintain an appropriate balance over time. In each case, the City should use a combination of pro forma financial analysis and outreach to stakeholders to determine whether a bonus produces incremental value for a developer/property owner, such that the bonused area is likely to be constructed, and whether a bonus produces sufficient incremental value to justify charging a proposed fee.

- The Waterfront Planning Advisory Board has been charged with developing recommended density bonus provisions for the portions of the Waterfront Overlay District within Downtown. Those provisions should be incorporated into the proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program upon adoption.

**DD-1.3: Employ additional density incentives to achieve specific community objectives.**

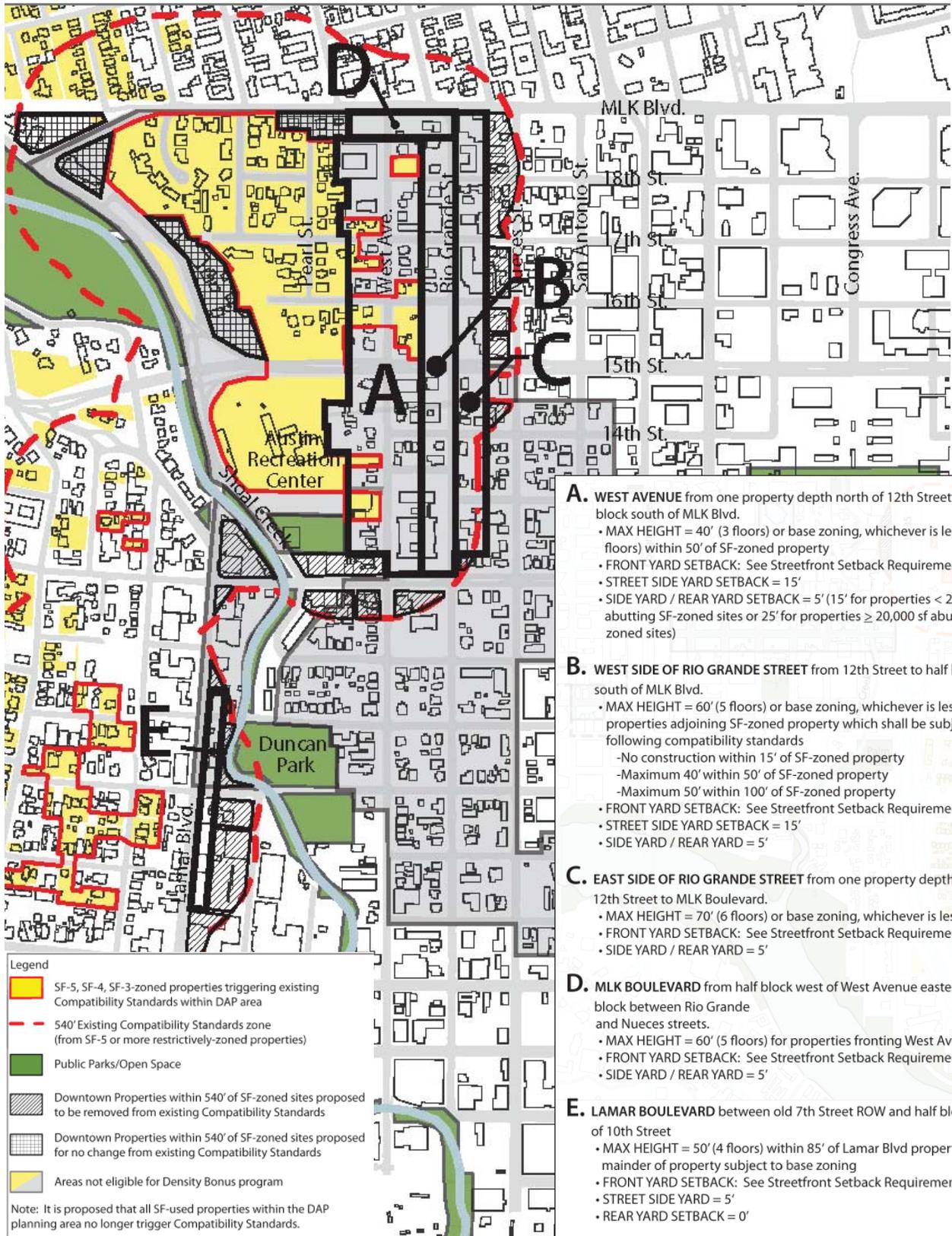
The City should allow for additional density, outside of the Density Bonus Program, to encourage specific uses or treatments. For example:

- The Northwest District Plan proposes to incentivize infill housing development by permitting an increase in density for residential uses within the DMU-40 and DMU-60 zoning districts, subject to form-based design standards that promote a compatible relationship with the surrounding context.
- The Core/Waterfront District Plan proposes that ground-level retail and restaurant floor area along Pedestrian Activity streets (i.e., Congress Avenue, East 6th Street and 2nd Street) be exempted from the Floor Area Ratio calculation.
- The Waller Creek District Master Plan recommends that on-site low-income housing units at or below 50% of Median Family Income (MFI) on the Housing Authority-owned Lakeside Apartments site should not be counted toward the floor area of any future redevelopment on that property.

**DD-1.4: Establish specific scale-compatibility standards that are tailored to the downtown context.**

Current compatibility standards of the Land Development Code are applied city-wide to properties adjacent to or near single-family zoned and/or used properties. A graduated height limit radiates out horizontally from such properties up to 540 feet, regulating height, building and parking setbacks and screening. This generic, city-wide approach to ensuring compatibility is not appropriate in a downtown setting, and it also produces results counter to many aspects of the vision of a dense, mixed-use downtown.

- The Land Development Code’s generic Compatibility Standards should not apply in Downtown; instead, the City should adopt more specific standards to protect adjacent neighborhoods and to promote compatibility of building scale and massing. Five compatibility zones are proposed, each with specific height standards aimed at providing an appropriate scale transition to the Judges Hill and Old West Austin Neighborhoods. These are illustrated on the on Page 109 (Proposed Downtown Compatibility Zones and Standards).



## Proposed Downtown Compatibility Zones and Standards

**DD-2. STREET FRONT RELATIONSHIPS:** *Downtown buildings should create engaging and pedestrian-oriented streetfronts.*

A building’s relationship to the street is the most significant factor in shaping the pedestrian experience of the city. Buildings should help to activate and define the character of the street edge. In some parts of Downtown, this could be storefronts and cafes built right up to the property line; in others, it may be more appropriate for buildings to be set back from the sidewalk with frontyard landscaping that provides additional greenery and shade.

The existing Land Development Code does not provide specific standards for the treatment of street frontages. The city-wide “Commercial Design Standards” (Subchapter E of the Land Development Code) provide some general guidance, but are not specifically targeted to Downtown conditions. The following policies are intended to remedy this situation, describing how buildings should relate to streets within Downtown.

**DD-2.1: Require setbacks and build-to lines that are appropriate to the form and character of the street.**

The Land Development Code currently legislates building setbacks according to a property’s zoning designation. For example, a property with a zoning designation of CBD or DMU requires no building setback from its streetfront property line, whereas a General Office (GO) designation requires a 15-foot setback. This produces incongruities in the street character when one street has multiple zoning designations. The DAP proposes that setbacks be established by street, so that the character of that street can be consistent, regardless of the zoning designation or building type along it. (See map on opposite page.)

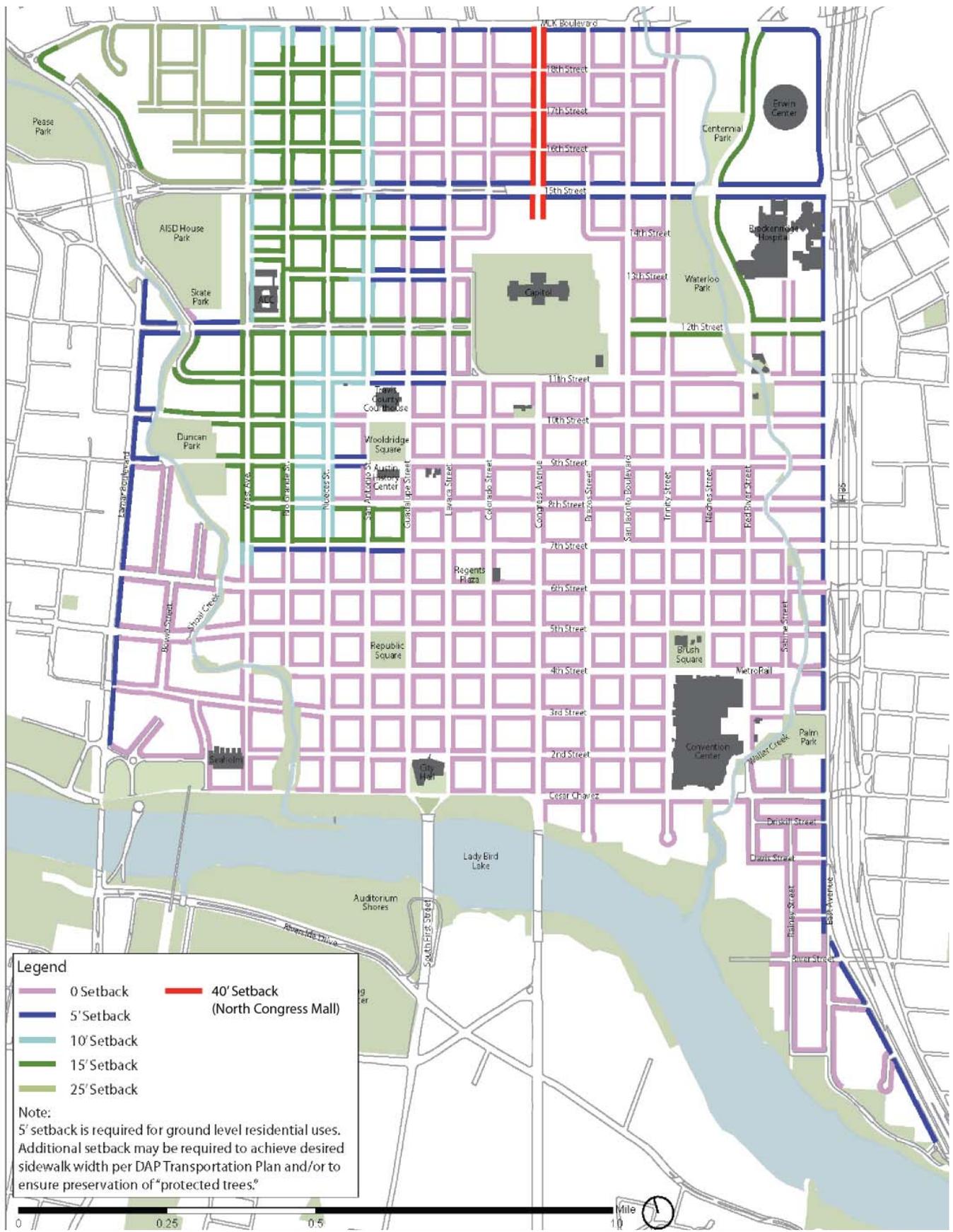
*Downtown buildings have a variety of street front conditions ranging from the shaded yards of the Northwest District to the storefronts and cafes of the Core/Waterfront.*

- At least 75% of a building should be built to the setback line so that the spatial definition and character of the street can be enhanced.

**DD-2.2: Allow additional setbacks if these provide publicly-accessible open space.**

Buildings that provide plazas, gardens, courtyards, paseos or other types of publicly-accessible open space should be allowed additional setbacks, provided that they meet the design criteria described in Policy PR-2.1.





**Streetfront Setback Requirements Map**



*Publicly-accessible open spaces (e.g., plazas and gardens) that extend the experience of the street and should be encouraged.*

**DD-2.3: Limit curb cuts, drop-offs and porte-cocheres that interrupt the continuity of the pedestrian path and experience.**

The following criteria should be established for the location and treatment of driveways or curb cuts that interrupt the continuity of sidewalks and that can undermine a successful pedestrian experience:

- Driveways, porte-cocheres and curb cuts should generally be prohibited on Pedestrian Activity Streets where pedestrian continuity and active street frontage is critical. (See Pedestrian Activity and Mixed Use Streets map on p. 81.)
- In the Core/Waterfront District, off-street drop-offs and porte-cocheres should be allowed only for hotel developments on Downtown Mixed Use Streets (see map page 81) and only where curbside drop-off areas are not practical or feasible. In no event should a drop-off or porte-cochere interfere with the provision of a generous and continuous pedestrian path.
- The number of driveway curb cuts along a block should be limited to a maximum of two, with driveways spaced apart from one another and from street intersections.
- The width of a driveway should be no greater than 25 feet.

**DD-2.4: Establish standards for the treatment of commercial building fronts.**

Consistent with the approach of Subchapter E of the Land Development Code, the DAP proposes the following, more specific direction for commercial street frontages:

- Storefront glazing should be provided on at least 40% of the wall area of the ground level between two and 10 feet above grade on all “Mixed Use Streets”, and 60% of the wall area along “Pedestrian Activity Streets”.
- All glazing on ground-floor, street or public open space-facing facades should have a Visible Transmittance Rating of 0.6 or higher. (This is a measure of transparency of glass.)



- Shelter and shading devices (e.g., awnings, canopies) should be provided on at least 75% of the frontage along a Pedestrian Activity Street and 50% of the frontage on a Mixed Use Street, projecting no more than eight feet into the public right-of-way, so as not to conflict with tree canopies.
- Arcades or colonnades that set the ground-level wall back from the property line should be allowed, subject to approval by the responsible City director, under the following conditions:
  - The arcade or colonnade is part of an existing or planned, block-long system of covered walkways;
  - The structure provides clear vertical openings to the street, no less than 14 feet in height; and
  - Between the ground and 14 feet above the ground, the solid portions of the structure may represent no more than 10% of the building facade facing the street.
- Public building entries should be oriented to the street, and (with the exception of the Warehouse District blocks) should be generally flush with the elevation of the sidewalk and with the ground-level finished floor. No ramps or stairs are permitted to project within the public right-of-way or front setback area.

*Projecting canopies along commercial frontages in Austin (left) and porches/stoops on residential frontages in Portland.*

**DD-2.5: Establish standards for the treatment of new residential building fronts.**

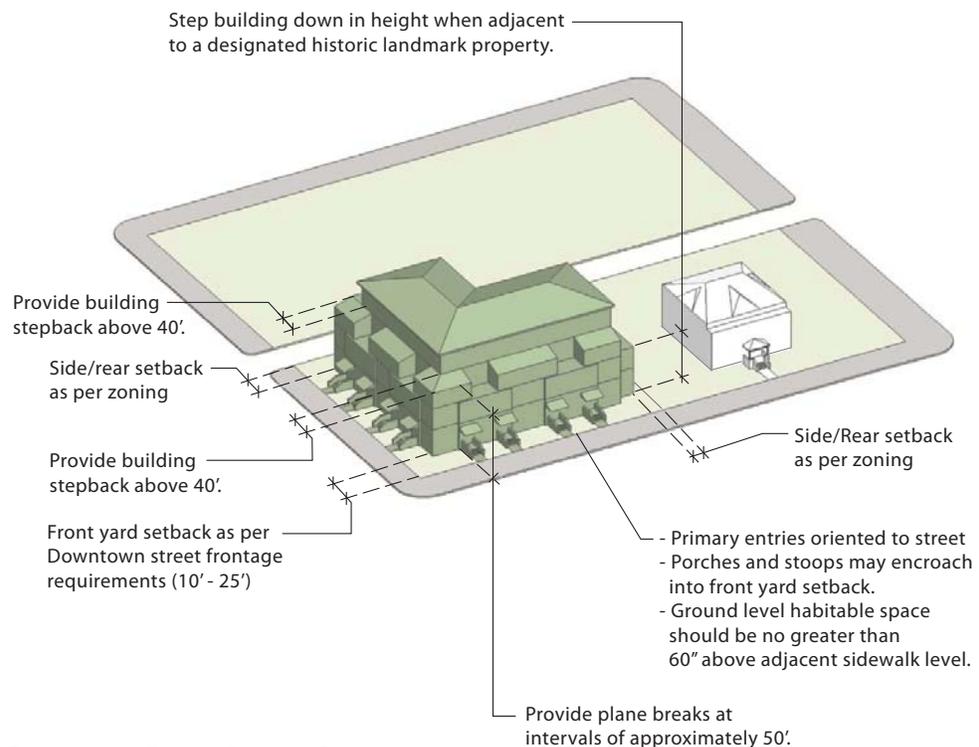
- Where ground-level residential uses are permitted as a pedestrian-oriented use (e.g., on streets designated as Downtown Mixed Use Streets), all living spaces (not including ground-level common areas or lobbies) should be separated from public sidewalks or trails by a building setback of at least five feet, or the required street front setback, whichever is greater.
- Ground-level living space should also be at least 18 inches above the grade of the sidewalk, but no more than 60 inches, to promote residential privacy and livability.

**DD-3. BUILDING DESIGN:** *Form-based development standards should guide the scale and treatment of most building types in Downtown.*

Individual buildings help to define the spatial experience of Downtown, so it is important that they be designed to contribute to a harmonious urban form – one that is enjoyable for people to move through and gather within.

As Downtown continues to mature and as larger half and full-block sites become more and more scarce, it is critical that buildings be designed in a way that does not undermine the value of adjacent sites or preclude them from developing to their full potential. It is also important that development regulations allow for smaller sites to be developed efficiently.

Building design standards should provide property owners and developers with a clear and predictable path for approval. At the same time, they should be designed to allow for flexibility and creativity, with a method of alternative compliance established for those who may wish to propose other architectural means to achieve the intent of the form-based regulations. Appendix I provides a draft of the form-based development standards that could be considered for a range of Downtown building types. As part of the ordinance amendment process that will follow adoption of the DAP, further outreach should be conducted with stakeholders and additional testing undertaken to apply the standards to a greater variety of Downtown sites and conditions. The following policies provide some general direction on the types of regulations that should be considered in the finalization of the form-based standards:

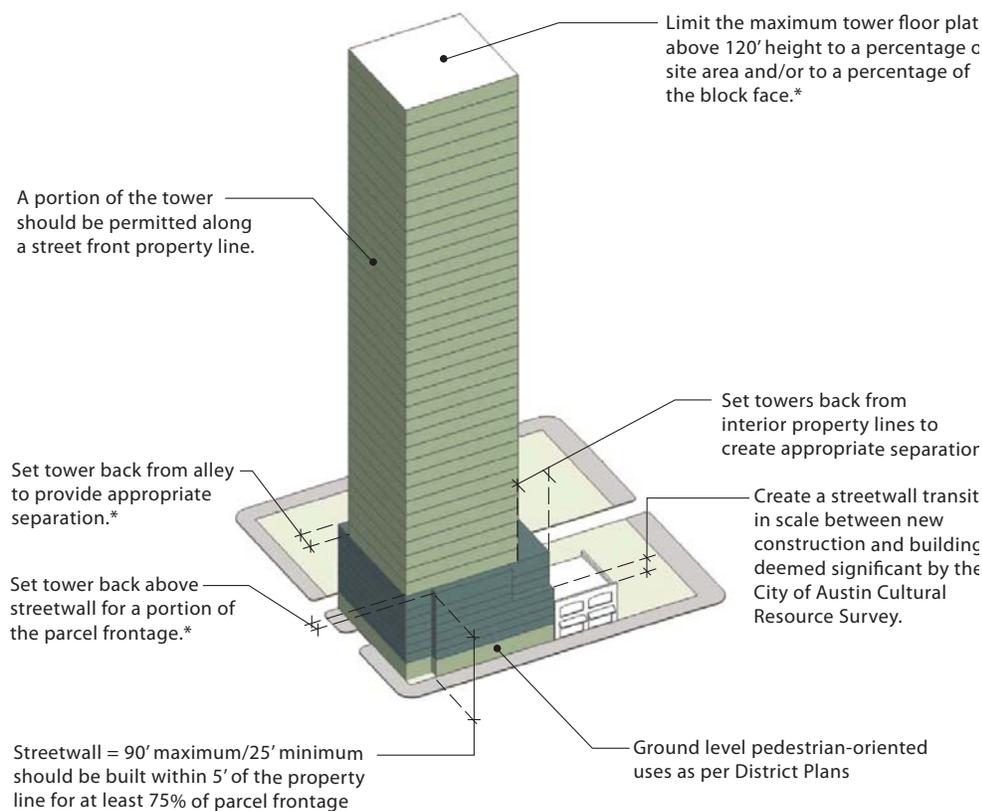


**Proposed Form-Based Standards for Neighborhood Infill Buildings**

### DD-3.1: Promote a compatible relationship between new and historic buildings.

Specific provisions should be made to ensure a compatible relationship between new development and historic buildings with a landmark designation.

- New buildings built adjacent to a landmarked building should provide a transition in scale through the use of setbacks.
- New development that is constructed on a landmarked property should be required to preserve the historic building façade and to set back any new additions from the existing parapet to clearly distinguish new construction from the original building. (See Policies HP-2.3 and HP-2.4.)
- Guidelines like those for the East 6th Street National Register Historic District should be developed for properties within the Congress Avenue and the Warehouse District areas.



\* Properties substantially impacted by Capitol View Corridors (CVCs) should be given special consideration and relief from setback regulations.

## Proposed Form-Based Standards for Quarter Block High-Rise



*A significant portion of a street wall should be built to the setback line to create spatial definition along a street.*

**DD-3.2: Create buildings that provide spatial definition of streets.**

A building’s front facade along the street is known as the “street wall”, which defines the space of the public realm (up to a height of 90 feet), creating a sense of interest and enclosure. It is important that the street wall of adjacent buildings be coordinated with one another, so that a consistent street, block or neighborhood form may be created. A significant portion of a street wall should be built to the setback line to create spatial definition along a street, and some level of articulation through plane and material changes should be provided to create interest, variation and human scale.

- Provision for bay windows and other minor encroachments that provide interest and variation on a street wall should be encouraged. However, significant areas of habitable space or parking should not be permitted to encroach into the setback area or into the public right-of-way.
- Sky-bridges that cross public rights-of way and interrupt the visual and spatial integrity of the street should not be premitted. Sky-bridges are appropriate only across public alleys or within private properties.

**DD-3.3: Step towers back from streets.**

Towers (i.e., any portion of a building greater than 90 feet in height) should “interlock” with the street wall to allow for both a horizontal and vertical building expression. To this end, a portion of the tower perimeter should be stepped back to allow for expression of the street wall; the remaining portion could be built to the property line to allow for the vertical expression of the tower. Special relief from these standards should be given to properties that have Capitol View Corridor (CVC) height limits of less than 200 feet or are within the Capitol Dominance Zone, through the proposed alternative compliance process.

*Towers should be spaced apart to protect the development potential of adjacent sites.*

**DD-3.4: Provide space between towers.**

- Towers should be stepped back from alleys and interior property lines, so that the livability and development potential of adjacent sites is not compromised.



**DD-3.5: Encourage tall and slender towers.**

- Tall slender towers should be encouraged in Downtown to allow light to the street, and to create an appealing skyline. Standards that limit the bulk of a building to a percentage of the site area and/or to a maximum floorplate size should be considered, such as:
- The length of a tower along a blockface should be limited to allow for some light penetration to the street and to avoid a “canyon-like” effect.

- Properties substantially impacted by CVCs, where the height limit is less than 200 feet, should be given special consideration and relief from the provisions of DD-3.5.

**DD-3.6: Prohibit highly-reflective glass cladding on buildings.**

- Expanses of highly reflective glass on Downtown buildings can create a glaring and unfriendly environment. During the code amendment-writing process, the City should establish a standard maximum level of reflectivity that is acceptable.

**DD-3.7: Integrate parking garages into the architecture of a building.**

- Parking garages should be architecturally-integrated or encapsulated within and beneath buildings, so that they are not a dominant part of the building expression. Views of cars and garage lighting should be screened with architectural treatments that are an integral part of the overall building vocabulary.



*Slender towers, such as the Spring create a pleasing skyline and provide light and air to the street.*

**DD-3.8: Establish an acceptable level of green building consistent with overall city goals to be established in the updated Comprehensive Plan, and consistent with City of Austin’s evolving goals, standards and initiatives.**

Currently buildings with CBD and DMU zoning designations are required by code to achieve a 1-star Austin Energy Green Building (AEGB) rating. Many feel that this standard does not achieve an appropriate level of green building reflective of the community’s commitment to sustainability and climate protection.

- The City should develop Downtown standards for green building, based on the goals and policies established city-wide by the Comprehensive Plan, to ensure that Downtown plays an appropriate and equitable role in meeting local and regional sustainability targets
- The City should evaluate other accepted green building rating tools in addition to AEGB. One such rating tool is the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system, which has become a nationally recognized benchmark. Some developers, especially those with a presence outside of Austin, may desire the option to use such tools. Further analysis is needed to develop specific recommendations, including determining an appropriate process and level of certification that would provide equivalency to AEGB ratings. If LEED, or another rating tool, is included as an option, processes should be put in place that will ensure an equivalent level of verification and reporting.
- The City should also allow developers to employ the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system as an alternative to the AEGB, since this rating system has become a nationally-recognized standard.

*Green roofs can provide usable open space, reduce heat gain and filter urban run-off.*





*Parc La Fontaine, Montreal*

## THE PUBLIC REALM

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***Overall Goal: Interconnect and enhance Downtown's network of public parks, open spaces and streets.***

Typical of many urban districts, approximately 50% of the land area of Downtown Austin (494 acres) is made up of parks, open spaces and streets. The quality and interconnectivity of these public spaces defines to a great extent our day-to-day urban experience and the overall livability and identity of Downtown.

Parks and open space comprise a significant portion (118 acres) of this public realm. With few exceptions, Downtown parks are in poor condition and, due to limited funding, poorly-maintained - with aging furnishings and few programmed activities that make them inviting places to gather. The few privately-owned open spaces (e.g., plazas, pocket parks, etc.) do not consistently contribute to Downtown place-making, and instead have become areas that lack activity and a sense of stewardship. And streets, which make up the most significant proportion of the public realm, are still dominated by automobiles, often with narrow sidewalks which can be discontinuous and/or inaccessible.

If Downtown is to continue to attract new residents, businesses and visitors, excellent parks, open spaces and streetscapes will be essential to its success. Over the past 10 years, growth and investment in Downtown has been directly tied to the City's investment and commitment to the public realm, evidenced by the intensity of new development along Lady Bird Lake and Second Street, both of which have been developed and maintained as signature public spaces.

The City's Great Streets Program, established in 2000, has set standards aimed at re-defining the role of streets from single-purpose conduits of vehicular traffic to tree-lined corridors that support pedestrian life, connect activity centers and enhance bicycle and transit circulation. However, the implementation of the program has been incremental, leaving many Downtown streets unchanged.

The DAP *Downtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan*<sup>47</sup> articulates a community vision for Downtown parks and open spaces and provides a guide for public and private investment and management. This vision is dependent on increased capital investment and an adequate funding source for ongoing maintenance.<sup>48</sup>

Public art - both permanent and temporary - plays an important role in the public realm. It may be expressed in the form of gateways to special districts and streets, as way-finding elements and signage, as streetscape amenities such as fountains, bike racks, transit shelters, and even as more utilitarian objects, such as manhole covers and tree grates. Public art can have a major role in place-making, helping to strengthen a community's identity, offering a moment of beauty and refuge or one of excitement and provocation.<sup>49</sup>

The following policies are aimed at achieving the community's vision of an interconnected and engaging public realm that is supportive of economic development and that contributes to an inclusive, sustainable and beautiful Downtown.

***PR-1. PUBLIC PARKS:*** *Downtown parks should be improved and maintained as signature spaces that serve residents, employees and visitors.*

A high-quality downtown parks system – combining large signature destinations, smaller spaces serving workers and residents and neighborhood parks – can promote economic growth for Downtown and reinforce Austin as a vibrant, mixed-use community. Recent transformative park projects across the country have relied on major capital investments, design excellence, and a commitment to high standards of operations, maintenance and park programming. Successful downtown projects have ranged from newly-formed transformative parks including Millennium Park in Chicago and Discovery Green in Houston, to the renovation and revitalization of existing parks like Bryant Park in New York City and Patriots Square Park in Phoenix. Today these parks serve a range of users, whose presence bring activity, investment and spending to the surrounding Downtown.

*Downtown parks should serve a range of users, creating a sense of community and offering a connection to nature.*



As organizers and catalysts of revitalization, signature parks can contribute directly to the community’s vision and goals for Downtown: they can enhance livability in ways that are respectful of a city’s history and culture, and secure Downtown’s economic and competitive position at the center of the region. By prioritizing parks and open spaces within the Downtown Plan, the community has acknowledged that the public realm is and will be both an important amenity for businesses and residents, and a highly visible aspect of the city’s identity.

The City’s Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) maintains and operates 11 Downtown parks totaling about 82 acres. These include linear parks or greenways (Lady Bird Lake, Shoal Creek and Waller Creek), adjoining parkland (Waterloo, Palm and Duncan parks), and the three urban squares remaining from Edwin Waller’s original Town Plan (Republic, Wooldridge and Brush Squares). Austin spends about \$7,000 per acre on operations and maintenance of Downtown parks, which is average for cities of comparable size, but less than cities that are known for outstanding parks. A better target for the public cost of operating and maintaining excellent downtown parks would be \$10,000-\$25,000 per acre per year, based on best practices from other parks systems such as Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Minneapolis and Tucson.

The Downtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan<sup>50</sup> builds on PARC’s Long Range Plan, describing a vision for each City-controlled park appropriate to its specific location and function within the open space system. The Master Plan also establishes an implementation strategy with priorities and budgets and recommends a governance, funding and management program. The following policies provide a summary of these recommendations:

*Discovery Green in Houston is a place for both grand events and children’s play.*



## Ten Guiding Principles for Downtown Austin's Parks

- 1. Meaning and Significance:** *Build on the positive existing patterns of use within and around the open space, and celebrate the distinct history, culture, and identity of the place.*
- 2. Attractions and Destinations:** *Create multiple activities and features that can attract a diversity of people, and establish a constituency of stewards.*
- 3. Flexibility and Adaptability:** *Allow the space to respond to daily, weekly, and seasonal fluctuations over time.*
- 4. Positive Edges/"Frame":** *Promote a form and pattern of development at the edges of the public space that provide positive activity and spatial definition.*
- 5. Connections:** *Design streets and pathways as an extension of the public space itself.*
- 6. Design Excellence:** *Procure the highest levels of design professionalism capable of creating successful, world-class public spaces.*
- 7. Public Art and Artful Design:** *Introduce public art that raises community consciousness and reinforces an authentic sense of place.*
- 8. Green Design:** *Promote the highest levels of sustainable design and green construction.*
- 9. Strong Management:** *Establish appropriate governance that can facilitate successful programming, maintenance, and security.*
- 10. Sustainable Financing:** *Secure adequate levels of funding to assure ongoing high quality maintenance and operations.*



**PR-1.1: Provide adequate funding for the maintenance and operation of all City-controlled Downtown parks.**

If the negative image of Downtown parks is to be reversed, and if Austin is to make a palpable change in the way open spaces look, are perceived and used, additional funding must be allocated to their upkeep. In addition to the physical benefits it will provide, this is critical for attracting a constituency of stewards that will justify and attract further investment.

- The City should provide an annual PARD Downtown parks operations and maintenance (O&M) budget in the order of \$950,000 (~\$23,000/acre), which would be sufficient to make long-needed repairs and operate the parks at the desired PARD “Level 1” maintenance.

**PR-1.2: Program and design parks to serve the diverse needs of Downtown residents, families, workers and visitors.**

Although Austin’s downtown parks support a range of recreational and passive activities, they do not promote the kind of activities consistent with Downtown’s evolving role as a dense mixed-use district, with a concentrated population of residents, office workers and visitors. Lady Bird Lake provides excellent opportunities for jogging, walking and recreational biking, but there are few good places in Downtown to sit and watch people or to enjoy a brown-bag lunch. (UT’s Regents Plaza at 6th and Colorado Streets is a notable exception in this regard.)

In spite of a growing resident population, there is virtually no family-oriented park space or playground within walking distance of the numerous condominiums and apartments that have been developed in Downtown. Although there are several parks which accommodate large programmed events (e.g., Waterloo Park), there are few great spaces that are suited to spontaneous gatherings or celebrations. The recent retrofit of Republic Square has provided an ideal space for performances, markets and civic festivities, but the other historic squares are not well-suited for such events: Brush Square is largely covered with buildings and a fenced surface parking lot, and Wooldridge Square has steep topography and inaccessible pathways.

*Downtown parks should be part of an interconnected and engaging public realm, serving residents, families, workers and visitors.*

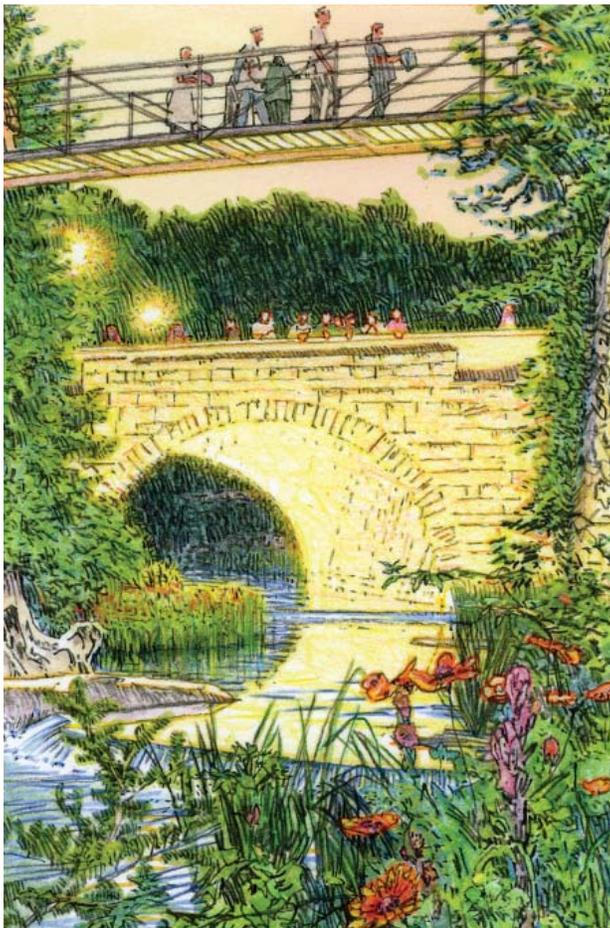


Many Downtown parks have been treated as “excess real estate”, expedient places for displaced historic buildings or areas to dispense meals to those in need. As a result, many parks have no regular users that can be their “stewards” or advocates, and there is no pattern of daily activity that has emerged. Many parks have been taken over by the homeless population, who tend to occupy spaces that are unused or uncared for.

- The DAP Downtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan makes recommendations regarding the range of recurring activities that should be supported within each Downtown park, and the kinds of spaces, features and facilities that would be desirable. The vision for each park and its key goals are summarized on p. 127. The City and their parks partners should build on this work to develop specific master plans and programs for Downtown parks that meet the diverse needs of residents, workers, families and visitors.
- The City should also develop a Furnishings Master Plan for Downtown parks to establish a consistent standard and identity and to guide short-term improvements.<sup>51</sup>

*The Waller Creek District Master Plan calls for environmental restoration, trail improvements and adjacent redevelopment.*

**PR-1.3: Improve Downtown’s urban greenways and adjoining public parks, as natural refuges and pathways.**



Lady Bird Lake, Waller and Shoal Creeks and the adjoining open spaces of Palm, Waterloo and Duncan Parks provide an approximate four-mile long system of greenways, trails and parks that lace through the Downtown, connecting surrounding neighborhoods, UT and other key activity centers with the core. These open spaces offer a unique retreat from urban life and a natural resource in the heart of the city. While Lady Bird Lake has benefited from City investment, volunteerism, and stewardship by The Trail Foundation (TTF) and the Austin Parks Foundation (APF), the full potential of both Waller Creek and Shoal Creek greenways remains unfulfilled.

- The City should finalize and implement the creek and trail improvements proposed in the Waller Creek District Master Plan<sup>52</sup>, including the environmental restoration of the stream channel, the public trail system and the parkland improvements. Improvements for Palm Park and Waterloo Park should be developed in concert with the detailed design of the Waller Creek Greenway, as these two parks are both open space extensions of the creek corridor and should be seamlessly integrated with it.

- The City should establish and implement a long-term vision for the Shoal Creek Greenway, in conjunction with a program of flood-control improvements and a high-quality trail system. A Master Plan should be developed that builds on previous plans and incorporates improvements for Duncan Park and House Park as integral extensions of the creek corridor.

**PR-1.4: Improve the historic squares of the original City Plan.**

Edwin Waller’s intention for the four squares of the original City Plan was to provide a balanced system of open space for community gathering and enjoyment, and to create focal points for civic life - a function which is again strongly desired and needed. Recent improvements to Republic Square, the site of the weekly farmers market and frequent civic events, have made significant strides in fulfilling this original intent.

- Brush Square should be improved as a cultural, visitor-oriented park, consistent with its location adjacent to the Convention Center and with the three already established museums on the site.) It should also provide a landscaped refuge from city life for the daily use of nearby residents and employees. The City should work with the Austin Fire Department (AFD) to find a new location for its downtown facility, so that the full potential of the open space can be realized.

*The Waller Creek Trail will link Lady Bird Lake with the UT campus.*





House Park/ARC



Duncan Park



Wooldridge Square



Republic Square



Shoal Creek Greenway



Waterloo Park



Brush Square



Palm Park



Waller Creek Greenway



Lady Bird Lake Greenway

## Parks and Open Space System with Connecting Streets

## PARK IMPROVEMENT GOALS

### 1 LADY BIRD LAKE GREENWAY

- Introduce additional activities to attract greater diversity of users.
- Program and improve underutilized parkland along trail.
- Manage understory vegetation along lake to improve views and access to water.
- Continue to make trail improvements to accommodate growing bike and pedestrian use.
- Implement trail signage system.

### 2 SHOAL CREEK GREENWAY

- Improve trail width and continuity.
- Introduce regular professional maintenance and security programs.
- Begin evaluating need for flood control, erosion control and water quality improvements.
- Implement regulations that require private development to contribute to the creek environment.

### 3 WALLER CREEK GREENWAY

- Enhance creek's ecological, hydrological and open space value.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle linkage to, across and along creek corridor.
- Promote activity and investment along creek in surrounding areas.

### 4 PALM PARK

- Revitalize as the premier, family-oriented park, with recreational, educational and cultural opportunities oriented to children.
- Create stronger connections with Waller Creek corridor and Convention Center-owned tract across the creek.
- Facilitate multiple uses of main open space / lawn.

### 5 WATERLOO PARK

- Reinvigorate as Downtown's premier city-wide events park.
- Encourage use and stewardship by surrounding State and Hospital employees and visitors, as well as by UT students and faculty.
- Create setting that respects and complements the natural open space amenity of Waller Creek.

### 6 BRUSH SQUARE

- Create visitor-oriented park with a cultural emphasis that also supports daily use by nearby residents and employees.
- Maintain and enhance as a landscaped refuge.
- Ensure that park can support variety of types and sizes of events and gatherings.

### 7 WOOLDRIDGE SQUARE

- Preserve historic and landscape character.
- Improve accessibility, usability and safety.
- Promote redevelopment and active uses of surrounding area.

### 8 REPUBLIC SQUARE

- Ensure that current design to "reset" the park is fully funded and executed.
- Create new focal point around sustainable food concession(s) and dining.
- Promote redevelopment and active uses around square.

### 9 HOUSE PARK/AUSTIN RECREATION CENTER (ARC)

- Improve streetscapes and connection to Shoal Creek trail.
- Better organize vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian circulation.
- Create more green space and shade.

### 10 OLD BAKERY BUILDING & PARK

- Improve area for outdoor dining, in concert with the Downtown Austin Alliance's Congress Avenue WOW Initiative.
- Establish destination-type café use within the building that has extended opening hours, including weekends.

### 11 DUNCAN PARK

- Improve tree health and vegetation throughout, reinforcing the natural creekside environment.
- Create new amenities to increase daily use value by nearby residents and employees.
- Contain BMX park activity so doesn't interfere with sidewalk use.

- Wooldridge Square should be carefully designed to preserve its historic character as a civic space, while improving drainage, accessibility and the ability to support programmed events as well as informal gatherings. The existing topography, tree canopy and bandstand structure should be maintained as key features of the park. In the near-term, efforts should be made to establish a stronger pattern of daily use with activities that serve the significant employee population in the area. Mobile food carts, semi-permanent kiosks, curbside food vans, and moveable chairs and tables are recommended in the northwest corner of the square where there is relatively flat terrain.
- The fourth square in Edwin Waller’s 1839 City Plan was located in the northeast quadrant (between 9th and 10th, and Trinity and Neches streets) but was never developed as an open space. It was the site of the original Austin High School and was sold in the 1960s to the First Baptist Church, whose main sanctuary occupies the site. The Parks and Open Space Master Plan identifies the need for additional open space in this northeast quadrant of the Downtown to provide for a more even distribution of public open space. In the long-term, it would be ideal to reclaim this historic block to realize the 1839 Waller Plan, but the church has expressed no interest in selling their property or in relocating.

As redevelopment of State and Federal properties in this area proceeds, the City should pursue opportunities for land swaps with the Church in an effort to reclaim the fourth Downtown square. Failing this, or in advance of it, other open space opportunities should be pursued in the Northeast quadrant of the Downtown, for example on land that may be surplussed by the federal government. In the interim, the City should partner with the General Services Administration to improve the existing plaza within the Federal Building Complex so it can better accommodate both daily use as well as special events.

*The renovation of Republic Square has provided a venue for performances, markets, and small civic festivities.*



**PR-1.5: Improve the PARD-owned Old Bakery and Emporium and surrounding parkland on Congress Avenue.**

- The City should enhance this small open space, located on the 1000 block of Congress Avenue, to provide a link between the Capitol Complex and Downtown. Consideration should be given to the introduction of a commercial café concession in the Old Bakery building, with extended and weekend hours to activate this key blockface and to complement the current senior arts and craft retail venue.
- The City should coordinate with the State, which owns adjacent underutilized parkland, to create a vibrant visitor destination that links the Capitol Complex to Downtown along “the main street of Texas”.

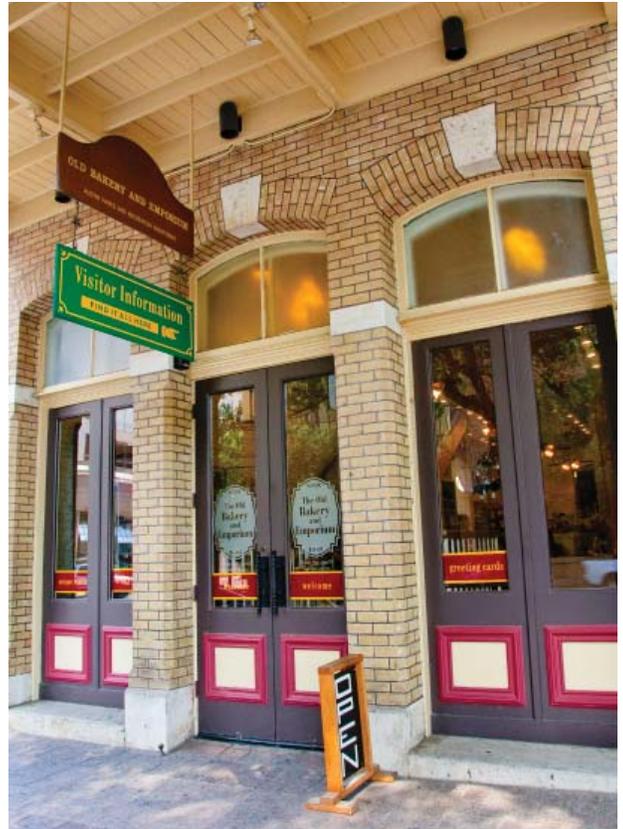
**PR-1.6: Pursue public/private funding sources and management structures for improving and maintaining Downtown parks.**

To create and maintain high quality parks, substantial one-time capital funding and ongoing operations and maintenance funding is required. Public sources often account for the majority of a park system’s capital funding. The City, through PARD, should continue to provide governance and overall policy direction for downtown parks.

- On-site earned income, such as concession and event revenues and corporate and private sponsorships, can become more substantial funding streams after parks become known as great places, with high-quality design and amenities. To facilitate the growth and capture of new funding, PARD should be enabled and encouraged to pursue longer and more robust concession agreements, as well as philanthropic and corporate and private sponsorships, including naming rights of park assets. The City should also enable PARD to keep all concession and sponsorship revenue for use in maintaining and improving the downtown parks system.

**PR-1.7: Special entities, such as non-profit conservancies, should be encouraged to assist with park improvements, operations, management and maintenance.**

Because downtown parks require an even higher level of investment and management oversight than the rest of the park system, they rarely depend on public funding alone. Many municipal parks agencies – including Austin’s PARD today – work with special purpose entities to produce supplemental funding and management capacity. Entities such as development corporations, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and conservancies each have access to financial



*The PARD-owned Old Bakery should become a vital part of the Congress Avenue experience.*

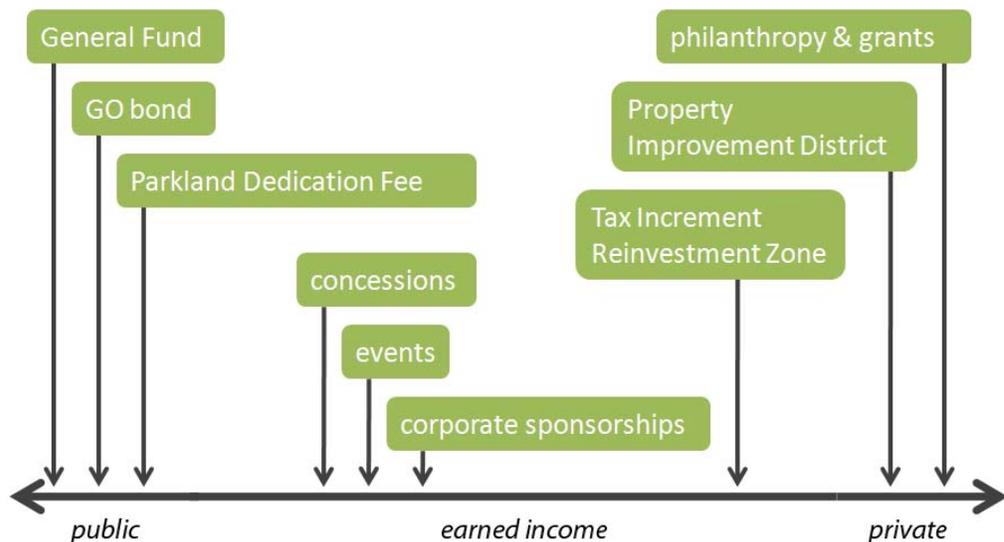
resources that are not as readily available to municipal parks departments, and these entities can execute capital projects and manage and program open spaces in ways that complement the resources of government agencies.

- PARD should partner with one or more special purpose entities to execute park revitalizations, and potentially also to manage and/or program downtown parks. The nature of this entity (e.g., public-private development corporation, private BID organization, or non-profit conservancy or friends group) and its role and relationship to PARD should be further determined in reference to priority projects and the range of available funding sources.

**PR-1.8: Allocate additional sources of public funding to Downtown parks.**

- The City should evaluate a range of existing funding sources for Downtown parks, including a General Fund increase, a set-aside for Downtown parks, adjustments to event and concession policies that allow revenues to be retained for use in Downtown parks and increased solicitation of corporate and private sponsorships and donations. In addition, the City should evaluate new public funding sources, including:
  - Extension of the parkland dedication fee to commercial properties within the Downtown, which will benefit from enhanced parks.
  - Establishment of a citywide park user fee integrated with City of Austin utility bills, similar to those already in place for drainage and transportation to be used for parks operation, maintenance and capital improvements city-wide, with an appropriate percentage dedicated to the Downtown parks system.

*There is a wide spectrum of public and private sector funding sources for parks and open spaces.*



**PR-2. OPEN SPACE:** *New development should be encouraged to create engaging open spaces (e.g., plazas, gardens, courtyards, etc.) that expand and enrich the public network of streets and parks.*

In addition to its 11 public parks, Downtown also includes 17 publicly-accessible open spaces (about eight acres), both on public and privately-owned land. These include plazas and courtyards on public land like the City Hall Plaza, Regents Plaza, Symphony Square and the Pickle Building Plaza, and others on privately-owned land, such as the sunken courtyard at One Congress Plaza. These spaces typically provide a more intimately-scaled experience and a welcome break in the dense fabric of urban development. This type of publicly-accessible open space should be encouraged, but carefully regulated, in terms of design and operations, by the City to ensure that they contribute to a positive urban experience and to Downtown’s public realm. If not well designed and maintained, these open spaces can become a liability, with areas of inactivity that promote negative social behavior.

**PR-2.1: Provide incentives and design criteria that promote high-quality open space within private developments.**

Special incentives including density bonuses and/or Floor Area Ratio exemptions should be offered to developments which provide publicly-accessible open space in compliance with established design criteria. The proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program includes publicly-accessible open space as one means of achieving additional density.<sup>53</sup> Downtown District plans are also a vehicle for achieving specific open space goals in particular areas. For instance, the Waller Creek District Master Plan provides specific FAR exemptions for the creation of publicly-accessible open spaces between the creek and Red River Street, south of Cesar Chavez Street.

- The City should allow the Code requirement for open space within private multi-family developments to be fulfilled with publicly-accessible open space.
- Specific design criteria for publicly-accessible open space should be finalized as part of the City’s ordinance amendment process that will follow adoption of the DAP. The following characteristics and elements should be included:
  - Accessible and visible from a public sidewalk;
  - Usable throughout daylight hours;
  - Public seating and furnishings;
  - Adjacent ground-level activities;
  - A minimum size with minimum dimension(s);
  - Planted areas;
  - Shade; and

*Regents Plaza provides an attractive setting for brown-bag lunches and performances.*



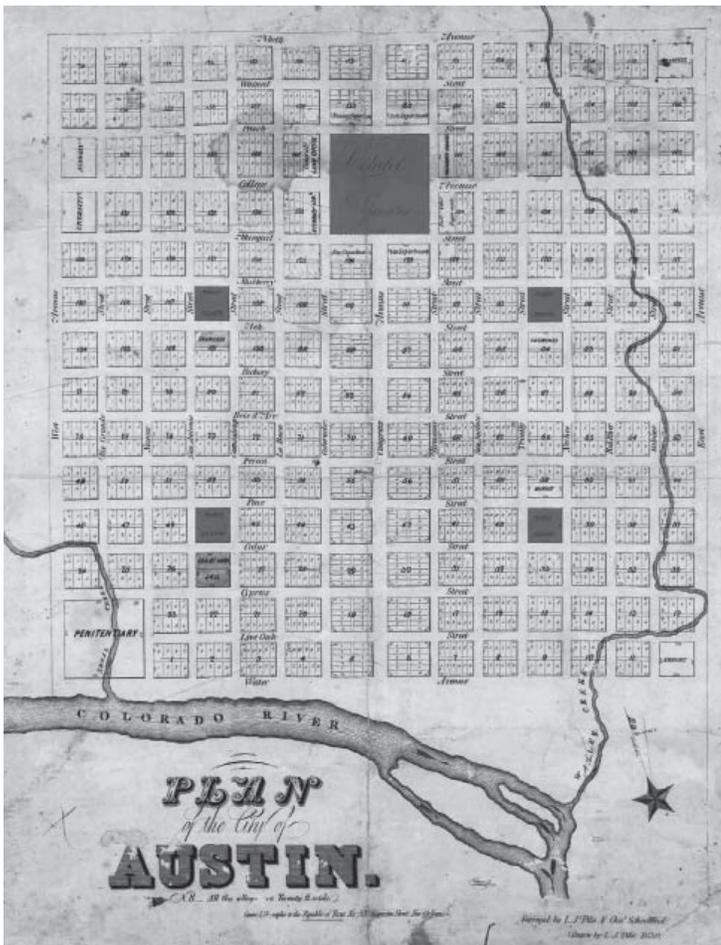
- A significant portion of the area open to the sky.

**PR-3. STREETSCAPES:** *All Downtown streets should be great public places, supporting pedestrian circulation and activities, and bringing nature and greenery into the urban core.*

Waller’s street pattern laid out in the 1839 City Plan contributes significantly to the form and character of Downtown Austin. The orthogonal grid of streets allow for walkable blocks (measuring 276 feet in each direction), with alleys that contribute to the fine-grained urban fabric. Most rights-of-way, with the exception of the wide ceremonial axes of Congress Avenue and 12th Street (originally College Avenue), were laid out to be 80 feet in width. This grid of streets is an essential element of the public open space system, making up over 35% (374 acres) of the land area of Downtown, providing easy connections between districts, parks, activity centers and cultural and entertainment destinations.

The grid remains largely intact after 170 years. Some interruptions have been made to accommodate public facilities, including the six-block Austin Convention Center, several of the State’s office developments within the Capitol Complex and the Federal Complex in the northeast quadrant of Downtown. As Downtown continues to evolve into a vibrant mixed-use district with an emphasis on pedestrian circulation, there is a need to ensure that new developments do not create further interruptions in the grid.

*After 170 years, the original grid of city streets remains largely intact.*

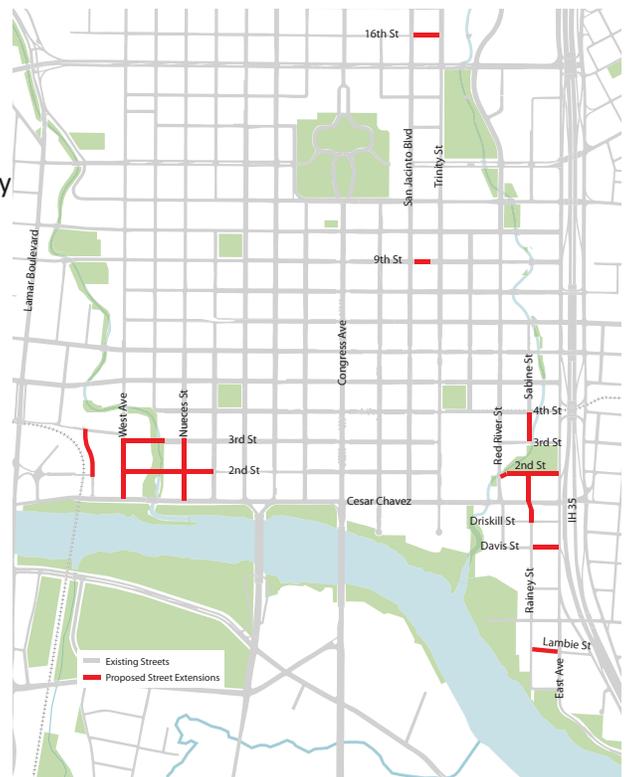


The Downtown Great Streets Master Plan<sup>54</sup> was finalized in 2000 to guide public and private streetscape investment and to create a more comfortable and engaging pedestrian environment. The Master Plan, among other things, establishes streetscape design standards and dimensional criteria, furnishings and tree species for each street. The Plan is being implemented consistently today by both the public and private sectors.

The DAP Downtown Transportation Framework Plan<sup>55</sup> builds on the Great Streets Master Plan, further developing the system of “priority streets by mode”, and developing more detailed streetscape cross sections of all of the different street types and variations.<sup>56</sup> In adopting the DAP, the Great Streets Master Plan design standards and furnishings should be incorporated into the Framework Plan.

**PR-3.1: Maintain, extend and restore Downtown’s grid system of streets and alleys.**

- The City should not allow full or partial street closures for new Downtown developments. Where a street closure to vehicular traffic is considered essential, generous access for pedestrians and bicycles should be maintained within the right-of-way. Redevelopment of blocks where streets have been interrupted should re-establish the grid. Potential sites where the street grid could be re-extended in the future include:
  - The Federal Building Complex, which could provide for the extension of East 9th Street between San Jacinto and Trinity streets;
  - The redevelopment of State parking garages along San Jacinto and Trinity streets, which would allow for the extension of East 16th Street; and
  - The redevelopment of both the Seaholm Power and the Green Water Treatment plant sites, which will allow West Avenue, Nueces, West 2nd and West 3rd streets to be extended.
- Within the Waller Creek District, various restorations and/or extensions of public right-of-ways are recommended:
  - East 2nd Street from Red River to IH 35; and
  - Sabine Street, between 3rd and 4th and between 2nd and Cesar Chavez Street.
- In the case of the Rainey Street District, the City and developers should plan for certain streets to penetrate through existing, long blocks to create better connectivity for all modes of transportation. The following are such recommended extensions:
  - Rainey Street, between Driskill and Cesar Chavez streets;
  - Davis Street between Rainey Street and the IH 35 frontage road; and
  - Lambie Street between East Avenue and Rainey Street.



**Proposed Future Street Extensions**

- The City should not permit the closure of alleys, as they provide an important service function. Vacation of alleys should only be allowed if equivalent off-street service facilities are provided, and where such a vacation does not result in a need for on-street servicing/loading. (See TP-1.3.)
- The City should not permit sky-bridges or other encroachments such as parking garages or habitable space to project into the public right-of-way.

**PR-3.2: Require all new development to build Great Streets sidewalks or contribute to the Great Streets Development Program fund.**

The City’s Great Streets Development Program encourages private developers to construct public sidewalk improvements by the City reimbursing a portion of their cost from the Downtown parking meter revenue fund. The resulting construction has been inconsistent, as participating developments are not necessarily located adjacent to one another or located in areas of high-pedestrian priority. Some developers have opted not to construct Great Streets sidewalks at all. Public sector implementation of Great Streets has had a more significant impact, as in the case of the 2nd Street District, where six blocks of street frontages, or 24 blockfaces, have been improved and where sidewalks occupy up to 50% of the right-of-way, allowing for café zones and continuous tree canopies.

- The City should require new development to construct Great Streets sidewalks, since the value of these improvements provides a direct economic benefit to the property and to the surrounding area. For properties where it is not practical to construct Great Streets, (e.g., because of phasing issues or size of parcel), the City should collect an in-lieu fee, the proceeds of which should be directed to the Great Streets Development Program fund.

*Downtown developments should contribute to the implementation of Great Streets improvements.*



**PR-3.3: Streamline the license agreement process for Great Streets improvements.**

The City should take measures to improve and streamline the license agreement process, as the complexity of the application process acts as a disincentive for private developers to construct Great Streets.

- To this end, the City should require developers to submit fully-developed streetscape plans demonstrating their compliance with the Great Streets Program and the DAP Transportation Framework Plan at the time of the site development permit application. A complete set of coordinated development plans (site plan, streetscape/right-of-way plan and building plans, elevations, etc.) is needed at this stage, so that City staff can understand and evaluate the submittal as a coordinated whole. (This process improvement will help in reducing the time needed for license agreement approvals necessary for construction in the public right-of-way, as well as reduce the need for multiple site plan corrections.)

**PR-3.4: The design and construction of Great Streets improvements should accompany and be closely coordinated with transit improvements, including urban rail.**

Streetscape and pedestrian design and facilities are critical to the success of public transit because: they provide the first or last element of any transit trip; they ensure that transit trips occur in a pleasant, accommodating, and human-scaled environment; and they ensure that transit facilities are carefully integrated into the fabric of Downtown. Therefore, it is critically important that streetscape improvements – consistent with the Great Streets Program and the DAP Transportation Framework Plan – be budgeted, designed, and constructed in

*The City should streamline the license agreement process to promote sidewalk cafes and concessions.*





Transit facilities should be designed as high quality streetscapes. (Portland Transit Mall)

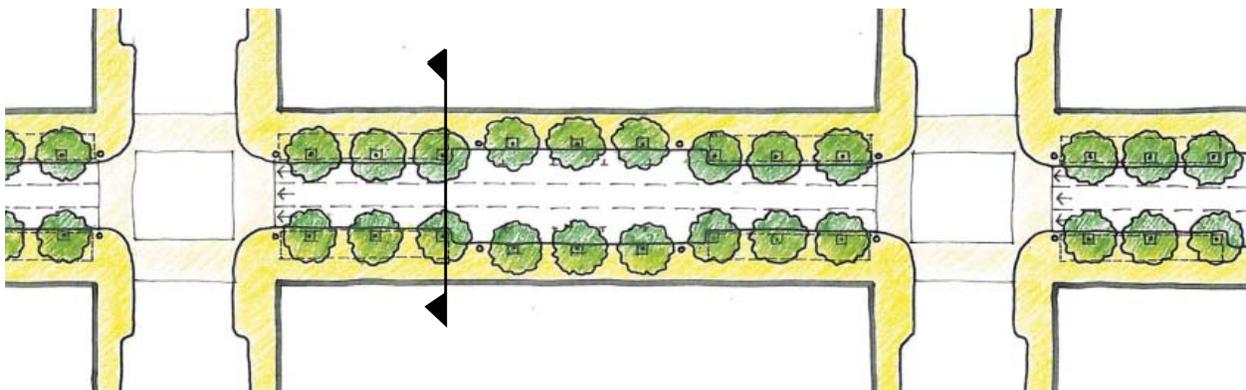
coordination with transit improvements and investments. This will be especially true for the corridors where urban rail and Capital Metro’s rapid bus service are provided

**PR-3.5: Improve East 6th Street as a mixed-use, pedestrian-priority, entertainment street that appeals to a greater diversity of people.**

East 6th Street is Austin’s signature entertainment district, and is also Texas’ most extensive and intact district of Victorian mercantile buildings. While it is known throughout the country and the world, the experience of being on 6th Street does not live up to this reputation. The sidewalks are in deteriorating

condition, and their narrow width makes it impossible to accommodate the high volume of pedestrians that descend on the area each weekend and during SXSW. As a result, the street must be closed to traffic, negatively impacting local businesses, encouraging unruly behavior and inhibiting the goal of creating a more diverse day and nighttime experience.

- The City should give the highest priority to the improvement of the street. Public investment in the pedestrian environment and a more focused effort on business recruitment, management of street and the maintenance and improvement of façades are essential to promoting 6th Street as a viable visitor destination.
- As part of the DAP process, *Sixth Street Austin* (managers of the East 6th Street public improvement district) developed a design concept for the street, calling for:
  - the widening of sidewalks to allow for permanent cafe zones and a generous promenade and landscape zone;
  - the maintenance of three vehicular lanes which could be managed in off-peak periods to provide for drop-off, loading and valet parking; and
  - pull-out areas for loading, drop-off and district valet service at mid-block.



**East 6th Street Conceptual Street Plan**

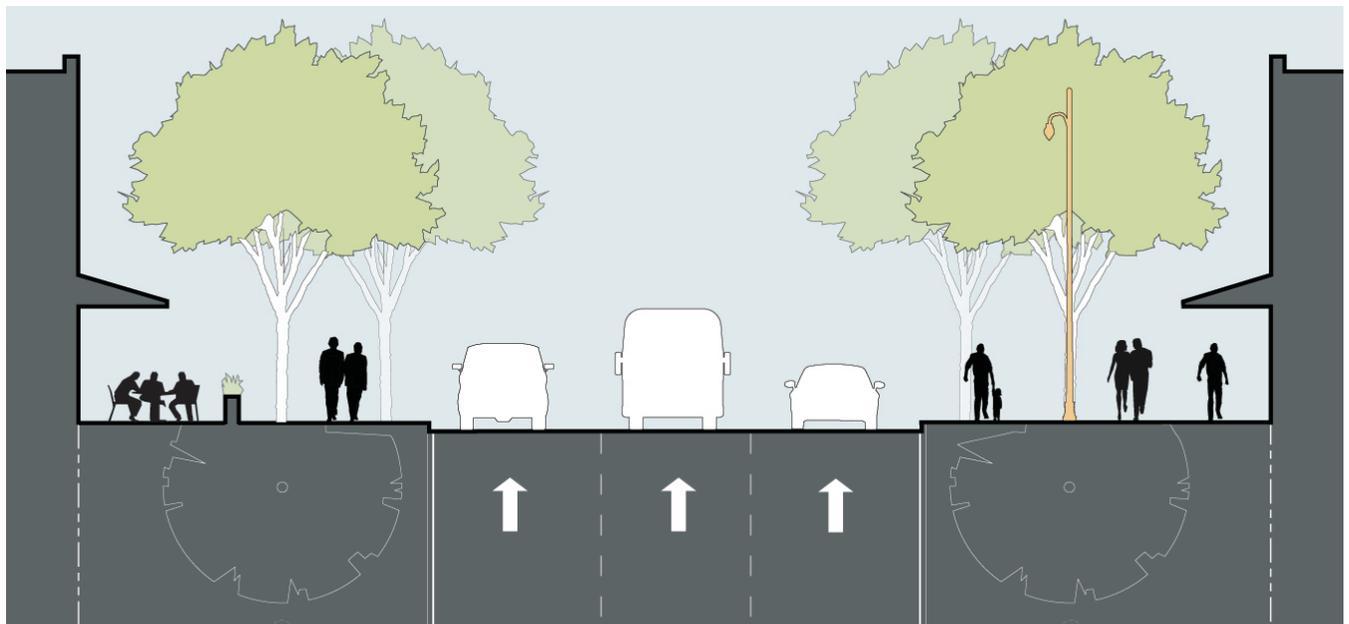
**PR-3.6: Improve Congress Avenue in keeping with its role as the Main Street of Texas.**

Congress Avenue is Austin’s and Texas’ main ceremonial street, providing a grand boulevard between the Capitol and Lady Bird Lake. However, like East 6th Street, it is in a condition that no longer meets expectations or potentials. Uneven sidewalks with multiple paving materials, diagonally-parked cars which constrict the sidewalks and block views, and congested bus stops with few amenities contribute to a deteriorating environment. However, the community has indicated strong support for urban rail on Congress Avenue, restoring its historic role as the confluence of a larger passenger rail system. Such a project would create the opportunity to revitalize the street.



*East 6th Street is Austin's most extensive district of Victorian mercantile buildings.*

- The City, using the Congress Avenue Charrette report<sup>57</sup> as the visionary starting point, should develop a master plan to define:
  - the long-term physical improvements to the right-of-way that support the location of urban rail and the accommodation – to the greatest extent practical -- of all other means of mobility on the Avenue;
  - storefront/facade and signage design guidelines for private properties fronting the Avenue;



**East 6th Street Cross-Section**

## ENVISIONING THE AVENUE....Six Elements for Success.

In April 2010, the Downtown Austin Alliance conducted a day-long, community-wide charrette to explore ways of enhancing Congress Avenue, block by block, to fulfill the Avenue's potential as the "Main Street of Texas". Charrette participants consistently identified the following six elements as being the most important to achieving greatness:



1. Outdoor Dining



2. Art, Culture & Theater



3. Shopping



4. History & Architecture



5. Streetcar/Urban Rail



6. Pedestrian Experience



- a maintenance plan for the physical improvements in the ROW;
  - a master license agreement that would allow individual property owners to make “pre-approved” improvements along their frontages within the public ROW; and
  - a master management structure that has a variety of responsibilities that can augment the City’s efforts in improving and monitoring the street.
- The City should leverage future investments in rail along Congress Avenue to provide for other enhancements, consistent with the community vision expressed in “Envisioning the Avenue - A Strategic Report”.

**PR-3.7: Improve Sabine Street, from 3rd to 7th Street as a bicycle-friendly, pedestrian promenade, paralleling Waller Creek.**

- The City should give high priority to the improvement of Sabine Street as an urban promenade, as called for in the Waller Creek District Master Plan.<sup>58</sup> This segment of the street provides a key link along the Waller Creek corridor, where the creek environment is too narrow to accommodate a creekside path.
- The Sabine Street promenade will connect the creekside hike-and-bike pathways south of 3rd Street with those north of 7th Street. The street, with one lane in each direction, will also help to provide calm, local access to several properties and businesses, and provide more direct access to Palm Park from the north.

*Sabine Street is envisioned as a vibrant promenade along Waller Creek, connecting 3rd and 7th streets.*

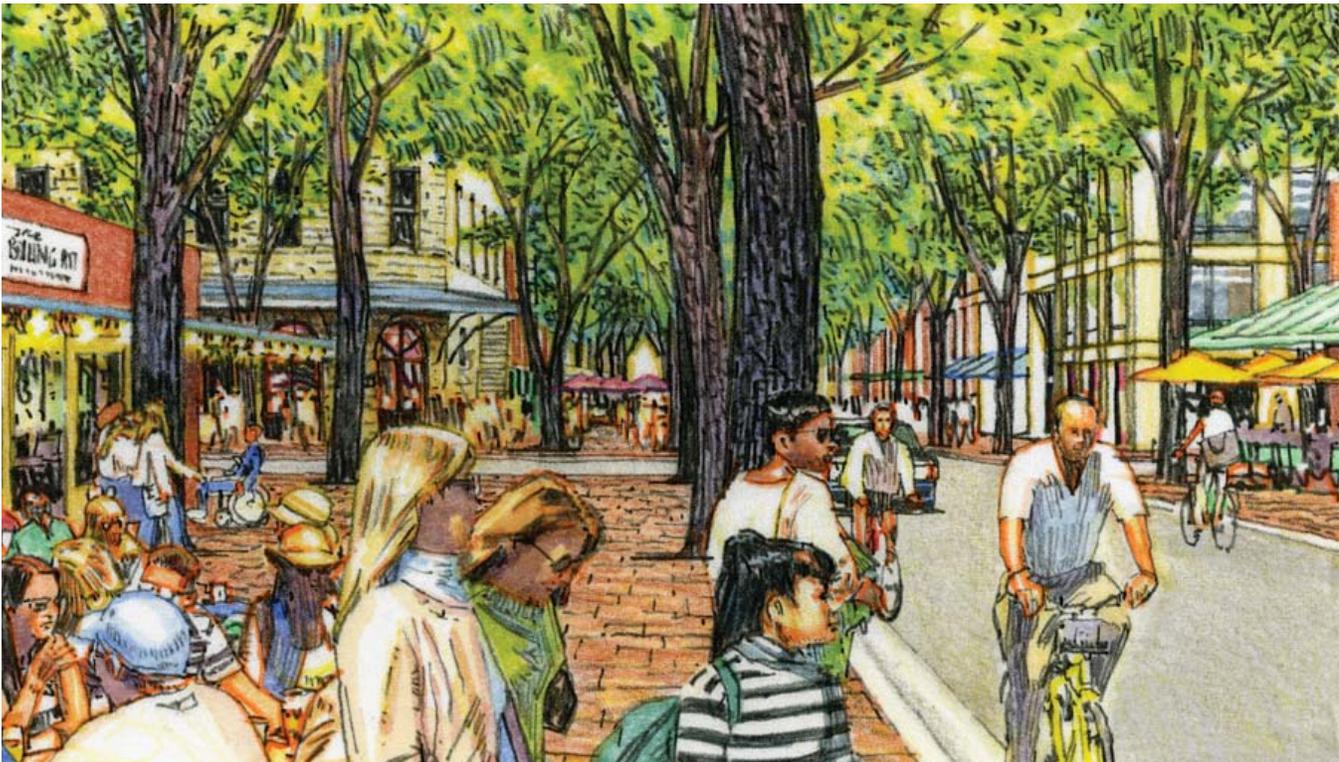


- Broad sidewalks should be included to provide generous space for cafes and kiosks that can activate the street. Special provision should be given to bicycle circulation either within the carriageway of the street, or in a dedicated path. Pedestrian connections to creekside overlooks, bridges and cafes should be provided along the mid-block alleys.

**PR-3.8: Explore the creation of a 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor linking Republic Square to Saltillo Plaza.**

- The area around what is now called Republic Square was, in the early 20th century, a hub of the Mexican American community in Austin. Located within this area were the Walker Chili Company, Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe Catholic Church, and numerous other Mexican American businesses and residences. Nicknames for what is now called Republic Square included “Chili Park” and “Mexican Park.” The 1920s witnessed the migration (instigated by the 1928 City Plan) of most of those businesses, residences, and institutions to East Austin, where Saltillo Plaza is located. The idea of creating a cultural/historical corridor along 5th Street – linking these two public squares -- has been suggested as far back as the 1999 “Republic Square Task Force Final Recommendations.”

*Sabine Street is envisioned as a vibrant promenade along Waller Creek, connecting 3rd and 7th streets.*

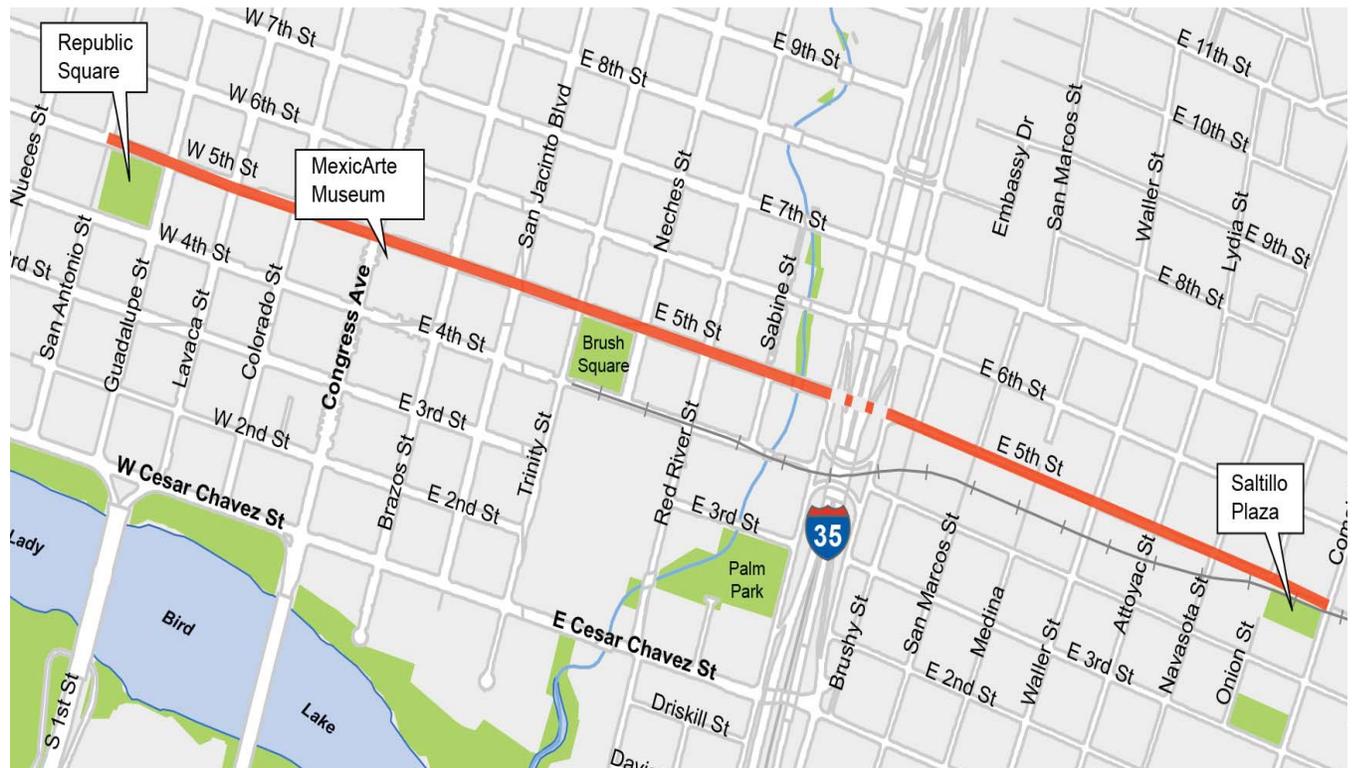


**PR-3.9: Establish a public restroom program in Downtown.**

- The City should undertake a master planning process to establish locations and types for Downtown public restrooms. Currently there are no public restrooms in Downtown Austin, apart from those that are situated in public buildings, like City Hall and the Central Library. This is a need that stakeholders throughout Downtown have identified as a high priority. The Master Plan should explore and evaluate a variety of options including: lease purchase of automatic pay toilets, construction of stand-alone facilities, integration of restrooms within parking garages, agreements with private property owners, etc.



*The City should undertake a master planning process to provide for Downtown public restrooms.*



*Potential 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor.*



239

City Center / Beaverton TC



Pioneer Square West



West

TRI-MET

What's New  
 4.17 Treatment Plant

**HOME SOURCE**  
 MOVING?  
 GO TO  
[USAHOMES.ORG](http://USAHOMES.ORG)

*Downtown Urban Rail, Portland Oregon*

## TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

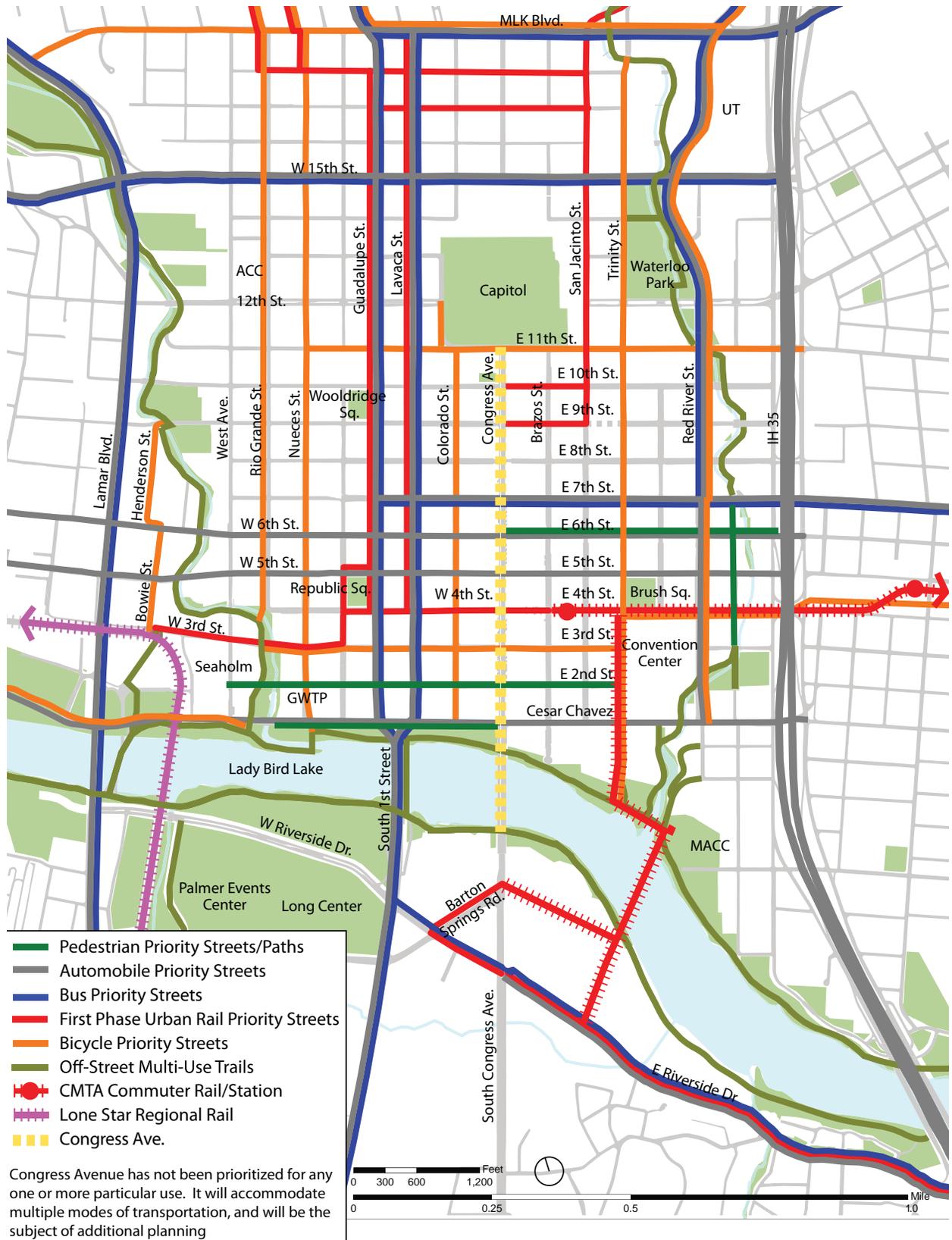
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***Overall Goal: Develop a multi-modal transportation system that improves access to and mobility within Downtown.***

Downtown can no longer depend on automobile access to sustain growth and provide mobility. There are few reasonable and sustainable ways of increasing vehicular capacity on freeways and arterials leading to and within the core. As Downtown real estate becomes more scarce, providing excessive amounts of parking for each individual project increases costs, reduces development potential and creates unattractive urban streetscapes. A key goal of the Downtown Austin Plan is to improve access to, and mobility within, the Downtown core, creating a more balanced multi-modal transportation system that supports growth and intensification, while fostering a high-quality, pedestrian environment.

***TP-1. STREETS: Downtown streets should be re-balanced to provide more equitable accommodation of all modes, including pedestrian, bicycle, transit and vehicular mobility.***

The grid of Downtown streets provides an excellent framework for a multi-modal transportation system, with particular streets prioritized for designated mobility functions. As part of the DAP, a Transportation Framework Plan has been established to guide transportation planning in Downtown.<sup>59</sup> The Plan calls for all streets to be improved as multi-modal corridors with enhanced pedestrian facilities, but also establishes a classification system defining priority roles for each street (e.g., pedestrian, bicycle, transit and vehicular), with corresponding cross-sections defined for most streets. The Transportation Framework Plan should be utilized as the basis for design and operation of Downtown streets, and should continue to be updated as specific projects are funded for design and engineering, and as further community input is considered.



## Transportation Framework Plan

**TP-1.1: Improve pedestrian facilities in all streets and implement the Great Streets Master Plan.**

All Downtown streets should provide safe and accessible pedestrian circulation. All streets should have continuous and accessible sidewalks on both sides of the street. The Council-adopted 2008 Sidewalk Master Plan provides a guide for identifying, prioritizing, and improving the Downtown sidewalk system. <sup>60</sup>

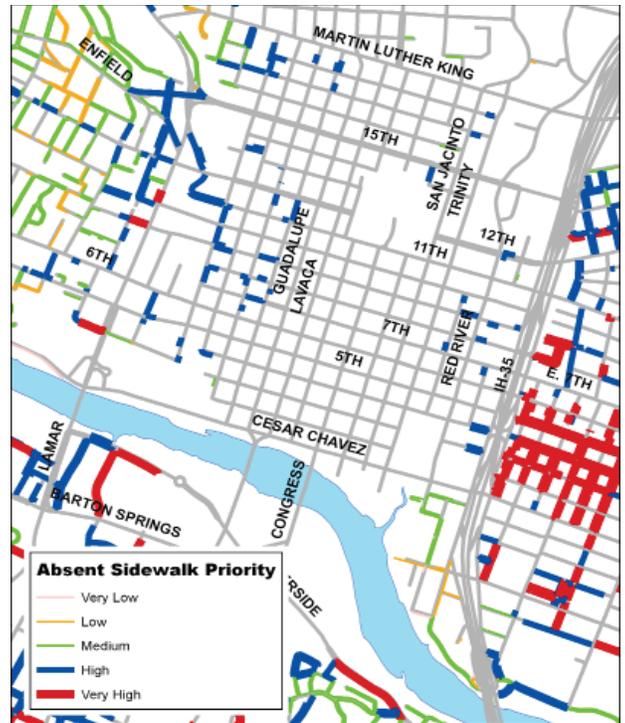
- The City should complete the Downtown sidewalk system to provide full continuity and accessibility along all streets. The map on the right illustrates areas with either no or inadequate sidewalks. Highest priority should be given to the Rainey Street District, which has both narrow streets and few sidewalks and which has recently emerged as a popular entertainment destination.

**TP-1.2: Convert certain Downtown streets to two-way operation.**

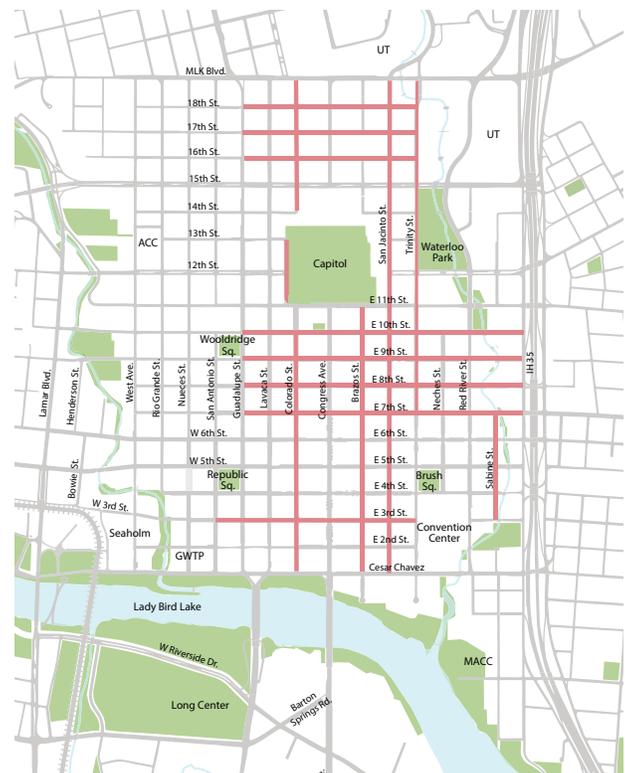
Virtually every planning study over the past 20 years has called for the conversion of many of Downtown’s one-way streets to two-way operation, in order to provide more understandable and convenient circulation patterns, calmer traffic flows and enhanced retail frontages.

The existing system of one-way streets creates confusion. East 7th Street, a principal gateway into Downtown from the airport, requires a disorienting one-block shift to the one-way system, and many trips within Downtown require circuitous routes to reach desired destinations. Wide one-way streets encourage faster-moving traffic that undermines the pedestrian environment and the potential for active, pedestrian uses along the frontage.

- The City should pursue the phased conversion of several Downtown streets (map to right) from one-way to two-way operation. These include: 3rd, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 16th, 17th, and 18th in the east-west direction; and Colorado, Brazos, San Jacinto, Trinity (north of 7th Street), and Sabine Street (between 3rd and 7th Streets) in the north-south direction.
- The north-south Lavaca/Guadalupe corridor and the east-west 5th/6th corridor should be retained as one-way couplets to handle the high volumes of traffic. (However, all streets in Downtown should be



**Downtown Missing Sidewalks**  
(City of Austin Sidewalk Plan 2008)



**Proposed Two-Way Street Conversion**

designed to allow for two-way conversion in the future, such as providing traffic signal pole infrastructure with all new street upgrades.) Certain other street segments may also need to be retained in one-way operation in consideration of the adjacent land use or the condition of the street. These include: the segment of Trinity Street between Cesar Chavez and East 7th streets to provide bus access and drop-off to the Convention Center; the constrained segments of 7th Street between San Antonio and Guadalupe streets, and San Antonio between 7th and 8th streets; and 10th Street between Nueces and Guadalupe streets to provide continued access to the sally port of the County Jail.

**TP-1.3: Maintain alleys as the principal means of loading, servicing and parking access.**

Downtown is fortunate to have a comprehensive system of mid-block alleys that provide rear service access to most properties. These alleys relieve pressure on the streets, allowing them to function for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular circulation. However, alleys are often congested with dumpsters, power poles and even above-grade grease traps that prevent them from functioning properly. The following policies are aimed at preserving and enhancing alleys, and improving their efficiency as both service corridors and for access and egress to parking within a development:

- Vacation or abandonment of alleys should be avoided, and occur only in special circumstances where equivalent off-street service facilities are provided (e.g., within a full-block development), and where such vacation does not result in a need for on-street servicing/loading.
- All development abutting an alley should be required to use alleys for loading, servicing and trash collection.

*Native vegetation and swales that intercept and treat urban run-off could replace the concrete banks along IH 35.*



- The City should work with Downtown property owners to eliminate dumpsters and above-grade grease traps from alleys. In older areas, such as 6th Street and Congress Avenue, more efficient systems for trash collection, recycling and composting, should be established.
- When at all possible, primary or secondary access and egress to and from on-site parking should be taken from the alley. This will be more possible once alleys become less cluttered with dumpsters and other obstacles.
- The City should continue operating the Downtown Refuse Collection District, which effectively manages refuse in the bar and restaurant intensive central core of Downtown.

**TP-1.4: Reduce or remove the barrier of the IH 35 edge.**

The completion of IH 35 in the 1960s created a significant social and physical divide through the entire city, isolating East Austin from Downtown and the more affluent neighborhoods to the west. The freeway is now over 50 years old and is one of the most congested and dangerous sections of the Interstate Highway system.

- As part of any future upgrade, the City should work with TxDOT to develop a long-term improvement plan that puts the through-traffic of the freeway below street level, so that the street network of Downtown can pass over it in an unobstructed manner, and so that the negative visual and environmental effects of the facility are reduced (see image below).

*Ultimately, the freeway could be depressed below grade with new bridges reconnecting Downtown with East Austin.*



- In the meantime, the City should make efforts to enhance pedestrian and bicycle access and safety beneath the existing freeway viaduct, to beautify the environment with landscaping and public art (as demonstrated by the recent “Makeover” project between 6th and 8th streets), and to make the frontage roads more attractive and pedestrian-friendly. (See image on p. 144.)
- The Downtown segment of the IH 35 corridor could be greatly enhanced, both visually and environmentally, with the removal of its concrete slopes and reconfiguration of frontage road edges to allow for the capture and filtration of stormwater runoff from both the freeway and the frontage roads. This runoff is destined for Waller Creek, and is the source of pollutants that undermine attempts to restore the creek. Native vegetation and swales that intercept and treat urban run-off should be introduced along the corridor. Bio-swales, vegetated filter strips, rain gardens, etc., will generate “ecosystem services”, reduce the urban heat island effect and create a more humane environment. (See image on p. 144.)

**TP-1.5: Establish a comprehensive way-finding system for all modes of transportation.**

Downtown lacks a way-finding system that guides visitors and residents to important destinations, attractions and landmarks, or to public services and public parking facilities.

- The City should develop a unified way-finding and signage system, indicating clear paths of travel to key destinations and major public facilities and cultural institutions. The way-finding system should be part of a larger, artfully-conceived branding program for Downtown and should include specific approaches that promote overall Downtown and district identity with maps, graphics and interpretive elements, as appropriate. The system should be designed to serve all modes of transportation and incorporate new communication techniques such as GPS, smart phone “apps”, toll tags, etc.
- As an integral part of the way-finding system, “real-time” electronic signage should be developed to indicate public parking availability along major entries into Downtown, as well as the status of bus or rail arrivals at key transit stops.

*“Real-time” electronic signage should be developed for public parking and way-finding.*



**TP-2. TRANSIT:** *Public transit should be enhanced as a high-quality mode of choice.*

Transit in Downtown has not been a mode of choice. The lack of high quality service and the inadequacy of bus stops and amenities have contributed to a negative image and identity. Introduction of commuter and urban rail and planned rapid bus routes have the potential of improving the quality of service and the identity and attractiveness of transit as a viable alternative to the automobile.

**TP-2.1:** *Establish an urban rail system to connect Downtown with other Central Austin destinations and the existing and passenger rail system.*

The expansion of urban rail within Central Austin should be given the highest priority, providing connectivity between Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods and destinations, including the Capitol Complex, UT, Mueller, the Riverside Corridor and Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. The Austin Transportation Department (ATD) is taking the lead on defining a first-phase urban rail project and is developing a financing and implementation strategy that could be taken to voters in 2012.

- Urban rail technology deployed within Downtown should be at a human-scale, compatible with the urban fabric, able to mix easily with mixed modes of traffic, and capable of high frequency service.
- The urban rail system should link to commuter and regional rail assets, including: MetroRail on East 4th Street, which is planned to be double-tracked and extended to Brazos Street; and the future Lone Star Rail (“LSTAR”) intercity regional rail line, which is expected to stop near Seaholm on West 3rd Street.

**TP-2.2:** *Concentrate major bus routes along designated Downtown corridors.*

Consistent with Capital Metro’s ServicePlan 2020 and the Transportation Framework Plan of the DAP, the City should prioritize certain streets within Downtown as major bus corridors, including: 7th, 15th and MLK Boulevard in the east-west direction; and Lamar, Lavaca/Guadalupe and Red River streets in the north-south direction. These corridors should provide both local and express service, while other streets should be limited to local routes.

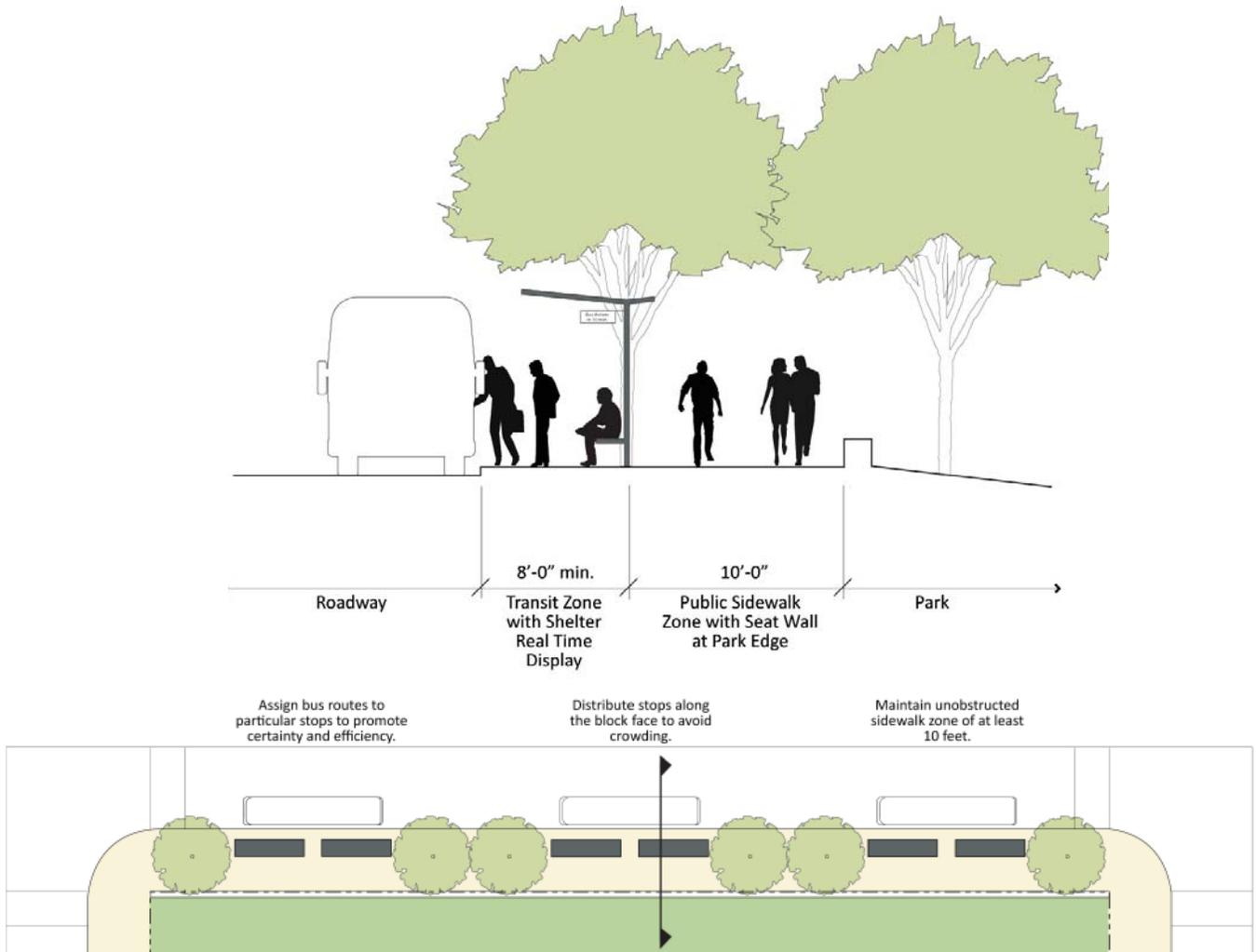
*Public transit should be a high quality mode of choice, rather than one of last resort.*

- Major through-routes should be relocated from Congress Avenue to the Lavaca/Guadalupe corridor. Studies should be undertaken to ensure that bus volumes can be accommodated along with future urban rail service which is also envisioned for the corridor.
- The City should support Capital Metro’s MetroRapid line by constructing Great Streets improvements along Lavaca and Guadalupe Streets.



**TP-2.3: Create high-quality, state-of-the-art transit stops and transfer areas.**

- Transit stops should generally be located on the “far-side” of an intersection, to avoid congestion and obstruction of right-turning vehicles. Stops should be consolidated to the extent practicable and spaced to provide convenient pedestrian access, but to avoid bunching of buses at every intersection.
- More deliberate provision should be made for comfortable and convenient bus transfers and transit stops within Downtown. Since the majority of bus routes in Downtown are “through” routes, most transit boardings and transfers will still occur on the street at curbside bus stops, where they can be accomplished most effectively, both in terms of passenger convenience and bus operational efficiency.
- The City should establish specific design criteria for on-street transit facilities to ensure convenient and comfortable transfers that are part of a well-conceived streetscape design. The criteria should include:



**Plan and Cross-section of On-Street Bus Transfer Area**

- State-of-the-art shelters constructed with appropriate amenities - (benches, lighting, shade, trash and recycling receptacles, way-finding, and a “real-time” bus arrival information system) that maximize public safety, mitigate crime, vandalism and public order problems, while providing comfort and an enhanced experience for transit patrons.
- Each bus stop should post the routes assigned to it, so that passengers understand where to wait.
- Where multiple routes converge, a sufficient length of curbside space should be provided to prevent overcrowding of passengers and buses and blocked sidewalks.
- Bus stops and transfer areas should be separated from the main, “through-zone” of the public sidewalk, so that transit users are not overly concentrated at one stop, do not impede the flow of other pedestrians along a street, and do not interfere with activities taking place on the properties they front.
- Capital Metro should ensure the highest levels of maintenance and security in and around stops and transfer areas.

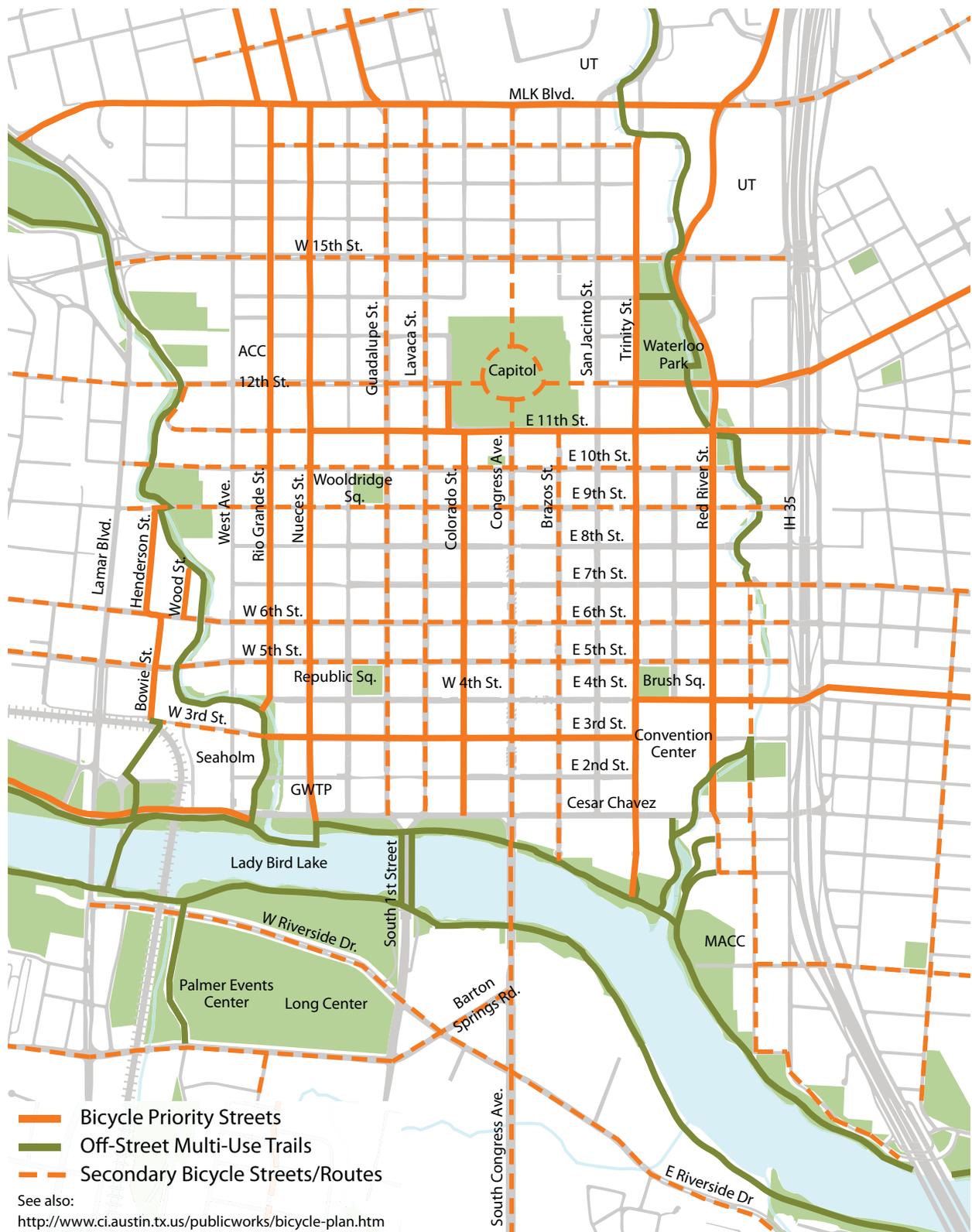


*The City should continue to expand Downtown's network of bike facilities (above: a "bike box" in Portland).*

***TP-3. BICYCLES: Downtown should continue to provide safer and more convenient bike facilities for all types of cyclists.***

As the City improves its bicycle infrastructure, and as traffic congestion persists, cycling has become an increasingly viable alternative mode of travel, offering easy and efficient ways of moving through Downtown, and contributing to the identity of Austin as an engaging and sustainable urban district.

Over the past five years, the City has significantly increased the number of bike lanes and paths in Downtown. Much of the Lance Armstrong Bikeway, an east-west system of dedicated trails and lanes connecting East and West Austin through the core, has been completed. The extension of the Pfluger Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge will provide safe passage over busy Cesar Chavez Street and a direct commuter and recreational link between Downtown and South Austin. Plans have been approved for a north-south bike boulevard along Rio Grande and Nueces streets, connecting UT and the West Campus neighborhood with Downtown and Lady Bird Lake. These improvements and others are helping to realize the goal of the City's Bicycle Plan Update of 2009, to make Austin one of the most bike-friendly cities in the nation. The following policies are intended to build on these accomplishments, by guiding public and private investment in Downtown's bicycle network and infrastructure.



## DAP Bicycle Framework Plan

**TP-3.1: Establish bicycle priority streets that provide facilities for all levels of bicyclists along key north-south and east-west corridors.**

- The City should augment the existing bicycle network by implementing the recommended facilities for the bicycle priority streets, as identified in the Austin Bicycle Plan Update<sup>61</sup> and the DAP Transportation Framework Plan, thereby providing a clear and safe network for bicyclists of all experience levels. Facility improvements include bike lanes along:
  - Bowie and Henderson Streets to connect Pfluger Bridge with the Shoal Creek Greenway, including design and construction of the railroad-undercrossing at Bowie and 3rd Streets;
  - Red River Street to connect the trail systems of Lady Bird Lake and Waller Creek with UT;
  - Colorado Street, once it is converted to two-way. In the meantime, “sharrows” (designated shared vehicular/bicycle lanes), are recommended on both Brazos and Colorado in their current one-way configuration;
  - 11th Street to connect East Austin with the Capitol and Downtown.



*Lance Armstrong Bikeway is part of Austin's expanding system of off-street trails.*

**TP-3.2: Introduce shared lane markings (“sharrows”) on streets where cyclists can safely share the lane with automobiles.**

- “Sharrows” designations should be introduced on certain Downtown streets where dedicated lanes are not practical, to alert motorists to take caution and to allow cyclists to safely share the lane.

**TP-3.3: Create a more continuous system of off-street and multi-use trails.**

- The City should improve the continuity of off-street, multi-use trails along Waller, Shoal and Lady Bird Lake greenways and address deficiencies and pedestrian conflicts so that a continuous and safe system is created in and around the downtown core.
- An off-street bike and pedestrian path should be introduced between the northern end of the Pfluger Bridge extension and Bowie Street, including an undercrossing of the Union Pacific rail tracks.

*Artfully-designed bike racks and facilities can reinforce Austin's identity as a premiere biking city.*

**TP-3.4: Increase bicycle parking in Downtown.**

- Bicycle parking should be planned comprehensively in tandem with automobile parking needs. The City should increase on-site bicycle parking requirements in Downtown, so that bike parking represents at





*“Bicycle cages”, located in portions of parking garages that cannot accommodate cars, are a cost-effective method of creating bike-parking spaces.*

least 10% of the required motor vehicle parking, before any parking reductions are made. At least half of these spaces should be either Class I racks or parking spaces defined in the City’s Transportation Criteria Manual, or in locked bicycle storage rooms. Bicycle parking should also be provided at major transit stops. Provision of bike stations<sup>62</sup> near major transit stops, in parks and within new developments should also be explored further for Downtown. Providing locked “bike cages” in portions of parking garages that cannot accommodate cars is also a cost-effective way of creating bike-parking spaces, both in new development or as a retrofit.

**TP-3.5: Require shower and locker facilities in office developments.**

- The City should adopt specific requirements for shower and locker facilities that promote commuter cycling in Downtown. It is recommended that the recently adopted requirements for an Urban Core PUD be adopted for Downtown, which require office buildings over 25,000 square feet to provide shower and locker facilities, proportionate to the area of the building and the number of employees.

**TP-3.6: Introduce bike-sharing.**

- The City should explore the feasibility of a community bike-sharing program that offers affordable access to bicycles for short trips. Bike sharing programs, like Paris’s highly successful Velib system, have proven to be an attractive alternative to the automobile, and an effective component of a multi-modal transportation system.
- Implementation alternatives should be evaluated including: public/private partnerships with advertising agencies who supply, rent and maintain bikes in return for advertising rights; and partnerships with community non-profit entities, bike retailers, car-share companies or with private companies that capitalize the enterprise through subscriptions, rentals, and advertising.

*Velib, the successful bike-sharing program in Paris, is provided and maintained by JC Decaux, who receives advertising rights in return.*

**TP-3.7: Ensure that urban rail facilities promote bike safety.**

Design of urban rail facilities within Downtown need to be carefully coordinated with the provision of safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities that avoid or mitigate potential conflicts.



**TP-4. PARKING:** *Adequate and convenient supplies of parking should be provided, consistent with goals for increased transit ridership and an enhanced pedestrian environment.*

Parking is one of the principal elements that is shaping the form and character of Downtown Austin. As much as 30% of the mass of a building can be dedicated to parking - affecting development economics, traffic circulation and the attractiveness of the urban environment. Although a central goal for Downtown is to create a sustainable, pedestrian-oriented district, the lack of a fully robust transit system requires that adequate levels of automobile parking continue to be provided until there are more viable alternatives. The provision of bicycle parking should also be considered as an integral part of a Downtown parking program.

As Downtown real estate becomes more expensive and sites smaller and less efficient for on-site parking, there is a need to manage the parking supply more effectively. Rather than single-purpose parking facilities for every use in Downtown, shared and centralized automobile and bicycle parking facilities, de-coupled from their primary use, could reduce the costs and burdens of on-site parking, provide for a more intensive and sustainable use of urban land and promote a more interesting and engaging public realm.

**TP-4.1: Manage and coordinate Downtown parking.**

The 2009 Downtown Parking Study by Walker Parking Consultants concluded that there is an adequate supply of automobile parking in the CBD to meet demand on most occasions. However, since many parking garages are not made available to the public, some nighttime and weekend parking is not conveniently located near the main activity centers, like East 6th Street and the Warehouse District.

- The City, through its newly-created Parking Enterprise, is taking and should continue to take a more proactive role than it has in the past in coordinating the supply of Downtown parking, through shared management and operation responsibilities, coordinated pricing, and consolidation of valet services within particular areas such as the various entertainment districts. The Parking Enterprise should also be charged with managing the supply of Downtown bicycle parking.

*As Downtown real estate sites become smaller and more expensive, shared centralized parking will be increasingly important.*

**TP-4.2: Promote public/private partnerships to provide shared parking facilities within new development.**

- The City and its Parking Enterprise should partner with private sector developers and/or with other governmental entities to construct joint public/private parking garages in areas of the City that have high demands for visitor parking, such as the Red River, East 6th Street and 2nd Street districts.



**TP-4.3: Establish an in-lieu fee system that allows developers to contribute to centralized off-site parking as an alternative to providing parking on site.**

- The City should establish an “in-lieu” fee to allow developers to pay into a parking fund as an alternative to providing on-site parking. In this way, the burden of providing on-site automobile parking on small sites would be relieved, allowing for more efficient and cost-effective infill development to occur throughout the area. (Bicycle parking should still be provided on site.) This in-lieu fund should be used by the Parking Enterprise to construct, operate and maintain joint-use parking garages.

**TP-4.4: Provide incentives for on-site, car-share spaces and recharging facilities.**

- Car-sharing in Austin is becoming a viable alternative to car ownership. Consistent with incentives offered in the UNO district, the City should reduce parking requirements in developments that provide car-sharing facilities.
- The City should also offer incentives for the provision of electric car recharging facilities within parking garages and on streets, including parking reductions, reduced electrical rates and assistance in providing higher-voltage charging equipment.

**TP-4.5: Manage on-street parking and loading areas in a more efficient manner.**

- As the Great Streets Program is implemented, it is estimated that up to 1,000 on-street Downtown parking spaces will be displaced to allow for transit lanes, wider sidewalks and bike lanes. Consideration should be given to “time management” of valuable curb space and travel lanes, including specified hours for short-term parking, commercial loading and servicing and/or for peak hour travel lanes as appropriate.

**TP-4.6: Create a way-finding system and real-time parking displays that guide visitors to key public parking facilities.**

- In coordination with a comprehensive way-finding system (see Policy TP-1.5), signage and real-time parking displays should be established along key corridors leading into Downtown to inform motorists of the availability and location of public parking facilities.

*Car-share and recharging facilities should be provided throughout Downtown.*



**TP-5: TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT:** A TDM Program should be put in place to promote more effective commuting behavior.

Transportation demand management (TDM) is a means of reducing the number of single-occupancy vehicles on a street network at any given time. Managing demand is a cost-effective alternative to increasing capacity, and an approach that can promote better environmental outcomes, improved public health, and more prosperous and livable cities. TDM programs are particularly effective in dense Downtown districts, where there are large public or private sector employers who can provide leadership in promoting alternatives to the single occupant vehicle.



*Time management of valuable curb space and travel lanes should be considered.*

**TP-5.1: Assist in establishing a Central City Transportation Management Association.**

- The City should partner with the DAA and major Central City employers (Travis County, State of Texas, University of Texas at Austin) to fund a Transportation Management Association (TMA) to promote TDM programs that decrease the number of Downtown workers using single-occupant vehicles. Such programs could include: subsidized transit passes, car-share incentives, preferential carpool parking and pricing, ride home program, real-time commuter information, day care coordination, etc.

*TDM programs promote alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle. (e.g. car pools, employee shuttles)*

**Join a CARPOOL GROUP**

**Carpool sign-ups**  
November 18-27, 2009  
9:30 AM - 4:30 PM  
@MVP room 101

**Deadline of Applications**  
December 9, 2009

brought to you by:  
Department of Student Welfare and Services  
CISWS

**Have a car and want a carpool group?**  
A list of students sign for a carpool group but only a limited number have cars.

**What do you get by heading a carpool group?**  
All carpool members bringing a car get a reserved parking slot @ the Chinese Carpark

**Looking for a carpool?**

- ✓ Reduce CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions
- ✓ Minimize gas & toll fees costs
- ✓ Maximize car park space
- ✓ **WEE! NEW FRIENDS!**





*Urban Bioswale, Portland Oregon*

## UTILITIES/INFRASTRUCTURE

**Overall Goal: Provide for phased utility and infrastructure upgrades that address existing deficiencies and that support positive development.**

Strong infrastructure capacity attracts economic growth, new businesses and residences - wherever it is invested. Adequate and timely investment in Downtown public infrastructure - utilities and streets - needs to be made if Austin is to achieve its vision of a dense and vibrant downtown, and if Downtown is to continue to support the vitality of all parts of the city. Investment in Downtown infrastructure promotes development that increases the City's General Fund revenues at a much higher rate than any other location in the city, due to its high-density nature, which can be 10 to 100 times as dense as a suburban development. Due to the compact nature of the urban core, the cost to install water and wastewater improvements

### Urban/Suburban Resource Consumption

	<b>Green Urban Condo Project</b>	<b>Typical Suburban Single-Family Project</b>
Number of Units	200	200
Acreage Consumed for Project	Under 3/4 of an acre	Between 57 and 70 acres (between 3 and 3.5 units per acre with roads and drainage)
Impervious Cover Percentage of Total Project Total Acres of Impervious Cover	100 percent 3/4 of an acre	45 percent 26 to 32 acres
Landscape Water Usage	<b>Zero</b> Landscaping irrigated with rainwater collection system and A/C condensation collection system.	15,600,000 gal/year Typical standard lot uses ~ 78,000 gallons per year of potable water for irrigation.
Electricity Usage	<b>\$10 to \$60/mo.</b> Energy efficient design; green building, smaller size; using City chilled water system for A/C.	<b>~ \$100 - \$300/mo. or more</b> This usage will vary greatly depending on the size of the home and multiple A/C units per home.
Taxable Value Per Acre	Over \$80 million to \$150 million per acre, depending on value of units.	~\$700,000 to \$1,225,000 per acre assuming an average home value of ~\$200,000.

*Source: Lower Colorado River Authority and Terry Mitchell, 2010.*

per “fee unit” can be less in relation to the number of units served, and in general, the revenue per linear foot of utility line will be higher for the high-rise residential, restaurants and other intense downtown uses. Furthermore, the Downtown’s lower elevation, reduces electricity demand needed to pump water uphill, compared to the higher elevations of the suburbs. With the existing investment in treatment and transmission mains, the upgrade of aging distribution and collector systems should be purchased to support redevelopment within the central city.

The DAP Downtown Infrastructure Strategy report (Appendix K) includes recommendations and targeted investments that will lay a sustainable framework to provide safe and reliable water, wastewater, storm drainage and electric systems, all of which are central to the overall health, quality of life and prosperity of the community.

***UI-1. COORDINATION AND PRIORITIZATION: Improve coordination among City of Austin departments and other agencies that plan and construct Downtown infrastructure, and set priorities consistent with the DAP.***

**UI-1.1: Consolidate utility coordination efforts under executive-level leadership to coordinate and facilitate the planning and construction of proposed utility and roadway-related infrastructure projects.**

- The City should adopt a policy to prioritize coordinated Downtown infrastructure planning and investment within each City department’s capital improvement program and maintenance budget. Part of the new policy should include establishing more focused roles and responsibilities for the two existing interdepartmental, utility planning and coordination groups to implement both the DAP Infrastructure Strategy recommendations and the Ten-Year Implementation Program summarized in the Leadership and Implementation section. The two existing groups are the CIP Coordinating Committee, led by the Capital Planning Office (CPO) and the Austin Utility Location Coordinating Committee (AULCC), led by the Austin Transportation Department (ATD).

**UI-1.2: Expand and refine the City’s use of the *Envista* system.**

- Envista is a GIS-based software enabling the various City department users to document and illustrate planned infrastructure projects within a shared mapping framework. This allows all City departments to have a comprehensive view of all planned projects, thus facilitating the identification of potential conflicts between them, as well as opportunities to combine projects or portions of projects to reduce cost, time and disruption to the public. Further refinement of the use of this tool will allow greater optimization of project planning and budgets.

***UI-2. WATER/WASTEWATER: The Downtown networks of water distribution and wastewater collection lines should continue to be upgraded by Austin Water Utility-initiated replacements and coordination with private development through the Service Extension Request (SER) Process.***

Generally, the water transmission and wastewater collection capacity serving Downtown is more than adequate, thanks to the recent construction of the 72-inch Ulrich water transmission main and the new Downtown wastewater tunnel currently under construction. However many of the water distribution lines within Downtown are old and inadequate; water mains are often too small to provide code-required fire flows for proposed higher-density development and many wastewater lines are substandard and in deteriorating condition. The SER process, updated in 2009, provides an opportunity for private developers to work with Austin Water Utility (AWU) to determine upgrade requirements and possible cost participation scenarios.

**UI-2.1: Dedicate adequate funding annually to Austin Water Utility’s (AWU) “CIP-dedicated funds”.**

Rather than attempt to predict where new development may occur next in Downtown and begin upgrades where they may not be needed, it is more effective to allocate “flexible” funds that can be used on a more dynamic, as-needed basis for necessary extension of City mains and/or for cost participation with a developer to “oversize” such City-needed mains.

- These funds should be used for upgrading City distribution and collection mains for water and wastewater through developer participation programs and/or for CIP projects, on an as-needed basis to meet the demands of emerging projects.

**UI-2.2: Require developers to submit their Service Extension Requests (SERs) for proposed projects in advance of their site development permit applications to allow time for AWU to assess needs and, if applicable, develop cost-participation agreements.**

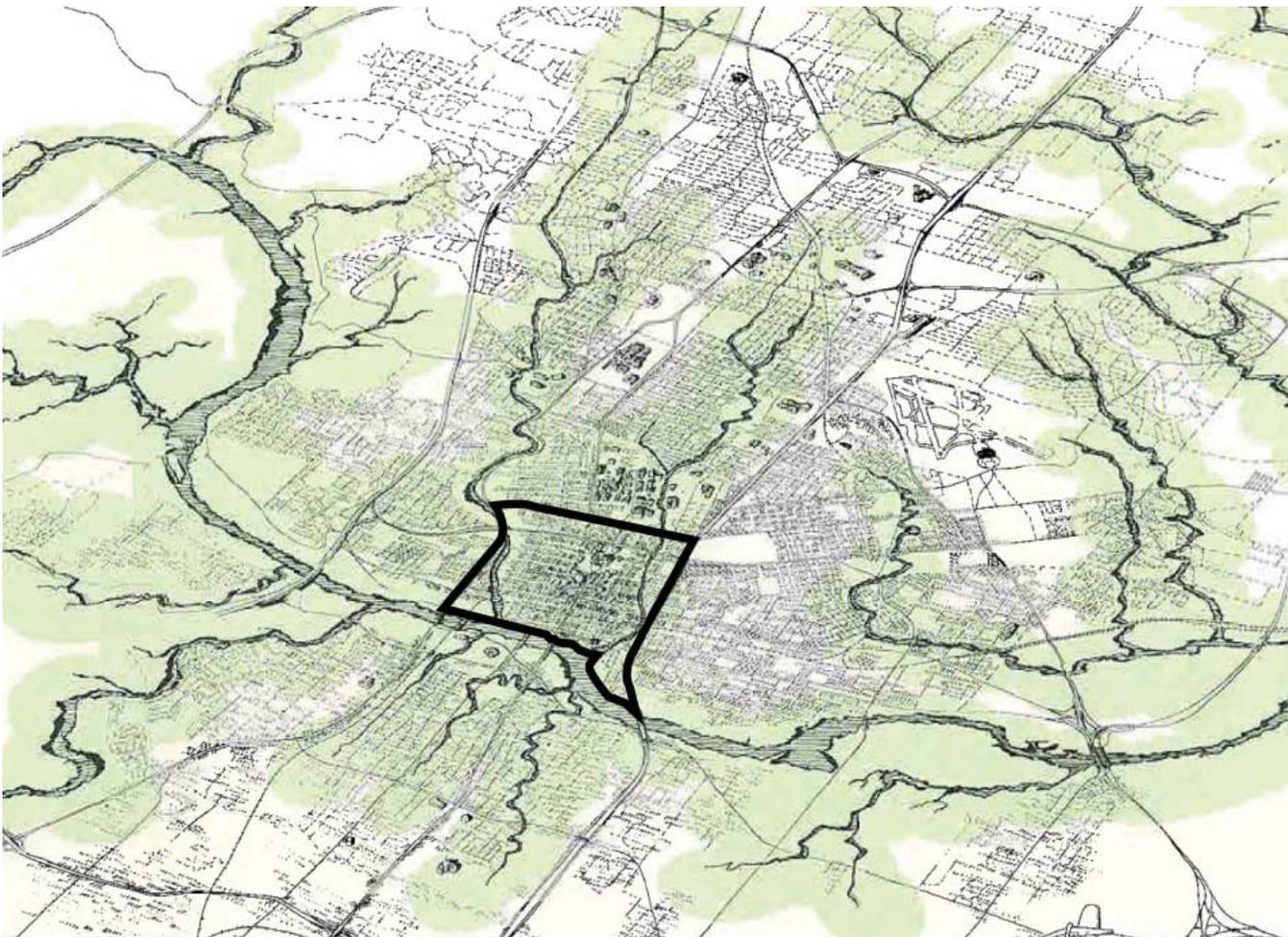
- With adoption of the DAP policy and procedure changes, there is an opportunity for developers to meet early in the site development process with AWU in order to establish the capacity and constraints within the area of the proposed development. While it is probable that much of the distribution system could provide domestic water needs, the current code-required fire flows could dictate that developers upgrade City water lines. There is an opportunity - if this process is started early - to explore modifying the proposed building design and to use more sophisticated utility modeling techniques, both of which can help reduce the size and expense of fire-flow water line upgrades, while providing appropriate levels of fire protection.

**UI-3. WATERSHED PROTECTION:** *Downtown stormwater drainage, water quality and flood control infrastructure should be upgraded.*

The Watershed Protection Department's (WP) mission includes protecting Austin's watersheds and waterways and safeguarding the community from flooding through the storm drainage system and more specific flood control projects. Downtown has two major urban creeks, Waller and Shoal, as well as the Lady Bird Lake portion of the Colorado River. These waterways provide important open space amenities, as evidenced by the amount of development oriented toward Lady Bird Lake. A major flood control project is planned and funded for Waller Creek which will open new opportunities for redevelopment as early as 2014, but Shoal Creek has no such project planned. Both creeks have been subject to severe flooding, which has hampered development opportunities of creekside properties.

Most of Downtown's storm drainage/sewer system dates from the 1930s, meaning it is both too fragile and undersized to meet the drainage demands of certain storm events. However, relatively few complaints are received about flooded Downtown properties, so investment in Downtown storm drain upgrades has been less of a priority than other parts of the city.

*Downtown is framed by Waller and Shoal Creeks and the Lady Bird Lake reach of the Colorado River ("Austin Creeks" 1976).*



Well-protected and managed waterways are an asset to a community and bring ecological and recreational benefits to its citizens. Downtown’s waterways are enjoyed by the entire community, as well as its many visitors. The vegetated creek corridors also help to intercept and filter stormwater run-off, support natural wildlife habitats, mitigate heat island effect, and contribute to the reduction of air pollution. Over the past 10 years, the Watershed Protection Department (WPD) has taken a proactive role in promoting these values through specific projects and initiatives. The following recommendations are intended to augment these efforts:

**UI-3.1: Develop a Downtown Drainage Master Plan and extend that plan to adjacent urban redevelopment areas as feasible.**

- An effective drainage master plan will map and document the existing system (location, size and condition of pipes and facilities), project future needs and establish a phased implementation program to construct upgrades according to priorities. Today, the system mapping has recently begun in the needed GIS (Geographic Information System) format. The Department has prioritized the downtown area’s documentation, which should be complete in early 2011.

**UI-3.2: Continue to allocate funding annually to departmental “CIP-dedicated funds” for use in upgrading City storm sewer mains through developer participation programs or for CIP projects, on an as-needed basis.**

- Watershed Protection should continue to direct funds received from the citywide drainage utility fee to support Downtown public and public-private projects.

**UI-3.3: Increase watershed maintenance of Shoal and Waller creeks.**

- With the redevelopment of Seaholm and the Green Water Treatment Plant, much attention has been focused on improving the creekside environment of lower Shoal Creek. Likewise, Waller Creek has been the subject of substantial efforts to improve the creek, from removing excess vegetation and invasive species to debris removal and focused policing. As these two creeks become more and more integrated into the life of Downtown, a higher level of routine maintenance, coupled with higher levels of security, should be established.

*The trail system along Lady Bird Lake (left) and Shoal Creek Trail (right) - provide an important recreational amenity Downtown.*



### UI-3.4: Construct the Little Shoal Creek flood control project.

Little Shoal Creek, located near Nueces Street in the lower part of Downtown is a small creek that has been diverted into an underground tunnel that is undersized.

- The Watershed Protection Department has developed the preliminary design for a larger flood tunnel project to take its place, and the City should move forward to construct it, as this is in a key redevelopment area that suffers from flooding.

### UI-3.5: Implement the Lower Shoal Creek Restoration Project.

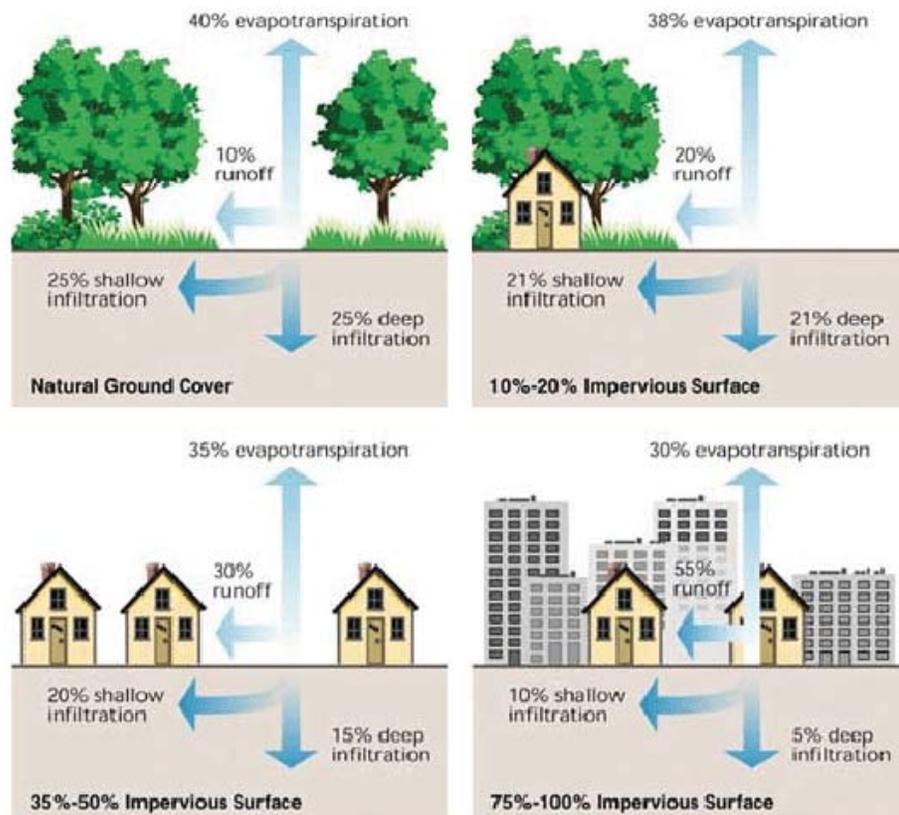
The Watershed Protection Department has developed streambank stabilization plans for the lower reach of the Downtown segment of Shoal Creek. This area is the focus for much public and private investment such as the recent Shoal Creek trail improvements, the future Central Library, the future Project Green, 360 Condominiums, etc.

- WPD should implement this project as soon as possible, as this portion of the creek corridor is a major open space amenity for the area.

### UI-3.6: Develop a flood control plan for Shoal Creek in conjunction with a Shoal Creek Greenway improvement plan.

- As has just occurred for the Waller Creek Greenway, the City should work with partners, such as the Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Travis County, to address

*Stormwater run-off infiltration and evaporation rates in more and less urbanized sites*



the severe flooding problems of Shoal Creek. This flood control project should be defined as part of a corridor-wide master plan that integrates recommendations for public open space and trail improvements, environmental restoration and streambank restoration, as well as redevelopment standards for creek-fronting properties. A USACE-sponsored Shoal Creek study will be initiated in 2011 to re-evaluate flood control options from MLK Boulevard to Lady Bird Lake, enabling the City and partners to advance the planning for this unique greenway corridor.



*A regular maintenance program should be established along Shoal and Waller creeks.*

### **UI-3.7: Create a Water Quality Program for Downtown.**

- Downtown development and its desired orientation toward waterways makes the need for a water quality program crucial. The focus for water quality improvement and control in Downtown should be on infrastructure and maintenance solutions which address odor control, trash and floatable materials and the color and condition of the creek and lake water, as well as maintaining and increasing the adjacent native vegetation, wherever possible. In addition the program should:
  - Encourage and expand the development of public/private programs for maintenance of Downtown creeks and Lady Bird Lake, such as the Keep Austin Beautiful (KAB) programs.
  - Increase the number of dedicated City of Austin staff for maintenance, particularly trash control, along the creeks and river.
  - Create/expand education programs to inform the public, property owners and tenants about “source control” water quality methods.
  - Expand street-sweeping frequency and areas as more areas of Downtown redevelop.

*The Waller Creek trail will be enhanced as part of the planned flood control project.*



- Expand use of trash and sediment control storm water inlets, as appropriate. (City staff is currently developing a Downtown inlet replacement program.)
- Encourage innovative water quality controls and landscaping and adoption of an “Integrated Pest Management Plan”, which requires an environmentally-sensitive approach to pest control, fertilization and plant selection.
- When the Green Roof Stakeholder Group completes their work, consider incorporating these recommendations into the DAP.

**UI-4. ELECTRIC UTILITY:** *Long-term electric utility needs should be anticipated and met with facilities that do not detract from the pedestrian environment.*

Downtown’s electric service area is called “the network” because it is largely an underground system supplied by transmission mains feeding it from outside the system. Current projections by Austin Energy (AE) do not indicate the need for new transmission feeds, but do project a need for two new electric substations in addition to the existing two substations in Downtown: Seaholm in the southwest quadrant and Brackenridge in the northeast. There is a new substation planned in the Rainey Street District, where a site has already been acquired. One additional substation will likely be needed at some point in the future to both support new development and provide for system redundancy.

In addition to substation infrastructure, the design and location of individual building electric vaults should be better addressed, so that these do not conflict with the desire to create a pedestrian-friendly, retail-oriented Downtown.

**UI-4.1: Acquire a site for a future electric substation.**

- AE staff believe that an additional new substation may be needed in or near the northwest quadrant of Downtown to meet long-term development needs. A 1.5-acre site will be needed and, as this process will take time and due public process, the site search should be initiated as soon as possible.

*Electric vault rooms should be avoided along Downtown street frontages.*



**UI-4.2: Austin Energy should develop design and location options for electric vaults, including underground and alleyway options, to better achieve goals of pedestrian-oriented, ground-floor uses and facades.**

- The location of Austin Energy’s required electrical vaults poses a challenge for Downtown projects. Currently, the vault must be at ground level, located within the customer’s property and be accessible by AE service equipment. Also, electric transformers inside the vaults are becoming larger due to the more energy-efficient design of buildings. Ground-

floor rooms occupy street frontages where more appealing pedestrian-oriented uses and facades are desired. To the extent possible, vaults should be located underground, within parking garages, or adjacent to alleyways, rather than within building facades fronting public streets.

**UI-5. DRY UTILITIES:** *Utility franchises should be better coordinated within the framework of Downtown planning and capital improvements.*

Telecommunications consume a significant amount of space beneath Downtown streets, yet are not regulated by the City. This creates difficulty in planning for and constructing public improvements, such as “Great Streets” sidewalks and street trees.

**UI-5.1: Require that “dry” utility franchises go through a City review process to receive approval for alignments and/or relocations.**

- The City should continue to improve the process to reduce conflicts between the various “wet” and “dry” utilities. The City should also clarify the legal implications of their agreements with the franchises, so that City projects are not responsible for bearing all the costs of relocations of the franchise utilities in street improvement projects.

**UI-6. ROADWAYS:** *Roadway upgrades should include needed utility improvements to support Downtown redevelopment.*

Out of 165 lane miles in Downtown, 81% are rated as “less than desirable and unsatisfactory”. The Street and Bridge Division of Public Works indicates that the best course of action is to rehabilitate or reconstruct most of them over the next 25 years. However, the practice of providing “overlays” and spot maintenance will need to continue as necessary stop-gap measures to defer extensive capital expenses.

**UI-6.1. Continue to prioritize maintenance improvements to Downtown streets and alleys, and coordinate and fund “complete” street reconstruction.**

- The Street and Bridge Department currently uses the Pavement Management Information System (PMIS) and data from the Downtown Austin Alliance to prioritize street and alley maintenance. This data should be coordinated with the new CIP coordinating committee, so that street reconstructions that integrate utility needs for the foreseeable future are prioritized within the overall infrastructure framework of Downtown.



*Congress Avenue, Austin*

## LEADERSHIP AND IMPLEMENTATION

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***Overall Goal: Implement the Downtown Austin Plan, within the resources and priorities of the community.***

The Downtown Austin Plan (DAP) is a policy document reflecting the community's vision and priorities for Downtown over the next 20 to 30 years. It is a living document that will be updated and amended on a periodic basis, as the remaining Downtown district plans are completed, and as changing conditions present new challenges, opportunities and priorities. The Plan's full range of policies and recommendations will be implemented over an extended time period. Some will require further analysis and outreach before they can be fully realized, and others will need to await sufficient funding and/or staffing.

This chapter of the Plan describes the actions that should be pursued to advance the community's vision for Downtown, including improved governance and organization; amendments to the regulatory framework; and investments and actions to guide the phasing and funding of capital, operating and maintenance programs over the next ten years.

***LI-1. GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATION: Existing City structures of governance and organization should be refined to facilitate implementation of the Downtown Plan.***

At least seven City organizations and two non-profits are currently supporting the development process and/or stimulating demand from new businesses and residents in Downtown Austin and the Central City, including:

- Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office (EGRSO)
- Planning and Development Review Department (PDR)
- Public Works Department (PWD)
- Watershed Protection Department (WPD)
- Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD)
- Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC)
- Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA)
- Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA)
- Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce (GACC)

The Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) and the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) finance, manage and construct affordable housing throughout Austin. The Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA) plays an important role as a manager of the Downtown Austin Public Improvement District to promote and maintain Downtown as a vibrant business, cultural and residential environment, and the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce acts as an advocate for economic development.

These entities possess a number of important economic development tools, from acquiring and disposing of public land for development to funding Downtown open space and public realm improvements to channeling federal entitlements to affordable housing projects. This system has generated economic development, mainly on public land. EGRSO indicates that 19 such projects are currently underway or planned to begin construction by the end of 2010 in and near Downtown.

In order to effectively implement the DAP to fully meet the opportunities that it presents, new and enhanced organizational structures and procedures are needed.

## Agencies Supporting Austin’s Development Process and/or Stimulating Demand

<b>Agency Type</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Function</b>
<b>Public Agencies</b>	Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office (EGRSO)	Administers Austin’s economic development programs, including small business assistance and cultural sector promotion, and oversees Downtown development projects – particularly projects on City-owned land.
	Developer Assistance Center/Austin One Stop Shop	Provides initial consulting to developers regarding permitting and approvals and streamlines the flow of information throughout reviews and inspections.
	Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD)	Administers the SM.A.R.T. Housing and affordable housing development assistance programs, as well as some commercial revitalization programs.
	Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC)	Issues tax-exempt bonds for development of new affordable housing in Austin.
	Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA)	Controls and manages public housing in Austin, administers the City’s Housing Choice Voucher program, and provides other services to low-income families in Austin. Has power of eminent domain and bonding authority.
<b>Non-Profit Entities</b>	Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA)	Maintains “clean and safe” programs, assists businesses, and makes recommendations for further infrastructure improvements and development Downtown.
	Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce	Undertakes activities to increase employment and economic growth in the region through business attraction and retention.

### LI-1.1: Establish a Central City Economic Development Corporation.

As Austin continues to develop through future real estate cycles, the City's activities will, by necessity, transition from encouraging the development of public land through disposition, to taking a more active role in closing feasibility gaps for projects on private land that generate significant public benefits. An effective economic development corporation could allow the City to be proactive about developing such projects by providing a suite of predevelopment and development services, as well as access to financing.

- Austin should establish a Central City Economic Development Corporation to serve these functions, coordinate the City's many economic development entities and assist in implementing DAP objectives. At its core, the function of the economic development corporation is to focus on executing projects rather than providing specific governmental functions Downtown, and to do so with some flexibility to promote public-private collaboration in generating economic development and other public benefits. To achieve these objectives, the Corporation should be equipped by the City to serve three principal functions:
  - Developing public infrastructure projects that contribute to city-building;
  - Supporting public and private real estate development projects that produce desired public benefits; and
  - Stimulating development of workforce and affordable housing Downtown.

The corporation should perform these functions by advocating for public approvals; guiding projects through the permitting process; assembling and conveying land; "packaging" incentives, subsidies and financing; providing planning and design assistance; and supplying project management and marketing services. It should also act as a liaison between the public and private sectors, facilitating cooperation and process efficiency, while ensuring that projects are implemented in line with the intent of the DAP.

#### Public Infrastructure

The Development Corporation should be tasked with developing -- and supporting the development of -- key public infrastructure improvements that stimulate desirable private sector investment in strategic locations or that provide strategic public benefits. This will entail prioritizing infrastructure investment, establishing effective financing structures, and managing project design and construction. Public infrastructure projects could include improvements in and around Waller Creek, revitalization of Downtown's key open spaces and parks, transportation and parking facilities and downtown streetscape enhancements. Working in

*The Midtown Houston Development Authority manages public infrastructure projects, such as Baldwin Park.*



this fashion the Development Corporation would not supplant the role of the City's Public Works Department, but would have the ability to act in an opportunistic and strategic manner, especially in situations where the City would not be able to do so.

The Midtown Houston Development Authority manages public infrastructure projects funded through the 617 acre Midtown Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ). Since its inception in 1994, the Authority has made significant improvements to the district's streetscapes, pedestrian experience, transit connections and public spaces, helping transform a blighted neighborhood into a growing district. The popular Midtown and Baldwin parks were conceptualized, funded and constructed by the Authority and are now managed through its partner organization, the Midtown Management District.

### **Public and Private Development Projects**

To support both public and private development, the Corporation should assist in the execution of catalytic development projects for Downtown. This will require the capacity to intervene in each component of the real estate development process, identifying priority projects that provide significant public benefits consistent with the DAP, and then becoming the implementing agent for that project. The Corporation should seek to support and facilitate a range of development projects, including:

- *Public projects*, such as infrastructure projects, that serve to support the DAP and stimulate private investment in additional developments;
- *Public-private partnership projects* that may utilize public funds or land and which partner with the private sector to meet a market need, and which also generate ongoing revenue for the Corporation; and
- *Private projects* that are viewed as important to Downtown's development. These would receive facilitation and other methods of support by the Corporation to ensure they are completed and produce public benefits.

### **Workforce and Affordable Housing**

To execute the City's vision of affordable housing development, the Corporation could channel public and third-party financing sources for affordable housing to privately-capitalized projects seeking gap financing for affordable rental and ownership housing Downtown. Potential public and private funding sources include Density Bonus Program proceeds, banks meeting Community Reinvestment Act obligations and financing offered by affordable housing intermediaries, such as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the Enterprise Foundation.

### **Development Corporation Attributes**

Many cities across the country have created development corporations performing similar functions to those recommended in this plan. The successful examples of these entities share a set of attributes that enable them to carry out these functions, including:

1. A clear statutory base;
2. Effective leadership;
3. A capable staff experienced in a range of program areas;
4. Stable funding sources; and
5. Strong partnerships with public and private entities.

Establishing the Corporation with these attributes in mind will lead to the successful implementation of the DAP.

### 1. Statutory Base

The Corporation should be a citywide Local Government Corporation (LGC) established under the Texas Transportation Code, Chapter 431, providing the entity with clear legal authority to carry out the functions described above while enabling the Corporation to support development agendas citywide as they evolve over time. LGCs possess authority to aid and act on the behalf of city government to accomplish any governmental purpose, including entering into contracts, hiring consultants and issuing bonds upon approval by City Council. However, the City Council retains ultimate control of the Corporation by retaining the right to approve both the articles of incorporation and bylaws. Several Texas cities have chosen to establish LGCs:

LGCs often serve as the management and financing vehicle for projects funded by TIRZs. Throughout Texas, municipalities have established LGCs

	Downtown Dallas	Uptown Houston	San Antonio HemisFair
<b>Classification</b>	LGC	LGC	LGC
<b>Statute</b>	TC c. 431	TC c. 431	TC c. 431
<b>Board Appointment</b>	Council	Mayor	Mayor

and TIRZs simultaneously, with one set of professionals acting as the board for both entities. An Austin LGC should be established with the capability of managing several different TIRZs, both currently in place and created for future investments. Creation of new TIRZs may be either project-driven or area-wide. Other Texas cities have utilized TIRZs with a variety of geographic scopes to meet their downtown redevelopment objectives:

	2007 Appraised Value (millions)	Size (acres)
<b>Dallas</b>		
City Center	\$1,472	Not reported
Downtown Connection	\$1,022	Not reported
<b>Houston</b>		
East Downtown	\$94	66
Midtown	\$885	443
Uptown	\$3,065	1,010
<b>San Antonio</b>		
Houston Street	\$365	629
River North	\$124	194



*Leadership and staff excellence at 3CDC have made it one of the most successful in the nation.*

## 2. Leadership Capacity

The Corporation should be guided by an appointed oversight and agenda-setting Board of Directors, including leaders with specific professional expertise from the public and private sectors. The Board should have two principal functions:

- Mobilize public and private resources in support of the DAP priorities; and
- Ensure accountability to the business plan created for the entity.

The board should have a broad-ranging skill set, and represent various points of view in the development process. Across the country, many models for board appointment are evident, including appointment by City Council, by the Mayor or a combination of the two, with nominations from various entities. The selection of an appointment process is less important than a commitment to a high-quality, professional board that is familiar with the development process. In Austin's case it will be important that major players, such as the State, UT, the County and the federal government be included.

The Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation, *3CDC*, exemplifies the effective leadership and capable staff needed for a successful corporation. The professionals at *3CDC* have broad expertise which has allowed the entity to not only provide the services of a traditional development corporation, but also to manage the Cincinnati New Markets Fund and the Cincinnati Equity Fund, which provide reliable sources of financing for downtown redevelopment projects.

## 3. Staff Excellence

The Corporation should be staffed with professionals experienced with private sector development and intergovernmental relations, and led by an Executive Director with substantial experience in managing an organization and coordinating real estate planning, financing and development. The Director must also have the ability to interact with senior City officials to advance project funding and approvals, and the Corporation's policies should give the Director the flexibility to employ staff as operations and projects require. The staff should possess a diversity of skills, including expertise in planning, negotiation of public-private real estate transactions, finance, marketing and project management.

## 4. Funding Structure

In the short-term, and within the confines of State legislation, the City should support the Corporation's operating budget with an appropriation from the

General Fund or other supplementary sources. The City should consider identifying a dedicated revenue stream from public improvement district (PID) fees, facilities charges, parking fees, property taxes or other sources that can ensure continuity of operating support for the Corporation for its first five years of operations.

The City should identify a medium- to long-term, self-sustaining funding structure for the Corporation that may include dedicated taxes and/or fees, development service fees, revenue from assets granted to the Corporation and interest income.



*The Jersey City  
Redevelopment Agency  
is a financially  
self-sustaining entity.*

An excellent example of an entity with such self-sustaining funding is the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency. It was established in 1949 with the goal of eliminating blight in Jersey City’s urban core and attracting residential, commercial and industrial development to the area. Since its inception, the Agency has been responsible for creating billions of dollars in development and thousands of jobs. The fees that the Agency charges to the private sector for facilitating development projects currently provide the majority of its operating budget.

## **5. Partnerships**

The Corporation should create strong partnerships with other development entities as appropriate to meet the DAP’s intended functions. Key partnerships will be with the Downtown Austin Alliance, a separate PID entity whose efforts should be coordinated to work in tandem with the Corporation’s mission, and with the Austin Housing Finance Corporation, who assists the City’s Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department in developing affordable housing.

An immediate opportunity for partnership lies in the redevelopment of the Waller Creek District. The Corporation should work closely with the PID and the newly-formed conservancy to fund and manage necessary public improvements and identify key catalytic private development projects to leverage the value of the Waller Creek public infrastructure investment. Although the Corporation may not be responsible for operations and maintenance of the Waller Creek District, it should assist in the design and development of public spaces and the management of the many “opportunity sites” abutting the creek. Uptown Houston is an example of an entity that has forged successful partnerships. It is a collection of four entities (a TIRZ, a PID, the Uptown Housing Authority, and the Uptown Houston Association) that work cooperatively to promote development in the Uptown District. The Authority’s role is to finance and manage projects - using TIRZ revenues and other public, private and earned funding sources - while the Association coordinates area-wide planning and



*Uptown Houston is an example of an entity that has forged successful partnerships.*

services. Since its inception, the Authority’s operations have been enabled by staff assistance from the Association and fees from the PID.

**LI-1.2: Encourage and support public/private partnerships and conservancies aimed at building and operating parks and open space improvements.**

- The City should encourage the growth of a network of public-private and non-profit, park-supporting entities that complement the efforts of PARD and the Economic Development Corporation described in LI-1.1 above.

These could include:

- Public Improvement Districts (PIDs), which are effective in obtaining sponsorships, engaging local business and residents and programming events and activities; and
- Non-profit or philanthropic organizations corporations or entities with the ability to gain support from communities or constituencies surrounding key Downtown park networks in the form of in-kind services (park volunteers) and fundraising.
- The City should work with the Austin Parks Foundation, the Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association and other non-profits, to expand their fund-raising capacity and develop a capital campaign for the first major Downtown park initiative (e.g., Waller Creek Greenway, including Palm and Waterloo parks). Successful capital campaigns depend upon a few strong champions from different sectors who provide leadership and visibility from the beginning, as well as significant staff to manage outreach and plan fundraising events. All capital campaigns should be structured such that a portion of each philanthropic contribution is earmarked for an operating endowment.

**LI-1.3: Organize City government to provide for the effective implementation of the Downtown Austin Plan.**

- The business plan of each City department should be updated to incorporate the relevant policies and recommended actions of the DAP, so each department is clear on its roles and responsibilities. Each City department should establish individuals responsible for implementing their department’s Downtown initiatives as set forth in the business plan, and these responsibilities and performance measures should be reflected within individual staff reviews so that there is clear tracking and accounting for progress made in implementing DAP recommendations.
- The City should assign a specific work group to play the central oversight role for plan implementation. This group should coordinate efforts of all affected City departments and act as the liaison to the Economic Development Corporation. An executive-level staff person should be appointed as the City’s Downtown Coordinator to oversee the work of the various departments, to act as a central

advocate for Downtown initiatives and to serve as a liaison to other entities including the DAA, UT, the State of Texas, Travis County, etc.

**LI-2. REGULATORY AMENDMENTS:** *The recommended policies of the DAP should be incorporated within the City’s regulatory framework.*

A key aspect of implementation will be to ensure that DAP recommendations are integrated with other guiding and governing plans, such as: the City’s Comprehensive Plan, which describes the overall vision and priorities for Austin; the City’s Land Development Code, which regulates land uses and development; the Austin Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan (AMATP) and the CAMPO Plan, our three-county region’s long-range transportation plan that establishes transportation needs and priorities.

**LI-2.1: Adopt the Downtown Austin Plan as an amendment to the City’s Comprehensive Plan.**

- The DAP is the Downtown’s Neighborhood Plan, and like the other adopted Neighborhood Plans, will amend the much more general Comprehensive Plan, providing specificity about the particular geographic area of Downtown.

**LI-2.2: Finalize and adopt a Downtown Density Bonus Program by ordinance. (See Appendix H)**

- The City should finalize the policies of the Downtown Density Bonus Program and formulate it as an ordinance to be incorporated into the Land Development Code.

**LI-2.3: Refine the recommended form-based development standards as part of the ordinance preparation and amendment process. (See Appendix I.)**

- A public review process with stakeholder involvement should be undertaken, as part of the typical code amendment process, to further review and refine the DAP’s recommended form-based standards. On the basis of this input, the City should prepare an ordinance that incorporates the standards into the Land Development Code.

**LI-2.4: Amend the zoning ordinance within the Land Development Code in a phased way that allows for further stakeholder involvement and refinement, as appropriate, in order to:**

- Incorporate new mixed-use zoning classifications;
- Incorporate standards for ground-level uses and treatments;
- Implement recommended rezoning of designated properties; and
- Incorporate revised Downtown-specific, scale-compatibility standards.

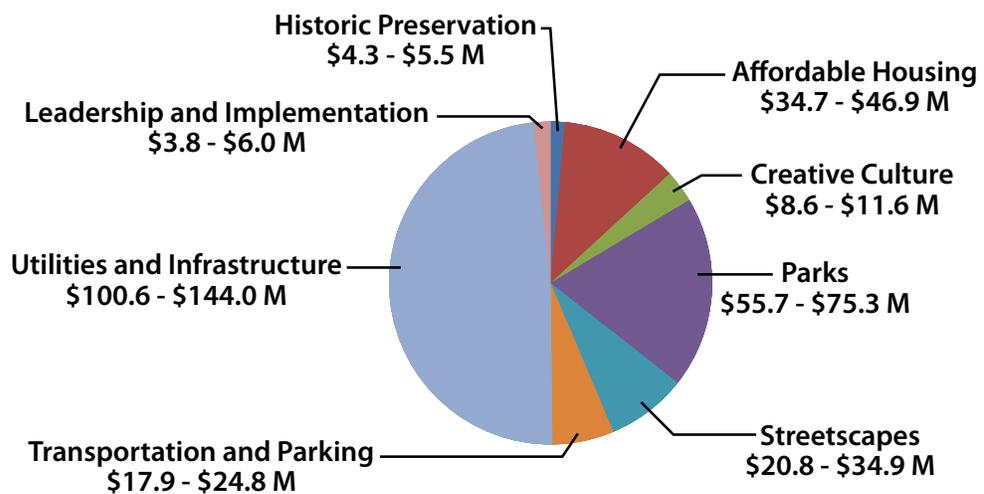
**LI-2.5: Make amendments to other plans, as appropriate.** Various regional and citywide plans should be amended, such as the Austin Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan (AMATP) and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) Plan to bring them into alignment with the DAP.

**LI-3. DOWNTOWN INVESTMENT AND ACTION PLAN:** *The Downtown Austin Plan’s Implementation Program should guide the phasing and funding of capital, operating and maintenance programs, as well as specific initiatives for the next 10 years.*

**LI-3.1: Adopt a ten-year action plan for implementation.**

- The City Council should adopt a ten-year action plan aimed at addressing the community’s major priorities for Downtown. The DAP Ten-Year Implementation Program (below) outlines those actions that have emerged as the highest priority for the next 10 years. (See Appendix L for a more detailed description of the Implementation Program.)

**LI-3.2: Upon adoption of a finalized Implementation Program, EGRSO should lead City departments in the development of a financing plan for these priority actions.**



*The Ten-Year Implementation Program calls for a \$250 - 350 million budget for both capital and operating expenses.*

**DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN: TEN-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN  
ESTIMATED BUDGET\* 2012 TO 2021**

<b>PROPOSED INITIATIVES</b>	<b>TEN-YEAR COST RANGE (2010 DOLLARS)</b>	
<b>HISTORIC PRESERVATION</b>	\$4,270,000	\$5,530,000
Cultural Resource Survey/Historic Preservation Plan Updates Additional Staffing for Historic Preservation Office Annual Historic Preservation Initiatives Budget		
<b>PARKS &amp; OPEN SPACE</b>	\$55,690,000	\$75,347,000
Increased Maintenance Staffing Design and construction of Waller Creek Greenway, Palm Park, Waterloo Park, and Brush Square Master Plan of Wooldridge Square & Old Bakery		
<b>STREETSCAPES</b>	\$20,830,000	\$34,950,000
East 6th Street Improvements Congress Avenue Improvements Wayfinding/Signage Plan (Phase Two) Public Restroom Master Plan/Pilot Program		
<b>AFFORDABLE HOUSING</b>	\$34,680,000	\$46,920,000
Permenant Supportive Housing Project (225 units) Downtown Workforce Housing Corporation Staffing		
<b>CREATIVE CULTURE</b>	\$8,575,000	\$11,600,000
Artist/Musician Affordable Housing "Austin Experience" Visitor Center Feasibility		
<b>TRANSPORTATION &amp; PARKING</b>	\$17,858,000	\$24,753,000
Construction of Missing Sidewalks Bicycle Facilities (Red River lanes, UPRR Underpass) Two-Way Conversion of Downtown Streets Guadalupe/Lavaca Transit Improvements Downtown Parking Enterprise		
<b>UTILITIES &amp; INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	\$100,638,000	\$144,012,000
Annual Flexible CIP Funds Downtown Drainage Master Plan Water Quality & Maintenance Program Little Shoal Creek Flood Control Project Lower Shoal Creek Restoration Project Downtown Shoal Creek Flood Control Master Plan Electric Substation Site Acquisition		
<b>LEADERSHIP &amp; IMPLEMENTATION</b>	\$3,800,000	\$6,000,000
Economic Development Corporation Staffing		
<b>TOTAL 10-YEAR CAPITAL &amp; OPERATING BUDGET RANGE</b>	<b>\$246,341,000</b>	<b>\$349,112,000</b>



## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Downtown Austin Plan Issues and Opportunities:  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/dap\\_ph\\_1\\_report\\_2-14-08.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/dap_ph_1_report_2-14-08.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> Source Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA) source: <http://www.downtownaustin.com>
- <sup>3</sup> Source City of Austin Staff, 2008.
- <sup>4</sup> The Role of the Cultural Sector in the Local Economy 2005 Update:  
[http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/council/downloads/cultural\\_sector2005.pdf](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/council/downloads/cultural_sector2005.pdf)
- <sup>5</sup> Lower Colorado River Authority and Terry Mitchell, 2010.
- <sup>6</sup> 2000 Census Tract Data from Downtown Austin Alliance:  
[http://downtownaustin.com/downloads/DTAustin\\_Resid\\_Profile.pdf](http://downtownaustin.com/downloads/DTAustin_Resid_Profile.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> Source City of Austin, Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office.
- <sup>8</sup> Waller Creek TIF Update, Spillette, 2010.
- <sup>9</sup> Source Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- <sup>10</sup> Based on MAS' study (2008-2010) of development capacity of assembled properties of at least one-quarter block area.
- <sup>11</sup> Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Corporation, "Fiscal Years 2009-2014 Consolidated Plan,": <http://austintexas.gov/page/reports-publications#consolplans>
- <sup>12</sup> Waller Creek TIF Update, Spillette, 2010.
- <sup>13</sup> Boards and Commissions Index: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/boards-and-commissions>
- <sup>14</sup> Downtown Austin Plan: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/downtown-plan>
- <sup>15</sup> Downtown District Spreads: [ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/dap\\_district\\_spreads.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/dap_district_spreads.pdf)
- <sup>16</sup> Waller Creek District Master Plan:  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted\\_mp\\_hires10\\_0712.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted_mp_hires10_0712.pdf)  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted\\_ds\\_hires10\\_0712.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted_ds_hires10_0712.pdf)
- <sup>17</sup> Urban Design Guidelines for Austin:  
[http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/downloads/urban\\_design\\_guidelines\\_for\\_austin.pdf](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/downloads/urban_design_guidelines_for_austin.pdf)
- <sup>18</sup> Envision Central Texas: <http://www.envisioncentraltexas.org/>
- <sup>19</sup> Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan: <http://www.imagineaustin.net/>
- <sup>20</sup> Austin Strategic Mobility Plan: <http://www.austin-mobility.com/>
- <sup>21</sup> Waller Creek District Master Plan:  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted\\_mp\\_hires10\\_0712.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted_mp_hires10_0712.pdf)  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted\\_ds\\_hires10\\_0712.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted_ds_hires10_0712.pdf)
- <sup>22</sup> Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan: <http://www.imagineaustin.net/>.
- <sup>23</sup> Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties:  
<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/>

- <sup>24</sup> Downtown Density Bonus Program: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/downtown-plan>
- <sup>25</sup> For more information on these proposed zoning districts, see the Waller Creek, Core/Waterfront and Northwest district plans:  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/npzd/dap\\_support\\_docs.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/npzd/dap_support_docs.pdf)  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted\\_mp\\_hires10\\_0712.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted_mp_hires10_0712.pdf)  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted\\_ds\\_hires10\\_0712.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted_ds_hires10_0712.pdf)
- <sup>26</sup> Northwest District Plan: [ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/npzd/dap\\_support\\_docs.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/npzd/dap_support_docs.pdf)
- <sup>27</sup> Waller Creek, Core/Waterfront and Northwest district plans:  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/npzd/dap\\_support\\_docs.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/npzd/dap_support_docs.pdf)  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted\\_mp\\_hires10\\_0712.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted_mp_hires10_0712.pdf)  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted\\_ds\\_hires10\\_0712.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted_ds_hires10_0712.pdf)
- <sup>28</sup> Downtown Affordable Housing Strategy:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/downtown-plan>
- <sup>29</sup> City of Austin Permanent Supportive Housing Strategy, 2010:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/housing>
- <sup>30</sup> Journal of Housing and Community Development, April 2008.
- <sup>31</sup> “The Rise of Family-Friendly Cities,” Wall Street Journal, 27 November 2007, citing, Brookings Institute demographer Bill Free.
- <sup>32</sup> Families and Children Task Force: [http://www.caction.org/CAN-Research/Reports/2009/factf\\_report.pdf](http://www.caction.org/CAN-Research/Reports/2009/factf_report.pdf)
- <sup>33</sup> Capitol Market Research, 2007.
- <sup>34</sup> Economics Research Associates, 2007.
- <sup>35</sup> The Role of the Cultural Sector in the Economy: 2005 Update.
- <sup>36</sup> Live Music Task Force: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/council/downloads/lmtfreport.pdf>
- <sup>37</sup> The Create Austin Plan:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/createaustin-cultural-master-plan>
- <sup>38</sup> Appendix J and Downtown Austin Plan:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/downtown-plan>
- <sup>39</sup> Action Plan: Managing the Nighttime Economy.  
<http://www.downtownmorgantown.com/newsletter/wintermainstreet09-1308699790.pdf>
- <sup>40</sup> Waller Creek TIF Update, Spillette, 2010.
- <sup>41</sup> Downtown Density Bonus Program:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/downtown-plan>
- <sup>42</sup> Waller Creek TIF Update, Spillette, 2010.
- <sup>43</sup> Downtown Density Bonus Program:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/downtown-plan>
- <sup>44</sup> Downtown Density Bonus Program:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/downtown-plan>
- <sup>45</sup> A draft Downtown Density Bonus program, based on extensive stakeholder input and economic analysis, was completed in July 2009.

- <sup>46</sup> Detailed District Plans: [www.cityofaustin.org/downtown](http://www.cityofaustin.org/downtown).
- <sup>47</sup> Downtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan: [www.cityofaustin.org/downtown](http://www.cityofaustin.org/downtown)
- <sup>48</sup> Downtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan: [www.cityofaustin.org/downtown](http://www.cityofaustin.org/downtown)
- <sup>49</sup> The Downtown Arts Development Study – Austin Alive: Mapping Place through Art and Culture at [www.cityofaustin.tx.us/downtown](http://www.cityofaustin.tx.us/downtown) for recommendations on how public art may be integrated in the public realm
- <sup>50</sup> Downtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/downtown-plan>
- <sup>51</sup> See the DAP Downtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan for recommendations for furnishings which could be used as an interim guide, until such a master plan is completed.
- <sup>52</sup> Waller Creek District Master Plan:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/waller-creek-0>
- <sup>53</sup> Downtown Density Bonus Program:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/downtown-plan>
- <sup>54</sup> Downtown Great Streets Master Plan:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/page/great-streets>
- <sup>55</sup> DAP Downtown Transportation Framework Plan:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/downtown-plan>
- <sup>56</sup> Downtown Great Streets Master Plan:  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/page/great-streets>
- <sup>57</sup> Envisioning the Avenue - A Strategic Report:  
<http://downtownaustin.com/downloads/FinalReport2010ViewOnline.pdf>
- <sup>58</sup> Waller Creek, Core/Waterfront and Northwest district plans:  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted\\_mp\\_hires10\\_0712.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted_mp_hires10_0712.pdf)  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted\\_ds\\_hires10\\_0712.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/DowntownAustinPlan/adopted_ds_hires10_0712.pdf)
- <sup>59</sup> DAP Downtown Transportation Framework Plan:  
[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/npzd/dap\\_support\\_docs.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/npzd/dap_support_docs.pdf)
- <sup>60</sup> Sidewalk Master Plan:  
[http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/publicworks/downloads/sidewalk\\_mp\\_resolution.pdf](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/publicworks/downloads/sidewalk_mp_resolution.pdf)
- <sup>61</sup> Austin Bicycle Plan Update:  
[http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Public\\_Works/2009\\_bicyclemasterplan.pdf](http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Public_Works/2009_bicyclemasterplan.pdf)
- <sup>62</sup> Bikestation: [www.bikestation.org](http://www.bikestation.org)



**ORDINANCE NO. 20111208-093**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE AUSTIN TOMORROW  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BY ADOPTING THE DOWNTOWN AUSTIN 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) The Downtown Austin Plan (the “Plan”) project consultants and City of Austin Planning and Development Review staff have met with neighborhood stakeholders, property owners, business owners, developers, state agency staff, University of Texas staff, Travis County staff, and staff from other City departments since January of 2007 to develop the Plan. Public involvement was achieved through stakeholder interviews and meetings, seven town hall meetings held beginning in January 2008 and including a public meeting held on December 8, 2010 to present the draft Plan concepts, answer questions, and receive comments on the Plan.
- (D) The Downtown Austin Plan provides a vision for the area and recommends action by the City and other stakeholders to improve downtown Austin. The Plan has action-oriented recommendations on the following plan elements:
  - 1. Historic Preservation
  - 2. Activities and Uses
  - 3. Density and Design
  - 4. The Public Realm
  - 5. Transportation and Parking
  - 6. Utilities and Infrastructure; and
  - 7. Leadership and Implementation
- (E) The Downtown Austin Plan goals are further described throughout the Plan.
- (F) On April 26, 2011, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the Downtown Austin Plan, endorsed the Plan, and recommended that City Council adopt the Plan.

- (G) The Downtown Austin Plan is appropriate for adoption as an amendment to the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan. The Plan furthers the City Council's goal of achieving appropriate, compatible development within the area. The 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 Downtown Austin Plan, as set forth in Exhibit A and incorporated as part of this ordinance, as Section 5-31 of the Comprehensive Plan.
- (B) The City Manager is directed to process the amendments to City Code recommended in the Plan, which include but are not limited to:
  - 1. A regulating plan that implements downtown-specific development standards;
  - 2. Creation of new zoning districts;
  - 3. A downtown density bonus program; and
  - 4. A downtown-specific compatibility framework.
- (C) Council initiates and directs the City Manager to process the rezonings of properties as recommended in the Plan.
- (D) The City Manager shall include implementation projects identified in the Downtown Austin Plan as part of the City's comprehensive capital project needs assessment and prioritization and shall identify possible funding strategies for these elements of the Plan.
- (E) The City Manager shall develop a detailed plan, identifying the necessary steps and recommending a schedule, for creating a Central City Economic Development Corporation and shall present this plan to City Council for consideration and possible action.
- (F) The specific provisions of the Downtown Austin Plan shall take precedence over any conflicting general provisions in the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan.





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## *City Council*

Lee Leffingwell, Mayor  
Sheryl Cole, Mayor Pro-Tem  
Mike Martinez  
Laura Morrison  
Chris Riley  
Bill Spelman  
Kathie Tovo

## *City of Austin*

Marc Ott, City Manager  
City Staff

## *Consultant Team*

McCann Adams Studio (urban design and planning, plan development)  
HR&A Advisors (real estate economics, parks and plan implementation)  
Studio 8 Architects (development regulations, computer modeling)  
Urban Design Group (infrastructure)  
Limbacher & Godfrey Architects (historic preservation)  
Taniguchi Architects (plan documentation)  
Economic & Planning Systems (creative community strategies)  
Capitol Market Research (real estate market analysis)  
Diana McIver & Associates (affordable housing)  
LTK (urban rail)  
HDR Engineering (transportation)  
Kimley-Horn (transportation)  
Tate Austin Hahn (website, citizen survey)

## *Renderings by Elizabeth Day:*

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